

2024 FAMILY DEVOTIONAL



IT WILL BE  
**WORTH IT ALL**

VOLUME 12



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MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 2024

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## TRUST IN THE LORD

*“Trust in the LORD and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”* (Psalm 37: 3-4)

**A** fretful heart is not a trusting heart, because it lacks joy and peace (Romans 15:13). Faith and works go together, so we should also do good as we wait on the Lord. Some of God's people were tempted to leave the land (Ruth 1; 1 Sam 26:19), which was tantamount to saying that God was not faithful and could not be trusted. However, in Psalm 37, David urged them to stay in the land and trust God for what they needed (vv. 27-29). Each tribe, and each family in Israel had their assigned inheritance which the Lord instructed them never to be passed into other hands. The Lord promised that He would care for the land of the faithful. The promise in verse three is stated in various translations as: *"Enjoy safe pastures"* (NIV), *"Feed on His faithfulness"* (NASB margin; NKJV), and *"Enjoy security"* (RSV). If we are faithful to God, He will be faithful to us. Trusting the Lord is a key theme in this Psalm (vv. 4, 5, 7, 34, 39).

The Scripture is replete with the message to “Trust in the Lord.” In fact, nineteen times in the Scripture the admonition to trust in the Lord occurs, and in these difficult times in which we find ourselves, our trust must be firmly grounded in the Lord. Psalm 118:8-9 reminds us that: *“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.”*

The people of God should not dread the arrival of evil tidings. If we are distressed by them, *“What do we more than others?”* (Matthew 5:47). Others do not have our God to resort to; they have never proven His faithfulness as we have done, and it is no wonder they are bowed down with alarm and are terrified with fear. We who profess to be of another spirit, have been born again unto a lively hope, and our hearts are set on things above and not on earthly things. Now, if we are distracted as others, what

is the value of that grace that is given to us which we profess to have received? Where is the dignity of that new nature which we claim to possess?

Again, if we should be filled with alarm, as others are, *we would undoubtedly be led into the sins that are so common to others under trying circumstances.* The ungodly, when they are overtaken by evil tidings, rebel against God; they murmur, and think that God deals harshly with them. Will we fall into that same sin? Will we provoke the Lord as they do? Moreover, the unconverted often run to the wrong source to escape from difficulties, and we will be sure to do the same if our mind yields to the present pressure. Trust in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Our wisest course is to do as Moses did at the Red Sea, *"Stand still and see the salvation of God"* (Exodus 14:13).

We will not give way to fear when we hear of evil tidings. We will continue to demonstrate that calm composure, which is vital for the storm, and will sustain us under adversity. How can we glorify God if we play the coward? The people of God have often sung God's high praises in the fires, but will we doubt and despair, as if we have no one to help? My admonition to you is to magnify the Most High God, then take courage and be reliant in sure confidence on the faithfulness of our covenant God. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid! TRUST IN THE LORD.

**Bishop A. Thomas**  
*Senior Pastor*

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024

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## THROUGH MANY TRIBULATIONS

“...*And that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*” (Acts 14:22)

**T**here is no man in this world without some manner of tribulation or anguish, though he be king or pope” (Thomas Kempis).<sup>1</sup> II Timothy 3:12 tells us that all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. So, inevitably at some point we will all find ourselves in a state of great trouble, distress, or suffering. Why then are these adversities necessary? It is because the testing of our faith produces perseverance. When perseverance finishes its work, it produces spiritual maturity so that we are complete and lack nothing (James 1:3-4).

The word tribulation is linked to the Latin word *tribulum* meaning threshing board. During harvesting the blades of a threshing board were often used to cut the ears of grain, separating the seed from the straw. At other times the harvest is crushed under the weight of a sledge or grinding wheel. Alternately, it is trampled under the feet of humans or oxen. After the crushing, winnowing takes place and the mixture is tossed in the air allowing the wind to separate the chaff from the seed. The tribulations of life can often feel like a threshing floor. Like we are being trampled, unfairly maltreated, or pressed beyond measure. Fear not, the process is designed to uncouple the treasured seed from its nonessential components. For the threshing floor is a place of separation and revelation.<sup>2</sup>

When we are faced with the storms of life and gale force winds blow, let us not be like the chaff which the wind drives away. Instead let us use it as an opportunity to prepare for flight. When baby eaglets are in training, they start flapping their wings while still perched in the nest; practicing, building up flight muscles and coordination. Eaglets are initially covered in downy feathers but as the stronger plumage grows, not only do they develop strength but also the ability of thermoregulation. The setback you are now experiencing may be readying you for flight. Be patient while the developmental process takes place. God is equipping you with survival

skills and preparing you for new heights. He is forming in you the ability to weather extreme temperatures and to overcome future tempests.

The tribulations of life may at times seem grueling and too numerous. In the moment they do not feel pleasant, and we may feel like we are going to buckle under the weight. But in the end, it will all be worth it because in Christ Jesus we will be made perfect. *“For the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, will make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle you”* (I Peter 5:10).

1. [Quotefancy.com/quote/1268201](https://www.quotefancy.com/quote/1268201)
2. [Moms-hope.org](https://www.moms-hope.org)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2024

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## FIRE IS NECESSARY

*“He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.”* (Job 23:10)

**T**he process of refining precious metals, like gold, has always been fascinating to me. To get rid of the flaws, the goldsmith must place the gold in an extremely hot furnace, which can reach temperatures of up to 1400 degrees Celsius. The impurities hidden within then rise to the surface so the refiner can carefully eliminate the scum until the surface is clear and reflective. This process is repeated until the gold has attained the desired state. In the purification of gold, extreme heat is required.

As followers of Jesus Christ, the fiery trials and suffering in our lives accomplish the same kind of purification within our hearts. God refines us in the fire. The flames in our life purify us and draw us to God in ways

that nothing else can. Christ, as our Refiner, examines our lives and discovers impurities and flaws which mar our lives. He then moves to sanctify us in those areas, and He often does so by bringing suffering into the very area that He wants to develop. God saved us for the ultimate purpose of being conformed to the image of His only begotten Son. Through the fire, loveliness of character might be made perfect and permanent in us.

This, however, is quite a difficult process and we are often tempted to despair. Yet, we are not alone in it; our expert Goldsmith is paying keen attention. Christ draws near the fire and sits as a Refiner intently watching the gold in the purifying crucible as He holds it in the center of the flames. You may start to fear that the gold of your life will be destroyed, but Christ is an expert Refiner and He will only burn away the dross.

The patriarch Job came to recognize this truth and so, did not despair. It was after his excruciating trial, which is beyond anything most of us have experienced, he testified of God, *“When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold”* (Job 23:10). He was confident that he would not be burned up in the trial but come out of it as a lump of purest gold.

Are you in the furnace of suffering? Remember, your heavenly Father loves you. The intense difficulties that test us are designed to remove the undesirable contaminants that prevent us from serving Him completely. So, take heart, God’s hand is on the temperature regulator. He will allow the heat to do no more than remove the impurities. Trust God in the fire. He is working every trial in our lives for our good and His glory.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2024

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## CHASTENING

*“My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; Neither be weary of his correction: for whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”* (Proverbs 3:11-12)

**H**ebrews 12:6 admonishes us not to despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of Him. This can be difficult to accomplish as the effects of being chastened tend to be accompanied with negative circumstances and unpleasant feelings. According to dictionary.com the word chasten means “to inflict suffering upon for purposes of moral improvement.” The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word chasten as “to correct by punishment or suffering: discipline.” Based on the definitions given, suffering is a part of chastisement. Suffering implies “an endurance of pain or distress” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). No one wants to endure pain or distress, but the Scriptures consistently show that chastisement is a necessary part of life’s journey.

In moments of being chastised, we do not respond by rejoicing. Instead, many of us respond with feelings of anger, guilt, frustration, regret, despair, and sorrow. This idea is described well in Hebrews 12:11 which indicates that “*No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.*” Grievous! However, the latter part of this verse indicates that “*Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.*” In other words, it is only when we can identify, understand, and experience the benefits of chastisement that these negative feelings are minimized. Our chastisement, though unpleasant, is for our benefit. Rest in the fact that the Lord loves us so much, therefore He corrects us. He wants us to be the best version of ourselves and receive all that He has promised to us (1 Corinthians 11:32). Also, like Job, be comforted that when He causes you to be sore, binds you up, wounds you, His hands will make you whole (Job 5:17-18). He is still there loving and keeping you during your period of chastisement.

Jeremiah asked a very important question about chastisement, and offered a solution: “*Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways and turn again to the LORD.*” (Lamentations 3:39-40). We must continually practice this solution so that we are not condemned along with the world (1 Corinthians 11:32).

## THE EMPATHETIC HIGH PRIEST

*“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. <sup>15</sup> For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”* (Hebrew 4:14-15)

**J**esus knows all about our struggles, He will guide ‘til the day is done.”<sup>1</sup> These are wonderful words from a beloved hymn of the church. We sing these lyrics with confidence and assurance that He knows and cares about our every trial and there is not a friend like Jesus, not one!

Jesus truly understands us, His compassion and empathy go way beyond what our minds can conjure up. He is able to walk 10,000 miles in our shoes and will continue to do so, because He has so much loving kindness, tender mercy, and empathy for us. Psychotherapist Alfred Adler describes empathy this way, “Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another, and feeling with the heart of another.”<sup>2</sup> This certainly describes the way our High Priest can identify with any and every emotion that we have ever, or will ever experience. Jesus wept, He got angry, He had compassion, He got hungry, He was frustrated, and was tempted with all the different feelings and emotional states that we go through. Our focus Scripture tells us that He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Rest assured that He knows and cares about everything that we experience. According to the songwriter: “There's not an hour that He is not near us – No, not one!” Just imagine that our Empathetic High Priest is right there holding our hands through our most difficult trial, bearing the burden with us.

Our lives can be compared to books with many chapters. Some chapters are filled with good tidings and fair weather, and some can be filled with storms and turbulence. Regardless of the series of events and the obstacles that we face, the plot of our story will culminate in a glorious conclu-



sion. We will end on a high note, we will make it because we have a Great High Priest and He is not insensitive to all that we go through. He punctuates every line, paragraph, and chapter of our story with so much empathy. He is always nigh, whether we are going through the water, flood, fire, or night seasons of our lives. This is the reason why the Scripture reminds us in Hebrews 10:23 to hold fast to the profession of our faith. What does that mean for the believer in the year of our Lord 2024? It means that even more than ever, we should continue to affirm our faith in, and our allegiance to our High Priest. The pages of our lives should loudly proclaim that even when we are troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down (2 Corinthians 4:8-9), we are not without hope in this world, because we have a Savior. As the lyrics of the hymn continues: “No friend like Him is so high and holy; and yet no friend is so meek and lowly, no not one!” He is our friend and High Priest and His name is Jesus.

1. *Johnson Oatman Jr.* There’s not a Friend Like the Lowly Jesus.
2. *Empathy.* PassItOn.com

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 2024

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## COME BOLDLY BEFORE HIM

*“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”* (Hebrews 4:16)

**A** throne is a sovereign ruler’s seat of authority. The same is true of God’s throne. He is the King of kings. His throne is His seat of authority. Unlike God’s throne, a throne can be corrupt, subject to bribes or respecter of persons. God’s throne or seat of authority is built upon what is right and just. Psalm 89:14 AMPC states, *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and loving-kindness and truth go before Your face.”*

Since God's throne is built on what is right and just, in consistent with His attributes, grace and mercy will also be present. His grace is sufficient, and His mercy is everlasting, so we do not need to fear when approaching His throne. This truth gives us the freedom to come boldly before our Savior. Boldness means freedom to speak without reservations. Therefore, we can come to the throne of grace with confidence and not condemnation and share our failures, our fears, and our needs. This boldness is exactly what the apostles prayed for in Acts 4:29. It was available to them, and it is also available to us.

The parable in Luke 18:1-6 speaks of the woman who went repeatedly to the unjust judge to be avenged of her adversary. The judge ignored her for a while but eventually granted her request because her consistency was wearing him out. Jesus told this parable to illustrate that our heavenly Father is the exact opposite of an unjust judge. God, the Judge of all the earth, is full of mercy *and* loving-kindness. Our pleas will not wear Him out. Therefore, we can approach Him repeatedly and with boldness because in His presence and at His throne we will find help in our times of need.

Sadly, the irony is that when we need grace and mercy the most, we are more inclined to stay away from the only place where it can be found—God's presence, standing before His throne of grace. Let us be reminded of God's promise of no condemnation when we go to Him for help (Romans 8:1). Let us cast our cares upon Him, He cares for us. In fact, God invites us to come when our "sins be as scarlet," not when we are perfect. Accept the invitation: "*Come now, and let us reason together,*" (Isaiah 1:18 KJV). This is an invitation to come boldly, not with fear.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 2024

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## GOD KNOWS HIS OWN

*“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his, And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” (2 Timothy 2:19)*

**T**he sure foundation of the Christian hope lies on the fact that Jesus knows His own. Just like a child who knows his father’s voice, a Christian knows the voice of his Heavenly Father. Your age, status or physical appearance will not cause God to forget who you are and who you belong to. There is a mark upon every child of God that cannot be removed by any force. Given the opportunity, the devil would want nothing more than to distract us from this fact with his lies such as: God no longer hears your prayers, God does not remember you, because you have sinned, God no longer speaks to you, and the list goes on. Do not believe them, always put your trust in God! His Word reminds us that He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Never allow your current condition to forget this fact. God knows exactly who you are, and He is concerned about your well-being.

We become familiar with God’s voice by spending time with Him through prayer, fasting and the reading of His Word. Because of this familiarity, when temptation comes our way, our appropriate response will be no to sin and yes to God. Our Heavenly Father cares and knows every detail about us. He knows us in the time of trouble. He knows our everyday tasks; He knows us by name, and He Knows us intimately. With such encouragement we can have confidence in God that whenever we call upon Him, as our Good Shepherd, He will hear us. If there is ever a time when you feel as if God has forgotten you, just reflect on Calvary’s cross and the promises that He has laid out in Scripture for His people.

God knows even our very thoughts. Psalm 139 reminds us that He examines us and knows everything about us. As we pray, thank God for knowing exactly who we are. Unlike mankind, He will not forget about us. This

certainly gives us hope as we live a life that is pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2024

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## NEVER ALONE

*“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.” (Deuteronomy 31:6)*

**A**s humans, we often experience or struggle with feelings of being alone. These feelings can emerge from not reading or meditating on the Word of God daily or from spending less time in prayer and fasting. They can also be derived from lack of fellowship with others, such as family, friends, and brethren. The Scripture emphasizes that we should be strong despite the challenging occurrences in our lives. God is aware of each difficulty that we may experience during our life’s journey, some of which make us more susceptible to feelings of being alone.

Moses forcefully emphasized that if we trust in the Lord, despite the situations encountered, He will go before us (Deuteronomy 31:8). This gives us the assurance that God will be with us, and He will not fail or forsake us. As such, we should not be afraid or be dismayed. Psalm 46:1 declares that *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”* This gives us the confidence that He is always ready to help us during difficult times, beckoning to us that He is present irrespective of our individual situations that we experience. What a wonderful consolation to be awakened to the knowledge that God is always present, whether or not we are conscious of that fact.

Joshua echoed the same sentiment as Moses when he encouraged the

Children of Israel to *“Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”* (Joshua 1:9). Applying these Bible verses as well as others to our life, will sharpen our awareness that we are never alone despite of how lonely we may feel at times. The enemy of our souls would like to confuse and discourage us that no one cares about us, no one loves us, and that spending time in His presence is a waste of time. Many individuals struggle with feelings of being alone and not knowing how to resolve the situation. As born-again believers, we should point them in the right direction. Let them know that Jesus cares about every detail of their lives. Oh yes, He cares, and He promised in His Word that He will never leave them alone. The song writer F. E. Graeff coined it well.

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained;  
Too deeply for mirth or song,  
As burdens press; And the cares distress;  
And the way grows weary and long?

Oh yes He cares, I know He cares,  
His heart is touched with my grief  
When the days are weary, the long night dreary,  
I know my savior cares.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2024

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## PRAIVING ALWAYS

*“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.”* (Colossians 4:2)

**W**e are encouraged in Scripture to pray without ceasing (1 Th 5:17) and to pray always and not faint (Luke 18:1). The meaning is not that we should do nothing but pray, but that nothing else we do should hinder us from spending time in prayer.

God has placed much emphasis on prayer because praying is of utmost importance to Him. It brings us in connection with Him through the Holy

Spirit (Rom 8:26-27). If we are not constant in prayer, we are robbed of the opportunity to experience God's power in our lives. Regardless of our situation or circumstance, prayer must be constant. While rejoicing, we must pray. While we are suffering, we must pray. Scripture reminds us that God's great movements in this world have been conditioned on and fashioned by prayer. God's movement to bring Israel from Egyptian bondage had its inception from constant praying (Ex 2:23-25 KJV).

The enemy would like nothing more than for the people of God to become weary in prayer. It is a known fact that God works through the prayers of His people, and when we fail to pray then sin will have its way. Through our constant prayer we function as God's agents to storm the gates of hell and tear down strongholds. Praying always is a loaded spiritual weapon against the forces of darkness. This warfare that we are engaged in forces us to carry out the recommended duty Paul mentions in Romans 12:12, *"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer."*

As an individual, as a family and as a church, we cannot and will not stop praying. Prayer cannot be retired as a secondary force in this world. While Paul and Silas were in prison, their circumstance propelled them to pray even more as they remained constant in prayer. Change will occur when we remain constant in prayer. Let us make this commitment outlined in Scripture, *"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word"* (Acts 6:4).

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2024

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## CAST YOUR BURDENS ON HIM

*"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."* (Psalm 55:22)

**T**he act of "cast" is to throw, hurl, or toss. It usually occurs when an individual is disgusted with a situation or does not know where to turn to resolve the situation being encountered. Our focus verse tells us that we should take that burden and cast it—

throw it—onto our Father, God. In fact, He wants us to take all our anxieties, everything that worries us, and to give it to Him who cares so deeply for us. This is not a promise that God will fix everything which worries us. God is not obligated to follow whatever script we write for Him. It's a promise that the Mighty God will receive our worries, and care about them. He will carry them for us. He is trustworthy to handle them in the way that is best. In other words, turn over everything to Him, lean completely on Him.

Many of us have been walking around with loads that are extremely heavy, loads that have prevented us from living a God-filled life and from having successful interactions with others. Our King, Savior, and Father continuously pleads with us to let go and let Him take control of our situations. He wants us to trust Him, and in doing so, release ourselves from the oppressive or depressive burdens we carry daily. He, who has the capability to handle every situation, understands us more than our friends, family, or spouse. Therefore, He wants us to be disgusted with our situation(s), and completely turn it over to Him who has the solutions to all our problems. One song writer coined the words of the chorus: “Turn it over to Jesus, turn it over to Jesus, turn it over to Jesus and you’ll smile the rest of your day.” (Author unknown)

God is our burden bearer. Psalm 68:19 (NIV) states, “*Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens.*” He wants us to free ourselves from the burdens or struggles that we encounter. His will is that we develop and maintain an intimate relationship with Him. He will never be frightened, bewildered, or upset when we share our concerns or feelings with Him. Above all, He desires that we love and trust Him in every facet of our lives. God is faithful, patient, long suffering, and kind. He does not want His children to be so burdened that they are unable to have fellowship with Him. God is always seeking for us, making sure that we are on the right path. As a result, we can toss all our burdens on Him who has the capacity to sustain us.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2024

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## GOD KNOWS HOW TO DELIVER

*“The Lord knows how to deliver the righteous out of temptations...” (2 Peter 2:9)*

*“The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.” (Psalm 34:17)*

**I**t is truly gratifying to find someone who has the expertise in an area where you have a need! A lady was waiting in an airport for a flight to Uganda when she noticed two neatly dressed pilots as they briskly walked towards the entrance of the aircraft. Moments later the boarding call was announced. After, what seemed like minutes, the aircraft pushed away from the boarding gate, and fell in line on the taxiway as it prepared for takeoff. The captain introduced himself and the crew as he welcomed everyone aboard. Halfway through the flight some unexpected turbulence was encountered and immediately the “Fasten Seatbelt” sign came on and the captain instructed the flight attendants to be seated. Fear and anxiety gripped the lady and the rest of the already nervous flyers as the wind ripped the aircraft, tossing it from side to side. The ten minutes it took to fly through that experience felt more like an hour. Once the pilot navigated out of the storm, the remainder of the flight was smooth sailing. Thanks to the pilots’ expertise, the flight landed at the Entebbe International Airport right on time and the storm was a thing of the past.

Turbulence (trials, temptation, persecution, heartache, sickness, and pain, to name a few) are natural phenomena that we must encounter in life. There is just no way to avoid them even though we try. Although we learn how to traverse many things in life, particularly the ones we can see and handle, yet sometimes the unseen enemies tend to throw us off track. Our attempts to pray them away sometimes prove futile causing many to become discouraged. Like the captain of the aircraft, our God is an expert, the Captain, and Chief Navigator of our lives. He knows how to deliver us out of every situation. We just need to trust His divine expertise.



One of the biggest struggles we have is not having the ability to see what is around the corner so we can “control” the outcome. Contrarily, faith takes the reins and places it squarely in the Master’s expert hand, causing us to trust Him completely for the desired results. And for this reason, Jesus in Matthew 8:23-27 fell asleep during the storm while the disciples were frantic. It is certainly not all the time that our ideas of deliverance match what God has in mind, but we should always know that His plan for us is a perfect one. Sometimes all it takes is a little bit of patience on our part to get our thoughts aligned with His. So, with that in mind let us focus and align our thoughts as we pray.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 2024

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## BY PRODUCT OF TRIALS

*“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” (James 1:3)*

**J**ames 1:1-3 exhorts us to count it all joy when we fall into various trials and tribulations, because the trying of our faith produces patience. Patience, faith, and trials are constant companions, where one exists, you will find the other. When things are going well, there is usually no reason for faith, as there is no opposition that forces us to question our beliefs, no fire that drives us to our knees to exercise our faith. However, when things are tough, we exert more effort as we try to focus on what we really believe and not just the feelings that are generated by our circumstances.

It is often quoted that faith isn’t faith until it is tried, and the hardships and adversities that we face are there to test just how much faith we have and the faith we have will dictate the patience we exercise as we navigate life’s misfortunes. Tribulation works our faith muscle, and this results in patience. Patience is a valuable attribute of the fruit of the Spirit, and just

as how diamond is created under intense pressure and heat, patience is produced under the fiery conditions of trials. Diamond cannot escape the pressure and heat that is instrumental to its generation and growth. Similarly, it is impossible to develop patience without afflictions and difficulties.

Today, let us reflect on the challenging moments and even seasons we have navigated: losses, disappointments, illnesses, wayward children, broken relationships, and failed businesses, and how our faith sustained us. These things came to try our faith, but somehow, we persevered, encouraged by the knowledge that God came through before and He will do it again. This confidence and assurance led to a peace which passed our frail human understanding and instigated patience, a valuable quality of the fruit of the Spirit. Therefore, despise not the trials that assail us as they exercise our faith and provide us with patience.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 2024

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## TRUST GOD'S TIMING

*“But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:8-9 NKJV)*

**T**hroughout the Bible, God's actions in showing up on time to deliver His people is truly glorious. From the parting of the Red Sea for Israel to feeding the multitude with five loaves and two fish, God's ability to provide and deliver His people is without fail. However, a significant catalyst for God's express manifestation in our lives is our faith and complete trust in Him. Trust brings with it the concepts of reliability, truth, and strength. So, if one would pose the questions: Is our God reliable, is He trustworthy and is He mighty? The an-

swer would be yes! I know that letting go is never easy, but that is where the beauty in our faith begins to work and where He blesses us. In retrospect, despite all that God has done in our lives, why do we need to control the narrative of circumstances in our lives, knowing God knows our reins?

Sometimes waiting on God can be difficult. But God's delayed response was never meant to weary us or causes us to be in dismay. In fact, the Bible admonishes us to *"Wait on the Lord and be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart"* (Psalm 27: 14). Furthermore, we know that God's promises are sure, and He has never been late on delivering them. Moreover, time is inconsequential to God and, thus, behooves us to be patient. God does not count time as men do. In fact, verse 8 of the focus Scripture above admonishes us not to forget that a day is like a thousand years to the Lord and a thousand years like one day. The lyricist Dottie A. Peoples said it best, "He is an on-time God." In her declaration, she stated, "He may not come when you want him, but he will be there right on time. He's an on-time God. Yes, He is." This statement carries a sense of assurance and steadfastness that God will deliver, and He will do it right on time. In life, sometimes we must look in our own archives and reckon God's faithfulness to us. Your situation might be dire and seems out of control right now, but my questions to you are: Is there anything too hard for the Lord to do? Hasn't He always come through in time past? Saints of old often make this affirmation, "Won't He do it" and to that, they will reply, "Yes, He will." I am reminded of the three Hebrew boys who were miraculously delivered by God from the fiery furnace, not before, not after, but right on time and likewise He will do it for you.

Finally, we are not alone in this journey we call life; not only is God for us, but we have a multitude of witnesses that God will always come through for us, *"...and that right early!"* (Psalm 46:5 KJV)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 2024

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## KEEP YOUR CONFIDENCE

*“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”* (Hebrews 10:35-37)

**C**onfidence according to the Oxford Dictionary speaks to the feeling or belief that one can rely on someone or something. It describes trust, faith, or conviction that we can safely depend on a person or a thing. As humans, we tend to build confidence in people after interacting with them over a period of time. This usually includes them doing what they said they would do, being where they said they would be and generally keeping their promises.

God has proven Himself faithful time after time, fulfilling His promises and coming through for us, which should produce our confidence in Him. David was able to face Goliath because of his confidence in God which was developed through his experience with the bear and the lion. He kept his confidence in His God and was greatly rewarded not just with the defeat of his enemies, but it set him up on a path that would lead him to the throne. The three Hebrew young men also kept their confidence and boldly declared in Daniel 3:17, *“Our God whom we serve will deliver us,”* which resulted in their God joining them in the fire and they not being burnt.

Despite the challenges, situations, and obstacles that you encounter, keep your confidence in God. He has never failed you before and He will not fail you now. The result that you long to see, (rewards, and blessings) is attached to the confidence that you possess and exercise. Jeremiah 17:7 declares, *“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.”* We can safely put our confidence in God because He is wise, He is powerful and has a plan for our lives, a plan to prosper us and to give us a good end (Jeremiah 29:11).

Let us not be influenced by the world that encourages self-confidence, or place our faith in man, but rather let us put our trust in a limitless God, who is not constrained by time or circumstance. He is an all-powerful God who is everywhere, knows it all and has our best interest at heart. So today as we contemplate keeping our confidence, let's examine the areas in our lives that we have not fully surrendered. Let us relinquish those to His control, fully persuaded that even if He doesn't show up immediately, He will come through. Whether it be sickness, financial constraints, family members' salvation or emotional distress - Keep Your Confidence.

MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 2024

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## GOD'S UNCHANGEABLE NATURE

<sup>24</sup> *“The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand”:*

<sup>27</sup> *“For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” (Isaiah 14:24, 27)*

**T**he attributes of God are the things that are true of Him. For example, He is merciful, omniscient (all-knowing), loving, good and holy. These attributes provide insight into who God is and how God interacts with us. For instance, because God is love, whatever He does is for our good. Because God is righteous, we can trust that He is working in our lives for His purpose. He is all-powerful, so anything He has purposed, He can do. He is sovereign so He can do what He wants, when He wants and how He wants. He has all wisdom, so whatever He does is wise.

Because He is all-knowing, whatever He has purposed is perfect. He does not need to change. He can declare the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:9-11). He needs no adjustments. This is what Isaiah's words bring into view, God's immutability—the unchangeable nature of God.

It is easy to forget that God is not man, especially when we go through tough circumstances. We make the mistake of looking at things through human eyes, not through God's eyes or through the lenses of who God is. As a result, we panic because we may not know what is going to happen and how. Yet Scripture assures us that the all-knowing God who is love, full of mercy and wisdom, and is gracious, has already determined the outcomes, which are both for our good and His glory.

The prophet asked the question, "*The LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?*" (Isaiah 14:27). In other words, who or what can cancel it? God's counsel will stand forever. His words cannot fail (Isaiah 55:11). Therefore, no matter what happens in the middle that gives the appearance that God's purpose is going to be derailed in the end, even that is also a part of the plan. We cannot worship God in truth without understanding that God is unchanging. This is a significant part of the premise of our trust in God. We cannot worship Him for who He is and not trust Him, and our trust in Him must be rooted in the knowledge that He does not change. Due to God's unchangeable nature, along with all His other attributes, we can rest in the knowledge that all things will work together for our good (Romans 8:28).

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2024

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## AN ANCHOR FOR THE SOUL

*"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;"* (Hebrews 6:19)

**N**ews headlines and breaking news reports paint a very grim picture as to the global crisis that our world faces today. Healthcare issues, gender issues, financial issues, pollution, and air quality issues are just a few of the terms that we often hear swirling around in our news feed and regular conversations. For the

people of God, breaking news should not break our spirits because we have stability in all the turmoil. We have hope in Jesus, and this keeps us steady in these uncertain times. Just as anchors protect the vessels from going adrift or being tossed to and fro, so does our hope in Jesus keep us stable and protect us from being swept away in this sea of chaos. Stability is a very precious commodity in the lives of the people of God. We can be immovable while everything else is being shifted around us because we received our news report from the Word of God, and we knew beforehand that abomination and desolation would come upon this world. Most importantly, we know that these are just the beginning of sorrows, and we know what will come next. We are anchored because we know how this will all play out. Our news report comes from verses such as 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 which inform us that one of these days, there will be a shout from heaven, and we will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; and we shall always be with the Lord. This is great news for us!

All the hard work and good intentions of the world's major organizations such as the United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO), and International Monetary Fund (IMF) will not be able to resolve the world's problems because as one songwriter wrote, "Jesus is the answer for the world today." And to go a step further, we should add that Jesus is the Anchor for the world today. Many songwriters have been inspired by Hebrews 6:19 and penned anointed lyrics that remind us of the sure and steadfast hope that we have in Jesus. As we sing these songs and meditate on the words, take joy in the fact that "we have an Anchor that keeps the soul, steadfast and sure while the billows roll." Let us "anchor our souls in the haven of rest" and be very sure that our anchor holds and grips the solid rock. This Rock is Jesus, yes He is the One."

The value of anchors is played out so well in Acts 27 where the Apostle Paul recounts his experience as a prisoner on a ship that was being battered by the Euroclydon wind. Due to the severity of the storm, the fellow passengers lost hope (v. 20.) Paul admonished them not to do anything drastic. He told them that except they abide in the ship, they cannot be saved (v. 31). These words still ring true for us today. No matter how tempestuous the storm may be, and how hopeless the situation looks, abide, trust and hope in your Anchor. Always remember that at any moment, the Lord can speak to the storm, and it must obey; but until then, ride out the storm and be anchored in Jesus.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2024

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## CONSIDER EACH OTHER

*“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:”* (Hebrews 10:24)

**O**ur faith is not just a mere profession of words, but it is a call to action. Scripture states that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). Therefore, let us examine what Hebrews 10:24 is challenging our faith to do. The NLT version says it this way: *“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.”* The word that jumps out to me in this Scripture is provoke. Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of The Bible definition of provoke means; to cause an incitement or to incite. In other words, to move to action, stir up or urge on. Provocation can only take place when the mind is persuaded to move from ideas to action. So, let me ask you, what provokes you daily to do the things you do? Is it the bills, or responsibilities in life that cause you to go to work? Or is it the love that you have for your job and family that challenges you to get up every day? What persuades you to live out your faith?

There is a saying that states that, it was not obligation that drove Christ to the cross, but it was love! In the focus verse for today, Paul is deliberately connecting our faith to the incitement of good works and works of love. Therefore, if we are holding fast to our faith, it should persuade us to good works and works of love. In a world that is so cold and encourages everyone to look out for themselves, how about us taking interest in others and how we can add value to their lives? 1Thessalonians 5:11 puts it this way. *“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.”* We become more Christlike when we develop a mindset like this.

So, my encouragement to you today is to look for the people that are in your sphere of influence and seek for ways that you can help to build them up. Love drove Jesus Christ to the cross. What is love driving you to



do today? Start with prayer and ask God to guide you and lead you with the right actions and the right words so that you can provoke someone unto good works and love.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2024

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## DO NOT NEGLECT MEETING TOGETHER

*“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25)*

**A**s the Day of the Lord fast approaches, let us consider what the verse for today is saying.

- The coming of the Lord is imminent.
- Do not forsake the gathering together of the church as some have.
- Encourage one another to fellowship more.

There is a strong exhortation not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together. Regular church attendance is noted as one of the principal means of maintaining faith, hope, and charity. This is vital in our walk with the Lord. Maybe your walk with the Lord is going well, but the body, (the church) consists of many members that are fitly joined together and that functions better when these members congregate corporately.

Let's consider the nature of bees. They spend spring and summer going around collecting pollen to make honey for food in preparation for the winter. The interesting thing is these bees individually go out to collect pollen and bring it back to their hive. The work that each bee does helps it and the entire colony to survive the winter. But something amazing happens during winter. Instead of the bees flying away to a warmer environment they come together to form a ball around the hive to protect it and the queen bee. They do this by flapping their wings together. What syner-

gy they demonstrate! The flapping of their wings creates a warm environment to which every bee, including the queen bee can survive the harsh, brutal temperatures of winter. Just like the bees coming together and flapping their wings for the well-being and survival of each bee, the same is true of the church.

The church environment is a place where we can find encouragement, upliftment, hope, restoration, and strength. It is where we can pray, break bread and fellowship together, (Acts 2:42). Coming together corporately is where a solid foundation can be established by the teaching of the apostolic doctrine. God has given to the church all that is needed for the body to survive the harsh brutal time in this world that we as pilgrims are in. This is a major reason why we should not neglect the corporate gathering of the church. It is like cutting off the blood supply to a part of the body. Eventually that part of the body will die.

The coming of the Lord is drawing near, and we would hate to see the soul of our brother or sister or someone that we know miss that special day. So let us pray today for a heightened awareness of the importance of meeting together regularly and for a desire to do so with gladness.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2024

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## LEARNING OBEDIENCE

*“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;”* (Hebrew 5:8-9)

**A**ccording to Bill Johnson, “Obedience is not measured by our ability to obey laws and principles, obedience is measured by our response to God’s voice.”<sup>1</sup> Obedience is then indeed a critical component that requires trust and faith, and it demonstrates our love for God. John 14:21 (NLT) states, *“Those who accept*

*my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.*” It is through obedience that we are led to true freedom and fulfillment in Christ Jesus.

By studying the example of Jesus, we understand that obedience often involves suffering and sacrifice. In the Garden of Gethsemane, we see Jesus’ agonizing over His impending suffering but surrendering to God’s will. He prays for another way, but ultimately accepts the "cup" of suffering (Matthew 26:39). It is through these experiences that we grow and mature spiritually. Jesus’ obedience led to His perfectness and His role as the author of eternal salvation. Therefore, through His sacrifice, we can find salvation and experience the abundant life that comes from following Him.

Trusting in God’s faithfulness and goodness is essential as we embark on the path of obedience. Reflecting on His past faithfulness in our lives and throughout history strengthens our trust in Him. Even in the face of challenges and uncertainties, we can confidently step forward, knowing that God is with us and will guide us. Job was experiencing great turmoil, in which he had lost his wealth, children and health. However, despite his challenges, he still trusted God, boldly declaring, *“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him...”* (Job 13:15). As a result of Job trusting in God, the LORD gave him twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10).

The stories of biblical figures like Abraham (Genesis 22), Moses (Exodus 3-4), and Jonah (Jonah 1-3) remind us that obedience can lead to incredible blessings and transformation. They faced their own trials but remained obedient to God’s call, and as a result, they experienced God’s faithfulness and witnessed His power at work in their lives.

Obedience is not merely about following a set of rules but about surrendering our will to God and allowing Him to shape us. It is a transformative journey that molds our character, aligns our desires with God’s, and enables us to reflect on His love and grace to the world. As we learn to obey, we become more like Christ and draw closer to the heart of God.

Throughout this journey, we are not alone. God is always by our side,

empowering us through His Spirit and surrounding us with His love and grace. We can find joy and excitement in learning obedience, knowing that we are aligning ourselves with God's perfect plan and purpose.

Let us encourage one another on this path, sharing stories of God's faithfulness and the blessings that come from obedience. Let us not just be hearers of God's words but doers. According to Aiden Wilson Tozer, "The driver of the highway is not safe when he reads the signs but when he obeys them."<sup>2</sup> As we support and uplift each other, we can experience the transformative power of obedience and grow together in faith. May this reflection inspire and encourage us to embrace the journey of learning obedience, trusting in God's faithfulness, and experiencing the abundant life that comes from walking in obedience to Him.

1. [https://www.azquotes.com/author/18329-Bill\\_Johnson/tag/obedience](https://www.azquotes.com/author/18329-Bill_Johnson/tag/obedience)
2. <https://www.quotemaster.org/qcb18f884cf2bbb777a5dc9a3d18bf9>

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 2024

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## BUILD TO LAST

*"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock."* (Matthew 7:24-25 NKJV)

**O**ne of the most structural failures is the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa in the city of Pisa, Italy. According to Business Insider,<sup>1</sup> the tower was built on an entirely unstable foundation. A too-small limestone base of only 3 meters deep was built into a dense clay bed, which meant that the tower was never going to last. Five years after completion, it started to achieve its now famous lean.

In our focus Scripture, as Jesus brings His Sermon on the Mount to a close, He made a parallel between storms and buildings to encourage His audience to act upon His words. He contrasted the difference between those who were doers and not just hearers of His teachings. In His illustration, two houses were built, one which foundation was on a rock and the other which had a foundation made of sand. When the rains, floods and winds came, the house built on the rock stood firm while the house built on sand collapsed.

The houses are representations of our spiritual life, a life that will eventually face the vicissitudes of life. Depending on how your “house” is built, will determine if it remains standing or if it will crumble. As the story tells us, both houses experienced the same storm, rains, floods, and winds but with different outcomes. We can learn from this that we are not exempt from the trials of life when our “house” is wisely built, on a safe secure foundation. As Christians, the hurricanes of adversity will strike. The difference is, we have a foundation that holds up through the storms of life. That foundation is obedience to the Word of God. Building a spiritual life is based on the bedrock of obedience. Those of us who hear and obey God’s Word is compared to a wise man who builds a house that will endure the tests of time (Matt. 7:24-25). James 1:22 admonishes us to “*Be doers of the word and not hearers only...*”

Storms can reveal the quality of the builder’s work. Under good weather conditions it is difficult to tell how well a building has been constructed or to differentiate between a weak building and a strong one. Only when both are exposed to extreme weather conditions their durability will be known. The same is true of our lives. The true test of its quality is not in the times when everything is going well but it is in the times when we are faced with the most difficult of circumstances. As you construct your spiritual house, ponder these questions. Am I building wisely? Will my house be able to stand when tested by tempests and tragedies or will it collapse? Be reminded that you are building not just for the here or now but for eternity. Be sure that your foundation is sure so that your house stands unshaken when the rains, floods and winds come. Build to last.

<sup>1</sup>*The Tower of Pisa. Peter Aiken Business Insider, Dec. 5, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com>*

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 2024

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## SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

*“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.” (Hebrews 12: 12-13 KJV)*

**T**he term “renewal” can be associated with being transformed or converted from one state to another. As we explore the process of spiritual renewal, we consider how we can change our spiritual state from one that is dependent on our limitations to one that relies on the strength of God. Romans 12:2 states *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

You may ask, “How can I obtain spiritual renewal?” The process to achieving spiritual renewal is a deliberate one. First, it begins with a desire to please God. As children of God, we are not immune to trials and tribulations in our daily walk. However, we should consider the trials we face as a vehicle into God’s presence and purpose. We often may not understand or fully appreciate the purpose of our trials and sufferings, but we should hold onto the fact that our God is gracious and kind. He will not suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able (1 Corinthians 10:13 KJV). Next, after we have a desire to please God, we must yield our will to His divine purpose for our lives. We must acknowledge that our God is sovereign in all His ways. His plans for our lives are greater than any plan we could have charted for ourselves. The process of yielding requires us to replace our will with God’s will for us.

As humans, we at times experience lack of faith, discouragements and disappointments that can slow us down, therefore, we must renew our spiritual strength daily. The Scripture reminds us, *“They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31, KJV)*. The process of daily spiritual renewal in-

volves reading God's Word. The Word of God is life that provides real-time instruction and inspiration, on-demand! When we spend time reading the Scriptures, we gain access to immediate instruction in our greatest moments of need.

As we continue in our walk with Christ, let us not become weary in well-doing or faint when we face challenges, but let us take a new grip with our tired hands and strengthen our weak knees. Let us stand resolute so our minds can be renewed through the Word of Truth.

MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 2024

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## SURPASSING PEACE

*“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7 KJV)*

**P**ace in the earthly context is defined as freedom from disturbance or a state in which there is no war. In other words, earthly peace is viewed as being in a state of tranquility. However, the peace that Christ offers is not like that of the world. Christ's peace is a surpassing peace, going beyond limit, powers, or capacity. It refers to a hope and reassurance that is greater than what a fallen world can offer. Christ's peace is permanent, guaranteed, and eternal. Therefore, the children of God can experience the peace of God while facing the most challenging experiences in their lives and that is the differentiator of God's surpassing peace. God's peace miraculously transcends any problems we may face.

This peace offers three important benefits. First, God's peace is supernatural and unexplainable. The peace of God is not like the temporary relief that the world offers that fade with time. Instead, God's permanent, guaranteed, and eternal peace goes beyond what our natural minds can comprehend. This eternal peace brings calm in times of uncertainty and when

faced with the most unthinkable situations, the peace that God gives is beyond our human understanding.

Second, God's peace *"Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:7). Have you ever been faced with turbulent circumstances and do not know how to respond? Have you ever felt in those moments that you have no way out? It is in these situations that we can truly appreciate God's surpassing peace. The Word of God reminds us that it is with the mind that we serve the Lord (Romans 7:25). If our minds are bombarded with cares, concerns, regrets, lost possibilities, we will be robbed of the opportunity to keep our hearts and minds on the things of the Kingdom. Therefore, when we rest in God, He gives us peace that guards our hearts and minds for whatever turbulent circumstances we may face.

Third, God's peace will release us from fear. Fear is the opposite of being in a state of peace and is one of the main strategies the adversary uses to keep us distracted. When we live in fear, we remain in a state of torment. According to 2 Timothy 1:7, *"God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."* So, as we move forward in our walk with the Lord, let us remain steadfast knowing that our God is faithful and will keep that which we have committed unto Him.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2024

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## COUNT IT ALL JOY

<sup>2</sup>*"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. <sup>4</sup>But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."* (James 1:2-4)

**W**e do not usually associate the word joy with the painful circumstances we face in our lives. These moments often leave us feeling depleted and defeated. Our initial attitude may be to feel sorry for ourselves or to blame others for



our problems. We are tempted to harbor feelings of bitterness and resentment, especially when we cannot trace the origin of our circumstances or perceive them to be unfair. Does God really expect us to have joy in bereavement and loss? Should we be smiling through sickness and other afflictions? Yet the Apostle James admonishes us to adopt a radical attitude in our trials: Consider it joy.

The word *count* or *consider* means to think or regard something based on weighing and comparing facts. So, joy is not merely a feeling, though it may involve emotions. It is an attitude that we adopt. It is a deliberate action of our will to engage our trials with God's truth. The inevitable and legitimate emotions we feel when we confront severe trials must eventually be arrested and placed under the scrutiny of God's Word. A biblical perspective of our suffering will be the only antidote to gloom and despair, as well as the only pathway to real and lasting joy. It is not that the intense negative emotions we experience when our faith is tested are now replaced by extremely positive ones. Rather, it is that we consider our trials from God's perspective, which changes our attitude toward them.

We will not be spared trials because we are God's children, they are a part of the Christian journey. In fact, it is these trials that God uses to perfect us. We must always trust that God has a sovereign plan, and He is working that plan out in our lives. The Apostle Paul reminds us, "*This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison*" (2 Corinthians 4:17 ESV). The Apostle James encourages us to embrace trials not for what they presently are, but for the outcome God will accomplish through them, "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him*" (James 1:12). Such promises are cause for great joy!

As we pray today, whatever your test or temptation may be, "count" or "consider" the joyful opportunities that await you and be thankful.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2024

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## A SONG IN THE NIGHT

*“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” (Acts 16:25 KJV)*

**B**efore Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God while being locked away in prison, they were publicly humiliated and severely beaten after doing nothing wrong. Most Christians that are familiar with the Apostle Paul and the early church know that they experienced these severe persecutions that often included being humiliated, physically abused, and even killed. Although we as Christians now may not experience that same extent of persecution, we experience our own tests and trials that can weigh us down. How did Paul and Silas after their pain and persecution still find a song to sing in the night? How can we during our most trying times ensure that we do not stop singing praises and praying to our God?

Isaiah 12:2-5 (KJV) reminds us that God is our salvation and that we can trust in Him and not be afraid because God is our strength. It continues by encouraging us to give praises to God and exalt His name by letting others know of the great things He has done. Have you ever been in a rough season, and engulfed yourself in praise and worship and noticed that you felt lighter afterwards? Or have you ever listened to someone’s testimony about the goodness of God, and it kept you going? These are the benefits that we can experience when we still pray, praise God, and declare His good works to others even when things are not going well for us. Verse 5 of Isaiah 12 emphasizes the importance of singing to the Lord and magnifying Him for the great things He has done so that all the world can know. This is what Paul and Silas were doing at midnight while imprisoned, praying and praising God so that the other prisoners could hear.

There is a reason why the Word of God tells us to still pray and sing praises unto God in our own midnights and in our own hard times and tribulations. It strengthens us and helps us to keep on going when we feel overburdened and weighed down by our problems. Whatever challenge

you are facing today, turn your heart to God in prayer and give Him a song of praise and experience what He will do for you.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024

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## ADORNED IN GLADNESS

*"Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;" (Psalm 30:11)*

**A**mid life's trials and tribulations, it is often easy to lose sight of the bigger picture. We can become consumed by the challenges of the present moment, allowing them to overshadow our hope and faith. As a result, we often become so depressed and sometimes feel that God has forgotten us. Yes, life can be filled with disappointments, heartaches, and uncertainties. We may even encounter enemies who try to destroy our peace and joy, leaving us feeling helpless and discouraged. Still, let us take solace in the words of Psalm 30:11 (NKJV), *"You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness."* In the depths of darkness, King David's words echo, revealing the wondrous truth that God can turn mourning into a joyful dance and clothe us with gladness.

It is important to remember that the feelings expressed in Psalm 30 were not just David's personal experiences but also the collective experiences of Israel. They faced numerous trials and challenges, much like we do today. However, despite the hardships, David's confidence in God's deliverance remained unshaken. Likewise, we can hold onto the assurance that no matter how hopeless our situation may seem, there is always hope in the loving arms of our Heavenly Father.

In Jeremiah 31:4, we find another beautiful promise that echoes this hope: *"Again, I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! You*

*shall again be adorned with your tambourines and shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice."* God's promise to rebuild and adorn Israel with joyful celebrations extends to all, assuring us of His gracious embrace and the gift of exultant rejoicing. Our Heavenly Father will rebuild our brokenness and lead us into a life adorned with the beauty of His presence.

Our great God works for our good, even in challenging times. Like Joseph said, what others may intend for evil, God can turn into good (Genesis 50:20). We are not called to place our hope solely in the temporary circumstances of this world. Our hope lies in something greater—something of eternal value. It is an anchor for our souls, providing us with unwavering strength and endurance. When our hearts are burdened, and the path seems unclear, we can find help in the truth that our citizenship is in heaven, where God's eternal promises await us.

Let us, therefore, fix our minds on things above, not on the short-lived things that surround us. During life's storms, God offers us His unfailing love and faithfulness. He is our refuge and strength, a constant presence in times of trouble. By seeking Him and placing our trust in His perfect timing and sovereignty, we can find peace that surpasses all understanding.

Finally, let us give heed to cultivating an eternal perspective and investing our time, talents, and resources in eternal matters, which will allow us to participate in God's redemptive work and bring His Kingdom to earth. Embrace the hope that God is building you up, restoring brokenness, and adorning you with His grace.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2024

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## GOD FINISHES WHAT HE STARTS

*“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:”* (Philippians 1:6)

Jesus was a master communication strategist, opining on both profound and yet simplistic delivery ideas about life and His Kingdom. His messages engage His audience by developing an enduring understanding of matters related to His Kingdom and sometimes life itself. In a conversation with a member of the Pharisees sect, Jesus stated that “... which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient [money] to finish it” (Luke 14:28, KJV). Jesus’ illustration within this passage shows the importance of starting and finishing strong. In a modern setting, people in the construction industry will better understand this concept, where the construction cost needs to be accurate to keep their clients happy. Sorry to say, some have even abandoned projects due to inaccurate prices. However, God has never abandoned anything He has started. From the very beginning of creation, the principle was set that God finishes what He starts. Genesis 2:2 (NIV) states, “*On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested[a] from all his work.*” God’s promises to Abraham about his descendants inheriting the promise is one example of God finishing what He started.

God desires fellowship with man, so, throughout the ages, He used types and shadows to fellowship with mankind until Jesus Christ came and the miracle of salvation was made available to all men. That is why we are redeemed, and have the promise of eternal life, due to the finished work of Calvary in our lives. In John 14:2-3 (KJV), Jesus stated that “*I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*” God’s promises to us are a sure foundation; that is why saints of old would herald the following sentiment, “God said it. I believe it. That settles it!” Rest assured that God is not going to quit or abandon the good work He started in you.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27, 2024

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## PERFECTED, ESTABLISHED, STRENGTH- ENED, SETTLED

*“But may the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”* (1 Peter 5:10, NKJV)

**D**o you ever long for the ability to help those who are in dire need? Especially the ones who are in need of food, clothes, and shelter or even those who are suffering from oppression. Some of us would have loved to have the wherewithal to help those who are plunged into financial straits or even those who suffer hunger. There are those of us who long for a world without sickness, oppression, pain, hunger, and other distresses, but our personal resources are very limited. One thing we can do however, is to pray for those who are in need. This is the position Peter found himself in when he saw the persecution of those who were suffering because of their faith. Many were beaten, imprisoned, exiled, or even killed for the sake of Christ. Although he could not physically pull them away from their oppressors, his desire and prayers were geared to one outcome, the complete deliverance from whatever they faced. He basically was saying, I know you will suffer, but once it is all done, I pray that God will see you as perfect, He will establish you, give you strength and ultimately, get you settled. His strong desire and hope for his fellow martyrs can be summed up in his prayer:

- Perfect: To be completely free from faults, defects, or blemishes.
- Establish: To be made firm or stable.
- Strengthen: To become stronger.
- Settle: To become fixed, resolute, and unmovable.

We might not be able to fully comprehend why we suffer. One thing we know is that regardless of the type of pain we experience, whether physical, mental, emotional, or psychological it will not last always. If we keep a firm grip on our faith, we will be back on our feet in no time. Biblical

suffering comes with a promise of hope and a future, and even though we must still face various storms we have the assurance that we will get through them if we use the resources that are available to us. For example, Christ being plunged into the cruelty of the cross, remained calm and patiently held on to the end result of the cross (our deliverance from sin). As a result, He was able to endure the agony associated with the cross. Romans 5:3-5 teaches us that suffering is the building block for patience. “...*But we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed...*” Hence, we can conclude that we can live in abundant hope despite sufferings if we keep in mind the promises of God for those who suffer.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2024

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## ENDURING TO THE END

*“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”* (Matthew 24:13)

**A**s I pondered the life of a soldier and all the challenges it entails, I wondered why one would choose that profession out of the hundreds of vocations that exist. The life of a soldier, especially a recruit, is hard and for some it is an absolute culture shock. The rigors begin from the first day on base. Long days and nights of exhaustive physical and mental training, many months away from family and friends, and having to adjust to the tension caused by the threat of war are some of the shocking changes for the enlistee. The recruit must quickly learn the idioms of his commander. He must submit to the directives of when to retire to bed, when to arise in the morning, when to eat, how to dress, when and how to speak. The soldier’s life is no longer his own. He is now committed to a cause bigger than himself. As he submits to the change from civilian life, he is being disciplined and prepared to endure hardship that will occur should there be war or catastrophe.

Our life's journey, especially during this time of moral depravity, can be likened to that of the natural soldier. Each day is like being on the base; our lives are not our own. We must follow the instructions of our Commander even when we do not understand the reason for the directives. The effects of society's degradation are swiftly and furiously hitting closer to home (think about our children, grandchildren, the education system, our religious freedom, our sanity, etc.). We may want to fight back on our own terms, but we must follow the directives of our Commander, Jesus Christ our mighty warrior. Fighting or protesting persecution with our strength alone will lead to us giving up, because it is impossible to win this war on our own. The war that the natural soldier prepares for can be likened to the full-on war for our souls. This fight is against principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places, (Ephesians 6:12). We must stay in the fight and endure even unto death. The Apostle Paul declared, *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain"* (Philippians 1:21). If we drop out now, our enemy would have won, and we would have lost out on our eternal heavenly privileges. What an awful picture!

Statistics show that not all soldiers join the army for patriotic reasons, but those who are committed know that strength in the face of danger is the required mandate for service. These soldiers willingly give up their lives for the sake of their country, and the same discipline is required of us. 2 Timothy 2:3 encourages us to, *"Endure hardship as a good soldier."* What is the benefit in enduring hardship when it seems easier to give in and enjoy a "civilian" life of ease? Scripture promises a greater reward that far outweighs the hardship. *"If we suffer, we shall reign with Him...."* (2 Timothy 2:12). What greater reward is there than to reign with the King of kings for all eternity! So, "soldier on" my sister, my brother. Fight on your knees. Wield the Sword of the Spirit. Boldly wear the Breastplate of Righteousness. Never leave behind the Shield of Faith or the Helmet of Salvation. Soon we will hear our Commander say, *"Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth"* (Revelation 3:10 ESV).



## COMFORT FOR THE TROUBLED HEART

*“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” (John 14:1 KJV)*

**S**ometimes, terror strikes you like a storm, calamity comes like a whirlwind, and distress and anguish are upon you (Proverbs 1:27 ESV). Adversity is not always a consequence of sin. We can be walking in wisdom, instruction, and the fear of God and still trouble finds us. Yet we must recognize that, *“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1). In Psalm 68:3, David joyfully expressed, *“But let the righteous be glad... yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.”* But in another season of his life, we see him in Psalm 25:16-17 crying out, *“...I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring me out of my distresses.”* Walking with the Lord does not mean that we will always be rejoicing. But irrespective of the stage on our journey, we must know where our help comes from. David knew this when he said in Psalm 25:15, *“Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.”*

In times of intense disappointment and discouragement we should not fall into resentment or disobedience. We should instead draw closer to God. We should feel confident that God is ever-present and has a destined purpose for us. When our hearts become troubled, we have the assurance of Jesus' promise, *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor), to be with you forever”* (John 14:16 AMP). Through salvation and personal relationship with Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth who provides comfort. This comfort supersedes human logic or emotion and goes beyond our limitations. So, if you ever feel so overwhelmed that you can't find the words to pray, just groan. For when we are weak, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us and takes our deep groanings and translates them into the mind of God (Romans 8:26).

It is through faith in the integrity and immutability of God's Word and God's character that we have the guarantee of His eternal comfort. This is a promise that we should not keep to ourselves. For not only does God comfort us, but He equips us to comfort others. II Corinthians 1:4 tells us that God, "*comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*" When we have proved God for ourselves, we must testify to others. We must share the revelation that the calamities of this life are only temporary, and that in Christ Jesus we have eternal life and rest.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2024

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## SEEING THE UNSEEN

*"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."* (2 Corinthians 4:17-18 NKJV)

**W**hen our minds are fixed with eternity in view, our troubles and trials in this world produce for us an eternal glory that greatly outweighs them. As the Apostle Paul encouraged the Christians in Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:17), as well as those in Rome (Romans 8:18), these sufferings, when seen through the lens of an eternal perspective, are considered light, momentary afflictions in comparison to the glory of eternal realities. To live our lives focused on the unseen we must remind ourselves of what Scripture teaches us about eternity. According to Randy Alcorn, "God tells us about our eternal home in His Word, not so we can shrug our shoulders and remain ignorant, but because He wants us to anticipate what awaits us...and because it has the power to transform the way we live today."<sup>1</sup>

We have the assurance from Scripture that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us, (John 14:2-3). We also learn from the Bible that no eye has seen, nor ear has heard, or no mind can conceive what God has prepared for those who love Him, (Isaiah 64:4, 1 Corinthians 2:9). Considering these facts, the Apostle Paul had a greater regard for the invisible, making eternal perspectives the main objective of his focus and governed his conduct accordingly.

You may ask, “How can I see the unseen?” It is seen through faith. Faith is the evidence of things not seen, (Hebrews 11:1). In other words, faith is the conviction of unseen actualities. Noah exercised that level of faith when warned by God of things not yet seen. That faith moved him with godly fear to prepare an ark for the saving of his family, (Hebrews 11:7). The same can be said of the blind man named Bartimaeus, who though he had never physically seen Jesus or eye witnessed any of His miracles, placed his trust in Him. Acting on that unseen evidence, brought him instant healing, (Mark 10:46-56).

As we pray and consecrate ourselves today, do not let your heart be troubled, nor do not lose hope, for “*We walk by faith and not by sight,*” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Knowing that eternal rewards are awaiting those of us who persevere in the Lord, the “troubles” we see in this life are relatively inconsequential when measured against the unseen, everlasting realities that are awaiting us.

<sup>1</sup>Alcorn, Randy. Seeing the Unseen. Expanded Edition. 2017

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2024

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## THE OVERCOMERS REWARD

*“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”* (Revelation 3:21 KJV)

**T**oday’s focus verse clearly states that only the one who overcomes will have the exclusive privilege of sitting with Jesus in His throne. This promise is not for the one who gives up or gives in; it is not for the fearful and unbelieving. One must stay in the fight and overcome. An athlete preparing for a race or a student preparing for an examination must overcome the obstacles of fatigue, delayed gratification, and self-defeating thoughts to prepare for the challenge ahead. The same is true for us if we are to enjoy the promises of God both now and in the life to come.

While the athlete and the student may be able to see their rewards before they complete the challenge, we must wait for our rewards in faith, knowing that God is not slack concerning His promises. 1 Corinthians 2:9 tells us, *“...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”* The prize that awaits us is unimaginable. All the great minds of this world combined cannot paint an accurate portrait of what’s coming because it has not *“entered into the heart of man.”*

The Apostle Paul states in 2 Timothy 4:8 that a crown of righteousness awaits him and others who are looking forward to Jesus’ return. Revelation 21:4 assures us that God shall remove from us forever all tears, death, sorrow, and pain. Let us pause and contemplate this promise. Can you imagine life where pain, sorrow, tears, and death are permanently non-existent? Death is one of the most painful realities of life but there is coming a day when death will be no more! And how about this promise in our focus verse, *“...Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne...”* Have you ever sat in a throne? Can you picture what it will feel like sitting with our Creator in His throne? Can you envision the joy

of feasting from the tree of life? All these promises and many more are in plain sight, yet no mind can imagine what is in store for us! Our limited minds would explode if we could truly comprehend our impending rewards.

Be encouraged. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus! “Trouble will be no more, on the other shore; peace and rest, home at last, when we get over there – when we get over there.” (Hezekiah Walker & The Love Fellowship Choir, 2002)



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