



**Monthly Devotional  
October 2024**



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## ***ENJOY HIS PRESENCE***

*Psalm 16:11*

*During the life of Jesus on earth, the word He chiefly used when speaking of the relations of the disciples to Himself was, "Follow me" [Matt. 4:19]. But when He ascended to heaven, He gave them a new word, in which their more intimate and spiritual union with Him in glory would be expressed. That chosen word was, "Abide in me."*

*Getting comfortable with God does not mean being disrespectful; it means that we do not have to be afraid of Him. The ultimate call of every believer's life is to enjoy God because He is life, and we can't truly enjoy life if we don't enjoy God.*

***Enjoy being in His presence!***

***God bless you!***

***Dr. Dwight C. Jones , Senior Pastor***

***Dr. Derik E. Jones, Pastor***



WHEN YOU ENTER  
HIS PRESENCE  
WITH PRAISE,  
HE ENTERS YOUR  
CIRCUMSTANCES  
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## There Is A Wind Is Blowing

Read John 6:63

*“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing...” [NIV]*

There is a wind blowing – do you feel it? We have been given a wonderful gift from God -- The Holy Spirit. He became our source of power for living when we received Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. So when you became a Christian, he came to live within you and Jesus promised that He will never leave you. He promised the disciples before He departed that He would send the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth and He will give them the power they needed to continue His work on earth. That promise is still good for us today.

As John speaks to in this text today, the Holy Spirit not only came to indwell you, but He imparted to you spiritual life, causing you to be born anew as a child of God, because the flesh counts for nothing. So, how can you continue to be filled? ***Walk by the spirit.*** The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, and they oppose each other and keep you from doing the things you want to do or should not do.

***Experience great joy in God.*** The bible teaches that “the joy of the Lord is your strength” in **Nehemiah 8:10**. It also means there will be power in this joy for overcoming besetting sins and for boldness in witness. Let your prayer breath be, Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me. (**Psalm 42:2**).

**Thought for today: Feel the wind of His presence!**

## Resting In His Presence

Read Exodus 33:14

*“And the Lord said, My Presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.” (NLT)*

This was God’s reply to Moses when he asked about the particulars of the mission he had been given and how he could get to know God better. God simply assured Moses that His presence would be with him and give him rest. This was considered by God to be a great privilege. To Him, it was all that Moses needed.

What was true for Moses is true for you. As much as you would like to know God’s plans and ways for you, all you really need to know is that His presence will be with you wherever He sends you and in whatever He gives you to do.

So when you get concerned that things aren’t going the way you think they should, just remember that God’s presence is with you and enjoy the rest He promised to give you. Thought for today — Do you want to be a spiritually emotional baby? If not, then let patience have a perfect work in you.

***Thought for today: Make a decision today to let go of your anxiety, fear, and doubt, and believe on the promise that God will never leave you or forsake you!***

*Resource: Joyce Meyer Devotions*

## Resting Upon The Rock

**Read Isaiah 26:4**

*“Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.” (NLV)*

Seeing that we have such a God to trust, let us rest upon Him with all our weight; let us resolutely drive out all unbelief and endeavor to get rid of doubts and fears, which spoil our comfort, since there is no excuse for fear when God is the foundation of our trust. A loving parent would be sorely grieved if his child could not trust him; and how ungenerous, how unkind is our conduct when we put so little confidence in our heavenly Father, who has never failed us and who never will.

It would be good if doubting was banished from the household of God; but it is to be feared that old unbelief is as nimble today as when the psalmist asked, “Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable?” You may have been in many trials, but have never yet been placed where you could not find in God all that you needed.

Let us then be encouraged to trust in the Lord forever, assured that His ever-lasting strength will be, as it has been, our deliverance and comfort.

***Thought for today: Praise God for his steadfast love and ever-lasting strength.***

*Resource: C. Spurgeon/A. Begg rev.; “Morning and Evening”*

## Give Abundantly

**Read 2 Corinthians 9:16-13**

*“Remember this, a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop.. God loves the person who gives cheerfully...” (ESV)*

Your life on earth is like planting a garden, and the kinds of seed you plant on earth are going to harvest in heaven. If you plant a lot of seeds, you are going to have a lot of fruit in heaven. But the other side of that coin is, if you plant sparingly, and hold back and don't give, you will reap sparingly.

Five times in the Bible Jesus gives the same command about storing up treasure in heaven. Anytime God says something five times, He is really wants you to get this. How do you do that? By planting seeds of generosity — not just money but by helping others, serving in God's kingdom, giving of your time, talent, and using your spiritual gifts in the Body of Christ.

There are two promises that God makes in Luke 6:38; “Give, and it will be given back to you. You will be given much. It will be poured into your hands — more than you can hold. You will be given so much that it will spill into your lap. The way you give to others is the way God will give to you” (ESV).

**Thought for today: God loves a cheerful giver!**

## Miracles

Read Romans 4:17

*“Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.” (NLT)*

There are certain dead-end words in life: cancer, divorce, bankruptcy, and unemployment, to name a few. How do you know when you're at a dead end? You know it when things get out of your control.

When you are at a dead end and waiting for deliverance, remember this: the situation may be out of your control, but it's not out of God's control. When you face a dead end, don't focus on what you can't do. Focus instead on what God can do.

There are two things God can do that you can't do. He can bring the dead back to life and create new things out of nothing (Romans 4:27). If God can give life to a dead man, He can bring life to a dead career, marriage, or health. He can bring life to a dead dream and a financial end.

When you face things that are out of control, it will take more than just a positive attitude — it takes faith in God because He can control things when you can't.

The Bible says what is impossible with men is possible with God. Count it all joy in a God who can turn crucifixions into resurrections.

**Thought for today: God specializes in the impossible, it's called “miracles,” and He can do one in your life! God is ready to turn your dead end into deliverance.**

## Bless Those Who Curse You...What?

Read Luke 6:27-28

*“But I tell you who hear Me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” ((NIV))*

Does it encourage you when you know somebody's praying for you? Paul is praying for all of the Believers in Philippi and he does it with a heart full of joy! When you pray for others — do it with joy! But what about the folks who just irritate you or seem to rub you the wrong way? Choose to pray for them too — rather than complain, grumble and nitpick. Jesus said to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. This is a requirement of God's children (*Matthew 5:44*).

When you pray more, you complain less. Nagging does not work, but prayer does. So why do more of the thing that does not work — than does. Paul says, “I pray for you with a heart full of joy.” You cannot change people, but you can pray and leave it up to God. What should you pray for? Pray what Paul prayed in verses 9-11 in that first chapter. His prayer was that the Philippians will grow in love; will make wise choices; will live with integrity; and that they will become more like Jesus.

**Thought for today: You can pray this same prayer for your children, friends, family, pastors, co-workers, supervisor, other believers and your spouse, and yes, your enemies! Paul says when you pray for others, your joy will grow more and more.**

## Bring Out The Best In People

### Read Philippians 1:6

*“Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (NIV)*

Paul is a pro at bringing out the best in people, even while in prison. In his letter to the church at Philippi, he says to them that he is confident of the Lord’s grace and power to rest upon them as believers in Christ to finish carrying out the gospel message and live their lives in faith, until Jesus comes back again. Paul also adds that until that day comes, he expects the best from them because of Christ. When people expect the best of you, you tend to do better.

How can you bring out the best in people? Paul offers this advice. The first thing Paul suggests is that you **believe in people**. He gave the Philippians confidence and encouragement to hold on to their faith in spite of being persecuted for their belief. Second, **give people vision**. The vision Paul gave to this church was that no matter what they were going through now, they were going to keep growing. And, finally, **be patient with people**. Paul recognized that nobody’s perfect, and if you expect perfection in people, then you will be disappointed.

**Thought for today: Celebrate how far people in your life have come, and don’t judge them for how far they still have to go.**

## Hope In The Dark

### Read Lamentations 3:21-24

*“Yet hope returns when I remember this one thing: The Lord’s unfailing love and mercy still continue...” (TEV)*

Pain is a natural part of life. You can’t escape it. Broken relationships, and rough seasons will always be with you. When they come, you can either become bitter or hopeful. The choice is yours.

Jeremiah faced the same choice. When his world came apart, the prophet wrote the book of Lamentations to share his honest frustrations with God. But he didn’t settle in his bitterness. After sharing his bitter feelings, he wrote these verses.

It’s healthy and good to be honest with God about your feelings, but eventually, you have to change your perspective. As long as your mind is on your pain, you won’t solve anything. Instead, like Jeremiah, you need to recognize God’s unfailing love and mercy for you. No matter what the problem, no matter how much anger you’ve spread at God, He still loves you, and that will never change.

The longer you focus on what depresses you, the longer your depression will last. Bitterness will keep you caught in your own pain. Jeremiah gives a simple cure for bitterness...”Yet hope returns...”

**Thought for today: You have hope in your darkest seasons by remembering that the Lord’s unfailing love and mercy still continue.” Count it all joy!**

## What's The Prize!

**Read 1 Corinthian 9:24**

***“In a race everyone runs, but only one person wins the prize. So run your race to win!” (ESV)***

Athletes know that it takes discipline to become great at what you are doing. There are no shortcuts. You don't become great by doing whatever you feel. Especially Olympian athletes. They pretty much put their life on hold and adhere to rigid schedules. In order to be intentional like an athlete in the race of life, you too must make some sacrifices and discipline yourself.

God wants you to win and not be a loser. The first thing you learn from an athlete is that you must intend to win. Winning in life has got to be intentional. You need to set goals and make every effort to reach them.

What's the prize? Greater reward and responsibility in eternity. You do it for an eternal reward. 1 Timothy 6:12 says, “Run your best race of faith, and win eternal life for yourself; for this is the life that God called you to when you professed your faith before many witnesses” (ESV).

You may have goofed off in your earlier life, but count it all joy that you can work on making the rest of your life to be the best, to make it count. So make a decision to be a committed Christian and from now on run your best race of faith. There is a reward at the end!

**Thought for today. You don't need will power, but God's power to stay focused on His reward.**

## Rest In God's Divine Plan

**Read Philippians 1:12**

*“I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters that everything that has happened to me has helped spread the Good News.” (NLT)*

No matter what's going on in your life — the good, the bad and the ugly, God is working out a plan. He even takes all of your mistakes and puts them into His plan. God can use them too for His Glory. Paul knew this, so he wrote this verse to direct attention from yourself, and to look at God's bigger picture. When you look at life from God's viewpoint, you have a bigger world view. If you don't look at it from God's view, you can become discouraged, frustrated, and unhappy.

When Paul became a Christian on the road to Damascus, he did not dream of being in prison. His goal was to preach in a big arena — in Rome, which was a powerful city in his day. But God had a different plan and path for Paul. God allowed Paul to go to Rome, but as a prisoner. While in prison, Paul was able to witness to the royal household. He also witnessed to the palace guards for two years while they were chained to him twenty-four hours a day. And they changed guards every four hours. If you add up the math over a two-year period, he witnessed to over 4,000 guards! Even members of the royal family had become believers. Paul did not spend a dull moment while chained, but continued to spread the gospel, even in adverse conditions.

**Thought for today: If you are disappointed in the way things turned out in your life, look through the eyes of faith.**

## The Joy Of His Presence

### Read Philippians 1:19

*“I will continue to rejoice, for I know that as you pray for me and as the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, all that happened will turn out for my deliverance.” (NLT)*

Paul was happy to hear that the Saints in Philippi were praying for him as he expressed in verse 19. This brought Him assurance, comfort and encouragement, but most of all the joy of God’s presence through the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Paul also teaches us the things we should be praying about for each other. He prays for spiritual insight which is more important than asking for more stuff we really don’t need. For example, in Ephesians 1:17 Paul says that when you pray for others, pray that He [God] will grant a spirit of wisdom and revelation to His people. Revelation means to “uncover,” and believers need to ask God to uncover the truths of His word to better understand how to pray for self and others. This verse also tells us to pray for a spirit of wisdom — spiritual insight and understanding. When God helps you understand the truth, He makes it so real to you that nothing can ever take it away. Pray as Paul taught for revelation and a spirit of wisdom. And you too will experience the presence of His joy through Jesus Christ.

**Thought for today: Take a break from asking God for things and instead ask Him for more of his presence in your life.**

## Not Broken

### Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

*“We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we’re not crushed and we’re not broken...” (NLT)*

Faith doesn’t always take you out of the problem, but it can take you through the problem. Faith doesn’t always take away the pain, but Faith gives you the ability to handle the pain. Faith doesn’t take you out of the storm, but it calms you in the storm.

Paul describes these things perfectly in the scripture verses today. He says, “There is joy in knowing that even though you may be pressed on every side by trouble, or crushed, you are not broken because you can get up and keep on going and growing through faith,”

Often, the first thing you do in an adverse situation is worry and become anxious. Even the disciples got anxious when they saw that the thousands of people following Jesus needed food. How are we going to feed all these people, they might have asked Jesus. Had they forgotten that they were standing in the presence of the Son of God? He simply says to them, “You feed them” (Mark 6). Jesus wanted to stretch their faith and that is what He wants to do with you—stretch your faith to do the impossible.

Your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything (James 1:3-4).

**Thought for today: God always has the answer before you even know the problem.**



## Unrelenting Joy

Read Job 6:8-10

*“...Then I would still have this consolation  
— my joy in unrelenting pain...” (NIV)*

Job’s pain is relentless. Escape from life seems like the best or only option. Yet he leaves his fate entirely up to his Creator. As much as he would like to be done with the agony his life has become, he doesn’t consider ending it himself.

While he suffers day after day, he doesn’t even pretend to hope that things will get better, nor can he find a reason for rejoicing in his trials. His only consolation is in believing that, in spite of everything, he has not brought dishonor to the God he loves. He has cursed the day he was born even life itself, but he has not cursed God.

Job remained steadfast in his faith. When you suffer, you can gain encouragement and strength as you endure anguish without having to deny your faith or taking fate into your own hands. Trust in God with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. Acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He will direct your path (Proverbs 3:6).

**Thought for today: In the face of unexplainable suffering, you can humbly admit that you do not know all that is in God’s mind, but you can always pray rather than try to fix things yourself.**

## God’s Presence in Trials

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18

*“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (NIV)*

You can enjoy God’s presence even more when you learn to cultivate a heart of thankfulness. Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Give thanks no matter what happens. God wants you to thank Him because you believe in Christ Jesus. You are to give thanks in all things, not some things,” and that’s what Paul is saying in this verse.

Does that mean I am thankful when my car gets totaled? Well, you can be thankful that you were not hurt. What about the really tough things in life like losing a job, a home, sickness, or the death of a loved one? Thankfulness? Seriously?

Christians are good at saying the right “spiritual” thing in such circumstances. However, it is harder to have a thankful heart in the hard circumstances. God is not saying be thankful that something awful has happened. He knows you are human; you get hurt, and sometimes may even lose hope. But He is saying to trust Him while going through and give thanks in the face of your pain. It is then that you can rest in His presence during your season of suffering.

Your sadness may last for a time, but joy and peace will come in the morning [Ps. 30:3].

**Thought for today: We serve a great God. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present.**

## The Presence Of His Fruit

Read **Philippians 1:10-11**

*"...That you will be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." (NKJV)*

What fruit is Paul talking about? He is talking about the Fruit of the spirit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. It is the perfect picture of Jesus. Literally, the "fruit of the Spirit" is what happens when the Holy Spirit indwells a believer. The "fruit" is the product of the Holy Spirit's cultivation of character in your heart. Galatians 5:22-23 describes what that fruit looks like, and the second characteristic listed is joy.

What is joy? The Greek word for joy is *chara*. Joy is the natural reaction to the work of God, whether promised or fulfilled. Joy expresses God's kingdom—His influence on earth (Romans 14:17). The Spirit's product of joy can manifest in several different ways:

**(1) The joy of deliverance; (2) The joy of spiritual maturity; and (3) The joy of God's presence.**

When you yield to the Spirit, God opens your eyes to His grace around you and fills you with joy (Romans 15:13). Joy cannot be found in the world; it is only fellowship with God that can make your joy complete (1 John 1:4).

**Thought for today: Be filled with the presence of His Fruit.**

## Will You Rob God?

Read **Malachi 3:6-12**

*"...Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty..." (NIV)*

Anyone who has ever been robbed knows how invasive that experience is. What belongs to you is taken away by someone who did nothing to earn it and who has no right to it. So, how do you think it makes God feel when you rob Him?

God says you have robbed me with your tithes and offerings. His children hoard for themselves what truly belongs to Him. ***"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" Ps. 24:1.*** And worst of all, the heartfelt love that should be behind each gift is absent. But count it all joy that God is so loving and amazing that behind this, "if" He offers a promise of blessing — greater than you can imagine, if you will only give back what is His in tithes and offerings.

It does not matter how poor or rich you are, the same pouring out of blessing is offered. Don't rob the Almighty God and miss out on this double blessing that is yours. Make a commitment right now to bring your tithes and offerings into His house.

**Thought for today: Giving your money to the Lord is one way you die to self.**

## What's In Your Heart?

Read Jeremiah 17:9-10

*"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?..." (NKJV)*

Scripture clearly teaches that the real issues of life are spiritual and are really matters of the heart, the inner man. Maybe it's for this reason the word "heart" is found so many times in the Bible. You, cannot attain a heart that is morally pure and fully devoted to God on your own. The verse in Jeremiah is a reminder that the heart is deceitful. So is there any hope for you to have a clean heart then? Yes!

Since the heart is so important to what you think, say, and do, you need to regularly do open heart surgery with the scalpel of the Word under the guiding hand of the great physician, the Lord Jesus. You can accomplish this through the teaching, guiding, convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. Like a sharp two-edged sword, the Word divides the inner man asunder to reveal the true condition and needs of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

What is impossible for man is possible for God. A pure heart is a gift from God, and it comes by a new birth, by a new creation, and by the Spirit living in you. God had promised in the Old Testament through the prophet Jeremiah, "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33), and "I will give them singleness of heart and action" (Jeremiah 32:39). This was finally fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ, Who makes us a new creation with a new heart (2 Corinthians 5:17).

**Thought for today: Spend time in God's Word to maintain the purity of your heart.**

## Focus In A New Direction

Read Philippians 3:12-14

*"...I press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward." (NIV)*

If you have been miserable because of the things that have happened in your past, be encouraged and set your focus in a new direction. Determine to be what God wants you to be, to have what God wants you to have, and to receive what Jesus died to give you.

When you feel discouraged, say, "I am not going to live in bondage anymore. I cannot do anything about what I have done in the past, but I can do something about my future. I am going to enjoy my life and have what Jesus died for me to have. I am going to let go of the past and go on pursuing God from this day forth!"

You will discover that you can become a joyful Christian filled with God's presence, by following these three Habits of Happiness:

- (1) **Happiness is not a goal.** It is the result of right thinking, living, and right acting.
- (2) **Your habits create your happiness.** How you shape your habits create the habits of happiness in your life.
- (3) **Build your happiness by developing good habits that are long-lasting.** Happiness becomes temporary if it is based on "happenings." As soon as the occasion is over, you lose your happiness.

**Thought for today: Focusing in a new direction brings you peace, joy, and hope, in His presence.**

## God's Eternal Word

**Read Romans 14:17**

*"The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (KJV)*

If you were to sum up your life today, what truths would you want to emphasize to your family and friends? What regrets would you have?

There is one word from this verse I want to bring to your attention: joy. Paul was saying, "I am looking back on my life and on what I have done here. One word seems to sum it up well: joy" This word could be translated to say "exceedingly happy." This was a man who had a firsthand experience of suffering, hardship, and adversity. But in the midst of it all, he also experienced the joy of Christ bubbling up within him like an artesian well.

The fact of the matter is that the happy life is the holy life—the life that is lived for God. Joy is an operative word in the life of the Christian. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). And Jesus not only promises us life beyond the grave, but a dimension of life on this earth that is worth living.

**Thought for today: Let your life be summed up with joy in His presence.**

*Resource: Excerpts from Every Day With Jesus by Greg Laurie*

## Abide in Christ

**Read John 15: 1-17**

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener." (NIV)*

In John 15, Jesus describes himself as the true vine and his Father as the vinedresser. The true vine was a way to contrast Jesus with Old Testament Israel. The hearers would understand that he was saying that he was *the* Messiah and the fulfillment of the covenant because of the Old Testament references to a vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7; 27:2-6). To bear fruit simply means to grow in character — to become more like Christ and reflect the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

To abide in Jesus means to keep his commandments and to keep his commandments means to love God with all your heart and soul and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39). One way that you display your love for God is through your trust, prayer, and devotion to him. You abide through relationship. You pursue in love. You pray in love. You obey in love. The fruit that Jesus speaks of is simply evidence of a relationship with him. It is a relationship that He initiates through and by his sovereign love.

In this chapter, Jesus reminds us that there is no greater love than someone laying down his life for his friends. He then says, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:13).

**Thought for today: Enjoy abiding in His Presence everyday!**

## Holding Nothing Back

**Read Mark 14:1-11**

*“...a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on His [Jesus] head..” (NIV)*

A woman approaches Jesus and break an alabaster jar of expensive perfume. We know from John’s Gospel that the unnamed woman here is Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. She does not hold anything back as she pours all of the fragrant oil on Jesus head. The perfume she used comes from the nard plant, native to India and costing approximately a year’s salary for an average working person.

Jesus praises Mary’s act of extravagant, costly love and commends her deed as one that will be remembered wherever the gospel is preached. However, to some of those present, her actions seem foolish and wasteful. But Jesus sees a beautiful thing; he sees a complete outpouring of her love.

Do you count it all joy in giving God your best — or does He get leftovers? You can be like Mary if you are willing to break your most precious gift — the gift of yourself — and pour all you have before the savior.

Comedian Rodney Dangerfield was famous for his line, *“I don’t get no respect.”* But did he steal that line from the Lord? God says to His people, *“If I am a father, where is My honor? If I am a master, where is My respect?”* Don’t give God the leftovers. Give Him the best you’ve got! Make sure that He is great in your daily life!

**Thought for today: “Giving isn’t hard if we love the object of our gift...” Kent Crockett**

## You Are Set Free

**Read Romans 8:9**

*“But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you...” (NLT)*

The work of the Holy Spirit can be seen in the fruit of the lives of believers. As you yield to His work, you are co-laboring to be more like Christ. The joy in all of this is that the law of the Spirit supersedes the law of sin and death, and that is terrific news! If this good news ever made the front page of worldwide newspapers and people believed it, the world would be radically transformed and filled with joy!

You go through the motions of living day in and day out, but imagine being transformed by an understanding that Jesus Christ came to set you free from the law of sin and death. Not only that, but He sent His Holy Spirit to enable you to live out your new life in Christ, free from the bondage of sin! This is the good news of Jesus Christ, and this is the message to which Paul dedicated his life.

Do you find yourself in bondage to sin? Perhaps you are thinking of sin in terms of murder, stealing, fraud – but what about greed, anger, lying? All are sins and all make you subject to the law of death! Your life is filled with areas where you fall short of living in the freedom of obedience to God’s Word. Paul writes about the transforming power of God that sets you free from all sin.

**Thought for today: Enjoy the fact that believers are not controlled by sinful nature, but by the Spirit.**

## Don't Give Up

### Read Jeremiah 31:25

*"I will satisfy the weary soul, and every languishing soul I will replenish." (NKJV)*

In this age, Jesus grants us the gospel rest of ceasing the impossible labor of self-atonement for our sins (*II Corinthians 5:21*). But in embracing the gospel, we find ourselves also drafted into a war — a war to keep believing the gospel and a war to keep spreading it to others. In this age we “strive to enter that [complete] rest” of the age to come. Wars are exhausting — especially long ones. That’s why you are often tired. Many soldiers, who experience the fierceness of combat, want to get out of it. That’s why you’re tempted to escape. That’s why you’re tempted to give up. **But don't give up.** No, rather “take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded” (*II Chronicles 15:7*).

**Don't give up** when that familiar sin, still crouching at your door after all these years, pounces again with temptation. **Don't give up** when your long asked-and-sought-and-knocked-for prayers have not yet been answered. **Don't give up** when your reputation is damaged because you are trying to be faithful to Jesus.

So, look to Jesus (*Hebrews 12:2*), “fight the good fight of the faith” (*1 Timothy 6:12*), and finish your race (*2 Timothy 4:7*). When you have done the will of God, you will receive what is promised: his great and eternal reward (*Hebrews 10:35-36*).

**Thought for today: Never Give Up. Stay the course. Remember God has an eternal reward.**

## No Conflict Here

### Read Matthew 5:9

*"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God." (NIV)*

If someone were to ask you for a one-word description of what the gospel brings when persons repent and believe, there is little doubt that your response would be *salvation*. Certainly, this is an appropriate reply, for you are saved from the wrath of God when you put your faith in Christ Jesus (*1 Thess. 1:9-10*).

However, there is another answer to the question, and that is the word *peace*. After all, Paul refers to the gospel as the “gospel of peace” (*Eph. 6:15*), and he also says that having been justified by faith alone in Christ alone, you have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Rom. 5:1*). Being fully God, Christ Jesus represents the interests of His Father as the supreme Emisary sent to reveal God’s wrath against the sins of His people on the cross and God’s great love in giving His Son to die in your place.

Unlike Jesus, you cannot be mediators in the sense of redeeming others from sin. What you can do is imitate, however faintly, the Creator’s work of peacemaking by helping to bring about true and godly peace between warring parties who cross your path. In so doing, you prove that you are a child of God. You can be at peace knowing that you will inherit eternal life in the kingdom of your Father.

**Thought for today: “Peace is not the absence of conflict; it’s the absence of inner conflict.”**

## An Impossible Faith

**Read Hebrews 11:6**

*“And without faith, it is impossible to please Him...” (ESV)*

God promised the Israelites that following their deliverance from the Egyptians, He would lead them to the promised land. But it took them forty years of wilderness wandering before the promise was fulfilled. They were only a short distance from their destination. Was it because God did not love them? Would God abandon them now after all that He did in Egypt to show Pharaoh who the true God is? None of the above. Their disobedience and unbelief kept them in the wilderness.

God allowed them to be in a season of testing. But with each test, they failed by not trusting and waiting on Him. They kept right on grumbling and complaining about everything.

God had already promised them victory. Yet, like many people, they walked by sight and not by faith, and their unbelief displeased God. Failure to believe in God's word kept this generation from entering the Promised Land.

Is doubt and disobedience preventing you from walking into your promised land today? Instead of falling into the same trap as the children of Israel, believe what God says He will do and remember what He brought you through in the past.

**Thought for today: Are you only a short distance from receiving your blessings? Then keep the faith!**

## God Sees Your Heart

**Read Ephesians 2:8**

*“God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.” (NLT)*

There was a man who played golf regularly with his friends from church. He wore clothes that were just like those worn by professional golfers. He had the best equipment money could buy and talked as if he was ready to join the professional tour. He looked and acted the part. While he adhered to the external aspects of the game, he missed out on what was most important— he was a lousy golfer!

What makes a person a Christian? You may recite words that true believers should speak; you may attend church regularly; you may even tithe faithfully. However good these works may be, they will not grant you entrance into heaven. Your salvation is 'through the grace of our Lord Jesus' (Acts 15:11, NIV), and not due to your adherence to rules and regulations. As you travel on your spiritual journey with the Lord, remember that what is most important is your relationship with Him. Your behavior should be an expression of your love for Him. Do not fall to the temptation that looking the part will gain favor with God. Humanity looks at the externals, but God looks at the heart. He knows your motives — and will not be fooled by your attempts to impress Him.

**Thought for today: Don't be like the golfer. Let your relationship with the Lord be an expression of your love for Him.**

## Inspire Others

When you have the opportunity to talk about your faith, take the chance and do it. Paul and Barnabas risked their lives to preach about Jesus, speaking at Iconium in the Jewish synagogue to both Jews and Gentiles. Acts 14:1 explains that their preaching moved many Jews and Gentiles to believe. While they gained converts there, other listeners were angered and made plans to have them stoned to death. Paul and Barnabas had to flee for their lives and boldly continued to preach in the surrounding country.

How often do you have the opportunity to talk to someone about being a Christian, and yet you hesitate for fear of offending or angering someone?

In North America today, we can talk about Jesus without being threatened with being stoned, so the next chance you get, share something about Jesus with someone. That person might really love it, and it may have a far-reaching effect in his or her life.

Be inspired by Paul and Barnabas's courage and take a little risk.

**Thought for today: Ask God for the courage to share your faith with others.**

## Enjoying God's Presence

**Read Jeremiah 29:13**

*"You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." (NLT)*

There is no place where God's presence is not. Theologians call this the omnipresence of God. It literally means he's all present. He is not confined by location, time, or any dimension. This is good news for His children. It means that God wants us to truly experience his presence on a daily basis. We just need to reshape the conversation regarding what it means to experience God's presence. With that mind, here are **three simple, utterly ordinary, utterly profound ways, we can enjoy the presence of God every day because:**

**He is omnipresent:** Because God is omnipresent, we are always in his presence. Ponder that for a second and see if it doesn't cause a shiver of delight. Every second of every day, we truly are in the presence of God. R

**He is present in His Word:** The Bible is no ordinary book, no mere collection of words and pages. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us that the Word of God is alive and active.

**He inhabits our Prayers:** Consider, for a moment, the glorious nature of prayer. God, the creator of the universe, the King of Kings, the one who keeps planets in the proper orbit and atoms from splitting, wants us to request things of him.

**Thought for today: You have the privilege of enjoying the presence of the Lord. Rejoice and be glad in it!**



## Complete In Him

**Read 1 Peter 4:12-13**

*“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.. but rejoice...” (NIV)*

When a trial comes, you tend to think, "Why me? What have I done wrong?" You may have done nothing wrong. Trials are necessary for growth. Imagine being a student, knowing that your progress needs to be measured. How can that be done without testing or examination?

If we do away with tests, how do we gauge growth? James 1:2-3 says, to Count your trials as joy, "knowing that the testing of your faith [through trials] produces patience." "Testing" is *dokimion*, meaning "to prove." We can conclude, then, that God's testing process has the goal or aim of purging us of all impurity, to make us "perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (verse 4).

But what can you learn from your trials and testings? James suggests three things:

- (1) **Trials should produce fruit.**
- (2) ***The fruit you produce depends on your outlook.***
- (3) ***Joy comes after, not before, the trial—and often not during it.***

**Thought for today: You will be complete and lacking nothing when you face trials.**

## The Power of Praise

**Read Acts 16:25-26**

*“At midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God...At once all the prison doors flew open....” (NIV)*

How do you respond in moments of crisis—when you discover that you lack sufficient funds to pay your bills, when the children are fighting and there is dinner to cook, when you are in conflict with someone you love? Your first behavior might be to react negatively. You might get mad, react by attacking, or you might go the other way and become passive-aggressive. It seems as if the crisis moments in life knock us off our spiritual equilibrium and throw us into a tailspin.

Paul and Silas were in such a moment. They were men of God who were doing the work of the Lord. Despite their efforts, they were jailed, stripped and beaten, and placed in stocks. If anyone had the right to cry out to God and demand justice, it was Paul and Silas. But, their response was amazing! They were 'praying and singing hymns to God.

Praise in the midst of crisis forces you to focus on the one who is most important — Jesus Christ. Praise reminds you of the one who is in control and who will bring justice — Jesus Christ. These are not the moments to doubt God; these are the moments to run to Him and to seek deliverance.

**Thought for today. When faced with a crisis, don't panic — praise!**