

Daily God Walk

The Christ Life

Thankful

Paul T Smith

© 2015, 2024 by Paul Smith – New Hope Ministries
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be
reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any
means without permission of the author.

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
(AMP) – The Amplified Bible

New Hope Ministries
2232 Terrace Ln
McKinleyville, CA 95519
707.349.9890
www.DailyGodWalk.org
paul@nhmresources.org

Daily God Walk Theme

Our theme for this devotional is being thankful and giving praise to God for his goodness and mercy.

There is a lot of instruction in the Bible about being thankful and offering praise to God. We are exploring some of the passage which give instruction in those areas.

Beginning in Psalm 50:14-15 with a devotion titled, “Be Thankful... That’s an Order” and concluding with a devotion from Ephesians 5:19-20 titled, “Always Giving Thanks to God” we explore a broad spectrum of praise and thanksgiving passages.

Our hope in the devotions for this month is that you will be inspired to “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4) and that you will “Extol the Lord at all times” (Psalm 34:1) as you “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs”(Ephesians 5:19). And again I say, “Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20).

Be Blessed,



Paul Smith
New Hope Ministry Resources

Day One

Be Thankful... That's an Order

Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me. – Psalm 50:14-15

We may have heard it said that God owns the cattle on a 1000 hills and it is usually said in the context that we should not worry about provision because God has the ability to provide. However, the passage which is being quoted is not referring to God's blessings but to God's frustration with His people for failing to grasp the meaning of worshipping him.

Beginning in verse seven God is rebuking the people concerning making their worship ritualistic and making their sacrifices to God begrudgingly. In verses 9-10 He says, "I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine and the cattle on a thousands hills." God doesn't need our sacrifice, but he does want us.

He goes on to say, "I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine and all that is in it." Apparently the people were performing their worship and making sacrifice as if God needed what they were giving Him.

Verse 14 calls for bringing thank offerings to God and in the process fulfilling the vows made to him. In Old Testament times the thank offering was the offerings of the first-fruits from the harvest as a thanksgiving to God for his bountiful supply. As people of the covenant, Israel confirmed their commitment to the covenant and affirmed their confidence in the faithfulness of God by bringing these sacrifices to Him.

We are being called today to offer ourselves unto God as a thank offering. In Romans 12:1 Paul calls believers to offer themselves as living sacrifices and then says, “This is your spiritual act of worship” (NIV).

As we enter the sanctuary of worship we should be offering our lives as a thank offering in gratitude to the gift of salvation and the indwelling presence of Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Lord, accept my life as a thank offering to you. Amen.

Message: We are being called today to offer ourselves unto God as a thank offering. In Romans 12:1 Paul calls believers to offer themselves as living sacrifices and then says, “This is your spiritual act of worship” (NIV).

Affirmation: As I come to worship the Lord I offer my life as a thank offering to him. I am a living sacrifice of thanksgiving unto my Lord.

Reflection: God does own the cattle on a thousand hills, so, why does he want my sacrifice? Does he call us to sacrifice because he needs us or because we need him? Think about it.

My Thoughts:

Day Two

Jesus is Our Example of Being Thankful

They took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” - John 11:41

I find it interesting that Jesus was thanking the Father for hearing him before he even called Lazarus forth from the tomb. That is a great picture of the faith which comes from an intimate relationship. He knew the Father heard him before he asked and he was thankful.

I find a great truth here regarding thankfulness. How often are we thinking, “If God does this thing I will be so thankful”? What we are really saying is, “OK God, I’ll trust you when the answer comes.” We would like to trust him, and we want to trust him, but we really aren’t sure if he will come through so we reserve thankfulness until we see the evidence of his blessing.

It is true that Jesus had a unique relationship with the Father, but it is just that relationship which we should be seeking. Oh, I know that we will never have quite the same intimacy with the Father, but we can certainly grow closer than most of us seem to be.

It is when we have a close, intimate relationship with God that our faith becomes strong enough to call things that are not as if they are (Romans 4:17). We develop that kind of faith and relationship through regularly spending blocks of time with Him, both seeking him and worshipping him.

I have found that the more time I spend with Him the more grace, or favor, I sense being released into my life. Also, when I have intimacy with the Father faith grows

and I can hear his voice more clearly. It is in those times that it is easy to give thanks to the Father.

I would encourage you to take the time and make the effort to develop an intimate relationship with the Father. We should take advantage of the access afforded us by faith in Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, lead me into intimacy with you. In Jesus name.

Message: The more time we spend with Him the more grace, or favor, is being released into our life. Also, when we have intimacy with the Father faith grows and we can hear his voice more clearly. It is in those times that it is easy to give thanks to the Father.

Affirmation: I am thankful to God even before I ask because I know that he is always looking out for my best interest whether he gives me what I ask or not.

Reflection: Having a thankful attitude goes deeper than just being thankful for receiving an answer to prayer. Give some thought to the idea of being thankful to God even if we don't get the answer to prayer we expected.

My Thoughts:

Day Three

Be Thankful For the Peace of Christ

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. Be thankful. – Colossians 3:15

The peace of God gives us opportunity to be thankful and being thankful produces the peace of God. It is a cycle which perpetuates itself. In this passage, verses 15-17 Paul is giving us a formula for peace.

In verse 16 he says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”

The peace of Christ and the word of Christ are intrinsically connected. When we have the word of Christ dwelling in us then the peace of Christ will also be there.

I love how the Message reads in this passage:

“Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ – the Message – have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives – words, actions, whatever – be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.”

Implicit in this passage is that the word of Christ, the living words of God, are to motivate us to love, to be thankful and to have a heart of gratitude.

There is so much chaos and turmoil in the world that it is difficult to be at peace within ourselves as long as we are looking at the circumstances around us. But when we

focus on Christ the rest of the world seems to grow dim as we bask in the light of his love. When we can do that then the peace of Christ surrounds us.

Make it a purpose to start every day by looking past the things which try our souls and turning your eyes toward Jesus, the Christ, the Prince of Peace and he will give you an abiding peace.

Prayer: Help me to look past the world and see the peace of Christ.

Message: There is so much chaos and turmoil in the world that it is difficult to be at peace within ourselves as long as we are looking at the circumstances around us. Make it a purpose to start every day by looking past the things which try our souls and turning your eyes toward Jesus, the Christ, the Prince of Peace and he will give you an abiding peace.

Affirmation: My heart is thankful and the peace of Christ abides in me because I look past the things which try my soul and turn my eyes toward Jesus, the Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Reflection: Start every day by being thankful for God's grace.

My Thoughts:

Day Four

Failing to Be Thankful

You have not brought me sheep for burnt offerings, nor honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with grain offerings nor wearied you with demands for incense. You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses. – Isaiah 43:23-24

In this 43rd chapter of Isaiah God is expressing his frustration at the thanklessness and the unfaithfulness of his chosen people. In verses 18-19 he says that he is going to do a new thing. He says that he is making a way in the desert and he is putting streams in the wasteland. He is promising restoration and a new way, but still he doesn't have the attention of the people.

He says, “The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise. Yet you have not called upon me, O Jacob, you have not wearied yourself for me, O Israel” (verses 20-22).

He promised a new thing; streams in the desert. He was bringing life to a barren land and even the animals honored him for what he had done, but his own chosen people did not stop to praise him and to thank him for his great kindness.

God told them that they did not inconvenience themselves to honor Him yet they have burdened Him with their sins and wearied Him with their offences (verse 24). The people of that day remind me many today who

come to God for their own needs but do not show gratitude for His bountiful blessing.

Once when Jesus was approached by some followers He said, “You only follow me because of the loaves and fishes,” and so it often is for people today. As long as we have a need we will follow Him, but when our needs are met, rather than be thankful we forget His mercy and go our own way.

We must practice gratitude and thankfulness lest we fail to honor God for His bountiful blessing.

Prayer: Lord, give me a heart of gratitude for your many blessings.

Message: As long as we have a need we will follow Him, but when our needs are met, rather than be thankful we forget His mercy and go our own way. We must practice gratitude and thankfulness lest we fail to honor God for His bountiful blessing.

Affirmation: My gratitude for his grace and mercy goes beyond just being thankful for the bounty he provides.

Reflection: Is it possible to make offering unto the Lord without actually being thankful for his blessing? Can you see the church today, or even yourself, in these verses from Isaiah 43?

My Thoughts:

Day Five

Praise Him You Who Fear The Lord

I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

- Psalm 22:22-23

I can see David addressing an assembly of the people who have gathered to praise and worship God. In a tone of prayer he cries out, "I will declare your name to my brothers," and I can hear the great congregation erupt in praise as he speaks.

Then he turns to the people and says, "You who fear the Lord, praise Him!" and there is a mighty roar of praise from the people. Oh, to have been there!

In our verses today David gives three aspects of giving thanks to God; praise, honor and revere. Let's take a brief look at each of these words, then let us follow David's instruction.

- Praise: *halal* - to boast in. David is calling those who live in faith to boast in the goodness of God.
- Honor: *kabad* - weighty or heavy. To give credence to or to give much weight to. A few years ago in a political contest the question of "gravitas" came up. Gravitas means having weighty judgment and being able to carry the load. We give God the glory (*kabad*) when we give him credit for carrying the load for us.
- Revere: *gur* - stand in awe of. King James Version translates *gur* as fear. When we consider the nature of God we stand in awe of him - we revere him.

In this passage we are being called to have a reverential fear of God and to boast in his goodness as

we acknowledge his glory and weighty judgment. All of this inspires us to revere him. We stand in awe of his glory as we praise him for his mighty works.

Recently I was in prayer with someone who was making a commitment of their life to Christ. As we prayed together we were overwhelmed by the glory of the Lord as we were awed by His marvelous grace. And yes, we did praise Him.

Prayer: My Lord, I do praise, honor and revere you.
Amen.

Message: We are being called to have a reverential fear of God and to boast in his goodness as we acknowledge his glory and weighty judgment. All of this inspires us to revere him. We stand in awe of his glory as we praise him for his mighty works.

Affirmation: I stand in awe of He who holds the universe in the palm of his hand and I worship him for I know He holds my future as well.

Reflection: Give some thought to the three Hebrew words which are used to denote praise, honor and awe of God.

My Thoughts:

Day Six

Others Praise Him Because of Our Deeds

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. - Matthew 5:16

Jesus was just teaching about believers being the light. He told them, "You are the light of the world" (v14). Then he explained that people don't hide a light under a bowl but they put it out so everyone can benefit from the light which shines.

It is in this context that He tells His followers to let their light shine before men. There is something we should notice here and it is this; Jesus is connecting our light shining with doing good deeds, and, it is the shining light of good deeds which causes mankind to give praise to Father God.

Often we have thought of the shining light being our testimony concerning Christ, and there is that application. Another application is our lifestyle. If our life is a reflection of the life of Christ then it becomes a light to the world. However, the primary application here is to the light being our good deeds.

We have an outreach in a mobile home park in our town. It began by just knocking on every door and sharing the love of Christ. After a few weeks of talking to people we threw a community hotdog picnic and invited everyone. In the weeks following the picnic we started a small group which meets in the club house every week.

What I have found interesting is that now as we are visiting people in the park they invite us in to talk with them. We are becoming their friends. Some of them have accepted Christ as their savior in our meetings.

These people are seeing the Christ, the light of the world, in the lives of those of us who are serving them every week. The result is that they are now praising God for the light which they are seeing, not only for the light in those of us who are ministering but also the light they are seeing in their own lives.

Some of the people we have been reaching are reading these words today because of the light they saw in other believers. Let your light so shine before men.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for letting me be a light to the world.

Message: Jesus is connecting our light shining with doing good deeds, and, it is the shining light of good deeds which causes mankind to give praise to Father God.

Affirmation: It is because of the good works I do that others can see the light of God's love shining for them.

Reflection: You may never have thought about how your light would shine, but now you know. Your light shines through the good work you do for others. Give some thought to how you can let your light shine by doing good works for others.

My Thoughts:

Day Seven

Unity Promotes Glorifying God

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Romans 15:5-6

Paul had just been giving instructions to the church at Rome on how to get along with those who differed with them. Some of the early believers felt that it was important to continue honoring the Jewish feasts and holidays and, in fact, felt that it was necessary for all believers to do so.

In chapter 14 he says, “Everyone of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another” (v12-13). In the following verses he makes the point that some are convinced that certain foods or actions are wrong for them and those people must live according to their conscience. However, he goes on to tell them that in those things they should not require others to agree but allow them to have their own conscience before God.

If we would only follow that advice we would see a lot less division among believers and unity would prevail. It is for unity that Paul is appealing to the church.

While we are striving with the evil in the world let us not carry that strife over into the body of Christ by requiring other believers to practice their faith just the way we do. I’m not talking about ignoring sin or allowing heresy, but I am talking about things like days of worship and lifestyle issues that are not in contradiction to the teaching of the Word of God.

When we can look past the individual differences we have with others in the body of Christ and allow them the same freedom we expect to have, then we can come together in unity. It is this coming together united in our common faith to worship the Lord God as one that glorifies our Father.

So let us with one heart and one mouth give praise and thanksgiving to the Lord of Glory.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to look past my differences with other believers and join with them in glorifying you. Amen.

Message: When we can look past the individual differences we have with others in the body of Christ and allow them the same freedom we expect to have, then we can come together in unity. It is this coming together united in our common faith to worship the Lord God as one that glorifies our Father.

Affirmation: It is more important to be in unity than it is to be in agreement on every little issue.

Reflection: Some have said there are over 40,000 divisions in the body of Christ. That is 40,000 groups who feel they are different enough that they need to separate themselves into another group. How can there be 40,000 major differences in the one body of Christ?

My Thoughts:

Day Eight

The Feast of Booths - A Time to Remember

Beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the Lord for seven days... Rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. Celebrate this festival to the Lord for seven days each year... Live in booths... so that your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt.

- Leviticus 23:39-43

Even while they were still wandering in the desert, living in tents, God was giving the Israelites instructions on how to be thankful and celebrate their deliverance. The Festival of Tabernacles, or Booths, is a festival of celebration.

Moses wrote that there were three times a year that the entire nation was to appear before God; the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. Each had its significance to the people of Israel. Passover celebrated their exit from Egypt, Weeks celebrated the blessing of harvest and Tabernacles celebrated how God kept them through their time of dwelling in tents in the wilderness.

Each of these festivals are punctuated with remembering and with being thankful for the bountiful blessings of God. It would be good for all of us to set aside periods of time when we remember God's many and wonderful blessings and celebrate His Goodness.

Can you remember when God brought you out of your Egypt? Have you had times of wandering in the desert of life not knowing where you would be tomorrow, or what would be happening? I think we have all been

there at one time or another, but thanks to God we haven't had to stay there.

Many of us set aside a day during this month that we call "Thanksgiving." It is a time of family gathering together and during those times we often tell family stories of the past and remember the good times. I would encourage you that during this period that you set aside times to show your thankfulness to God for His many and bountiful blessings.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for your many wonderful blessings.

Message: Each of the festivals celebrated by Israel are punctuated with remembering and with being thankful for the bountiful blessings of God. It would be good for all of us to set aside periods of time when we remember God's many and wonderful blessings and celebrate His Goodness.

Affirmation: Every day I make it a point to be thankful to God for his many and bountiful blessings.

Reflection: I usually begin the blessing of a meal with this sentence, "Father God, I thank you for your goodness and mercy." Some might think that would become ritualistic and shallow, but for me it is a reflection of the depth of my gratitude to God for his great mercy and his bountiful blessing.

My Thoughts:

Day Nine

Give Thanks for What He Has Done

Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. - Psalm 105:1-4

This entire psalm is about remembering and being thankful to God for the things he has done, his promises and covenants. It is a celebration of God's faithfulness to fulfill all that he has promised.

In verse 5 the psalmist calls Israel to remember the wonders and miracles God has performed, as well as the judgments he has pronounced. He seems to be saying that God is gracious and he will do what needs to be done to bless and protect his people, but at the same time he doesn't turn his back upon their failures but he calls them to repentance by pronouncing judgments.

The writer goes on to speak about the covenant made with Abraham and his family. In verse eight he writes, "He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham" (v8-9). He is heralding the faithfulness of God for an immeasurable period of time (a thousand generations).

As I am reading this psalm which recites the many times God interceded for the descendants of Abraham I am reminded of the many songs written by recent psalmist which tell the story of God's redeeming grace. Songs like "Amazing Grace" by John Newton a converted slave trader.

James Rowe wrote the wonderful hymn, "Love Lifted Me." The first verse and chorus tells the story well: I was sinking deep in sin, Far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, Sinking to rise no more. But the Master of the sea, Heard my despairing cry, From the waters lifted me, Now safe am I - Love lifted me! Love lifted me! When nothing else could help, Love lifted me!

This song reminds us that it is only by the grace of God we have been lifted out of the mire of this worlds sin. Be Thankful.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for your redeeming grace. Amen.

Message: The message of this devotion is fully contained in the Scripture passage. "Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always."

Affirmation: I will give thanks to the Lord and call on his name as I make known among the people the what he has done.

Reflection: Many who have experienced a radical conversion testify to the glory of God. Have you experienced "Amazing Grace" and has "Love Lifted" You? Give him thanks and let others know as well.

My Thoughts:

Day Ten

Be Thankful for Deliverance

Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians! Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends of the earth; say, "The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob."

- Isaiah 48:20

Isaiah not only predicted that Babylon would invade the Jews and take them into captivity but he also predicted the one who would in turn invade Babylon and even names the king (Cyrus) who would end their exile and free them to go back to their homeland.

An interesting thing happened when the people were freed to leave Babylon; many of them chose not to leave. While in exile many of the Jews established new lives, intermarried and put down roots in Babylon. Their freedom came and they chose to use their freedom to stay there.

In our passage today Isaiah gives a mild rebuke coupled with a great promise. He is saying that it is time to flee Babylon; it is time to get back home and take care of business there.

I am reminded of many who have become believers today but they aren't anxious to leave their Babylon. They don't see Christianity as embracing an entirely new lifestyle, they just see it as adopting a new philosophy of religion. These folks are quite comfortable with their lifestyle and would just as soon not be disturbed.

But there is another group of Jews in Babylon who are ready to go home. Psalm 137 reads, "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps" (v1-2). They could no longer sing the songs of Zion for their hearts longed for home. These are the ones who would return when the cry rang out, "Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians."

There will always be those who are more comfortable with this world system and its pleasures. Those are the ones who will choose the comfort of Babylon over the labor of restoring what the enemy has destroyed. There will also be those who can no longer stand for the ways of the world and who must flee to the hope held in the promises of God.

Are you ready to announce to the world with shouts of joy and proclaim it? Are you ready to send out to the ends of the earth the message, “The Lord has redeemed me”? It is time to leave Babylon (this world system) and declare the righteousness of God.

Prayer: Help me to leave Babylon rejoice in your deliverance. Amen.

Message: There will always be those choose the comfort of Babylon over the labor of restoring what the enemy has destroyed. There will also be those who can no longer stand for the ways of the world and who must flee to the hope held in the promises of God.

Affirmation: I do not allow the comforts of this present world to dim the hope of the world to come.

Reflection: Many Jews chose Babylon over Jerusalem because of the comfortable life they had built for themselves there. Carefully examine your own life to see if you may be settling for the comforts of this world rather than committing to the kingdom of God.

My Thoughts:

Day Eleven

Overflowing With Thankfulness

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. – Colossians 2:6-7

There is a man in our ministry with a 35 year history of drug abuse. He gave his heart to the Lord on September 11, 2009 and he hasn't looked back. He is now clean and sober for over two years. I mention him because every time we come together he says, "I'm so thankful that I don't have to go hell."

My friend has experienced enough hell in his drug abusing days and now because he has received Christ Jesus as Lord he has heaven to look forward to. He has told me that he came to Jesus out of fear of dying and going to hell, but now he serves Jesus out of love. He is overflowing with thankfulness.

Like so many others who have lived addicted to drugs my friend has many problems in his body. He has had cancer and struggles with Diabetes. Yet, he never complains and always has a cheery greeting. He is overflowing with thankfulness.

I have knocked on many doors with him and he loves to tell the story of how Jesus saved him and delivered him from drug abuse. In fact, he has told his story at two of our community outreaches and each time people respond to give their heart to Jesus. He is overflowing with thankfulness.

He not only received Jesus as Lord but he continues in Him. As Paul wrote he is "rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith and overflowing with thankfulness."

I find in my friend a challenge for all of us. When the world starts to get us down and the circumstances of life try to steal our joy, then it is time to be strong in the faith and rejoice in the goodness of our God. Paul wrote in Romans 5, “We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope” (v2-4).

Let us rejoice in the hope and overflow with thankfulness.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for the hope I have in Christ Jesus.

Message: When the world starts to get us down and the circumstances of life try to steal our joy, then it is time to be strong in the faith and rejoice in the goodness of our God.

Affirmation: I rejoice in the hope of the glory of God and I rejoice in suffering for him because I know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Reflection: This devotion instructs us to continue in faith with thankfulness even when times are tough. Thankfulness is a habit which requires work to develop. Practice being thankful.

My Thoughts:

Day Twelve

Devote Yourself to Prayer and Thankfulness

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

- Colossians 4:2

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.

- 1 Timothy 2:1

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:5-7

I have known a few people who did not know the meaning of thankfulness. It seems they see a caveat in every blessing. I know one man that when you tell him of a project idea or a dream he will say, “yes, but the thing of it is...” and he goes on to give all of the reasons why it can’t be done. And the truth is that his attitude is what keeps good things from happening.

In all three of the scriptures above there is a pattern that we should follow. First, there is prayer. Then we are instructed to present our petitions to God with thanksgiving. Prayers, petitions and requests are to be made with thanksgiving.

Some of the unhappiest believers I know submit their petitions with complaining rather than thanksgiving. It’s almost like they only see God as a reluctant vending machine that they have to keep pounding on to get what they paid for.

You can rest assured that those complainers not only have many unmet needs they also don’t have much peace

in their life. Their glass is always half empty and they're just waiting around to see what is going to be the next bad thing to happen to them.

Paul gave us the secret to righteous rejoicing and being thankful in all circumstances. He said he had found the secret of being content in every situation, whether he had plenty or was in need. The secret was that he knew God would supply all of his needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:10-19).

Prayer: Help me to present my needs to you with thanksgiving. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: The secret of being content in every situation, whether we have plenty or we are in need, is in knowing God will supply all of our needs according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus.

Affirmation: I can endure all things, the good and the bad, because I know God is in control.

Reflection: Can you see the correlation between unhappiness and unthankfulness? Happy people are thankful the glass is half full and unhappy people complain because the glass is half empty. Which are you? Be thankful and be happy.

My Thoughts:

Day Thirteen

Give Thanks - This is the Will of God

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

The church at Thessalonica was founded shortly after Paul and Silas left Philippi. As was his custom when he entered the city he first went to the synagogue, but being quickly rejected there he went to the Gentiles to preach Christ.

Paul was in the city only long enough to get a body of believers established then he moved on. It is interesting that the same Jews who rejected him now began to cause trouble among his Gentile converts.

In the early days of the church communication was always a problem. Paul would stay in one place long enough to establish a work then move on to the next city. Once he had left a city he would appoint elders to lead the church and he would stay in contact with those elders. Nearly half of the New Testament is letters Paul wrote to the leaders of churches throughout Asia Minor and into Europe.

Paul knew that he would have very little time to spend with new believers so he was constantly warning them against the sins of the flesh and encouraging them to be consistently praying for God's grace and leading in the affairs of life and the church.

It is in this context that he is writing to the church. In his closing words to the church he writes these instructions:

- ✓ Be joyful always;
- ✓ Pray continually;
- ✓ Give thanks in all circumstances;

- ✓ Do not put out the Spirit's fire;
- ✓ Do not treat prophecies with contempt;
- ✓ Test everything - hold on to the good.
- ✓ Avoid every kind of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-19)

That is a good set of instructions for all of us and especially that we should give thanks in all things because that is the will of God for us.

Prayer: Help me to be consistent in my walk and gratitude to you.

Message: "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." This is a formula for happiness and success in your faith walk: Be joyful, be prayerful and be thankful.

Affirmation: I rejoice daily and pray with thankfulness seeking the grace to keep the Spirit's fire burning in me.

Reflection: The instructions of 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19 are each inter-related and could be called "7 Steps to Joy and Peace With God." Give some thought to how each of these instructions work together to grow us in the faith.

My Thoughts:

Day Fourteen

Offer a Sacrifice of Praise

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

- Hebrews 13:15-16

What should be the fruit of our lips? David cried out to God, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight” (Psalm 51). His desire was that his words would give honor to God. That is the thought the writer of Hebrews is conveying.

We are being told to “continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise,” but the problem many of us face is that rather than getting a focus on God and his goodness we are influenced by the conditions around us and the words which come through our lips are not often enough praise to God.

I think the reason the writer calls continual praise a sacrifice of praise is because we can't always see things to praise about. It is hard to praise God when you have a flat tire and you are already running late to an important appointment. It is even harder to praise God when one of our children is sick and we feel helpless to make them well. Then praise becomes a sacrifice.

How can we praise God in those circumstances? The answer is in this passage: Through Jesus. It is by faith that the grace of God is released to us and it is by faith we continue to live in grace. The longer we live in grace and the more mature our faith becomes the easier it is to praise God, through Jesus, in any and all circumstances.

This passage not only calls us to continually offer a sacrifice of praise, but it also calls us to make a sacrifice

of service, doing good works and sharing with others. I have found that it is easier to praise God in my circumstances when I am making a sacrifice of service for the benefit of others. That is particularly true when I am serving those whose circumstances are worse than mine. Make a sacrifice of service and it will not be such a sacrifice to praise Him. Try it I think you will like it.

Prayer: I praise you for grace and ask for grace to serve others.

Message: It is by faith that the grace of God is released to us and it is by faith we continue to live in grace. The longer we live in grace and the more mature our faith becomes the easier it is to praise God, through Jesus, in any and all circumstances.

Affirmation: When times are good I praise God. When times are not so good I praise God because I know the hard times are preparing the soil of my heart to be thankful in the good times.

Reflection: Are there circumstances in your life which make it difficult to praise God? In those times praising God becomes a sacrifice - but it is a sacrifice which pleases God. Think on it.

My Thoughts:

Day Fifteen

Jacob Praises God for Prosperity

Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, ‘Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,’ I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. – Genesis 32:9-10

Jacob had been on a long hard journey since God had given him the promise that his descendants would inherit the land. He had fallen in love with Rebecca and had been deceived by Laban, her father, and he married Leah the oldest sister.

He worked with his father-in-law for about 21 years total and God blessed him. When it was time to return to his homeland he had become a wealthy man.

Laban didn’t want to let him leave and Jacob had to sneak away with his wives, children and livestock. When Laban found out he was gone he pursued Jacob and finally overtook him. They made peace, but Jacob’s journey wasn’t yet over.

Word came to Jacob that Esau was preparing to meet him and he had 400 men with him ready for battle. Jacob is fearful for his life and the lives of his family. There is but one thing to do; he must separate himself from the chaos and pray.

Jacob begins his prayer by giving praise to God for the way he had bountifully blessed him. He is reminded of God’s promise to prosper him and make his descendants like the sand of the sea (v14), then he gets down to earnest prayer.

After spending the night wrestling with God in prayer, and as the day is breaking, Jacob cries out, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” That was when God changed his name from Jacob, the deceiver, to Israel, the prince.

It should be remembered that his prayer for favor began with giving God praise for how He had blessed him. We will be facing hard times on our journey of faith and when those times come we must face them with thanksgiving in our heart for the goodness and faithfulness of God and God will see us through.

Prayer: God, in the midst of trial give me a grateful heart. Amen.

Message: We will be facing hard times on our journey of faith and when those times come we must face them with thanksgiving in our heart for the goodness and faithfulness of God and God will see us through.

Affirmation: I may not be able to thank God *for* the hard times, but I can thank him *in* the hard times because I know that his blessings are bountiful and his desire is to bless me.

Reflection: Can you see a parallel between the life of Jacob and our lives today? We go through times of blessing and plenty, then we go through times of hardship and trial. Going through those times will show who we are on the inside. Who are you?

My Thoughts:

Day Sixteen

Overwhelmed With Thanksgiving

I will wash mine hands in innocence: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving and tell of all thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth. – Psalm 26:6-8 KJV

David was a master at writing songs of worship and thanksgiving which not only exalted the Lord God but celebrated the relationship we can have with God.

David seems to be saying that he washes his hands that he might appear before the Lord innocent and clean. Then he speaks of “compassing” the altar. What is meant we aren’t really certain, but it seems that he is making reference to moving about the altar, perhaps in a dance, singing songs of celebration.

We get the idea of singing praises from the statement, “That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving and tell of all thy wondrous works.”

I can almost see David dancing, for he was known to dance before the Lord, and singing as he worshipped the Lord giving thanks for all of His wondrous works.

As I read the accounts of the kind of worship and celebration Israel had when David who was not only a gifted king but also a gifted worshipper of the Lord God, I become a bit jealous. There are times I long for the chance to dance around the altar singing praising to my Lord.

Maybe we in the 21st century of Christianity have become just a bit too subdued. Too often we sing the songs of Zion with little enthusiasm and we would never think of singing at the top of our voices and we would

certainly never even think of breaking out in a dance. No, we are far too much in control to do such a thing.

Have we become so controlled, so subdued, that we cannot let our emotions flow and broadcast for the world to see and hear our thankfulness for the good things God has done?

Ah, but alas, I will return to worship next Sunday and be a good 21st Century Christian singing softly and praying quietly.

Prayer: God, give me the courage to sing and dance like David.

Message: Have we become so controlled, so subdued, that we cannot let our emotions flow and broadcast for the world to see and hear our thankfulness for the good things God has done?

Affirmation: I will compass the altar of worship offering praise and thanksgiving for the goodness, grace and mercy of the Lord.

Reflection: Give some thought to the idea of worshipping with abandon, not caring who sees or what they think. How would that look to you? How would you feel about being able to freely rejoice loudly and dance vigorously before the Lord?

My Thoughts:

Day Seventeen

Praising God Together Every Day

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God.

- Acts 2:46-47

The early days of the church were days of amazing grace and wonder. Jerusalem seemed filled with folks who had believed in Jesus and had been born into His kingdom.

There were all kinds of folks whose lives had been affected by the Christ. Some of them were from the rulers of the Jews, but most of them were just common folks who had believed in Jesus. Now, regardless of their station in life, they gathered in small groups in their homes to break bread and praise God.

Apparently they established a pattern early on. The pattern was that they “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (v42). Our verses today give a little more explanation to their pattern; they went daily to the temple courts for prayer then they went to their homes, apparently in groups, where they broke bread together and had a time of fellowship and praising God.

When I was very young there were several churches in our town with the name of “Revival Center.” These churches would have meetings nearly every night of the week with a parade of evangelists coming through. I remember that as a time of having a lot of fellowship with other believers.

We not only went to church together frequently we also had others to our house for dinner fairly regularly. Many of my fondest memories are of setting around the

table listening to mom and dad recite stories of healings and miracles which had happened in our family.

I'm afraid too many of us have gotten away from meeting together with other believers on a regular basis just to fellowship, break bread and praise God for his many wonderful works. Our lives are too busy and our interests too varied. It might be time to get back to celebrating our faith like those early believers did.

Prayer: Lord, help me to get back to the basics of fellowship, breaking bread and praising you frequently with others. Amen.

Message: Have we gotten away from meeting together with other believers on a regular basis just to fellowship, break bread and praise God for his many wonderful works? Our lives are too busy and our interests too varied. It might be time to get back to celebrating our faith like those early believers did

Affirmation: I purpose to daily find someone with whom to celebrate the walk of faith.

Reflection: Examine your life to see if you might have become too busy to daily share the wonderful works of the Lord with others. Begin to plan more times of gathering with other believers to fellowship, break bread, praise God and pray.

My Thoughts:

Day Eighteen

Watch and Pray

When Solomon had finished all these prayers... He stood and blessed the whole assembly of Israel in a loud voice, saying, "Praise be to the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised.

- 1 Kings 8:54-56

It was a glorious day for Israel. The temple Solomon built for the Lord had been completed. The Ark of the Covenant had been put in its' place in the Holy of Holies. Finally, centuries after Israel left Egypt, they had a magnificent home for their God.

The priests had brought the Ark of the Covenant from the old Tent of Meeting, the Tabernacle. Every step they took toward the Temple was marked by the offering of another sheep or bullock in sacrifice. On that day they offered so many sacrifices that they could not keep track of them all (1 Kings 8:5).

Not only were the people moved by the day, but so was God. Verses 10-11 read, "When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple."

After he had blessed the people and praised God, "Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven and [prayed]" (v22). This prayer is one of the most moving prayers in the Bible because he not only asks God to remember his promises but he also asks him to forgive the people when they have failed and turned back to him in repentance.

When he had finished praying Solomon stood before the people and said, “Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised... May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us. May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep the commands, decrees and regulations he gave our fathers” (v56-58).

Prayer: Lord, Give us a heart of thankfulness that we might, in our finest hour, give unqualified praise to you. Amen.

Message: “Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses. May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us. May he turn our hearts to him , to walk in all his ways and to keep the commands, decrees and regulations he gave our fathers”

Affirmation: My prayer for strength, courage and consistency is sprinkled with praise and thanksgiving for the goodness of God.

Reflection: Think about how you can praise and be thankful while seeking God for strength, courage and consistency.

My Thoughts:

Day Nineteen

Wholehearted Worship Inspires Faith

I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. – Psalm 9:1-2

Some scholars believe that this psalm was written after one of David's victories over the Philistines. In these first two verses David is praising God from the depth of his heart, then beginning in verse five he gives the cause of his praise; "My enemies turn back; they stumble and perish before you; For you have upheld my right and my cause."

David was a man of well documented weaknesses, but he was also a man of great faith. God calls him a man after His own heart, and so he was. David trusted God when he went into battle and when he had won he did not take credit for himself but rather gave God the glory.

He writes, "The Lord reigns forever, He has established His throne for judgment. He will judge the world in righteousness; He will govern the peoples with justice. The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you" (v7-10).

"Those who know your name will trust in you." The psalmist here is not just referring to those who have heard of the name of the Lord. He is speaking of those who "know" Him in a close and intimate kind of way, the way one knows a close relative or a dear friend. To know Him in that way is to trust Him because He is altogether trustworthy.

I pray that all of us who know Him and His name would have the kind of confidence that David had. That

his full trust was in God is evidenced when he faced the giant, Goliath, with only five stones and a sling.

Did God honor David's faith, prompting David to worship Him wholeheartedly, or did David worship God wholeheartedly and because of that God gave him great faith. Either way David worshipped. Wholehearted worship does inspire faith.

Prayer: God, grant me the heart of David to worship you. Amen.

Message: David speaks of those who "know" Him in a close and intimate kind of way, the way one knows a close relative or a dear friend. To know Him in that way is to trust Him because He is altogether trustworthy. I pray that all of us who know Him and His name would have the kind of confidence that David had.

Affirmation: I have met Him and I have learned His ways and now I can say I know Him as a dear friend.

Reflection: Think about how David gave in to his weaknesses at times, yet he knew how to repent and he knew how to worship with all of his heart.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty

Praising God for Being Strength and Shield

The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song. – Psalm 28:7

David is one of the most unique men in the Bible. He was a shepherd and he understood the role of shepherd as he shows us in the 23rd Psalm. When he said, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want” he was drawing from his experience with God and his experience as a shepherd.

As a poet and minstrel David was among the most gifted and anointed. Most of the psalms were written by him and because of those psalms we are given great insight into the nature of God.

David was also a warrior who understood who was actually in charge of the armies. When he went up against Goliath as just a youth he realized that the assault was not just against the armies of Israel, but Goliath was defying the Lord God. Knowing his God gave him the courage, and faith, to go up against this giant.

Now David is in another crisis. His son Absalom had risen up against him and rather than fight his own son David went into hiding. Many believe that David wrote this psalm while he was hiding from the armies of Absalom.

This incredible man, being chased from his palace by his own son, and in hiding, declares, “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to Him in song.”

How often have we gotten up to a rainy day only to complain that we can't do a certain thing because of the

rain. Or maybe someone has said something against us and we cannot do our job correctly because we are offended. We complain and cry, "Why me?" Lord.

There is a lesson we can learn from David. Even in the middle of the greatest trial we have ever faced, if God truly is our strength and our shield then we will trust him and like David our heart will leap within us as we anticipate his deliverance.

Prayer: Father God, help me to trust you in hard times just as I trust you in the easy times. In Jesus name.

Message: There is a lesson we can learn from David. Even in the middle of the greatest trial we have ever faced, if God truly is our strength and our shield then we will trust him and like David our heart will leap within us as we anticipate his deliverance.

Affirmation: The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.

Reflection: Can a warrior in hiding truly declare "The Lord is my strength and my shield?" David's faith was not just for deliverance but it was also for endurance. It is one thing to rejoice in deliverance and quite another to rejoice while enduring the trial.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty One

Receive God's Power

I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me. O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me. O Lord, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit. Sing to the Lord, you saints of his; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. – Psalm 30:1-5

How often does our life seem like one big pit that we stumbled into? Some years ago I read the title of a book and smiled. The title read, “If life is a bowl of cherries, why do I always get the pits?” It really does feel like that some times.

Not only is David making reference to a time of sickness when he thought he was going to die, but he seems to be implying that his sickness was from the Lord. This passage concludes with, “His anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime.” Could it be that the psalmist knew God had reason to be angry at him and that his sickness was evidence of that anger? We don’t really know, but it does look like it.

Most of us have been angry at someone we love at some point along the way and being angry we tend to withhold our favor from them for a period of time. On the rare occasion when my wife and I have an argument I find myself withdrawing from her emotionally. That only lasts a short time, but it’s there none the less. When my anger is over I revert back to expressing my love for her as I normally do.

It looks like what David is saying is he found that to be true about God. Our behavior may be so atrocious that it causes God to withhold his favor for a period of time as a discipline, but we know his anger only lasts for a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime.

There was a time many years ago when I was in crisis and it seemed all that was important to me was falling apart. I would bury my face in my pillow so no one could hear me and scream at God. I would cry myself to sleep. It was then that the words of this psalm became very real to me, “weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.”

Those nights passed, and a new morning did come to life. Have hope, it may be dark now, but morning is coming.

Prayer: I thank you Lord for the morning. Amen.

Message: Our behavior may be so atrocious that it causes God to withhold his favor for a period of time as a discipline, but we know his anger only lasts for a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime. The nights of angst will pass, and a new morning will come. Have hope, it may be dark now, but morning is coming.

Affirmation: I have reason to rejoice because in my darkest hour the Lord guided me into the light of hope in Christ.

Reflection: David seems to imply that his dark night may be a reprimand for his disobedience. Can you remember a time of need in your life and when you prayed about God brought to your mind a time of disobedience? There is hope in discipline.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Two

I Will Bless the Lord At All Times

I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.” – Psalm 34:1-3

It is believed that David wrote this psalm after he had escaped from Abimelech by feigning lunacy. David had stumbled into an enemy camp and would surely be put to death, but he got a sudden inspiration; he would pretend to be a lunatic, slobbering, speaking incoherently and stumbling as he went along.

Some wanted to kill him, but their fear of what might happen to them for harming a crazy person outweighed their desire to kill him. The king had his army take him out of their camp and send him on his way and David was spared.

Where did that thought come from that he should act crazy? David seems to be giving the credit to God. In verse four of this psalm he writes, “I sought the Lord, and he answered me; He delivered me from all my fears.” In his distress he called out to the Lord and the Lord gave him supernatural wisdom.

He goes on to write, “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and he delivers them” (v7). David had learned that regardless of how bleak the circumstances seem to be, God is dispatching angels to deliver us. All we have to do is call on Him and trust him.

Unfortunately we are more apt to feel desperation than faith when faced with severely adverse circumstances. I don't know about you but the last thing I would think of is acting crazy to cause my enemies to fear killing me. Sometimes God's remedy to a situation is

craziness to the world but it will make perfect sense in the spirit.

David concludes this psalm by declaring, “The Lord redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him” (v22). Remember this promise and use every occasion to extol, or bless, the Lord and to put His praise on our lips at all times.

Prayer: Lord, Help me to trust you in every crisis and to always have a praise to you on my lips. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Sometimes God’s remedy to a situation is craziness to the world but it will make perfect sense in the spirit. David concludes this psalm by declaring, “The Lord redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him” (v22). Remember this promise and use every occasion to extol, or bless, the Lord and to put His praise on our lips at all times.

Affirmation: I have found that trusting God in the most difficult of circumstances produces the most amazing results.

Reflection: Trusting God and rejoicing in the most trying times is a mark of faith. Can you rejoice in your trial?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Three

I Will Yet Praise Him

Why are you downcast O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. – Psalm 42:5

This is one of my favorite psalms. It speaks of hope in the deepest despair. It is believed that David wrote this psalm when Absalom, his son, was trying to overthrow his thrown and David was hiding from him.

At the beginning of the psalm he writes, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.” We get the picture of deer being chased by hounds and thirsty for a cool stream, but it cannot stop or it will be caught.

In anguish he cries out, “so my soul pants for you, O God.” He knows God, is hungry for God, and he wonders why God isn’t coming to his aid. He further expresses his angst as he writes, “My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’”

He remembers the good times, the times when he led the procession bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to the house of God. No doubt tears of longing course down his cheeks as he remembers the joy of that day. There was shouting and dancing as all Israel rejoiced and gave thanks on that joyous occasion.

Now there is no joy, only longing. There is no victory, just the sting of desperation. Yet, in the midst of this great sorrow of being dethroned by his own son he writes, “Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”

David had the kind of faith that trusted God even in the face his greatest trial. There is a lesson here for us. The times never get so bad and the circumstances so stressful that we cannot pause to give thanks to God for all he has done and to praise his name.

How are things in your life? Have the circumstances made it difficult to praise Him with a thankful heart? Have your disappointments been so great and your hurts so deep that your tears have been your respite? My friend, take heart. Put your hope in God above the circumstances and when the dust settles you will find that he came through just in time.

Prayer: Lord, sometimes it feels like the hounds of hell are yapping at my feet. Give me the grace to praise you in those difficult times. Amen.

Message: How are things in your life? Have the circumstances made it difficult to praise Him with a thankful heart? Have your disappointments been so great and your hurts so deep that your tears have been your respite? My friend, take heart. Put your hope in God above the circumstances and when the dust settles you will find that he came through just in time.

Affirmation: When I can praise God in the most difficult circumstances my thankfulness is richer and my faith grows deeper.

Reflection: Remember the times when God came through just in time and reflect on his faithfulness.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Four

Give Thanks to God Who Bears Our Burdens

Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens. Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death.

- Psalm 68:19-20

God is the great burden bearer. Jesus said, "Come to me all of you who bear great burdens. My burdens are light and my yoke is easy" (Matthew 11:28-30). David is reminding us in this psalm that God, our savior, is our burden bearer.

Few in life carry burdens heavier than the fatherless, the widow and the orphans. David knew that and wrote, "Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol him who rides on the clouds - his name is the Lord - and rejoice before him. A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling" (v4-5).

Some time ago I began visiting with a couple who live not too far from me. When I met them they seemed to be under a heavy attack from the enemy of their soul. They both have physical issues and struggle with emotional stress caused by their physical condition and economic need.

Week by week as I have visited with them I have been encouraged as I have seen the hand of God lifting them up and giving them courage to face the things that had stressed them.

They already had a faith when I met them, but they needed someone to come by and remind them that God was in control and everything was going to be all right.

There are others I visit who don't live in that hope. Each time I stop by it seems their life has become more difficult and they seem to be slipping deeper into despair.

Those folks have not yet realized that Jesus is the great burden bearer.

I have found that the greater a persons' need the more God desires to be their answer. The heavier the burden the stronger his call, "Come to me all you who carry heavy burdens." Yet, there are so many who insist on bearing it alone.

Be thankful that you know a God who is your burden bearer and who will help you through every trying situation. Have hope, look up, "from the Sovereign Lord comes escape."

Prayer: Thank you Lord for being my burden bearer. Amen.

Message: The greater a persons' need the more God desires to be their answer. The heavier the burden the stronger his call, "Come to me all you who carry heavy burdens." Be thankful that you know a God who is your burden bearer and who will help you through every trying situation.

Affirmation: I daily take my burdens to the Lord and leave them there because my God is a God who saves me from myself.

Reflection: Give some thought to the difference between those who do have hope in Christ and those who do not have hope in Christ. What differences can you see?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Five

Enduring Weariness and Discouragement

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of Lords: His love endures forever. – Psalm 136:1-3

It would have been a wonderful experience to be at the temple when psalms like Psalm 136 were being recited. This psalm is an antiphonal psalm. A lead voice would recite, “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good,” and the congregation would respond, “His love endures forever.” I can almost hear them now.

The psalmist calls the people to remember that the sovereign God alone made the heavens and “spread out the earth upon the waters” (v5-6). His love endures forever.

He delivered his people from Egypt, “divided the Red Sea asunder... and brought Israel through the midst of it... but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea. His love endures forever” (v13-15).

He led his people through the desert, “struck down great kings... and killed mighty kings... and gave their land as an inheritance... an inheritance to his servant Israel; His love endures forever” (v16-22).

He is “the One who remembered us in our low estate... and freed us from our enemies... and who gives food to every creature. Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever” (v23-26).

This psalm has again inspired me to remember how God has worked in my own family. As a child I have been kept up late into the night on many occasions as I listened to my parents recite the blessings of God to friends who were visiting.

I've heard my mom give praise to God for providing food and shelter when others were going without; for healing when there was no doctor available; and, yes, even bringing back to life those who were as dead. Many are the stories of faith and deliverance that have formed the basis for my faith and I cry out with great joy, "His love endures forever." Hallelujah!

Prayer: Help me to always remember your love and grace. Amen.

Message: I've heard my mom give praise to God for providing food and shelter when others were going without; for healing when there was no doctor available; and, yes, even bringing back to life those who were as dead. Many are the stories of faith and deliverance that have formed the basis for my faith and I cry out with great joy, "His love endures forever." Hallelujah!

Affirmation: The faith inspired by the testimony of others has given me courage to endure the trials of life.

Reflection: Take some time to reflect on the times God has spared you, or delivered you, and be thankful that his mercy and love endure forever.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Six

Thankfulness for Revelation

I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king. - Daniel 2:23

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had a disturbing dream and he was seeking someone to interpret it for him. He had many wise men, astrologers and interpreters of dreams and he called them to come interpret his dream. That was not an uncommon thing, but this request was uncommon.

Nebuchadnezzar not only wanted to know the meaning of the dream he wanted the interpreters to first tell him what the dream was. All of his wise men told him that it was impossible they said, "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks!" (v10). The penalty for not being able to do this was death.

When Daniel found out what the king wanted he went to the king to ask for time to interpret the dream. He then returned to his home and called together his three friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (You might remember them from another story). The four of them held a prayer meeting and God revealed the dream to Daniel.

Daniel then began to give praise and thanksgiving to God: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever, wisdom and power are his... He reveals deep and hidden things." (v20-23).

A key to getting revelation knowledge from God is seeking his face for answers. The fate of Daniel and his friends would have been considerably different if they had not have taken the issue before the Lord and made it matter of earnest prayer.

I think that one reason we do not have many answers from God is because we do not consistently seek him. And the reason we find it difficult to be thankful is the same. We're not thankful because we have no revelation and we have no revelation because we do not consistently seek him.

Are you looking for direction? Seek Him for revelation - seek him until revelation comes the praise him for the answer.

Prayer: I thank and praise you Lord for revealing you will. Amen.

Message: A key to getting revelation knowledge from God is seeking his face for answers. One reason we do not have many answers from God is because we do not consistently seek him. And the reason we find it difficult to be thankful is the same. We're not thankful because we have no revelation and we have no revelation because we do not consistently seek him.

Affirmation: God reveals his plans and his will for me because I have learned to seek him for revelation.

Reflection: Have you found yourself trying to figure out your next move, considering the options and the consequence of each option, then, realizing that you haven't yet considered what God has to say on the subject? Think about it.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Seven

A Grateful King

King Nebuchadnezzar, To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world: May you prosper greatly! It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation. – Daniel 4:1-4

Nebuchadnezzar had built an image, perhaps it was a representation of himself, and commanded that the entire nation bow before the image and give homage. You probably know well the story of the three Hebrew princes, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who refused to bow and worship the god Nebuchadnezzar had made.

I love the response these three men gave when the king threatened to throw them into the furnace:

“O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Daniel 3:16-18).

You know the end of the story. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire without even a hair singed. It was this miraculous sign which caused Nebuchadnezzar to declare the Lord God to be the official God of his kingdom.

Our world and our nation is in a horrible state. We live in a time when evil is called good and good is called evil. We need men and women in the kingdom of God who have the spirit of these three Hebrew men who will stand before men and

declare, “Our God is able to deliver, but if he doesn’t, we still will not bow before the gods of this world.”

Perhaps the key to the leaders of the land turning back to God is for those who claim to be believers to take a stand and declare openly their faith in the Lord God and refuse to bow before political correctness, and who refuse to bless those who disrespect the morality and faith handed down to us through the blood of martyrs for centuries.

Prayer: Lord, grant me grace to stand for you and righteousness before this generation so that they will know that the Lord, he is God. Amen.

Message: Perhaps the key to the leaders of the land turning back to God is for those who claim to be believers to take a stand and declare openly their faith in the Lord God and refuse to bow before political correctness, and who refuse to bless those who disrespect the morality and faith handed down to us through the blood of martyrs for centuries.

Affirmation: I will stand on the solid rock of Scriptural truth and declare the righteousness of God.

Reflection: The message of these three young Hebrews is that when you stand upon your convictions, not considering the cost, you will have an effect upon the world around you.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Eight

Sanity Lost Then Found

At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. - Daniel 4:34

God had shown Nebuchadnezzar sign after sign to convince him that there was but one God. There was the first dream Daniel interpreted for him, the fiery furnace experience, and then another vision that Daniel interpreted. After several declarations of his commitment to the God of Daniel, he still had pride.

Daniel had interpreted a dream as prophetic that the king would be driven out into wilderness to live as a wild animal until he fully acknowledged “that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men” (25).

A year after he was given that prophecy, “as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my Majesty?” (v29-30).

“The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, ‘This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar. Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle... until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.’ Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled” (v31-33).

It took seven years of living like a wild animal before this king raised his eyes to heaven and declared the Most High to be sovereign over heaven and earth.

There is a lesson here for all of us. We must live with the sure knowledge that all we have, all we are, and all we ever hope to be, is given us by the grace of God alone. Anything less than a heart committed to that principle will open us to pride and cause us to miss God's best for us. Let's learn from Nebuchadnezzar.

Prayer: God, give me the grace to always acknowledge you as Lord.

Message: We must live with the sure knowledge that all we have, all we are, and all we ever hope to be, is given us by the grace of God alone. Anything less than a heart committed to that principle will open us to pride and cause us to miss God's best for us.

Affirmation: All that I have and all that I am I owe to God for it is only by his amazing grace that I have been blessed.

Reflection: The story of Nebuchadnezzar is a warning to all of us. If we don't acknowledge the Lord God as the ruler of the universe we stand in danger of being chastened as Nebuchadnezzar was chastened. Think about it.-

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Nine

Thankful That He Found Me Faithful

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to His service. - 1 Timothy 1:12

Many years ago I heard a preacher say that he hoped when he died the Lord looked at him like a well cooked pancake and says, "Well done good and faithful servant." I'm not sure I want God to look at me like a pancake, but I do want to be found faithful.

Paul was a mighty man of God who influenced the world in the first century. In a short span of time, probably no more than 35 years, he traversed most of the known world making three missionary journeys, each lasting years; he wrote nearly half of the New Testament and established churches on three continents.

What did Paul have to say about himself in all of this? "I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man" (v13). As a servant of the established religion of the Jews he was there at the martyrdom of the deacon Stephen. He persecuted the church with a vengeance. By his own confession he was a violent man.

Then he found grace. "I was shown mercy... The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus" (v14). In ignorance he persecuted the church, but once his eyes were opened to the grace of God he showed himself faithful.

God gave this former blasphemer, this former persecutor, this former violent man, a clear understanding of Grace. He writes, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the worst.

But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life” (v15-16).

Paul, the worst of sinners, is proof that the grace of God extends to all who will receive it. When he calls us he only asks for two things: we must respond to his call for grace to be released to us and we must be faithful. And O yes, be thankful.

Prayer: Lord, I am thankful that you have given me grace. Amen.

Message: When God calls us he only asks for two things: we must respond to his call for grace to be released to us and we must be faithful. And O yes, be thankful.

Affirmation: My hope is that God will find me faithful and will receive me into glory.

Reflection: Only God can take a blasphemer like Saul and turn him into an apostle like Paul, but that is exactly what he did. And, God is not finished transforming men and women into mighty warriors of the cross. And all he asks of us is that we be found faithful. Are you ready to receive that?

My Thoughts:

Day Thirty

Always Giving Thanks to God

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. – Ephesians 5:19-20

In this fifth chapter of his letter to the church at Ephesus Paul is giving instructions concerning the walk of the believer. In fact, he seems to be describing what our faith walk should be. Take a look at some of the things he says:

- ✓ Be imitators of God (v1)
- ✓ Live a life of love (v2)
- ✓ With no hint of immorality (v3)
- ✓ Do not be deceived with empty words (v6)
- ✓ Live as children of light (v8)
- ✓ Find out what pleases the Lord (v10)
- ✓ Have nothing to do with the deeds of darkness (v11)
- ✓ Be very careful how you live (v15)
- ✓ Do not get drunk on wine (v18)
- ✓ Be filled with the Spirit (v18)

That is a lot of instruction in a very short span of words.

He concludes these remarks on Christian lifestyle by calling the believers to fellowship and worship. He says, “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” When we are together for fellowship or for worship, our conversation should be about spiritual things. His instruction here is that there is a lot of good news to talk about so don’t muddy the waters of fellowship with bad news.

If we are singing and making music in our heart to the Lord we will always be giving thanks to God. Many times

through the day I am singing praises to God and often I'll just offer him a praise like, "I love you Jesus," "Your so good to me," "Thank you for your grace and mercy." In the process of establishing a lifestyle that is pleasing to the Lord Paul is telling us to include praise and thanksgiving.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for all that you have done and are doing.

Message: If we are singing and making music in our heart to the Lord we will always be giving thanks to God. In the process of establishing a lifestyle that is pleasing to the Lord Paul is telling us to include praise and thanksgiving.

Affirmation: I am often praising God and thanking him for his goodness.

Reflection: This entire month of devotions has been on being thankful to God for who he is and what he has done. I encourage you to practice being thankful throughout the day. You don't have to wait until a time you have set aside to pray just begin to worship and praise him as you drive along, are walking, when you go to bed, when you rise up... At all times have a praise and thanksgiving in your heart.

My Thoughts:
