

Daily God Walk
The Christ Walk

Words

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the New
International Version (NIV). All other translations
used will be credited using these abbreviations:

(KJV) – King James Version

(NKJV) – New King James Version

(TLB) – The Living Bible

(TM) – The Message

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Day One

When God Speaks Things Happen

Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities... Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave. - Psalm 107:17-20

Psalm 107 is a call to the people to offer praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for his bountiful mercy. It begins, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever," and concludes with, "Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord" (v43).

The message of the psalmist is that as we go through life we tend to go our own way and our way usually ends in distress. When we find ourselves in distress we call upon the Lord, and the amazing thing is that he responds to us with love and mercy.

The psalmist first tells the plight of a people wandering in the desert (v4-9) . They were lost, hungry and thirsty, "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress."

He next writes of those who sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains (v10-16). "Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble and he saved them from their distress" (v13).

Then in our text for today he speaks of some who foolishly followed their own ways and fell into sin. Does that sound familiar? We should all be able to identify with that. We can also identify with verse 19, “Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.”

How did he deliver them? “He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.” When God speaks things happen. Today God is just waiting for us to cry out to him in the midst of our maladies so he can send forth his word and deliver us.

Prayer: Lord, first, give me grace not to falter, but if I do slip, give me the humility to cry out to you; and when I do cry out, send forth your word to deliver me. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When God speaks things happen. Today God is just waiting for us to cry out to him in the midst of our maladies so he can send forth his word and deliver us.

Affirmation: I will not wait until times of trouble to call upon the Lord. I will call upon him daily and trust him for all of my needs.

Reflection: In Psalm 107 there are three groups of people. Those who wandered in the wilderness (v4-9); Those in darkness and suffering (v10-16); and those who foolishly chose to go their own way (v17-20). What are the differences between these groups, what has caused their dire circumstances and what do they all have in common?

Day Two

God Sends His Word

He sends his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly... He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws. Praise the Lord.

- Psalm 147:15-20

Many years ago I was moved by the last five psalms. Each one begins with an exhortation to “Praise the Lord;” and each one ends with an exhortation to “Praise the Lord.” The point seems to be that believers are to always be prepared to praise the Lord.

This particular psalm was written after the people had returned from their exile to Babylon. In another psalm the people lamented that they had hung their harps in the trees and could no longer sing because of their exile to Babylon, but in this psalm they are offering praise to God for being allowed to return to their homeland.

They had endured being separated from their promised land, but now they have returned. Now they declare, “The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (v2). They had lost much but now the Lord was restoring them.

Have you been there? Has there been a time when you felt like everything was done and you no longer

had hope for the blessings of the Lord? I think we've all been there, but thank God we don't have to stay there.

God sends his word to men. The Hebrew word here translated "command" also means speech or word. We could read v15, "He sends his word," or we could paraphrase, "He makes a speech."

What is this speech God has made? He has revealed his will and he has given great peace and joy to those of us who have heard his word and responded in faith.

Prayer: Lord, help me to always be conscious of the results of not following you and to be grateful for the grace of being restored to fellowship with you. Grant me the grace to hear and obey your word. In Jesus name.

Message: God sends his word to reveal his will and he has given great peace and joy to those of us who have heard his word and responded in faith.

Affirmation: I rest in the Lord because his word has given me hope. He spoke, I heard, and now I trust.

Reflection: In the history of Israel there were times of great joy, and there were times of great trial. The joy came when they were following God faithfully and the trials came when they chose to follow their own way. However, God has always been faithful to reveal himself to all who would humble themselves and call upon his name.

Day Three

*God's Word Accomplishes
His Purposes*

As the rain and the snow come from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. – Isaiah 55:10-11

This slice of hope cut from the fabric of prophecy is affirming God's commitment to fulfill his purposes through the power of his word.

This chapter begins with offering hope to the thirsty and the hungry: "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!" He is offering hope to those who have lost hope.

The Lord speaks through the writing of Isaiah saying, "Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live" (v2-3). Isaiah uses the words, "listen," and "hear," telling us that the Lord is speaking comfort and hope to those who will respond to his love.

He offers hope to those who have fallen into behaviors that do not give life. Isaiah writes in verses 6-7, "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way

and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.” These are words of hope.

When we listen to the words of God, and hear the message of hope he is offering, then the power of his words is released in us and he accomplishes his purposes. God has spoken hope and has called all of us frail and failing humans to turn from our own ways and call upon him.

He has promised that he will release the power of his words to those who will hear and believe.

Prayer: Lord, I sometimes find it hard to hear your words over the boasting of my own ego. Grant me the grace to listen and to hear your word that your power might be released in me. Amen.

Message: Jesus tells us that the Father has put all things under his power, yet, when it was time, he submitted that power to become servant of all. From all power to servant of all in what was more than a gesture, but what was in fact an example of the way all believers should live.

Affirmation: I have made the choice to follow the example of Christ and become a servant to all.

Reflection: Have you wondered how Jesus could actually be servant of all considering who he was? If you were to compare the leadership model of Jesus to what is common among leaders today what similarities would you see? What are the differences you would notice?

Day Four

Christ Speaks the Words of God

The Lord said to me: “What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.

- Deuteronomy 18:17-19

By the time that Jesus was born the Jewish teachers attributed this prophecy to the Messiah who would come to deliver Israel and establish God’s kingdom on earth.

As God revealed his will to man a pattern of faith began to appear. First he established priests to maintain the legal and ceremonial aspects of their faith. Then he established the prophets as those who would bring up to the minute words of instruction and inspiration to the people.

It was the job of the prophet to be in touch with God and not to be influenced by the political arena, or even by the priests. They were a group set apart to minister the word of God to the people. Jesus was just such a prophet.

We know that Jesus was (and is) much more than a prophet, but we must also recognize that he was a prophet. At one point Jesus declared, “These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me” (John 15:24).

When Christ spoke it was the voice of God himself declaring his truth to those who listen and hear. God chose a time and a place to reveal himself to mankind in the form of a man, and that man was Jesus the one we call Christ.

All of the hope that God has in mankind was carried in the person of Jesus. All that he spoke was a revelation of the will and purposes of God. In fact in John 6:63 Jesus says, "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." God's will for all of mankind is life abundant (John 3:16, 10:10).

Prayer: I thank you Lord for sending your Word to us in the person of Jesus, the Christ. My prayer is that the words he spoke will continue to be heard and that the lives of men, women and children will continue to be changed by them. Amen.

Message: All of the hope that God has in mankind was carried in the person of Jesus. All that he spoke was a revelation of the will and purposes of God.

Affirmation: The words Jesus spoke are the words of God. I trust his words and my faith is strengthened because his words are Spirit and they are life.

Reflection: While on earth Jesus was both priest and prophet. As priest he stood between God and man. As prophet he speaks the words of God. What are the ways Jesus was different from the priests and the prophets who came before him? In what ways was he the same?

Day Five

Hearing and Believing
His Word Produces Life

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe. - John 6:63-64

There are two words which epitomizes the greatest hindrance to faith. Those words are, "What if?" What if it isn't really true? What if I try it and it doesn't work? What if God doesn't accept me? I think all of us have gone through a process of using the "What if" questions, but thankfully, most of us have gotten past those nagging fears.

All of the what if questions come from our human side, the side of us that demands reason and logic. These questions come from the side of us that demands there be a bridge in front of us before we step out. In short, the source of these questions is not faith but fear, and fear comes from the limitations of the human condition.

Jesus is telling us faith demands that we step out of the region of human reason and step into the realm of the Spirit. Faith demands that we see things through the eternal perspective rather than from the temporal, human perspective. The way Jesus said it was, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing."

His words call us beyond human ability and they ask us to disregard the human condition. He is calling us to be born of the Spirit so that the power of his words, which are life, will be manifest in us and through us.

We read disappointment in his words as he says, "Yet there are some of you who do not believe." I am afraid that is true yet today. There are sincere people who are more moved by fear than by faith and they still demand that the bridge be complete before them before they take the first step.

Are you ready to take a step of faith, even when you don't see a bridge before you? That's a big question.

Prayer: Lord, It is only human to want the bridge built before we step out, so grant me the grace of trusting that what you have said is more real than what I fear. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: The words of Jesus call us beyond human ability and they ask us to disregard the human condition. He is calling us to be born of the Spirit so that the power of his words, which are life, will be manifest in us and through us.

Affirmation: I have heard his words and have believed what he taught and I have been born into his family. I am born of the Spirit and his words, the words of life, are manifest in and through me.

Reflection: This devotion brings up the "What if" question. Have you been challenged by the fact that much of what Jesus taught is beyond human reason? Is it human reason to turn the other cheek and to love our enemies? Have you ever questioned, "What if this is not all true?" The Scripture text for this devotion gives good reason to hear his words.

Day Six

His Words Build A Strong Foundation

Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. - Matthew 7:24-25

When I read this passage I am reminded of the old hymn, "My Hope Is Built." In 1834 Edward Mote felt moved to write a hymn and as he walked to visit a friend the words began to come to him, "On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand." That's what Jesus promised.

This passage only gives half of the story. Jesus went on to say, "But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash" (v26-27).

When we build our life on the solid truth of Christ and the words of instruction he left us we will have a solid foundation for a fruitful life. When we do not listen carefully and choose to follow our own way in building a life without the wisdom of his counsel, we build on ground that is unsure.

There is a person very dear to me who has been trying everything the world has to offer for years, yet

he is continually in difficult times. I have talked to him about the way of Christ and he has repeatedly told me he just doesn't believe it, yet he continues to follow a path which is destroying his life.

This man cannot see that he is building on sinking sand and he will never have a secure life because he doesn't have a foundation which will stand against the storms of life. Until he comes to the Rock he will not have a secure life.

Examine your life. Are you building your life on truths with eternal value or are you attempting to have security in the temporal things of this world?

Prayer: Here I am again Lord, search my heart so that I may be sure that my hope is in the Rock Christ Jesus. Amen.

Message: When we build our life on the solid truth of Christ and the words of instruction he left us we will have a solid foundation for a fruitful life.

Affirmation: On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. I am secure now and for eternity because my life is built on the words of Christ.

Reflection: There are some who say they can't live by the words of Christ because it is just too hard. What do you think makes it hard for some people to live the Christ life while others seem to easily live that life?

Day Seven

When His Words Remain In Us

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing... If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. - John 15:5-8

I have a friend who has the most remarkable testimony of being born again that I have known. He and his whole family had a deadly disease. He was deeply involved in illegal activities and was addicted to drugs. Then he surrendered his life to Jesus and everything changed.

His life and the lives of his wife and children were radically affected by Christ. They were in the vine. Then came a great surprise. He got a job that exposed him to a lot of people and he began to change.

This person who had not only been freed from sin and addictions but who had been healed from a disease which carried a death sentence, and he was letting it all slip through his fingers as he began to dabble in the world again.

He left his family was again involved with drugs and other sins. He disconnected himself from the vine. He severed himself from the life God had given him.

This tragic story is repeated time and again by people who begin to look back to the world and begin to listen to the words of the enemy as he says

to them, “Go ahead, just a little bit of fun isn’t going to hurt you.” They listen to wrong words.

Jesus said, “If my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you.” The world speaks enticing words offering what it can’t deliver. Jesus always delivers on his word.

Jesus has proven over and over that his words are true and if we continue in the vine, and we continue to listen to his words, then our desire will be for him and his righteousness and all that we desire and ask of him will be given to us.

Prayer: Lord, help me to always stay in the vine and listen to your words. Help to not listen to the enticing words of evil which are trying to draw me away from your abundant life into a life of false hopes and lying promises. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Jesus has proven over and over that his words are true and if we continue in the vine, and we continue to listen to his words, then our desire will be for him and his righteousness and all that we desire and ask of him will be given to us.

Affirmation: While I am in the vine God's favor rests upon me and he grants my hearts desire. That is why I remain in the vine.

Reflection: When Jesus instructed his disciples to stay in the vine he was telling them to continue in obedience to the words he was speaking. How does this passage relate to Joshua 1:8? There is a principle in both of these passages relating to the effect of abiding in the words of the Lord. What is that principle?

Day Eight

*We Are Held Accountable
To Our Words*

Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks... I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.

- Matthew 12:34-37

That isn't a pleasant thought. I don't know about you but I have spoken many careless words in my life and I'm not sure I want to face them all at once. Do you think Jesus meant that we would literally face all of our words on the day of judgment?

To get perspective we need to look at the verses that precede these. He is talking about cause and effect; "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good." He then goes on to say that those he is addressing are like vipers with very little good coming out of their mouth and further states, "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."

Jesus seems to be saying that the attitude of our heart will determine what and how we speak. He follows verse 34 with, "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him." Jesus is saying that the heart of the evil person will spew out words that are not conducive to life.

In that context we read that we will be acquitted, or as KJV reads, “justified,” or condemned by our words. It is not as much the words themselves but the good or the evil in us prompting the words which is going to be judged.

In view of this passage it would be good for us to not only be careful of the words we use but to also look inside ourselves to see what is causing us to use the words we use. If our words are peace and blessing then we have the right motivation, but if they are harsh, disrupting and judging, then we may need an attitude adjustment.

Prayer: Lord, I too often find myself speaking words that do not edify and lift others up. Help me deal with my inner person so that I will have words of grace. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: It would be good for us to not only be careful of the words we use but to also look inside ourselves to see what is causing us to use the words we use. If our words are peace and blessing then we have the right motivation, but if they are harsh, disrupting and judging, then we may need an attitude adjustment.

Affirmation: I constantly examine my heart to be sure that what I harbor there is true, just, lovely and good so that the words I speak will be true, just, lovely and good.

Reflection: Some people I know cannot bring up a subject in conversation without pointing out the negatives. I have watched people who have become experts at finding negative things to talk about and not a one of them seems to be a happy person. How can you make your words count for good?

Day Nine

Be Slow to Speak

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. - James 1:19-20

We've all known people who were "quick to fly off the handle." They are not comfortable to be around because you don't know when something is going to set them off.

James is giving us three keys to controlling our anger; be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath.

What does it mean to be swift to hear? It means to listen carefully. Sometimes we can quickly take offense at a sentence we half heard or even of a thought that was not expressed adequately. Listen carefully and process what is meant by what is said.

Being slow to speak indicates that we don't just respond to what "we hear" but to what is meant by the one talking. To do that we have to think through our response. Sometimes the best response is to get clarification before we respond.

The third key is simply to keep a lid on your anger. Don't let others control you by being able to manipulate you into becoming angry and doing something that will embarrass you.

All of this comes from humbly accepting the word God has planted in us. When we are living in the Spirit it is his word that flows from us when we speak. When we will process a word or a thought we have heard before we respond, the word of the Spirit in us will be able to respond with his word.

We must keep in mind that the words we speak reflect what we have in our hearts. We are wise to keep our hearts submitted to the Spirit so that the words we speak are words of the Spirit. Be slow to speak so your words will be Spirit words.

Prayer: Lord, I tend to respond too quickly to a perceived wrong. Grant me the grace to be a careful listener and to be even more careful in what I speak. In your name, Amen.

Message: When we are living in the Spirit it is his word that flows from us when we speak. When we will process a word or a thought we have heard before we respond, the word of the Spirit in us will be able to respond with his word.

Affirmation: I have learned to think before I speak. I practice two principles from proverbs when I speak: "A soft answer turns away anger;" "Where there is no wood the fire goes out."

Reflection: We know that the words we speak, particularly in response to what others have said or done, come from our heart. How are we going to be able to keep a bridle on our tongue? How do we keep from speaking things that are not words of peace?

Day Ten

Speaking Power Filled Words

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest in men's wisdom, but on God's power. - 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

There is power in the spoken word to stimulate our intellect and to motivate us to action, but are mere words of men able to effect a change in the hearts of men? Can mans words alone affect the eternal destiny of other men?

In this passage Paul is telling the church at Corinth that he did not come to impress them with oratory but reveal to them the power of God.

There is a story of a conference where two men were scheduled to speak on the 23rd Psalm. The first to speak was a young man, fresh out of seminary. Stepping to pulpit with dignity, and not a little pride, he delivered an oratorical masterpiece. When he was finished the crowd erupted in applause.

The second man to speak, a pastor who had been through many struggles in his ministry, moved slowly to the pulpit and with bowed head he began

to speak on the 23rd Psalm. With cracking voice he spoke of the Shepherd who had led him to green pastures and through the valley of the shadow of death. When he was finished the audience was hushed as each one pulled their handkerchief to wipe their eyes.

“What was the difference in the two men,” someone asked. The answer came; the first knew the Shepherds Psalm and the second knew the Shepherd of the Psalm.

Prayer: Lord, help me to speak your word in such a way that people are more impressed with your power than my oratory.

Message: There is power in the spoken word to stimulate our intellect and to motivate us to action, but mere words of men are not able to effect a change in the hearts of men. Only Spirit filled words can do that.

Affirmation: I seek God to continually be filled with His Spirit so that the words of my witness will be driven by Holy Spirit power and will have an effect on those who hear the witness.

Reflection: Education is a necessary component to an effective ministry, but there is no magic in anointing that comes upon a person when they graduate seminary. God's anointing and Holy Spirit power come to those who are called and who are humbly committed to living the Spirit filled life and expressing Holy Spirit power in their ministry.

Day Eleven

*A Time to Be Quiet and
a Time to Shout*

Joshua had commanded the people, “Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!”

- Joshua 6:10

I once heard a preacher say that the greatest miracle of the march around Jericho was that for seven days no one said a word! I think he was making a facetious statement, but there is some truth to the idea.

Think about it. We don't know how many soldiers there were who marched around the Jericho, but they undoubtedly numbered in the tens of thousands. For six days they marched with no one taunting the enemy and no loud noises. Then on the sixth day they marched around the wall seven times. Through six times around the wall there were no loud noises, but on the seventh time around all heaven broke loose.

This story tells us that there is a time to be silent, and there is a time to shout victoriously. The challenge is to know the difference. When are we silent, and when do we shout?

There are times when we are so moved by the awesome presence of God that we just silently bask in his love, and there are other times when we are

so moved by the Spirit that we feel like leaping high and shouting loud. Both of those are good.

In the case of Joshua and the troops at Jericho it was not so much whether there was noise as it was being obedient to the call of God. We should always be aware of God's guidance and what he is telling us by his Spirit.

We can be in the Spirit and be silent; we can be in the Spirit and shout - but the important thing is to be in the Spirit. In Ecclesiastes 3 the writer tells us that there is a time for all things. In verse seven he writes, "A time to be silent and a time to speak." Let's be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and respond appropriately, whether it is silence or a shout.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the wisdom to speak when I should, be silent when I should, and to shout when I should; and give me the grace to discern your will in those things. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We can be in the Spirit and be silent; we can be in the Spirit and shout - but the important thing is to be in the Spirit. In Ecclesiastes 3 the writer tells us that there is a time for all things. In verse seven he writes, "A time to be silent and a time to speak."

Affirmation: There are times I am very quiet in the presence of God, and there are times I feel to rejoice loudly. My prayer is to be able to discern when each is appropriate.

Reflection: Some have practically idolized a quiet worship, and others have practically idolized loud and boisterous worship. Can both of those worship styles be from God? How do we determine the appropriate way to respond to the Spirit of God?

Day Twelve

Words of Grace

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

- Colossians 4:5-6

When Jesus was about to leave earth and return to heaven he gave the instruction that has come to be known as the "Great Commission." There were several elements to that instruction, but the core of it is this: "Go and make disciples of all nations."

Believers are still yoked with the responsibility of making disciples of all nations. We are told to be witnesses, and Mark's record orders, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." We have done a fairly good job of taking the gospel to all creation, particularly since the advent of satellite TV and the internet, but have we done a good job of making disciples of all nations?

If we consider that approximately two billion people claim to be "Christian," at least in a nominal sense, then we must realize that five billion people remain who are not Christian. That means that at least 40 times more people live today as non-Christian than there were during the times of the early church.

I know there are many factors that have caused this imbalance, but the truth is we have not made disciples of all nations. I think Paul may have hit

upon something in this passage that will give us some insight as to our need.

Paul writes; "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders." I fear we have not always been wise in our interaction with the world. Gandhi was impressed with the teachings of Christ and is credited as once saying, "I would have become a Christian if I had ever found one."

It is time for us to look at the way we communicate with those who are not in faith. Is our witness full of grace, seasoned with love? Try the witness of love and see what God will do.

Prayer: Lord, I need the Holy Spirit to fill me with grace so that my witness to the world will be seen as an expression of your love toward them. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: It is time for us to look at the way we communicate with those who are not in faith. Is our witness full of grace, seasoned with love? Try the witness of love and see what God will do.

Affirmation: The Holy Spirit is equipping me to be a witness of God's love and grace. I will share the opportunity offered by Christ to know the life and peace of God.

Reflection: We are still under the mandate given by Christ to make disciples of all nations. That means every day and in every situation, when we are with people who claim faith in Christ, we are to be guiding them into a consistent faith walk. Give some thought to how you can do that.

Day Thirteen

The Power of Pleasant Words

A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction. Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. - Proverbs 16:23-24

Pleasant words have healing and restorative power. Many broken relationships have been restored because someone chose to use pleasant words instead of accusing words. And, many relationships remain broken because no one in the relationship is willing to break the cycle of angry words and speak pleasantly.

There is another proverb which says, "A soft answer turns away wrath." When my boys were young and having angry words with each other I would quote that proverb to them. It didn't work to calm them down very often, but it did give them something to think about.

In both business and ministry I have many times been faced with someone whose anger had pushed them beyond the bounds of reason. I have found that when I respond in like manner to them it is like pouring gasoline on a fire; the whole thing blows up in my face. I have also found that when I softly ask about the circumstances which caused their anger we can begin to solve the issue.

Have you ever been a little discouraged, or maybe even a little depressed, and someone you respect sits

beside you and begins to speak pleasant, encouraging words to you? Of course, we all have. How did that feel to you? If you are like the rest of us you probably felt like you had tasted honey and you began to feel healing in your inner person.

I would like to challenge you to be alert to people around you who are having a bad day and make the effort to offer them pleasant words. As the proverb says, "A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction." Speak encouraging words of hope and grace and you will find yourself surrounded with people who receive healing grace from your words.

Prayer: Father, it isn't always easy to speak pleasant words to irritating people. Grant me the grace to not respond to their words but to respond to their need for love. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: As the proverb says, "A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction." Speak encouraging words of hope and grace and you will find yourself surrounded with people who receive healing grace from your words.

Affirmation: When speaking to others I try to make my words encouraging filled with hope and grace salted with the offer of opportunity.

Reflection: The proverb reads, "A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction." It seems to be implying that our words should be instructing and encouraging rather than judging and condemning. Remember a time that you felt a failure and alone when someone came along beside you and offered encouraging words. Purpose to be that someone for others.

Day Fourteen

Speaking With an Instructed Tongue

The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. - Isaiah 50:4

Wouldn't it be good if we could say, "The Lord has given me an instructed tongue?" How would we talk, and what would we say if every morning when we awakened we had fresh words from God to speak through the day?

I am convinced that there are some among us who have that blessing. It isn't that when they awaken there is a typed set of instructions for the day setting there on their nightstand, but it can be just that simple.

When the first thought we have upon awakening from our slumber is, "What would the Lord have me do today and what would he have me say?" we would probably get that word. It has been my practice for many years to spend time with the Lord in the early morning seeking for guidance, submitting petitions and making intercession.

If we are truly aware that, we will be held accountable for every word we speak, just as Jesus said, we will be more careful about the words which come from our mouth. The only way to be sure of the value of our words is if they are given us by God himself. Oh, I'm not talking about exactly every

word, but I am talking about the kind of words we use and the tone we use.

A tongue that is instructed, or trained, to speak the words of God will have the power to sustain the weary. An instructed tongue will speak words of life and abundance.

It might be time to examine the words which come from our own mouth to see if they are words of encouragement and unity or words that discourage and divide.

Make a purpose to awaken every morning with the thought in mind, "What would the Lord have me speak today?" That thought will lead you to seek him for his instruction.

Prayer: Lord, my tongue needs your instruction. Grant me discipline to seek you daily for your instruction. Amen.

Message: Jesus tells us that the Father has put all things under his power, yet, when it was time, he submitted that power to become servant of all. From all power to servant of all in what was more than a gesture, but what was in fact an example of the way all believers should live.

Affirmation: I have made the choice to follow the example of Christ and become a servant to all.

Reflection: Have you wondered how Jesus could actually be servant of all considering who he was? If you were to compare the leadership model of Jesus to what is common among leaders today what similarities would you see? What are the differences you would notice?

Day Fifteen

Speak Only Words of Truth

Whatever is true... think on these things.

- Philippians 4:8

These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other and render true and sound judgment in your courts. - Zechariah 8:16

In Philippians 4:8 Paul gives us a guide as to how we will speak words that are fitting and proper. He tells us to find true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy things to think about. When we think about such things then those will be the things we talk about.

The Daily God Walk will be focusing upon one of those objects of thought each day for the next seven days.

Our Scripture passage for today is part of prophecy spoken by the prophet Zechariah. It is prophecy of restoration for the people of Israel and Judah.

Zechariah begins this prophesy with, "Again the word of the Lord Almighty came to me. This is what the Lord almighty says: 'I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her.' This is what the Lord says: 'I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and mountains of the Lord Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain.'"

The Lord is promising the Jewish people a time of peace and prosperity, but it all seems to hinge upon them loving truth. As the people turned back to God, God turned back to them and the test on their sincerity was their ability to respond to God with honesty and integrity as well as to deal with each other truthfully.

We are constantly being offered evil reports, but we are told not to listen to such things. There are many true things to think about. It is true that God loves all people; it is true that God loves those who call upon his name; it is true that nothing you or I have done could ever cause God to cease loving us. These things are true - think upon them and you will speak only true things.

Prayer: Father, help me to think on things that are true so that the words I speak will be truth. Grant me the grace of having a life that is a reflection of your truth. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: There are many true things to think about. It is true that God loves all people; it is true that God loves those who call upon his name; it is true that nothing you or I have done could ever cause God to cease loving us. These things are true - think upon them and you will speak only true things.

Affirmation: I choose to think on things that are true and that reflect the grace God has shown to myself and to others who come to him.

Reflection: There are many things that are true, but not all things are admirable and praiseworthy. Choose to think about those truths which are worthy of praise.

Day 16

Speak Only of Noble Things

Whatever is noble... think on these things.

- Philippians 4:8

The scoundrel's methods are wicked, he makes up evil schemes to destroy the poor with lies, even when the plea of the need is just. But the noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands. - Isaiah 32:7-8

We don't often use the word "noble" in our conversations any more and consequently we are losing the richness of its meaning. The Greek word from which noble is translated is *semnos* which means august, venerable, honest, honorable or noble.

It is ironic that two of the words in the definition of *semnos* are probably used less frequently than noble. They are august and venerable. August speaks of majestic dignity or grandeur. Venerable speaks of outstanding character; those who are of such character that they would never be thought of as being anything less than "noble."

In this passage Isaiah is contrasting the words and deeds of the evil person with the deeds of the noble person. The evil person speaks lies with the intention of hurting others to get an advantage over them; but the noble person makes plans worthy of grandeur.

"The noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands." What a testimony. A person who thinks noble thoughts will not only speak noble words but will also make noble plans and his deeds will be noble.

I have found that it is all too easy to get into the habit of talking about all that is wrong in the world today. The government, politicians, the economy; all of these provide ample opportunity for negative words to be spoken, but the person of noble character will speak words of honor and will encourage character while speaking noble thoughts and concepts.

Make a commitment to yourself today that you will focus on speaking of noble things and begin to make noble plans so that you will be remembered by your noble deeds.

Prayer: Lord, it is always so easy to talk about the evil of the world around us, but grant me the grace to discipline my mind by thinking noble thoughts and speaking noble words. I ask in your name. Amen.

Message: Make a commitment to yourself today that you will focus on speaking of noble things. Begin to make noble plans and you will be remembered by your noble deeds.

Affirmation: I have purposed to search those things that are noble to be my food for thought.

Reflection: There is so much exposure to things that are not noble we wonder how we can keep our thoughts on things noble. Think on some ways that you can think on things noble and speak noble thoughts.

Day Seventeen

Speak and Think About Just Things

Whatsoever is just... think on these things.

- Philippians 4:8

This is what the Lord says: "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed." - Isaiah 56:1

I had a tough time deciding on what passage to include in this devotion that would convey the idea Paul was trying to convey. I concluded that the Isaiah passage presented the entire concept that what is just is also the right thing to do, however, there are a couple of other verses that are more specific about justice.

Deuteronomy links justice to continuing in the blessing God gives: "Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the Lord your God is giving you" (16:20).

David, in Psalm 82, links justice to defending the rights of the poor and oppressed: "Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed" (verse3).

In Proverbs 21:3 we are given the value of doing what is just and right: "To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice."

So then, what is the just and right thing to do? What are words we should use that convey the concept of justice and righteousness?

These passages seem to be saying that justice is treating all people fairly, even those who do not have the ability to return that grace. We are to give particular attention to the weak, poor and fatherless among us.

To do that we are going to have to change the way we think about people who appear less than us, or are limited in their social skills. We are also going to have to change the way we speak about others.

Speak words of compassion about the homeless, the single mother, and others who struggle with issues of life, and you will soon discover that you are beginning to think compassionate thoughts about them.

Prayer: Lord, help me to speak words of compassion and think just thoughts about others. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Justice demands we treat all people fairly. To do that we are going to have to change the way we think about people who appear less than us, or are limited in their social skills. We are also going to have to change the way we speak about others.

Affirmation: My thoughts are on things that are just. I think of ways that I might treat others justly, especially those who are in need.

Reflection: Thinking on things that are just requires us to have decided just what things are just. In a recent call to war a political leader called it "a just war." What is a just war? How can any war be just? Think on these things.

Day Eighteen

Only Speak of Pure Things

Whatever is pure... think on these things.

- Philippians 4:8

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. - Psalm 119:9

You are already clean (or pure) because of the word I have spoken to you. - John 15:3

A philosophy that I have ascribed to for many years is that the attitudes of our heart have gotten there over a period of time. What I mean by that is we have heard an attitude expressed, then we repeated that attitude, and over a period of time we have expressed that attitude in our words until finally it became a part of who we are. It became firmly established in our hearts.

For many of us a good part of our attitudes about others has not been pure. There are groups of people that we have formed attitudes about that may not be accurate. There are food groups that we have formed an attitude about that may not be accurate. And, not surprisingly, there are political parties that we have formed attitudes about which may not be accurate.

I think you can see my point. The words we hear and speak form the opinions and attitudes we hold. That is why we must be careful to only speak and think things that are pure, or as one translations renders this word, "holy."

When we speak words which convey a pure heart, and a pure conversation, we are projecting an attitude that will produce pure results. In one passage Apostle Paul writes, "To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted" (Titus 1:16).

We should examine our words and thoughts in light of what Paul wrote. Are my thoughts about others pure? Are my words about others pure? I would challenge you today to begin thinking only pure thoughts and speaking only words which convey those thoughts.

Prayer: Lord, I tend to think thoughts about others that are not pure thoughts. Grant me a heart that is pure so that the thoughts I think and the words I speak will be pure. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: We should examine our words and thoughts in light of what Paul wrote. Are my thoughts about others pure? Are my words about others pure? I would challenge you today to begin thinking only pure thoughts and speaking only words which convey those thoughts.

Affirmation: I am committed to thinking pure thoughts so that my words and deeds will be pure.

Reflection: It's time for a "pure thoughts" check. For just a moment give some thoughts to a few ideas or things. As you look at each of them - what is your reaction? Your reaction is a reflection of what you have been thinking of them.

Day Nineteen

Only Speak of Lovely Things

Whatever is lovely... Think on these things.

- Philippians 4:8

I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. - 1 Corinthians 1:10

We have all heard the expression, "Take time to smell the roses," and it appears that Paul's admonition to think on lovely things carries the same fragrance. The word translated "lovely" also means pleasant, or agreeable and these words produce opportunity for peace and unity.

Have you ever been in a tense situation when all at once someone began to interject pleasant, agreeable words into the conversation? Just a few words can change the atmosphere from contentious to pleasant.

In the Corinthian text Paul is addressing the divisions within the local church. It appears that there was much bickering over unimportant issues and it was affecting the unity of the body.

Another translation of this verse reads, "I urge and entreat you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in perfect harmony and full agreement in what you say" (AMP). In this translation we can more clearly see that Paul is

instructing them to speak agreeable pleasant, lovely things.

It would be good for us, particularly in a tense situation, to ask ourselves the question, "Will my words sound pleasant, or lovely, or will they seem contentious or divisive?" I am reminded of a proverb which says, "Where there is no wood the fire goes out." When our words change from harsh and contentious to pleasant and agreeable, peace enters the conversation.

It is amazing what effect a pleasant word can have in restoring peace in an otherwise tumultuous situation. The next time you are faced with that kind of situation first think lovely thoughts then speak pleasant words. The results just might surprise you.

Prayer: Lord, give me the wisdom to know how to use lovely, pleasant and agreeable words. Then grant me grace to use those words to promote unity and harmony. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Ask yourself the question, "Will my words sound pleasant, or lovely, or will they seem contentious or divisive?" When our words change from harsh and contentious to pleasant and agreeable, peace enters the conversation.

Affirmation: From lovely thoughts to lovely words my attitude toward others is pleasant.

Reflection: It is not hard to find things that are not pleasant to think about. There is much unpleasantness in the world around us. Real effort is required to keep our thoughts on those things that are lovely. Give some thought about how you can make the world around you more lovely.

Day Twenty

Speak of Things That Are Admirable

Whatever is admirable... think on these things.

- Philippians 4:8

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns" - Isaiah 52:7

I envy the conversation of some of my friends. They do not seem to have the ability to say anything negative about anyone. It is sometimes frustrating because I have known some people who make so some good gossip, but even the best gossip is wasted on some people.

Paul is instructing us to speak only of things that are admirable. Isaiah sums it up in a nutshell: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" Those are good words, even admirable words.

I looked into several translations of the New Testament and found some interesting translations of the Greek word *euphemos*, which is translated admirable in the NIV. The KJV translates it "good report." Others translate it as gracious, commendable, good repute. In the AMP Bible this phrase reads, "whatever is kind and winsome and gracious."

I heard the story of one saintly mother who was known to always have something good to say about others. A friend thought of someone she would certainly have nothing good to say about so the friend approached the woman.

"I know someone you can't say anything good about," she said to the saintly woman. "Who is that," the woman asked. "The devil," was the reply. "You can't say anything good about him."

The woman thought for a moment and said, "He is certainly an industrious fellow isn't he." If we only think on it of a bit we can say something good about anyone.

Prayer: Lord, help me to always look for the good in others and to think of good, gracious, commendable and kind things to say about them. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Affirmation: I will think and speak of good news, peace and good tidings. I will declare the salvation of our Lord.

Reflection: It is so easy to get into the habit of allowing those thoughts that are not admirable to creep into our thought processes. Thoughts of judging others, or condemning others. Think about ways of having admirable thoughts about those who have not appeared to be admirable.

Day Twenty One

*Think About Excellent
and Praiseworthy Things*

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me -- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

- Philippians 4:8-9

In these two verses the Apostle Paul is summing up all he has written to the church at Philippi. He begins his summary with, "Finally brothers," as if to say, "After all of this I can only say choose carefully what words, thoughts, ideas and concepts you think about." Then he proceeds to give a whole set of words to meditate upon and to make a part of their life.

This instruction is given to the entire body of Christ. If we were to follow his instructions in these verses we would have the peace of God with us.

I will have to confess that all too often I have caught myself thinking on words and ideas that are less than noble, and certainly not admirable. I suspect that you are not much different than me in that regard. What are we to do when we find ourselves thinking thoughts that are outside the parameters Paul has set for us here?

The answer to that question is found in another passage written by Paul to the church Corinth. "Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). The only way to control what words we think upon is to be conscious of our thoughts and when we are aware that we are thinking about things we should not be thinking about then we must stop those thoughts at the gate of our mind and replace them with right thinking.

Pause long enough to consider what excellent and praiseworthy thoughts we can have. What noble and admirable thoughts can I have. What is true, what is right, or proper to think about? Are my thoughts pure? If not then we need to stop those thoughts at the gate of our mind and find excellent, praiseworthy thoughts.

Prayer: Lord, help me to put a gate at the entrance of my mind and to partner with the Holy Spirit to be my gate keeper. In Jesus name.

Message: The only way to control what words we think upon is to be conscious of our thoughts and when we are aware that we are thinking about things we should not be thinking about then we must stop those thoughts at the gate of our mind and replace them with right thinking.

Affirmation: I am careful to guard my mind from thinking thoughts that project negativity and I am focused on things that are excellent and praiseworthy.

Reflection: Paul instructed believers to take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ. How are we to do that? How can we take our thoughts captive? How are to make all of our thoughts obedient to Christ?

Day Twenty Two

*Words From the Spirit
to the Church at Ephesus*

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:... You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love... He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. - Revelation 2:1-7

In the Revelation John, writing what God gives him to write, is sending a message to seven churches in Asia Minor. His first message is to the church at Ephesus. Many believe that these messages to the seven churches is representative of seven church ages and others believe it is to seven conditions which exist in the body of Christ in any age.

Whatever deeper meaning these messages have we will leave to another forum, but for our purposes we will look at them as if each one is a warning to believers today. We can certainly see how each of these messages can be received as a warning for us and also an opportunity to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

The church at Ephesus is being congratulated for their diligence in defending the Christian faith. They have not tolerated evil ones who would pretend to be followers of Christ but who in fact were driven by their own lusts and greed.

However, while contending furiously for purity of belief, they lost something very valuable. They had lost their first love. What is the first love of a believer? When we have been truly born again we have such a love for God and others that our lives are profoundly affected. Our focus becomes pleasing God and serving others.

In this passage we are being called back to intimate relationship with God. We are not to disregard truth and doctrine, but neither are we to forget that loving God and others must come first.

Those who hear this message and who overcome their lack of love is given the right to eat from the tree of life. Let us hear what the Spirit says, repent of our hardness and allow God to give us a refreshing baptism of love.

Prayer: Father, help me not to allow my zeal for the truth to override my love for you and others. Restore my first love. Amen.

Message: We are being called back to intimate relationship with God. We are not to disregard truth and doctrine, but neither are we to forget that loving God and others must come first.

Affirmation: I have learned that when I make loving God and others first I have no problem keeping my doctrine pure and aligning myself with truth.

Reflection: How can a church value the truth, have pure doctrine, and yet lose their love? What would be the signs that this is happening? Something to think about: If those who hear this message and overcome their lack of love will eat from the tree of life, what will happen to those who continue in truth yet do not renew their love?

Day Twenty Three

*Words From the Spirit
to the Church at Smyrna*

To the angel of the church in Smyrna write... I know your afflictions and your poverty -- yet you are rich!... Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer... Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.- Revelation 2:8-11

The church at Smyrna is called the suffering church. The Spirit is warning this church of difficult times to come, but if they remain faithful, even to the death, they will receive a crown of life.

This church is typical of all the suffering churches since the beginning. Through the ages believers have endured much persecution and believers have suffered indescribable suffering.

We who live in a free country do not understand the price others around the world are paying just to call themselves Christian. Today believers are put in prison because of their faith, some are martyred and many have been displaced.

Let's remember those of our faith who are, as the church of Smyrna, suffering for the name of Christ. I am calling you to pray for the persecuted believers around the world.

The website, persecutionalert.com lists 50 countries where Christians are being persecuted for their faith. Since 1984 over 1.5 million Christians have been martyred in Sudan alone. There are many countries around the world which hold Christians in prison just because of their faith. Followers of Christ are still being persecuted, abused and martyred for their faith.

I am reminded of the passage in Hebrews 11, "Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword." Yes, followers of Christ are still being persecuted around the world today and we must make prayers of intercession for our brothers and sisters who claim Christ as Lord.

Prayer: Lord, let my heart be burdened for my brethren who suffer for the name of Jesus around the world and give me a heart to intercede for them in prayer. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Followers of Christ are still being persecuted around the world today and we must make prayers of intercession for our brothers and sisters who claim Christ as Lord.

Affirmation: I am committed to praying for the persecuted church and particularly for those who are countries where believers in Christ are being martyred.

Reflection: I would encourage you to visit the website persecutionalert.com to gain a perspective on the persecuted church worldwide. Pray for our brothers and sisters who are suffering and call others to pray for the persecuted church.

Day Twenty Four

*The Spirit Speaks
to the Church at Pergamum*

To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live - where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name... Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality... Repent therefore!... He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. -- Revelation 2:12-17

The Lord tells the church at Pergamum, "I know where you live - where Satan has his throne." Pergamum was indeed a place where Satan ruled. There was a grand temple to Aesclepius the Greek god of healing. There was also a temple to Serapis, the ancient Egyptian god of the underworld. It was difficult to be faithful to Christ in such a place, but the Lord says, "Yet you remain true to my name."

Even while commending them for remaining true to his name, he who speaks as a double-edged sword warns them of a problem. "You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin."

It is difficult to know exactly what is meant by the teaching of Balaam, but we are safe to conclude that

it included compromise and probably justification for sin. Balaam had set the stage for Israel to fall prey to committing spiritual adultery with the Baal of Peor and literal adultery with the women of Moab.

What does this mean to us today? We must always be cautious lest we fall prey to the deceitfulness of our flesh and begin to justify behaviors condemned by God's word. The influence of evil is more pervasive today than ever before. The internet and cable TV have made it so easy to succumb to the desires of the flesh that many have compromised their faith.

He who speaks as a double-edged sword is encouraging believers in their faithfulness to his name and warning each of us of the dangers of compromising with the world.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to remain faithful to your name and to resist the temptations of the world. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: The influence of evil is more pervasive today than ever before. We must always be cautious lest we fall prey to the deceitfulness of our flesh and justify behaviors condemned by God's word.

Affirmation: I am aware of the deceitfulness of my flesh and how it desires things forbidden by God. Therefore, I will guard my heart with all diligence so that I will not fall prey to the evil around me.

Reflection: One of the issues of the church at Pergamum was though they did not deny the name of the Lord they did compromise with those who would lead them away. Give some thought to the way compromise affects our walk with God. Do a little research and find out about the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.

Day Twenty Five

*The Spirit Speaks to
the Church at Thyatira*

To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel... He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says.

-- Revelation 2:18-29

Reading the entire text dealing with the church of Thyatira I saw a picture of the church today. The church, the body of Christ, is still holding fast to the doctrine of God, Christ and the kingdom of God, but the church is not perfect.

One interesting note is that this church is the only one where the Lord says, "You are now doing more than you did at first." He had spoken of their service and perseverance and seemed to be indicating that they were doing well. However, he did not have one thing against them; they tolerated Jezebel.

Whether this Jezebel was a literal woman prophetess, or was a metaphor for a spirit of compromise which affect some in the church, we don't know. And whether the sexual immorality and eating of things offered to idols were literal or metaphorical, we don't know; but we do know that there was a spirit of compromise with the world working among some believers.

Can we see that same spirit at work in the church today? Yes we can. There are those who would use the church for a political forum, and some would use it to promote the god of prosperity. Some in the body of Christ have become so concerned about being inclusive that they have not called for holiness and they have not warned their followers about the spirit of the world.

Then the Lord gives hope to the faithful. "To you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets... hold on to what you have until I come. To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations just as I have received authority from my Father." Hold On!

Prayer: Lord, give me ears to hear what you are saying to the church today and help me to hold faithfully to you. In Jesus name.

Some have become so concerned about being inclusive that they have not called for holiness and they have not warned their followers about the spirit of the world.

Affirmation: I have heard the call to be separate from the world in my lifestyle, my attitudes, and in my spirit. I am committed to a life in the Spirit and not of this world.

Reflection: Think about the accusation Jesus is making against the church in Thyatira: They are doing good works and they are increasing in good works, but they have one issue that nullifies the works they do: They tolerate Jezebel who claims to be a prophetess with a new word from the Lord. Give some thought to just how she was trying to influence the church.

Day Twenty Six

*The Spirit Speaks to
the Church at Sardis*

To the angel of the church in Sardis write: I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die... Remember therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent... He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. - Revelation 3:1-6

God is giving the church at Sardis a wakeup call. He has seen that they began well but they had been so filled with tolerance that over time their vision became blurred and they lost their way.

There is a fine line we must draw as believers which separates tolerance from compromise. We must be inclusive in our outreach to the world around us, but we must be exclusive when it comes to our faith. What I mean by that is God loves all of those in our communities, regardless of their lifestyle or behaviors and we should love them to. God also warns of judgment to come upon those who do not respond to the message of Christ, and we have the responsibility to preach that message.

We must be cautious that our firmness in the faith does not lead to hardness of heart and at the same time we must be careful that our love for those in need of Christ does not lead us to compromise the message of reconciliation, renewal and restoration.

The church at Sardis began with the fires of revival, but as time went by the fire went out. They became like those video fireplaces found in some hotels. You turn the TV to a certain channel and there is a video of a fireplace with soft music playing and looking so cozy you just want to curl up in front of it. But it isn't real; it's just a video of the real thing.

The church today is being called to "Wake up! Strengthen what remains." It is time for revival in the pews. It is time to turn our face toward heaven and seek him for a renewed zeal for spiritual things.

Prayer: Lord, I have found it easy to become confused between tolerance and compromise. Give me the kind of love for the people of the world that drives me to preach the truth of Christ; his love and grace along with his intolerance for compromise. Amen.

Message: The church today is being called to "Wake up! Strengthen what remains." It is time for revival in the pews. It is time to turn our face toward heaven and seek him for a renewed zeal for spiritual things.

Affirmation: I have heard the call to wake up and I am becoming strengthened in my faith and commitment to serving in the kingdom of God with Holy Spirit power.

Reflection: It is time to become serious about loving the people who need Jesus, despising their sin and declaring the righteousness of Christ. Give some thought to the idea presented about the TV in the motel room. How can that apply to the church today?

Day Twenty Seven

*The Spirit Speaks
to the Church at Philadelphia*

To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God... He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

- Revelation 3:7-13

There is no rebuke to the church at Philadelphia, only encouragement. The Spirit says, "I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut" (v8). The Spirit says, "You have kept my command to endure patiently.

This church was not reprimanded as the church at Ephesus for losing its first love. Philadelphia is not scolded for tolerating a spirit of Balam, Balak or Jezebel as other churches were. This church had taken to heart the command to "endure patiently,"

It appears that they were having to endure an assault from Satan, the enemy. It is mentioned that they had little strength left (v8), yet they had not compromised, they had not denied the name of Jesus.

Many of us in the church today are growing weary as we battle Satan, the spirit of the world, and the human spirit. We see others around us tolerating and even justifying lifestyles that are condemned in God's word. We watch others compromise under the delusion that they can have a greater effect in the world by making the message more palatable. Yet we hold on.

The promise to those who endure is that they will be pillars in the New Jerusalem and that God himself will, "write on him my new name" (v12). The spirit gives hope to those who will endure patiently and hold on. Keep holding to his name.

Prayer: Lord, it isn't always easy to endure patiently so I ask for your grace to hold to your truth and your name. Give me the strength to endure to the end. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: The promise to those who endure is that they will be pillars in the New Jerusalem and that God himself will, "write on him my new name" (v12). The spirit gives hope to those who will endure patiently and hold on. Keep holding to his name.

Affirmation: The grace and love of God has called me to faithfulness. I am committed to holding on to his name and enduring all that I must so that the kingdom of God may spread.

Reflection: It was only to the church at Smyrna and the church at Philadelphia that God had only good to say. He spoke of the suffering they would endure and the patience they would need to hold on to their faith until the end. Give some thought to your own faith walk. Can God give you the same commendation as he gave these churches, or would he warn you of some of the errors the others had?

Day Twenty Eight

*The Spirit Speaks to
the Church of Laodicea*

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: I know you deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm -- neither hot or cold -- I am about to spit you out of my mouth... I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire... Those I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me... He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. - Revelation 3:14-22

Laodicea was not a bad church. They are not accused of idolatry, compromise with the pagan world, or of having false prophets, yet they receive such a graphic judgment, "I am about to spit you out of my mouth." What was their sin?

This church had simply become lukewarm. Ephesus had lost their love but Laodicea had lost its fire. They still had a form of godliness, but the power had departed from them. Christianity had become their religion and they were quite content with what they had and felt no need for anything else.

The city of Laodicea was quite wealthy and very self-sufficient. In fact, in 60 AD the city was destroyed and Rome offered assistance to rebuild it. The

people of the city refused the help of Rome and rebuilt the city on their own. Perhaps the same spirit of self-sufficiency had permeated the church. Their motto was, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing" (v17). They didn't need God, they had stuff.

The Spirit was calling them to repentance and offering them an opportunity to have their passion for God restored. God says to them, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock" (v20). Was he saying that he wasn't even in their church but was standing outside the door waiting to be invited in?

Laodicea stands as a warning to us today. The more self-sufficient we are the closer to the door Jesus gets. We must be careful that our achievement and success doesn't find him standing outside the door asking to come in.

Prayer: Grant me the grace to trust your sufficiency alone. Amen.

Message: The church at Laodicea stands as a warning to us today. The more self-sufficient we are the closer to the door Jesus gets. We must be careful that our achievement and success doesn't find him standing outside the door asking to come in.

Affirmation: I know that my sufficiency is in Christ alone and not in my own ability and achievements.

Reflection: There are many congregations who are victims of the same mentality as Laodicea. They feel they have everything they need. When you think of being a lukewarm Christian what comes to mind? If you were measured on the same scale as this church how would you measure up?

Day Twenty Nine

Jesus Said, "I Am With You Always"

Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. -- Matthew 28:20

The followers of Jesus had just gone through a very confusing time. For about three years they followed him believing that he was the Messiah, the promised redeemer of the Jews. They expected that at some point he would set up his kingdom and rule the world from Jerusalem.

They were so convinced that Jesus was about to set up his earthly rule that they argued about who would sit on his left and his right in the kingdom. You can imagine their disappointment when on the eve of Passover, as they had their last meal together, he began to speak about his betrayal and death.

After his crucifixion they seem to have fallen into a deep depression. They huddled secretly behind locked doors for fear that they would be next. There they were, broken hearted, fearful and not knowing what to do. Then, all at once Jesus was in their midst and began to reveal what was going to happen next.

After being with them for a few weeks teaching them the principles of the kingdom and encouraging them that even though he was going to leave them physically he would be with them in Spirit always. Even though they didn't fully understand all that he was saying they believed and accepted him.

The disciples were a bit fearful, though they had hope, they were still a bit confused about what to do next. Jesus discerned what they were feeling as he told them what they were to do next: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." And to give them confidence for the task he added, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

We can fearlessly minister the message of favor with God through faith in Jesus Christ because we know that he will be with us all the way to the end of this age.

Prayer: Lord, grant me confidence to keep making disciples because I know you are with me. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: We can fearlessly minister the message of favor with God through faith in Jesus Christ because we know that he will be with us all the way to the end of this age.

Affirmation: I have experienced the abiding presence of God and I know that he will not leave me. He is with me and he empowers me to be a fearless witness of God's favor through faith in Jesus Christ.

Reflection: Can you identify with the fear and disappointment the disciples felt after Jesus was crucified? They had abandoned their business of fishing to follow him and now they had not only lost him but they were fearful for their own life. In the middle of all that Jesus appears and promises, "I am with you always." What a hope.

Day Thirty

I Will Return As the Comforter

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever -- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

-- John 14:16-18

Jesus could see the forlorn look on the faces of his disciples as he was explaining that he was going away and he was no doubt moved with compassion for them. He was explaining that one of his purposes in going away was to prepare a place for them so that they could then come to him.

He could see that they weren't really getting the idea so he tried to give them comfort by promising that they weren't being left as orphans but that he would soon return to them as comforter or counselor. He seemed to be saying, "Hey guys, cheer up. It isn't all that bad. Look, I have been with, but now you will experience something that is better than my being with you; I will be in you."

While in a physical body on earth Christ could only be with them, but in Spirit he can be in all believers at all times. That is the truth he was trying to convey. The disciples were trying their best to understand, but these were new ideas to them. They didn't understand how he could actually be in them.

Finally, as a he was about to ascend to heaven, after he had taught them many things, with his parting words he sent them back to Jerusalem to wait for this promised gift from the Father. He knew that they didn't quite get the idea, but he also knew that when the Holy Spirit came upon them they would understand.

They went to Jerusalem to wait. They weren't sure what they were waiting for, and they weren't quite sure what the future would hold, but they knew the Father had something special in mind. There in Jerusalem it finally became clear to them. The counselor who had been promised finally arrived in spectacular fashion.

The same Spirit of Christ, the counselor, the Holy Spirit, is in the church today giving comfort, strength and power to believers.

Prayer: Thank you for the counselor who is always with me. Amen.

Message: The disciples went to Jerusalem to wait for the promise of the Father. There in Jerusalem it finally became clear to them. The counselor who had been promised finally arrived in spectacular fashion. The same Spirit of Christ, the counselor, the Holy Spirit, is in the church today giving comfort, strength and power to believers.

Affirmation: I have received the promise of the Father. The Spirit of Christ, the counselor, the Holy Spirit is in me today giving me comfort, strength and power.

Reflection: Jesus, the Christ, left earth and returned as comforter. He was with them but then was in them. One of the greatest mysteries of God: Christ in you (Colossians 1:21).

Day Thirty One

I Am Coming Back for You

In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. -- John 14:2-3

He went away, but he is coming back!

Jesus never promised a path of roses for those who follow him. In fact, he prophesied just the opposite. He said that if a person were to be considered his disciple they would have to pick up their cross and follow him. He predicted that those who did follow him would suffer persecution and rejection even from their closest friends and relatives.

He spoke of the trials being so bad that even some of those who were called "the elect" would succumb to temptation and fall. Knowing all of that He promises, "I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." Take heart, he's coming back.

I can remember a time in my life where everything seemed to be falling apart. I had lost everything, including my marriage, and I was stuck in a town in state far away from friends and family. I remember being on my knees reminding God of how much I had sacrificed for him and then I said, "And this is the thanks I get." Have you ever been there?

I'm reminded of the story of a returning missionary who had invested his life in the mission field. Upon returning home, old and white haired, he expected there would be many friends there to receive him; but as he disembarked he looked around and there was not one person there to welcome him. Disappointed he asked the Lord why no one was there to welcome him home. He heard the Spirit speak to his heart, "Son, you aren't home yet." Jesus said, "I am going to prepare a place for you."

Whatever you are facing today just remember Jesus said, "I will come back and take you to be with me."

Prayer: Thank you for the hope of your return. I cry as the earliest believers cried, "Even so Lord Jesus, come quickly." Amen.

Message: In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Affirmation: I have believed the promise he left with us. He is now preparing a place for me and some day I will be where he is.

Reflection: There are many words of promise Jesus gave to those who would believe in him, but none are more precious than this: "I am going to prepare a place for you... that you also may be where I am."