

Mine eyes have seen the glory
Of the coming of the Lord
He is trampling out the vintage
Where the grapes of wrath are stored
He hath loosed the fateful lightning
Of His terrible swift sword
His truth is marching on

Glory, Glory Hallelujah
Glory, Glory Hallelujah
Glory, Glory Hallelujah
His truth is marching on

Praise the Lord!!! His TRUTH is marching on! Where would we be without it? No matter how dark the days may become, God's truth will always be there. It is up to us as Christians to keep that truth in the forefront. God has provided us with a detailed instruction book on how we should live our lives. ***All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*** (II Tim. 3:16-17).

There are still people in this world who have not yet been introduced to the love of Jesus or the good news of His Gospel. They have no concept of the power of prayer or the life-changing nature of His Word. Last month, Bible Pathway stepped out in faith and sent 14 pallets, each stacked 5 feet high, of Bible Pathway Devotionals and Bibles out into the mission field. We know that God will provide the funds in His timing. Please, pray that every devotional and Bible sent will be placed in the hands of both those seeking Him as well as those that have never even heard the name of Jesus.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

In His Love,

Jennifer

Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb (Ps. 37:1-2).

Human beings, by nature, are a nosy, judgmental lot. We view the world through the lens of self. We use our lives as a baseline, and we carefully weigh and measure the lives of those around us, searching to see if their “blessings” or “curses” line up with what we know of their attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs. Often, we are horrified to discover that those that seem to be “getting ahead” in this world, those that are the most prosperous, the most influential, the most powerful, etc., are those that live outside the will of God. We do indeed ***fret because of evildoers***, and we are very ***envious against the workers of iniquity***. We shake our heads at the unfairness of it all. In our upset over what we see happening in the world around us, we forget God’s promise: ***Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed*** (Ps. 37:3).

So how can we keep our focus on God instead of allowing ourselves to fall victim to the evil that is running rampant in our world today? First, we must ***Trust in the LORD***. Hold fast to His Word, and remember His promises. ***These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*** (John 16:33). Jesus has already won! It does not matter what we perceive the earthly balance of power to be in the middle of the “fight” because the ending is already a foregone conclusion.

Next, we must ***delight thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart*** (Ps. 37:4). When we ***delight in the LORD***, we derive immense pleasure from living within His will and doing as He bids. We automatically become less concerned with the worldly success of the ungodly because that type of “success” loses its appeal. Our love for God becomes all-consuming, and the greatest ***desire of our heart*** becomes the ***desire*** to spread that love to all that will receive it.

We must also ***commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass*** (37:5). This is the active component of the **trust** we mentioned earlier. When we **commit** ourselves to God, we give Him all that we have. We lay our sin at His feet, and we allow His grace to flow through us (Rom. 10:9). From that moment on, we need not concern ourselves with the “earthly rewards” of the wicked; we should instead feel a deep sense of compassion for them because they are lacking the richness of God.

Finally, we are called to ***Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass*** (Ps. 37:7). It is here that our blessings in Christ come full circle. We have no reason to fear, either in this life or the next, for our God has promised to protect us. No matter what Satan has planned for us, God will ensure that it eventually backfires (37:14-15). We are His, and God takes care of His own.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

Thought for the Day: *If we allow our concern for the worldly success of the wicked to shake our trust in God, then we lose the only thing that truly separates us from them.*

Christ Revealed: As the Fountain of Life (and the) Light (Ps. 36:9). In Him was Life; and the Life was the Light of men. . . . That was the True Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John 1:4-9; comp. 4:10,14; Rev. 22:1).

Word Studies: 36:7 **put their trust under** = take refuge in; 38:2 **Thy hand presseth me sore** = your punishment presses heavily upon me; 38:8 **roared** = groaned with anguish.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox, President, Bible Pathway Ministries • **Government Official:** Sen. Joni Ernst (IO), Rep. Dan Bishop (NC), Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez (NM) • **Country:** Saint Maarten (39,689) Caribbean • **Major Languages:** English, Spanish • 39% Roman Catholic; 44.8% Protestant; 6.7% None; 5.4% Other; 3.4% Jewish; 0.7% Not Reported • **Prayer Suggestion:** Cry out to God in humility (Ps. 9:12).

Optional Reading: Colossians 4

I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD (Ps. 40:1-3).

As David reflected on his past, he was reminded of dark and troublesome times. He recalled seemingly endless days and nights of suffering and sorrow. He remembered occasions where he had been so overcome by circumstances that he had felt as if he were drowning, being sucked down in ***an horrible pit of miry clay*** that he had not possessed the strength to free himself from. Yet even in his deepest darkness, David had known he wasn't alone. The deeper he had sunk, the louder he had cried out to God. ***I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill. Selah*** (Ps. 3:4). Then, in absolute faith, he had ***waited patiently for the LORD***.

Centuries later, we are given another example of how patience can be born of absolute faith. The Apostle Paul understood all too well the feeling of being overcome by circumstances beyond his control: ***Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness*** (II Cor. 11:24-27). Yet Paul faced these trials with equanimity, never once losing faith. He knew that his life lay in God's hands, and he, like David before him, trusted that his cry would be heard and answered. ***Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*** (James 5:8).

David's psalm goes on to acknowledge God's rescue. ***He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry***

clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. More than that, though, David praises God for allowing him the privilege of enduring tribulations in the first place. **And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.** David's life had played out on the big stage for all the world to see. Thus when God triumphantly raised him from the muck, all the world bore witness to His glory. Through David's suffering, the suffering of countless others was alleviated as, for the first time, blind eyes saw and deaf ears heard, new hearts were opened, and the family of God grew.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy (1 Pet. 4:12-13).

Thought for the Day: *Concerning the tribulations of this world – Remember, perseverance rather than despair in the face of suffering, and unconditional faith rather than doubt in the face of uncertainty.*

Christ Revealed: As One who will do the will of God (Ps. 40:6-8). Jesus said that His purpose on earth was to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work (John 4:34; Heb. 10:7-9).

Word Studies: 40:6 **ears . . . opened** = You have given me a heart to hear and obey; 41:3 **make all his bed in his sickness** = sustain him in all his sickness; 42:1 **panteth after** = longs for.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Official:** Rep. Doug La Malfa (CA), Rep. Elise Stefanik (NY), Rep. Randy Weber (TX), Rep. Mike Collins (GA) • **Country:** Slovakia (5,443,583) Central Europe • Major Language: Slovak • Restricted Religious Freedom • 62.1% Roman Catholic; 8.2% Protestant; 3.8% Greek Catholic; 12.5% Other/Unspecified; 13% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Trust in the Lord; He is your refuge (Ps. 15:1-4).

Optional Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. *Selah* (Ps. 46:1-3). **O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth** (Ps. 47:1-2).

The Book of Psalms is unlike any other book in the Word of God. Unlike the traditional linear narrative contained in the books of history and the law, each chapter (psalm) in the Book of Psalms stands alone as a personal missive offered directly to God from the psalmist's heart. If we were to couch it in modern terms, the Book of Psalms would be best classified as a hymnal, a collection of songs of prayer and praise composed and sung by the children of God as an expression of worship to their Creator and Lord.

Psalms 46 – 48 are psalms of celebration and praise in the face of deliverance. **God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.** It is clear from the writing that the psalmist has faced times of great difficulty, but through the power and protection of God, he has arrived on the other side. **The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted** (Ps. 46:6). **He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet** (47:3). As he pours out his praise to God, he does so with the sure knowledge that the Lord is not only worthy of praise but also that He is the only one that is. **Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of His holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: He is greatly exalted** (47:6-9).

The words 'praise God' are ever-present in the vocabulary

of most modern-day Christians, but how many of us genuinely imbue those words with the spiritual and emotional weight they deserve? As we raise our voices in praise and worship, how many of us understand that we owe EVERYTHING to the Lord? ***Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth*** (46:8-10). Every good thing that exists in our lives is directly attributable to God. ***Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*** (James 1:17). It is His hand that guides and protects us, and it is to Him, and Him alone, that our praise and worship are due.

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God (Eph. 19-21).

Thought for the Day: *Praising God should come as naturally as breathing; we encounter His good work at almost every moment of the day.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who will judge His people (Ps. 50:4). The Lord Jesus Christ . . . shall judge the quick (living) and the dead at His appearing (II Tim. 4:1).

Word Studies: 46:6 **heathen raged** = nations were in turmoil; 48:11 **daughters of Judah** = its cities and villages as opposed to Jerusalem, the major city; 49:9 **see corruption** = experience death; 50:23 **conversation** = daily conduct; 51:4 **clear** = pure, blameless.

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Official:** Rep. Glen Grothman (WI) • **Country:** Slovenia (1,988,292) South Central Europe • **Major Language:** Slovenian • **Religious Freedom** • 57.8% Catholic; 2.4% Muslim; 2.3% Orthodox; 0.9% Other Christian; 3.5% Unaffiliated; 23% Other/Unspecified; 10.1% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Trust in the Lord: where He guides, He provides (Ps. 16:1-8).

Optional Reading: I Thessalonians 2

For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company (Ps. 55:12-14).

David trusted utterly in God. To David, God was much more than a religious figurehead. He was his Creator, his Lord, his Savior, and his dearest Friend. David reached out to God at all times. He took his feelings directly to the Lord, whether happy, sad, content, troubled, or overwhelmed. He praised His holy name in good times and bad, secure in the knowledge that God's righteousness would prevail. David's relationship with the Lord stands as an example for us all. Nothing in our lives is inappropriate to bring up before the Lord. If a thought, feeling, situation, or experience is relevant to us, then it is relevant to our Creator.

In Psalms 55, we find David deeply troubled. He is heart-broken over the revolt led by his son, Absalom. His son's actions caused him distress, but given their complicated family history (II Sam. 13 – 14), he probably was not overly surprised by the assault on his kingdom. What did surprise him was that Ahithophel, his friend and most trusted adviser, had joined Absalom. ***Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only (17:1-2).*** Not only had he joined him, but he also had sought permission to personally execute David. This betrayal was almost too much for David to bear. ***And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest (Ps. 55:6).*** As David poured out his heart to God, he expressed his deep disappointment in the hypocrisy and treachery of this one whom he called ***mine equal, my guide.***

Despite his momentary desire to flee, David knew running

and hiding would not bring him the peace he sought. Instead, he committed his sorrows to the Lord and trusted solely in Him as he had done from his youth. He had assurance that his God could sustain him in every trial and would accomplish His purpose for his life. Therefore, he concluded the psalm by saying: ***Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved*** (55:22).

David spoke out of the realization that those seeking his downfall were, in reality, opposing God. A millennia later, Jesus faced the greatest personal betrayal of all in the person of Judas Iscariot, one of his closest friends. As servants of our mighty God, we should also be prepared to endure the disappointments, deceptions, and betrayals of those who seek to work against Him.

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you (John 15:18-19).

Thought for the Day: *There is nothing we can tell God that He does not already know, thus attempting to hide things from Him only deepens our guilt and sin.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who saves those who will call on Him (Ps. 55:16-17). And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21; also Rom. 10:13).

Word Studies: 53:3 **filthy** = corrupt; 55:4 **sore** = grievously; 55:9 **divide their tongues** = bring confusion to their counsel; 59:10 **prevent** = go before.

Pray For: Our Nation and Military Worldwide • **Country:** Solomon Islands (609,883) South Pacific Ocean • Major Languages: Melanesian Pidgin, English, 120 Indigenous Languages • Religious Freedom • 73.4% Protestant; 19.6% Roman Catholic; 2.9% Other Christian; 4.1% Other/None/Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray to the Lord with sincere lips (Ps. 17:1).

Optional Reading: I Thessalonians 3

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips: When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches. Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice (Ps. 63:5-7).

David had more than most would consider his fair share of trouble throughout his life, but as we read through the Book of Psalms, we find he was amply equipped to deal with it. ***O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary*** (Ps.63:1-2). When Psalm 63 was composed, David was again on the run, this time from forces led by his son, Absalom, but he was not alone. God was with him. Even though the land in which he found himself had ***no water***, David knew that the thirsting of his soul ***shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness*** as he stilled himself and communed with God. ***But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life*** (John 4:14).

When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches. The middle of the night can be an unsettling time. Alone in the darkness with our thoughts, all of the hustle and bustle of the day gone, there is very little to distract us from our private fears and insecurities. What do you do to occupy your mind at night when you can't sleep? Do you go over the day's activities, trying to see if you made the most of your time? Maybe you worry about finances, job pressures, deadlines, or friends and family. Perhaps you "daydream" or think about the future. More than a few of us have probably tried the age-old mind trick of counting sheep to slow down our thoughts enough that we can fall asleep. Yet how many of us stop and remember that we are not lying there alone as we silently struggle with our insecurities? God is with us, even in the dark of the night.

David's solution to his sleepless nights was to turn to God.

There he was, deep in the wilderness of Judah, seeking refuge from his own son (II Sam. 16:22-29). He surely had his share of restless, unsettled nights, but David did not use that time to dwell on all his mistakes or worry about his future. Instead, he meditated on God, counted his blessings, and as a result, faced each day with a renewed sense of purpose. ***But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by Him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped*** (Ps. 63:11). We, too, need to avail ourselves of the strength and comfort that only God can provide. When you can't sleep, look to God instead of sheep. Meditate on His greatness, His power, and His love. Allow His peace to flow through you as you find rest and renewal ***in the shadow of*** (His) ***wings***.

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

Thought for the Day: *Any period of restlessness we find ourselves in can be resolved through communion with God; He settles our neglected spirit.*

Christ Revealed: As the Rock – the unmovable, eternal, unchanging Savior (Ps. 61:2; 62:2,6-7). Jesus is the Rock of our salvation and that spiritual Rock (Petras) that followed (accompanied) them (Israelites) (I Cor. 10:4).

Word Studies: 60:12 **do valiantly** = gain the victory, do great things; 61:4 **covert** = shelter, protecting power; 62:9 **to be laid in the balance** = they prove to be worthless; 63:5 **marrow and fatness** = the richest of foods.

Pray For Staff: Kevin Jennings • **Government Officials:** Rep. Jim Himes (CT), Rep. Darin LaHood (IL), Sen. Roger Wicker (MS) • **Country:** Somalia (10,428,043) Eastern Africa • Major Languages: Somali, Arabic, Italian, English • Prohibits Proselytism for any religion other than Islam (State Religion) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Lift up your prayer of thanksgiving for the marvelous blessings of God (Ps. 18:1-3).

Optional Reading: I Thessalonians 4

Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha. Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee: and let such as love Thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: Thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying (Ps. 70:1-5).

When thinking back on King David, many of us are inclined to place him on a pedestal of righteousness, high above the rest of mankind. We draw inspiration from his relationship with God, but at the same time, we believe such an intense relationship is beyond their own reach. We feel spiritually inferior to the man whom God chose to head the earthly line from which He would eventually bring forth His Son (Rom. 1:3). These feelings often cause us to fail to see the correlation between David's overall relationship with the Lord and his complete surrender to Him. David did not cleave to God through supernatural means beyond his control; he consciously chose to accept Him unconditionally as Lord of his life. That same choice lies before each of us today. **Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you** (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

The 70th Psalm provides a prime example of David's total dependence on and unshakable trust in God. Make haste, **O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD**. David was in trouble, and he sought God's deliverance. To David, it was as simple as that. He knew with absolute certainty that God was there for him. Just as a child turns to their parent when they get overwhelmed, so David turned to God. **But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: Thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying**. To some, David's words might sound brash and overreaching as he boldly stated what he wanted to happen to those who plagued him. **Let them be ashamed and confounded that**

seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha. Yet David was merely claiming the promise that God had already given to his ancestor, Abraham. ***And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*** (Gen. 12:3). Far from being presumptuous, David's plea showed a mature understanding of his relationship with God.

When we draw near God with a faithful heart, we too become heir to His promises (Gal. 3:29). David had complete confidence that the Lord would defend Him because God had said it would be so. Therefore he could survive any situation, no matter how dire or unending it seemed, secure in the knowledge that God would make it right. How many of us have the courage to believe the same?

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) (Heb. 10:22-23).

Thought for the Day: *It takes humility, not pride, to proclaim God's power because in doing so, we are acknowledging that we ourselves have none.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who led captivity captive (Ps. 68:18). With His resurrection power, Jesus broke the captive power of Satan. When He led the Old Testament saints from paradise into heaven, He led captivity captive (comp. Eph. 4:8; also Gal. 5:1; Rev. 1:18).

Word Studies: 67:2 **saving health** = salvation; 68:4 **JAH** is an abbreviation for Jehovah – the Eternal, Self-Existent One – and corresponds to **I AM THAT I AM**; 68:13 **pots** = sheepfolds; 68:18 **led captivity captive** = led your captives captive – a prophecy concerning Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:8-9); 68:20 **issues** = escapes.

Pray For Country: South Africa (48,375,645) Southern Africa • Major Languages: IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Afrikaans, English • Religious Freedom • 36.6% Protestant; 7.1% Catholic; 1.5% Muslim; 36% Other Christian; 2.3% Other; 1.4% Unspecified; 15.1% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Call upon the Lord in time of trouble, for He promises to hear us (Ps. 18:6).

Optional Reading: I Thessalonians 5

When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah (Ps. 75:2-3).

In several places in the Book of Psalms, we have been reminded to be still and wait on God. **Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass** (Ps. 37:7). This idea is revisited in today's reading as the psalmist makes clear the fact that the Lord, and the Lord alone, chooses the time for judgment. **When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly.** Our responsibility is to **wait patiently for Him** in readiness for His return (Luke 12:35-36).

"Everything will be made right in God's perfect time." Chances are you have heard that phrase, or one like it, many times in your life. You may have even said it to yourself or others in an attempt to explain a situation that does not lend itself to understanding. But have you ever really stopped and thought about what it means?

God simply is. He is eternal; **I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty** (Rev. 1:8). The average human life span is between 70 and 80 years. How are we supposed to compare that to eternity? The simple answer is that we can't. Our understanding of God's time is no greater than an infant's understanding of earthly time. To a toddler or young child, time is a mystery. They want what they want when they want it. They can't be pacified by being told, "Dinner will be ready in thirty minutes" or "We'll go to Grandma's house in three weeks" because they can't understand the concept. Yet just because they don't understand doesn't stop it from happening exactly as their parents said. At the end of thirty minutes, dinner is ready. Three weeks elapse, and the family goes to Grandma's. The child's lack of understanding has no impact on the timeline set out by their parents.

Although the comparison is an oversimplification, it is the same with our relationship with God. His concept of time is too

great for us to comprehend, but our lack of understanding does not change His timeline. God will judge wicked, unrepented, sinful behavior in His perfect time. ***For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and He poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them*** (Ps. 75:8). He will pass His judgment only at the time He has set, not at the moment we demand it. It may seem that the ungodly and immoral are flourishing all around us, and we may struggle with "why?" but it is not for us to question. God will not let evil exist in His creation for one moment longer than He considers necessary. We must be content with the knowledge that our lives today, tomorrow, and for all time are in His hands.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:8-9).

Thought for the Day: *It is not for us to sort out what is wrong with the world; our task is to walk with God as He does.*

Christ Revealed: As the Righteous Judge who will crush the oppressor (Ps. 72:2-4). Psalm 75:8 describes the judgment of God upon those who refuse to accept the salvation so freely offered by Jesus, the Lamb of God (John 1:29,34-36; comp. II Thess. 1:8-9).

Word Studies: 73:4 **bands** = pain; 73:21 **pricked in my reins** = emotionally disturbed; 74:2 **the rod** = the tribe; 74:4 **set up their ensigns for signs** = replace the symbols of God with their own symbols; 75:5 **speak not with a stiff neck** = defy not God with an insolent attitude.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Matt Rosendale (MT) Rep. Judy Chu (CA) • **Country:** South Sudan (11,562,695) East Central Africa • **Major Languages:** English, Arabic • **Religious Freedom** • Christian; Animist; Muslim • **Prayer Suggestion:** Let your faith in the Word of God overrule all fears (Ps. 18:30).

Optional Reading: II Thessalonians 1

For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments (Ps. 78:5-7).

Our God is a God of love (I John 4:8). He cares deeply about every person that ever has been or will be born (Ps. 100:5). God knows much better than we do ourselves that no one lives in a vacuum. For better or worse, we are all affected by the actions and choices of those around us. We are also profoundly affected by the legacy of those that came before us. God works through each generation to provide for the needs of the next. Here in the 78th Psalm, we find Him working through the person of Asaph.

Asaph was a Levite who served as a singer/song leader for Tabernacle and Temple worship during the time of David and Solomon (I Chr. 6:31-39; II Chr. 5:12). Here in the 78th Psalm, we find that he has used his musical gift to serve the Lord in an extraordinary way. God had commanded, ***And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up*** (Deut. 6:6-7). Yet over the centuries that had elapsed since that time, God's people had not been as diligent as they should have been about following that command. Whole generations had been lost to ignorance and idolatry, with only a faithful remnant remaining. Under David's rule, many had returned to worshiping the one true God but were still sorely lacking in their knowledge of His Word. Asaph took that opportunity to compose a musical ***Maschil*** (a lesson) to deepen their understanding of the will of the Lord.

Asaph began by summarizing the history of the nation of Israel from the time of her formation by God up until the time

of David. He knew that for the people to understand their responsibilities to God, they needed to know all that God had done for them and come to terms with how Israel as a nation had responded. Asaph was not telling them about the failures of their ancestors to explain or excuse their current behavior, nor was he expecting them to make amends for what had happened in the past. He was simply providing them with the information they needed to wholeheartedly serve the Lord.

We hold the same responsibility for educating future generations as did Asaph. As we share our testimony, we are honor-bound to share it all – the good, the bad, and the ugly. We bring glory to God by allowing others to see the difference He has made in our lives. We never know when the lessons we have learned from our personal sins and failures will allow someone else to avoid the same mistakes.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (I Cor. 10:11).

Thought for to Day: *Earnestly teaching God's Word should not only kindle the faith of the student but also reinforce the faith of the teacher.*

Christ Revealed: As the true Shepherd (Ps. 80:1). Christ is the Good Shepherd and the Door through which one must enter to be saved. He alone is The Way to heaven (John 10:9,11; 14:6).

Word Studies: 78:15 **clave** = split; 78:34 **inquired early** = sought diligently; 79:4 **derision** = ridicule; 80:3 **Turn us again** = Restore us; 80:8 **a vine** = Israel; 80:12 **hedges** = wall or fences; 80:18 **quicken** = revive.

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Country:** Spain (47,737,941) Southwestern Europe • Major Languages: Castillian Spanish, Catalan • Religious Freedom • 94% Catholic; 6% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord to reveal and cleanse any hidden sins in your life (Ps. 19:12).

Optional Reading: II Thessalonians 2

God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; He judgeth among the gods. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course. I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Arise, O God, judge the earth: for Thou shalt inherit all nations (Ps. 82:1-8).

When Asaph wrote the 82nd Psalm, he was disturbed by the attitudes and judicial behaviors he saw among Israel's leaders and judges. These men had been placed in positions of power and judgment through the will of God, with the expectation that they would legislate and enforce His commandments and laws. Their 'job' was to represent God in enacting His judgments, and God held them to an exacting standard. **My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation** (James 3:1). What grieved Asaph was how these standards were being blatantly ignored. The **poor**, the **fatherless**, the **afflicted**, and the **needy** were being crushed under the weight of man-made 'justice,' and the true voice of God was not being heard.

In the eyes of their fellow Israelites, these leaders and judges were accepted as the emissaries of God. **I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.** The power complicit with their position had gone to their heads. Asaph looked to them in disappointment and disgust and offered the gravest of warnings: **God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; He judgeth among the gods...ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.** God was watching, and He would hold them accountable for their false judgments.

Power over others is one of the most spiritually dangerous of God's many gifts. When we are placed in that position, it is with the understanding that we are to work solely within His will, adhering to His Word and His instruction, and thus lead

others along the path of righteousness. Far too often, however, this commission is muted or forgotten entirely as we become more confident and outspoken in our role. We begin to press forward with our personal agendas, striving to influence the world in the way we think is best. Arrogantly, we assume that God has provided us with the platform from which to work our will, so He must fully agree with us. Asaph reminds us of the foolishness of this belief. ***God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; He judgeth among the gods.*** God sees every abuse of power, and He will hold us accountable. Our authority over others comes directly from Him and is limited to the scope of His will. If we choose to ignore the parameters that He has set to pursue our own agenda, then we will answer to Him.

But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you (II Pet. 2:12-13).

Thought for the Day: *Leaders who lead their subjects into spiritual decay are just as guilty of neglect as parents who fail to teach their children right from wrong.*

Christ Revealed: By Jerusalem, from where the psalmist declared that all of the springs (sources) of joy and happiness flow (Ps. 87:7). Jesus is the source of our joy as the angel announced at His birth (Luke 2:10). Jesus also declared: These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full (John 15:11).

Word Studies: 82:1 **the gods** = earthly rulers and judges; 82:4 **rid** = rescue; 82:5 **foundations . . . out of course** = administration of justice is ignored; 82:6 **gods** = My representatives; 83:2 **lifted up the head** = exalted themselves.

Pray For Government Official: Sen. Lindsey Graham (SC) • **Country:** Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) (21,866,445) Indian Ocean • **Major Languages:** Sinhala, Tamil • **Christianity suppressed** • 69.1% Buddhist; 7.1% Hindu; 6.2% Christian; 7.6% Muslim; 10% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord to deliver you from willful sins (Ps. 19:13).

Optional Reading: II Thessalonians 3

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust (Ps. 91:1-2).

Absolute security. Unwavering trust. Complete and total lack of fear. How amazing would it be to live our lives cocooned in these emotions and utterly supported by the hand of God? As we contemplate the psalmist's words in the 91st Psalm, we can take comfort from the realization that such a life is open to us, right here and right now, if we fully surrender ourselves to God and willingly place ourselves in His shadow.

In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes (Judg. 17:6). We live in a fallen world. Ambition, greed, self-pride, contempt, anger, and hate are often the emotions that hold the most significant sway in today's society. Biblically defined concepts of absolute right and wrong have been obliterated and replaced with expectations for us to accept the current nebulous and ever-changing societal norms. As the climate of popular morality slides further and further from the will of God, confusion and chaos reigns. It is easy for those of us who still cling to His Word and His promises to feel alone and vulnerable as we are simultaneously attacked from all sides. Yet we are not alone, and if we are truly standing in the shadow of God, we will never be vulnerable. His protection is complete and unwavering; if we make our home with Him, we have nothing to fear. ***Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling (Ps. 91:9-10).***

The promises laid out here in the 91st Psalm are both wonderful and comforting, but in order to fully benefit from them, we must first understand what is being promised. As much as we might wish it to be so, God's promise is not for an earthly life free of all trouble, conflict, or sorrow. ***Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12).*** What He is promising is that with Him, we are stronger than any trouble we will face. We have nothing to fear as long

as we follow in His footsteps and remain in His shadow. Any pain and suffering we encounter are temporary and will pass away. Those who hate us and work against the will of God will be gone in the end as surely and completely as our pain and suffering, but even as they fall, we will stand. God promises He will bring us through to stand with Him on the other side – triumphant, whole, and at peace.

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls (1 Pet. 1:6-9).

Thought for the Day: *Suffering for God is temporary, but damnation without Him is eternal.*

Christ Revealed: By the seed (descendants) of David (Ps. 89:3-4). Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed (descendants) of David according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3; also Matt. 1:1; Luke 3:31-32).

Word Studies: 88:13 **prevent** = come before; 89:10 Rahab, in this context, is a poetic name for Egypt (see 87:4; Is. 51:9); 89:24 **horn be exalted** = authority shall increase; 89:41 **spoil** = plunder; 90:13 **let it repent thee concerning** = change your judgment to compassion on; 91:13 **dragon** = serpent, a reference to Satan.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Government Officials:** Rep. Elissa Slotkin (MI), Rep. Tom McClintock (CA), Rep. Dan Newhouse (WA), Rep. Brian Mast (FL) • **Country:** Sudan (35,482,233) North Eastern Africa • Major Languages: Arabic, English • Restrict Religious Freedom • Sunni Muslim; Small Christian Minority • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray that your words and thoughts will be pleasing to the Lord (Ps. 19:14).

Optional Reading: 1 Timothy 1

The LORD reigneth, He is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is established of old: Thou art from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh Thine house, O LORD, for ever (Ps. 93:1-5).

The 93rd Psalm is short, only five verses in total, but that in no way detracts from the strength of its message. In straightforward, declarative sentences, the anonymous psalmist seeks to showcase the nature of the reign of God. Under the inspiration of the Lord whom he loves, the psalmist clearly describes for all to understand the foundation upon which God has built His eternal kingdom.

The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with majesty. With his opening line, the psalmist leaves no doubt as to the identity of God. He is our Lord and our King, and there is no beginning and no end to His reign. ***Thy throne is established of old: Thou art from everlasting.*** Unlike earthly kings, the Lord's majesty is innate. ***And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon Him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war*** (Rev.19:11). ***And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS*** (19:16). It is impossible to be in His presence and not know Him for who He is. ***That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*** (Phil. 2:10-11).

The LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved. God's infinite strength flows from within His being, and it is upon this strength that He has built the world and all that it contains. ***For the kingdom of God is not in word, but***

in power (I Cor. 4:20). God's ***strength*** flows through each and every person that has accepted His as their Lord and Savior, and surrounds and contains all that deny His existence. ***The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.***

The psalmist has come to understand the TRUE nature of God's kingdom. It exists without borders, and all else is contained within. God is sovereign over all; no person or thing escapes His authority. ***For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist*** (Col. 1:16-17). This is God's world. No matter our circumstances, we are privileged to live in it. To God be all the glory.

And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen (Rev. 7:11-12).

Thought for the Day: *We have no claim on anything in this World; it is all God's. Thus, those precious possessions many of us cling to were never ours to begin with.*

Christ Revealed: As the Creator: It is He that hath made us (Ps. 100:3). All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:3; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11).

Word Studies: 92:6 **brutish** = without regard to reason or propriety; 93:5 **becometh** = distinguishes; 94:20 **throne of iniquity** = workers of evil; **frameth** = devises; 95:7 **of His hand** = under His care; 99:3 **terrible** = holy, awesome.

Pray For Government Officials: Gov. Spencer Cox (UT), Sen. Ed Markey (MA)
• **Country:** Suriname (573,311) Northeastern coast of South America • Major Languages: Dutch, English, Taki-Taki • Very limited religious freedom • 27.4% Hindu; 22.8% Roman Catholic; 25.2% Protestant; 19.6% Muslim; 5% Indigenous • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord to reveal His perfect will for you (Ps. 25:4).

Optional Reading: I Timothy 2

O*give thanks unto the LORD; call upon His name: make known His deeds among the people* (Ps. 105:1).

Although every verse in the Word of God is intended to guide and instruct the hearer, we rarely come upon a single verse as packed with information as this one. In one short line, the psalmist calls our attention to the three essential facets of Christian life. ***O give thanks unto the LORD*** calls us to offer praise and worship to God. ***Call upon His name*** reminds us of the need to pray continuously. Finally, ***Make known His deeds among the people*** is a statement of our mandate to witness for the Lord. Together, these three actions build the foundation for a solid relationship with God.

From beginning to end, the Bible is filled with examples of people praising and worshiping the Lord. Those that study His Word as God directed know that praise to God in one form or another can be found on practically every page. One of the most extraordinary praise services ever recorded is found in Nehemiah, chapter 8, and took place after the wall of Jerusalem had been rebuilt. Ezra read to the Israelites from the Law, inciting the people to repent and worship the Lord. From the moment of creation, we have been called upon to praise and worship our Lord. ***For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*** (Phil. 3:3).

The second reference the psalmist made was to prayer. Prayer is the element that unites God and man. Our relationship with God begins with a prayer of repentance and acceptance. As we kneel before Him, we claim Him as Lord of our lives and enter into the body of Christ. That relationship is then strengthened daily by our prayer life. Prayer is not simply a matter of asking God to meet our needs. True repentance, praise, and thanksgiving to God for all He is and does are essential to any prayer. Once again, the bible offers us many examples of a bountiful prayer life. Moses was a man of prayer, and so was David. Jesus Himself spent much time in prayer; following His example, Paul did too. The need for prayer should be evident to all. ***Praying always with all prayer and supplication in***

the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Eph. 6:18).

The third and final action mentioned in this verse refers to our responsibility to witness for God. Many who have no problem praising and worshiping the Lord and maintaining a solid prayer life still find themselves reticent when giving witness for Christ. The reasons for this are varied. For some, it is shyness or a fear of speaking with strangers. For others, it is a fear of saying the wrong thing or coming across as pushy or obnoxious. However, we can't let nervousness and anxiety stop us. If we live our lives for God, we are already halfway there! Instead of compartmentalizing, we must bring our relationships with God out into the open. Each day we need to make a point of sharing something that God has done in our life. If we trust Him, He will give us the words to say and deliver them to the ears of those who stand to benefit the most.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Thought for the Day: *How can we claim God to be the most amazing thing in our lives and not witness for Him? If you are not affected enough to bring Him up in everyday conversation, then perhaps you should re-examine what He means to you.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases (Ps. 103:3). Forgiveness of sin and the healing power of God describe the ministry of our Lord Jesus, who was sent to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19; Matt. 9:6).

Word Studies: 101:2 **perfect heart** = blameless; a heart of integrity; 101:4 **froward heart** = an obstinate and evil mind; 101:5 **cut off** = de- stroy; **suffer** = tolerate; 101:7 **tarry** = continue to dwell; 102:26 **wax old** = deteriorate.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Officials:** Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (AZ), Rep. Betty McCollum (MN), Rep. Andy Kim (NJ), Rep. Rob Menendez (NJ) • **Country:** Swaziland (1,419,623) Southern Africa • Major Languages: English, Swati • Religious Freedom • 40% Zionist; 20% Roman Catholic; 10% Muslim; 30% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray for understanding of His will as you read the Word of God (Ps. 25:5).

Optional Reading: I Timothy 3

Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever. Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can shew forth all His praise? Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times. Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation; That I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance (Ps. 106:1-5).

The 106th Psalm is a testament to God's faithfulness in direct contrast to the faithlessness of mankind. In a very matter-of-fact manner, verse by verse, the psalmist lays out the history of the sins of the nation of Israel against the Lord. It does not make for comfortable reading even in the present day. The original Israelite audience most likely cringed in remembered shame as they listened. Yet the underlying message of the 106th Psalm is not one of condemnation and despair but rather joyous celebration.

Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever. Noah Webster defined mercy as “That benevolence, mildness or tenderness of heart which disposes a person to overlook injuries, or to treat an offender better than he deserves; the disposition that tempers justice, and induces an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries, and to forbear punishment, or inflict less than law or justice will warrant.” This definition barely begins to describe the depth and breadth of what God showered upon His chosen people. Sin after deliberate sin, the people showed their indifference to God's will, yet God responded with mercy and grace instead of judging them as they deserved. He provided for them, guided them, delivered them from their enemies, and comforted them in their distress. Even His corrections and discipline, though the Israelites likely deemed them painful in the moment, were built upon the foundation of love and grace. ***Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; And gathered them out of***

the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south (Ps. 107:2-3).

The psalmist was entranced by the love God had shown and continued to show for His people. He longed to share in that love and, even more than that, to share it with others. He asked God for **salvation** so that he might **glory with Thine inheritance**, but also so that he might see his fellow man through the lens of God's mercy and grace and allow the love that God had put into his heart to flow outwards in the same manner that it flowed outwards from God.

Through the body and blood of His Son, God has now made the psalmist's most fervent desire a reality for all who will receive Him. ***But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*** (Eph. 2:4-5). Those of us who have been washed clean in the blood of Christ and gathered into the family of God have been given new hearts that are uniquely suited to absorb and reflect His love. Now and forever more, we can rejoice in His presence and, with mercy and grace, share that rejoicing with everyone we meet.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13:34).

Thought for the Day: *God's mercy, like His love, can be emulated by our worldly hearts but never truly copied, but only by committing to the attempt can we grow closer to God.*

Word Studies: 106:20 **similitude** = likeness; 106:29 **inventions** = deeds, acts; 106:30 **stayed** = stopped, checked; 107:11 **condemned** = despised, spurned.

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Official:** Rep. Cory Mills (FL), Rep. Chris Deluzio (PA) • **Country:** Sweden (9,723,809) Northern Europe • Major Language: Swedish • Religious Freedom • 87% Lutheran; 13% Other (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord to be merciful and to forgive your sins (Ps. 25:6-7).

Optional Reading: I Timothy 4

Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in His commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. (Ps. 112:1-4).

The 112th Psalm departs somewhat from the traditional pattern of praise and worship to give us a closer look at the life that can be enjoyed by ***the man that feareth the LORD***. Family honor, peace, prosperity, protection from evil, and freedom from fear are just some of the many blessings the psalmist declares such a person can expect to receive.

As we read this psalm, many of us are filled with a sense of confusion. We know, through both life experiences and our studies of God's Word, that faithful obedience to God does not guarantee us earthly wealth, nor does it necessarily protect us from persecution, random evil, sickness, or traumatic events in our day-to-day lives, so what exactly is the psalmist speaking of here? The answer to that question lies within the perceptions of the reader. God does indeed gift each of His faithful children with all of these blessings, but only those looking through the eyes of the Spirit can fully appreciate them. These blessings and gifts are aligned with the values of God, not the world.

To the man rich in the love and compassion of God, prosperity and wealth take on a new meaning. The size of his bank account ceases to be important; all that matters is that he has enough to share with others in need. The more he can improve the lives of his fellow man, the richer he feels. He is uniquely equipped to handle whatever circumstances come his way. The peace of God fills him, providing comfort in times of sorrow and healing in times of pain.

The man of God believes in the Lord so completely that worldly news does not frighten him; he trusts in God's plan and has willingly laid his life in His hands. Although evil might well be able to attack his physical body, it will never be able to touch his soul; he is encased in the armor of God, and he will

be able to endure all without fail (Eph. 6:10-18).

Last but certainly not least, the man of God **endureth for ever**. The life of a true Christian heart leaves an indelible legacy that can never be erased. Each life they have touched has been imbued with a spark of the light they contain. God's love is constant; it never dissipates and cannot be destroyed. It makes its way from person to person, spreading farther and farther with every godly touch. With every life changed, the legacy increases. Once we give ourselves to God, we can be assured that we will forever have a place in His service.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God (Matt. 5:3-9).

Thought for the Day: *Accepting God into our lives does not automatically mean the world around us is a better place, but with God's light, the darkness breaks before us, and we can finally see the path*

Christ Revealed: Christ quoted Psalm 118:22: The Stone which the builders refused (rejected) – to the chief priests and the Pharisees when they willfully rejected Him as the Messiah (Matt. 21:42-45).

Word Studies: 108:7 **mete** = measure; 109:23 **declineth** = fades away; 111:7 **verity and judgment** = truth and justice; 112:9 **horn** = strength, power; 114:8 **standing** = pool of; 116:3 **compassed me** = surrounded me.

Pray For Country: Switzerland (8,061,516) Central Europe • Major Languages: German, French • Religious Freedom • 38.2% Roman Catholic; 26.9% Protestant; 4.9% Muslim; 5.7% Other Christian; 1.6% Other; 21.4% None; 1.3% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Seek the guidance of God in meekness (Ps. 25:9).

Optional Reading: I Timothy 5

Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of Thy word. I rejoice at Thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. I hate and abhor lying: but Thy law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise Thee because of Thy righteous judgments. Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them. LORD, I have hoped for Thy salvation, and done Thy commandments. My soul hath kept Thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. I have kept Thy precepts and Thy testimonies: for all my ways are before Thee (Ps. 119:161-168).

Peace does not exist in the natural heart of man. The moment mankind ushered sin into the world, we forsook our right to it. ***Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return (Gen. 3:16-19).*** Having torn ourselves away from perfect communion with God, we entered into a world where basic needs took center stage and meeting them became a full-time job. As we established ourselves, pride, ambition, and greed became the driving force behind all we did. Our hearts hardened, and our nature was set.

Yet even as we fell into corruption, God laid the foundation for our redemption. He established His ***law, commandments, and precepts***. He revealed Himself through His Word and established order amid chaos. The peace we had lost still existed in Him, and He invited us to return to Him so that we might once again share in it.

In this stanza of the 119th Psalm, the psalmist rejoices in

the peace God has shared through His holy Word. He reflects on how that peace has overcome the trials and tribulations of the world, lifting the psalmist out of the chaos and providing a firm foundation upon which he can stand. With all his heart, the psalmist trusts in God for **salvation**, vowing to continue to follow the Lord's ways.

The psalmist tasted the peace of God through His Word. His hope was born of the promises he found within its verses, and his joyous need for God was brought home to him through the **laws, commandments, and precepts** therein established. Today, we in the body of Christ continue to draw comfort from His Word. We have exchanged the unquenchable hope of **salvation** the psalmist sang of for the surety of God's promise fulfilled (John 3:16). Peace has once again taken root in the new hearts He has given us. Our joy comes from knowing that we will never be without Him again.

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27). ***And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*** (Phil. 4:7).

Thought for the Day: *Following the path God has laid out is the only way to avoid the pitfalls of sin.*

Christ Revealed: By the psalmist who delighted in the Commandments of God (Ps. 119: 47). Christ said: I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me (John 6:38; 15:10).

Word Studies: 119:1 **undefiled** = blameless; 119:7 **uprightness of heart** = sincere intentions; 119:25 **My soul cleaveth unto the dust** = I am very discouraged; **quicken thou me** = restore my life; 119:28 **melteth for heaviness** = is weary because of grief; 119:83 **am become like a bottle in the smoke** = shrivel like a wineskin in the smoke.

Pray For Bible Pathway Printer: Pollock Printing, Nashville TN • **Government Officials:** Rep. David Cicilline (RI), Rep. Chris Stewart (UT) • **Country:** Syria (17,951,639) Southwestern Asia • Major Languages: Arabic, Kurdish, Armenian, Aramic, Circassian • Limited religious freedom for Christians • 90% Muslim; 10% Other (Christian - various denominations), Jewish • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord to forgive your sins (Ps. 25:11).

Optional Reading: I Timothy 6

Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth (Ps. 124:6-8).

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). The devil is our mortal enemy. He hates us and would like nothing better than to ruin our lives, kill us, and hurl us into eternal torment. He will attack us from every angle as personally as possible. At times, his attacks will occur with such ferocity that it will seem as if there is no hope in sight, and we may fear that we are about to be overtaken. Satan is a mastermind when it comes to attacking God's people. Even so, Satan is not someone that we have any reason to fear.

Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Through the grace of Jesus Christ, we can stand as victors, not cower as victims. With God on our side, we will never be defeated by the enemy, a fact that He makes abundantly clear to us in His Word. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us (Rom. 8:37).

We live in a fallen world, and, as God's children, we will constantly find ourselves surrounded by spiritual warfare, but we must hold fast to the promise of the Lord to help us during our times of distress. ***Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*** We don't have to depend on the resources of this world or our own devices. In the heat of the battle, the Lord Himself has promised to rise as our protection against harm. ***So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him*** (Is. 59:19).

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33). The next time we find ourselves under an attack from the devil, let us remember the words given to us by the psalmist. Instead of

dropping our heads as if beaten, we need to stand tall in the truth of the Word of God. We will not be defeated. As believers, we will rise victorious over the enemy. The ultimate fate of the devil is sealed. He has already lost the war. God has given us His Word as both a shield and a sword (Eph. 6:16-17). With it, we can be secure in our protection, but we can also send Satan on His way. There is an old saying, "The next time the devil brings up your past, remind him of his future." When you feel him closing in, remind him that you have God's Word, and let him know that you like the ending!

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

Thought for the Day: *The devil's strength comes from our weakness; sadly, most find it easier to fall than to climb.*

Christ Revealed: As our Protector – the One who shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in (Ps. 121:8). By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture (John 10:9). And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly Kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (II Tim. 4:18).

Word Studies: 130:3 **mark** = record; 130:4 **feared** = revered with awe; 131:1 **exercise** = concern; **too high for me** = far beyond me.

Pray for Government Officials: Rep. Mike Rogers (AL), Rep. Jim Banks, Rep. Babara Lee (CA) • **Country:** Taiwan, Republic of China (23,359,928) 77 islands Southeastern coast of China • Major Language: Mandarin Chinese • Religious Freedom • 93% "Chinese Religions" (Buddhist/Taoist/Confucian); 4.5% Christianity; 2.5% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Declare the wondrous works of God with thanksgiving (Ps. 26:6-7).

Optional Reading: II Timothy 1

O give thanks unto the **LORD**; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for His mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the **LORD** of lords: for His mercy endureth for ever. To Him who alone doeth great wonders: for His mercy endureth for ever. To Him that by wisdom made the heavens: for His mercy endureth for ever (Ps. 136:1-5). Who remembered us in our low estate: for His mercy endureth for ever: And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for His mercy endureth for ever. Who giveth food to all flesh: for His mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for His mercy endureth for ever (Ps. 136:23-26).

God is eternal, existing without beginning or end. **I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty** (Rev. 1:8). God is good; evil does not exist in Him. This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). God is true to His nature; He will not act outside of it. **God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good** (Num. 23:19)? God is love, and only love can live in His presence. **Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love** (1 John 4:7-8).

These are the truths around which the psalmist composed the 136th Psalm. He opens by offering thankful praise for God's nature, **O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good**. The psalmist is praising the very essence of God. Although later he cites specific actions and accomplishments, in these first three verses, he is marveling over God Himself, not anything He has done or will do.

He then sings praises to God the Creator, **To Him that by wisdom made the heavens**. Once again, it is God he is praising – the Creator, not the creation. God's wisdom, His creativity,

His attention to detail, all of it is honored by the psalmist.

Next, he focuses on God the Savior. ***To Him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for His mercy endureth for ever: And brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endureth for ever*** (136:10-11). He recounts how God drew Israel out of Egypt, established her in the land He had prepared for her, and protected Her from her enemies.

Finally, He praises God the Provider. ***Who giveth food to all flesh: for His mercy endureth for ever*** (136:25). A land to call home. Food. Shelter. God provided for every need His people had, and for this, the psalmist raises his voice in thanksgiving.

Woven throughout the entire psalm is the phrase for ***His mercy endureth for ever***. With this repeated phrase, the psalmist acknowledges the ultimate truth. God's unending, all-encompassing, unconditional love is the thread that ties it all together, God, King of kings and Lord of lords, Creator, Savior, Provider, and Friend.

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away (1 Cor. 13:7-8).

Thought for the Day: *God's actions and intentions are free of sin; His perfection cannot be measured by human standards.*

Christ Revealed: As the Descendant of David, who would sit upon David's throne (Ps. 132:11).

Word Studies: 132:6 **Ephratah** = the district in which Bethlehem was located; 132:11 **fruit** = offspring; 132:17 **horn** = authority, power; **bud** = flourish; 135:4 **Jacob** . . . **His peculiar treasure** = the people of God are God's own possession.

Pray for Radio: Sponsored by James & Ila Drost • **Government Officials:** Rep. Katherine Clark (MA) • **Country:** Tajikistan (8,051,512) Central Asia • **Major Languages:** Tajik, Russian • **Almost entirely Muslim** • 90% Muslim; 10% Other (Russian Orthodox, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Seventh-day Adventists, Lutherans, Korean Protestants, Bahais, Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Seek the Lord in times of trouble; He will shelter you (Ps. 27:5).

Optional Reading: II Timothy 2

Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me (Ps. 139:7-10).

In the 139th Psalm, David reveals his knowledge of one of life's great theological truths. God knows everything there is to know about us. Nothing can be hidden from Him, not even our innermost thoughts or secret desires. Over the course of this Psalm, David concludes that God knows him better than he knows himself.

With his heartfelt and poetic words, David gives thanks for God's presence in all places at once. The omnipresent nature of God is difficult, if not impossible, for the human mind to process. We think in a singular, linear fashion, and our finite minds are baffled by the infinite nature of God. A billion people at a billion different points on the globe could all be praying simultaneously, and God would still be able to give each of them His undivided attention. This is a truth that we must accept on faith alone. He is present for every moment of every life He has ever created. ***For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad*** (Luke 8:17).

David also understood that there is a second reason that God knows us so well. God is our Creator, and who could better understand the nature of the creation than its Creator? If a flaw is found in the foundation of a towering skyscraper, the architect who designed the blueprints will be called. When a glitch is discovered in computer software, we seek out the designer who wrote the code. When looking for answers, tracking down the people who know the product inside and out makes sense. They will be the ones that will understand its proper function and be best equipped to get things back on track. So it is with mankind. Our heavenly Father created us and knows everything there is to know about us. ***For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath***

before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

Since God knows us that well, what is the point in trying to hold things back from Him? Do we really think we can compartmentalize our hearts to the point that we can deceive God? Most of us have experienced situations where we desperately wanted something but were afraid to pray about it because we were not sure that wanting it was proper. Do you remember what happened when you tucked the thought away and tried to keep it to yourself? You created a barrier between yourself and God, a barrier that could only be breached by opening up and sharing the hidden thought. God knows what is in our hearts, whether or not we reveal it to Him, but the only way for us to receive His counsel is by being open and honest in our prayers to Him.

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God (Phil. 4:6).

Thought for the Day: *To seek to know God through prayer and reading His Word is to bask in His presence; to seek to fully understand God is to make a vain attempt to become His equal.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who deals bountifully with us (Ps. 142:7).

Word Studies: 139:15 **curiously wrought** = skillfully fashioned; 140:5 **gins** = lures, snares; 141:7 **Our bones are scattered** = Overwhelming destruction is contemplated; 143:3 **smitten** = crushed, struck.

Pray For Country: Tanzania (49,639,138) Eastern Africa • Major Languages: Swahili, English, Arabic • Religious Freedom (heightened tensions between Muslim and Christian communities) • Mainland - 30% Christian; 35% Muslim; 35% Indigenous Beliefs; Zanzibar - More than 99% Muslim • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask the Lord to teach you His ways (Ps. 27:11).

Optional Reading: II Timothy 3

Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish (Ps. 146:1-4).

The Book of Psalms closes in an explosion of praise and worship to the Lord our God. The last five Psalms begin and end with the phrase, **Praise the LORD**. Throughout the text, His wondrous glory is written out for all to experience. Praise is given for God's greatness on a grand scale, as well as for His attention to detail in each of our lives.

In the 146th Psalm, the psalmist draws particular attention to the trustworthy, saving power of God. He does this by first pointing out the limitations of man: **Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish**. No man, regardless of his level of intelligence or earthly power, can save himself or others from the certainty of death. Whether it belongs to a president or a prisoner, a pauper or a millionaire, every human body will fail at some point. Breathing will cease, and we will **returneth to his earth**.

To the psalmist, though, this was a statement of fact, not one of fear. Man might not be able to help himself, but God certainly could. **Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God** (146:5). The psalmist knew that God was eternal (146:10) and that it was through God alone that the oppressed could be freed, the hungry could be fed, the blind could be healed, and the wicked could be defeated (146:6-9).

Christians today have an even greater promise to cling to. Through the work of Christ, death has been defeated. **But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel** (II Tim. 1:10). For those of us who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior

of our lives, our last earthly breath will be drawn not with fear but with joy as we prepare to look upon the face of God (Rev. 22:4). Like the psalmist, we too must remember that God alone is capable of fulfilling this precious promise. There is nothing that any of us can do to earn this privilege. Only those whose hope is in the Lord his God will be able to find solace in these blessed words, And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise (Luke 23:43).

May we all join with the psalmist and sing: ***Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise Him in the heights*** (Ps. 148:1). ***Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints*** (149:1). ***Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in His sanctuary: praise Him in the firmament of His power. Praise Him for His mighty acts: praise Him according to His excellent greatness*** (150:1-2). ***Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD*** (150:6).

And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people (Rom. 15:11).

Thought for the Day: *If we allow our fear of death to outweigh our love of God, then we have falsely attributed more power to it than Him.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who gives sight to the blind (Ps. 146:8). Jesus Christ opened blind eyes. Then touched He their eyes . . . And their eyes were opened (Matt. 9:27-30; Mark 10:46-52; John 9:1-41).

Word Studies: 144:7 **rid** = rescue; 144:13 **garners** = grain storehouses; **streets** = fields; 145:3 **unsearchable** = beyond our understanding; 147:4 **telleth** = counts; 148:7 **dragons** = large sea animals.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Officials:** Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (IL), Rep. Ron Estes (KS) • **Country:** Thailand (67,741,401) Southeast Asia • **Major Languages:** Thai, English • **Restricted Religious Freedom** • 93.6% Buddhist; 4.9% Muslim; 1.2% Christian; 0.2% Other; 0.1% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Thank the Lord for hearing your prayers (Ps. 28:6-7).

Optional Reading: II Timothy 4

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God (Prov. 2:1-5).

God gave Solomon a most precious gift. ***And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge My people, over whom I have made thee king: Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like*** (1 Kings 3:11-12). As a direct result of that gift, Solomon guided his people into an age of peace and prosperity, the likes of which they had never known before (4:25). Solomon's desire to preserve God's wisdom for future generations led him to compose the Book of Proverbs. His stated purpose is for others ***To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion*** (Prov. 1:2-4).

One of the first things we notice as we enter the Book of Proverbs is that, even in his wisdom, Solomon struggled with the sin of excessive pride. ***My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee*** – although technically correct in the fact that the words and commandments were issued by him under his authority as king, they were not truly Solomon's words; they flowed from the wisdom of God. As we read through the Book of Proverbs, we would be remiss to view it simply as a book of advice from a long-dead king. The words contained herein are given to us by God so that we might

better understand the reasons for His Commandments. Verse by verse, God is offering us encouragement and instructions on how to get the most we can out of the time He has given us here on earth. ***That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God*** (Col. 1:10).

If you have ever cried out to the Lord, “Why?” here is your chance to find answers. God offers us more cause-and-effect explanations within these verses than anywhere else in His holy Word. Not everything we read over the coming week will be easy for us to understand and accept, but we would be foolish to dismiss anything just because it does not immediately conform to our way of thinking. God intends this book to challenge our pre-conceived notions and earthly understandings. He wants to shake us out of our complacency and make us stop and take a serious look at how we are living our lives in relation to how He believes that we should be living them. Are you ready to accept His challenge?

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates (II Cor. 13:5)?

Thought for the Day: *We do not have to fully understand God’s wisdom, just accept it.*

Christ Revealed: As the Creator who founded the earth . . . He established the heavens (Prov. 3:19). All things were created by Him, and for Him (Col. 1:16; Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:2-3).

Word Studies: 1:4 **give subtilty to the simple** = impart insight (prudence) to the teachable; 1:11 **lurk privily** = wait secretly; 1:28 **early** = diligently; 2:1 **hide . . . with thee** = receive and treasure My Commandments in your heart; 2:7 **buckler** = a shield used in hand-to-hand combat; 2:12 **froward** = opposed to God; 2:16 **strange woman** = adulteress; 3:26 **thy foot from being taken** = your life from all danger.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Country:** Timor-Leste (1,201,542) South-east Asia • **Major Languages:** Tetum, Portuguese • **Religious Freedom** • 98% Catholic 1.0% Muslim; 1.0% Protestant • **Prayer Suggestion:** Sing praises to the Lord (Ps. 30:4).

Optional Reading: Titus 1

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee (Prov. 4:1-6).

All parents have been charged by God to provide their children with Godly instruction and discipline. **And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up** (Deut. 6:7). **Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it** (Prov. 22:6). **And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord** (Eph. 6:4). In today's reading, we look at the mirror image of that charge, focusing not on the parent's responsibility but rather the child's. **Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.**

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth (Eph. 6:1-3). Just as it is the parent's responsibility to instruct the child, it is the child's responsibility to absorb that instruction, study on it, and apply it to their life. In the beginning, the learning is instinctual. The child is 100% dependent on the parent and thus is entirely focused on them as their source of survival. As the child grows, that focus is fragmented by worldly distractions, and conscious choice comes into play. Today's reading entreats the child to choose wisdom over folly, to listen to the Godly words of their parents, and to let their **heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.**

Solomon is not merely referring here to the act of learning that takes place before the age of majority. Our need for Godly instruction and guidance is unending. ***The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge*** (Prov. 18:15). From the moment we are born until we draw our last breath, we are learning and processing. In that sense, we will always be children to the generations that proceed us just as they are to the generations that came before them. ***Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding*** (4:7). It would be the opposite of wisdom to decide that those who have walked with God longer than we have been alive no longer have anything to teach us.

Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? hath He not made thee, and established thee? Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee (Deut. 6:7).

Thought for the Day: *All children go through a rebellious phase; those who have been provided with a strong foundation of faith often weather the storm better than those who have not.*

Christ Revealed: By the teacher of wisdom (Prov. 4:7,11). Christ is the Teacher in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).

Word Studies: 4:12 **straitened** = hindered; 4:13 **fast** = firm; 4:24 **forward** = deceitful talk; 5:3 **strange** = adulterous; 5:6 **moveable** = irresponsible, unstable; 5:19 **ravished** = delighted; 5:22 **holden with the cords of his sins** = ensnared, held fast by the control of his sins; 6:12 **naughty** = worthless, wicked.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Government Officials:** Rep. James Clyburn (SC), Rep. Cori Bush (MO), Sen. John Barrasso (WY) • **Country:** Togo (7,351,374) Western Africa • Major Languages: French, Ewe, Mina, Kabye, Dagomba • Religious Freedom • 29% Christian; 20% Muslim; 51% Indigenous Beliefs • **Prayer Suggestion:** Confess your sins to the Lord; He is quick to forgive (Ps. 32:5).

Optional Reading: Titus 2

Now therefore hearken unto Me, O ye children: for *blessed are they that keep My ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors. For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate Me love death* (Prov. 8:32-36).

The LORD possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was (Prov. 8:22-23). When reading the book of Proverbs, identifying the speaker can sometimes be challenging. There are times when Solomon appears to be referring to himself, while other times he is clearly recording the Words of God as revealed to him through his gift of wisdom. The opening chapter in today's reading gives us no such issues. Here, tucked among Solomon's pearls of wisdom and approximately 1000 years before His entrance into the world, the pre-incarnate Christ has left us a most precious gift. In these verses, He is revealed to us in all His majesty. *For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.* With these words, the path to eternal life is illuminated. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him* (John 14:6-7).

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth. Before the first moment of creation, God's plan for us was fully formed and already in motion. *Then I was by Him, as One brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men* (8:30-31). God has loved us from the beginning of time and has prepared the way so that we might learn to love Him in return. *I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me* (8:17).

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. There is only one path we can take that will end in eternal life. In the time of Solomon, the world was being prepared to receive the Light. They were ***watching*** and ***waiting***, even though most did not understand what they sought. Today, we know beyond a shadow of a doubt whom we must follow and to whom our allegiance must lie. God's plan has been fully revealed, and the choice has been laid before all of creation. ***Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness*** (Rom. 6:16)? Jesus is here, and all who ***findeth*** (Him) ***findeth life***. Will we follow Him into life everlasting, or would we rather follow the devil into hell?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men (John 1:1-4).

Thought for the Day: *Though we cannot hope to know in advance the Day of the Lord, it draws closer every day. What line will you be standing in when it arrives?*

Christ Revealed: As the Creator who prepared the heavens (Prov. 8:27- 31). The heavens are the works of Thine hands (Heb. 1:10, John 1:3).

Word Studies: 8:12 **of witty inventions** = with wise insight; 8:29 **his decree** = its boundary; 9:7 **getteth himself a blot** = gets insults in return; 10:1 **heaviness** = grief, shame; 10:4 **slack** = negligent, lazy; 10:8 **prating fool** = self-sufficient know-it-all; 11:6 **naughtiness** = wickedness.

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Officials:** Rep. Robert Aderholt (AL), Rep. John Larson (CT), Sen. George Santos (NY), Rep. Seth Magaziner (NY) • **Country:** Tokelau (1,337) South Pacific Ocean • Major Language: Tokelauan, English, Samoan • 58.2% Congregational Christian Church; 36.6% Roman Catholic; 1.8% Presbyterian; 2.8% Other Christian; 0.1% Spiritualism and New Age; 0.5% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Be glad in the Lord and rejoice at all times (Ps. 32:11).

Optional Reading: Titus 3

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness. The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit (Prov. 15:1-4).

How we say something is every bit as important as what we say. Harsh or bitter tones, judgmental and condescending looks or mannerisms, and aggressive posturing have no place in our dealings with our fellow Christians or in our witness of Christ. ***For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved*** (John 3:17). Responding to anger with anger or hate with hate will do nothing but escalate the fight and alienate the other person. It doesn't matter if our words are just and true; if they are thrown with venom at our audience, the message that we are trying to get across will not be heard. ***Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man*** (Col. 4:5-6).

Tempering our speech with love and grace does not mean we should water down our message. It in no way means that we must support or participate in sinful behavior or compromise our God-proscribed values for the comfort of others. Nor does it mean we should choose to take the 'live and let live' path. ***When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand*** (Ezek. 3:18). God has called us to mentor, support, and when necessary, lovingly admonish our brothers and sisters in Christ. ***Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*** (Gal. 6:1). We are also called to share the Gospel and model a Christ-led life to everyone we come into contact with. ***Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and***

glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

To answer these callings as God intended, we must first relinquish our self-righteous pride and accept that we are no better than our neighbor. They are no less worthy of God's love and grace than we are. Our lives should speak for themselves; there is no need for us to point out in words our own perceived Godliness in contrast to their worldly nature. ***Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers*** (Eph. 4:29). Instead of tearing down, we should build up. Affirm their worth in God's eyes, not what they could be someday, but what they are right now—a person God believes is worth saving. Even delivered in love, this message won't be welcomed by everyone we share it with. But by offering it up in a non-confrontational manner, we greatly increase our chances of being heard.

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ (I Thess. 5:9).

Thought for the Day: *Only through the acceptance of God's love will we find the path forward.*

Christ Revealed: As One who hates Lying (Prov. 12:22).

Word Studies: 12:1 **brutish** = without regard to reason or propriety; 12:11 **vain** = worthless; 12:25 **Heaviness** = Worry; **maketh it stoop** = causes depression; 13:11 **vanity** = dishonesty; 13:16 **layeth open** = exposes; 14:1 **plucketh** = tears; 14:23 **penury** = poverty; 15:1 **grievous** = harsh; 15:17 **stalled** = fattened; 15:27 **gifts** = bribes.

Pray For Government Officials: Sen. Raphael Warnock (GA) • **Country:** Tonga (106,440) Southwestern Pacific • **Major Languages:** Tongan, English • **Religious Freedom** • 64.9% Protestant; 16.8% Mormon; 15.6% Roman Catholic; 2.7% Other/None/Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Praise God in prayer and with singing for His Word is pure and His works are done in truth (Ps. 33:2-4).

Optional Reading: Philemon 1

An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire. A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends (Prov. 16:27-28).

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” This old rhyme has been used by generations of children as a shield against schoolyard tormentors, but anyone who has ever been in that position knows there is no truth to it. Words can and do hurt, often causing damage that can last a lifetime. Indeed, we may be shocked to discover on the judgment day of Christ that the damage done by loose talk far exceeds that done in any other way because the destructive force of hateful words never truly ends. The Lord has given us many warnings regarding thoughtless speech. ***A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue*** (Prov. 17:4). ***Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince*** (17:7). ***A fool’s lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. A fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul*** (18:6-7). Although we can be honestly sorry, repent, and receive forgiveness, we cannot unsay what we have said. Once words have escaped our lips, they cannot be recalled. They will go on and on from mouth to ear and ear to mouth, spreading their damage across cities, states, nations, and continents.

A single snide remark made during a casual conversation may be soon forgotten by the speaker, but as it winds its way out into the world, it will grow ugly and malignant. Words have the power to wound a person soul-deep. ***The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly*** (18:8). Hateful comments are especially destructive if uttered by someone known to be a Christian. When we claim to serve the Lord, anything we say or do reflects on Him. Consequently, when we speak, people attribute our message to God. Through the power of words alone, we can drive people away from the church, cause them to shun Christian fellowship, and leave them with a false image of our Savior. How badly would you feel knowing that your words caused someone to turn away from their search for Christ?

David prayed, Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips (Ps. 141:3). He understood the dangers of unguarded speech, and he realized that God was the only one qualified to determine the difference between what was helpful and what was hurtful. ***Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers*** (Eph. 4:29). This prayer should be one that we pray each morning upon waking before we get involved in the first conversation of the day. Just as God guided David, He will guide and direct us. By running every word through the Lord's filter before allowing it to escape our mouths, we will ensure that we accurately represent Him to everyone we meet.

Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man (Matt. 15:11). ***Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*** (II Cor. 10:5).

Thought for the Day: *Words said to others can be taken back or explained, but words said of others become the devil's whispers.*

Word Studies: 16:2 **spirits** = motives; 16:8 **without right** = dishonestly gained; 17:18 **strike hands** . . . **surety** = gives a pledge to be responsible for his neighbor's debts; 18:2 **discover itself** = express itself; 18:3 **with ignominy reproach** = with dishonor and disgrace; 19:3 **freteth** = is resentful; 19:7 **they are wanting to him** = they abandon him; 19:13 **a continual dropping** = an unending irritation.

Pray for Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Official:** Rep. Andy Barr (KY), Rep. Rashida Tlaib (MI) • **Country:** Trinidad and Tobago (1,223,916) Off the coast of Venezuela • **Major Languages:** English, Hindi • **Religious freedom** • 32.1% Protestant; 21.6% Roman Catholic; 18.2% Hindu; 5% Muslim; 1.5% Jehovah's Witness; 8.4% Other; 2.2% None; 11% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Bless the Lord at all times regardless of circumstances (Ps. 34:1).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 1

W*ine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise* (Prov. 20:1).

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:17-19). A person who overindulges in **wine** or other **strong drink** is incapable of comprehending Godly wisdom. Their senses are dulled, and their base urges are multiplied. **But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment** (Is. 28:7). Drunkenness is a form of idolatry; it is surrendering control of our lives to strong drink rather than to a God. It is and has always been sin.

Alcohol can be a divisive subject among Christians today. The “official” church position on it varies from denomination to denomination, with some actively embracing it in moderation, some remaining neutral on the subject, and some labeling the consumption of it as sinful under any circumstance. The views of individual Christians are similarly conflicted. Some feel strongly that consuming alcohol in any amount is yielding to temptation and thus sinful, while others hold that alcohol in and of itself is just another example of the Lord’s bountiful provision. To further complicate matters, both sides turn to the Bible to back their positions and prove their point. So, which position best reflects God’s? They all do.

God does not hold alcohol in contempt. It is a product of His creation, a substance He provided for man’s enjoyment. **He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man’s heart** (Ps. 104:14-15). Those who do not feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit to abstain and choose to partake of it in

moderation, in accordance with the laws of God and man, are blameless before God. But alcohol consumption by a person who believes it to be sinful is sin. Any action we take that we believe in our hearts goes against the conviction of the Holy Spirit is a sin. Not necessarily because of the act itself but because we are purposefully choosing to go against our understanding of God's will. ***Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*** (James 4:17).

One final caution that we must all heed, regardless of our personal choices, is God's admonition to place the needs of others before our own desires. ***We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves*** (Rom. 15:1). Our responsibility to never knowingly lead others to sin will always take precedence over our individual rights (14:13).

For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:20-23).

Thought for the Day: *The fallout from indulging our vices does not fall on our shoulders alone; behavior that contradicts our faith is confusing to all who witness it.*

Christ Revealed: As the King who sits on the throne of judgment (Prov. 20:8). For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son (John 5:22).

Word Studies: 20:10 **divers** = differing; 20:19 **meddle not** = do not associate; 20:25 **make inquiry** = reconsider; 21:7 **robbery** = violence; 21:9 **brawling** = contentious; 21:14 **a reward in the bosom** = a secret gift; 22:2 **meet together** = have this in common; 22:26 **sureties for** = responsible for.

Pray for Staff: Judy McCrary • **Country:** Tunisia (10,937,521) North Africa • Major Languages: Arabic, French • Islamic state -- no open ministry for Christ is permitted; strict surveillance of all Christian activities • 98% Muslim; 1% Christian; 1% Jewish and Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Magnify the Lord; exalt His Name (Ps. 34:3).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 2

When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat (Prov. 23:1-3).

Giftng us with His Word is the second greatest blessing (the path to salvation being the first) God has ever bestowed on mankind. Not only does it introduce us to Him and provide us with the means to discern His Will, but it also is packed with Godly wisdom offering us direction on how best to navigate the fallen world in which we live. **Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path** (Ps. 119:105). When we internalize God's Word and align our values with His, we are granted the clarity of mind to seek His wisdom and apply it to our daily lives. **If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him** (James 1:5).

Individually, pride, greed, and ambition are all spiritual stumbling blocks that can distract us from our walk with Christ. But when combined, the danger they present is exponentially multiplied. In today's reading, Solomon cautions us against allowing flattery and hunger (physical, mental, or emotional) to blind us to the true nature of any given situation. Those in a position of earthly power rarely extend invitations without ulterior motives. Instead of allowing our senses to be dulled by our prideful gratitude and satisfaction over being allowed entrance into their world, we should **consider diligently what is before** us and keep our appetites and ambitions under control. It would be foolish to accept hospitality or favors before first learning the ultimate cost.

Just because a person is not in a position of power and authority over us, however, doesn't automatically mean we should lower our guard. **Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words** (Prov. 23:6-8). Communing with friends and neighbors who willingly and gladly share the bounty of God, accepting and giving

in relation to the moment's need, is a beautiful thing. ***And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common*** (Acts 4:32). But regardless of our need, we should avoid accepting anything that is grudgingly given. An individual who believes they have earned all they have and feels they must jealously guard against those who wish to take advantage of them is not someone to whom we need to be indebted. As with the rich and powerful, any invitations or favors from the selfish or miserly will come with strings attached. Strings which, if we allow them to entangle us, will work to draw us away from God's clearly marked path.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:8-10).

Thought for the Day: *Avoid leaders that would have us serve them rather than have us help them to serve God.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who rewards those who repay evil with good (Prov. 25: 21-22). If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink (Rom. 12:20). Jesus commanded: Love your enemies (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27,35).

Word Studies: 23:20 **riotous** = gluttonous; 24:26 **Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer** = A fair answer is as pleasant as a kiss on the lips; 25:9 **discover not a secret to another** = do not betray another man's confidence; 26:24 **dissembleth** = harbors deceit.

Pray for Government Officials Sen. Markwayne Mullin (OK) • **Country:** Turkey (81,619,392) Asia Minor and Southeastern Europe • **Major Languages:** Turkish, Kurdish • **Official resistance to Christian witnessing** • 99.8% Muslim; 0.2% Other (mostly Christians and Jews) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray and the Lord will free you from your fears (Ps. 34:4).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 3

H*e, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy* (Prov. 29:1).

Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). For those who refuse to accept correction from God, there is only one possible end. ***The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it*** (Jer. 17:9)? We are born into this world innocent of sin but in full possession of a sinful nature. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom. 5:12). Left to our own devices we will follow our nature; it is not possible for us to do otherwise.

God offers guidance, correction, and support to every soul He creates. He has given His Word to make His will known and reveals Himself in multiple ways daily. ***For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse*** (Rom. 1:20). Through the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, God has offered us the opportunity to transcend our nature and open our hearts to His love, mercy, and grace. ***For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*** (John 3:16).

The key word here is “offer.” We can submit to being molded by God’s guidance and corrections, or we can cling to our sinful nature, rigid and unyielding. The first choice will lead us to repentance and salvation; the second will lead us to destruction and damnation. God wants us to make the first choice, and He ensures that we have ample opportunities to do so. ***The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*** (II Pet. 3:9). But if we continually rebuff His advances and harden our hearts to his corrections, believing ourselves to be innocent

victims rather than desperate sinners, then we will reach the point of no return where we will **suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.**

For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is He whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:6-14).

Thought for the Day: *Free will is often lauded as the ability to make our own choices and determine our own destiny. However, our God-given free will boils down to one simple choice. Will we follow Him or not?*

Christ Revealed: As the One who descended from and ascended to heaven (Prov. 30:4). Jesus came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is (now) in heaven (John 3:13).

Word Studies: 27:16 **Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind** = Restraining a contentious woman is like attempting to hold the wind; 28:11 **searcheth him out** = sees through him; 28:14 **that feareth alway** = who is always reverent; 28:17 **stay** = help; 29:10 **seek his soul** = has concern for his well-being; 30:23 **odious** = hateful.

Pray for Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Government Officials:** Rep. Glenn Thompson, Jr. (PA) • **Country:** Turkmenistan (5,171,943) Central Asia • Major Languages: Turkmen, Russian • Restricted Religious Freedom • 89% Muslim; 9% Eastern Orthodox; 2% Unknown/Other (Catholic, Protestant, Baha'i, Jehovah's Witness, Hare Krishna) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Revere and worship the Lord with godly fear and you will have no want (Ps. 34:9).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 4

I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow (Eccl. 1:16-18).

If we view the Book of Proverbs as a roadmap of godly wisdom designed to help us navigate the path of life laid out by the Word of God, then we must view the Book of Ecclesiastes as the corresponding warning signs along the way. Solomon was a man in his prime when he recorded his proverbs for posterity, secure in the truth of his words and confident that a favorable outcome awaited any who would humbly heed his advice. By the time Solomon penned the book of Ecclesiastes, he was an old man, and all his illusions of self-competence had fallen away.

Solomon had been granted a most precious gift from God, but now, after having spent a lifetime searching for satisfaction through wealth, women, and possessions, he shamefully realized that he had squandered it. He had used God's wisdom to rule over the people of Israel effectively, but he had never truly applied that wisdom in a godly manner to his own life. Instead, Solomon had sought knowledge for knowledge's sake and had reveled in the pride of his own accomplishments. As he reached the end of his life, he realized just how much of a mistake he had made.

Before Solomon's ascension to the throne, David had counseled him: ***I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself*** (1 Kings 1:2-3). If Solomon had taken those words to heart, he would have had no reason for regret

at life's end. Unfortunately, Solomon never mastered putting God first. For the entirety of his adult life, Solomon sought his own pleasures. ***I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour*** (Eccl. 2:8-10). Ultimately, he realized that his pursuits had been nothing but ***madness and folly***. The Book of Ecclesiastes, then, is written not to instruct but to issue a clear and straightforward warning. Only with God at the center will our lives have meaning. If we are unwilling to seek the kingdom of God, then there is no point in attempting to do anything else.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

Thought for the Day: *Do our worldly pursuits keep us productive, or do they merely keep us busy? The difference between the two is how much participation we allow God in the activity.*

Christ Revealed: As God, the true Source of wisdom, and knowledge, and joy – the One who truly satisfies (Eccl. 2:26). We have the mind of Christ which is wisdom, knowledge, and joy (I Cor. 2:16; see also Luke 21:15; John 15:11; Rom. 15:14).

Word Studies: 1:13 **sore travail** = grievous task; 1:17 **madness and folly** = the ways of the foolish; **vexation of spirit** = very unsatisfying; grasping after the wind; 2:21 **in equity** = with skill; **portion** = inheritance.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Country:** Turks and Caicos Islands (49,070) North Atlantic Ocean • **Major Language:** English • **Limited Religious Freedom** • 72.8% Protestant; 11.4% Roman Catholic; 1.8% Jehovah's Witness; 14% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray that God will keep you from speaking evil (Ps. 34:13).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 5

A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease (Eccl. 6:2).

There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: (6:1). Solomon deliberately formulated these words in such a manner as to cause his listeners to lean forward and prick up their ears. He wanted all who heard him to fully understand the lesson he had discovered too late. ***Riches, wealth, and honour*** are indeed wonderful blessings from God, but in and of themselves, they are worthless. Without God as the spiritual center of our life, any enjoyment we receive from them will be fleeting at best. It is ***evil*** to look to our blessings as the source of our happiness and contentment. In the blink of an eye, our lives could end, and our blessings would cease. If we don't already have God at that point, we will be left with nothing.

Many today who are in danger of getting waylaid by this particular ***evil*** count themselves as members in good standing of the Christian community. They have accepted the blessings God has bestowed upon them as their just rewards and internalized their gratitude instead of honoring the Lord from whom the blessings came. Although they may pay lip service to God as the source of their prosperity, they genuinely believe they have earned everything they have been given. For such people, their blessings have become chains, tying them to this world and drawing them further and further away from God.

One of the ways in which we are called to honor God is by using the gifts we have been given in His service. ***Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church*** (I Cor. 14:12). Whatever we have been given, Riches, wealth, honour, wisdom, or skill, we have been given so that we can effectively serve Him and aid in the furthering of His kingdom.

To those who are only concerned with personal gain and who don't spare a second thought for matters of eternity, Solomon

had this to say: ***If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he. For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness*** (Eccl. 6:3-4). One day we will all have to settle an account of our lives with God. Woe to the person that has dedicated their life towards personal gain and forgotten the importance of serving the Lord.

And He spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:16-21).

Thought for the Day: *Worldly satisfaction can erode one's faith just as surely as perceived injustice and indignation.*

Word Studies: 5:12 **suffer** = permit; 5:13 **sore evil** = great adversity or affliction; 5:14 **evil travail** = misfortunes; 6:3 **an untimely birth** = stillbirth or miscarriage; 7:2 **lay** = take; 7:12 **excellency** = advantage; 7:26 **bands** = chains.

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Official:** Rep. Diana DeGette (CO) • **Country:** Tuvalu (10,782) Southwestern Pacific • **Major Languages:** Tuvaluan, English • **Religious Freedom** • 98.4% Protestant; 1% Baha'i; 0.6% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Call to the Lord for help; He will save you out of your troubles (Ps. 34:17).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 6

Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour. A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left. Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool (Eccl. 10:1-3).

For the last two chapters of the Book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon has endeavored to stress the attributes of the truly wise man. In chapter ten, he takes a closer look at the behaviors and characteristics that brand a man a fool.

To begin with, a fool is unpleasant to be around. Solomon likens him to a spoiled perfume that noticeably stinks and sets itself apart (10:1). A fool believes himself to be above reproach, but in reality, his reputation is paper-thin and prone to destruction. A fool is instinctively drawn to that which goes against God (10:2) and will go out of his way to make his position known and argue the correctness of it. A fool cannot hide the fact that he is one and sees no reason to do so (10:3).

A fool is careless of others. He works only towards his own convenience and gives no thought to the safety and convenience of others. A fool cares nothing for hard work or fair practices. A fool often surrounds himself with those who cater to him, not those who will challenge him to improve (10:4-10). A fool frequently speaks without forethought, automatically assuming that since he is the one speaking, his words are correct and universally welcome. ***The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him (10:13-14)?***

A fool is self-indulgent and wasteful. A fool desires to be seen as generous and compassionate, but only inasmuch as he himself is not inconvenienced or overshadowed (10:16-17). A fool is often lazy, attending only to what holds their own interest and neglecting the rest (10:18). Lastly, a fool is indiscreet, constantly complaining and gossiping about others without concern as to who might overhear their words or what damage

that might cause (10:20).

God did not move Solomon to provide us with this description so we could judge our neighbors but rather so we could examine ourselves. If we are honest, all of us reading this today will have to admit that from time to time we display some or even all of these traits (though rarely all at once), generally in moments of stress and selfish weakness. To claim otherwise is deceptive and foolish in and of itself. ***If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*** (1 John 1:8). God has not provided this description to cause us to crumble under the weight of self-condemnation but rather to assist in our continued spiritual growth. He is calling us to be ever vigilant, weed out our foolishness when and where we find it, and turn our faces towards Him. In God, we will find both wisdom and the strength to display it for all to see.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:15-17).

Thought for the Day: *To view oneself as the center of the universe is to render oneself a fool; the universe is God's, and we are but a small part of it.*

Christ Revealed: In the statement: For God shall bring every work into judgment (Eccl. 12:14). Jesus will judge all, for the Father (God) judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son (Jesus) (John 5:22).

Word Studies: 10:14 **is full of words** = talks as though he knows everything about which he knows nothing; 10:15 **he knoweth not how to go to the city** = he is ignorant concerning the most obvious matters; 12:11 **goads** = rods sharpened at the ends, used in driving oxen (Judg. 3:31; 1 Sam. 13:21); **The words of the wise are as goads** = The words of wisdom rouse into action to do right.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Government Official:** Rep. Nikema Williams (GA) • **Country:** Uganda (35,918,915) Eastern Africa • Major Languages: English, Luganda • Religious Freedom • 41.9% Roman Catholic; 42% Protestant; 12.1% Muslim; 3.1% Other; 0.9% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray not to be envious of others (Ps. 37:1).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 7

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned (Song 8:6-7).

And He (Jesus) ***answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*** (Matt. 19:4-6). By Biblical definition, marriage is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman. This bond encompasses all aspects of a couple's relationship, including spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical. While the laws regarding the creation and dissolution of legal marriage contracts vary from place to place and may change over time, it is essential to remember that God's definition of marriage remains unchanged and cannot be altered by human laws.

In the Song of Solomon, God offers us a beautiful illustration of His concept of marriage. He begins with courtship, showing us how to build the foundation necessary for a successful marriage. As the bride and groom prepare for the wedding, they reflect on what brought them to that moment. Mutual attraction ***Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.*** (Song. 1:15) led to passionate feelings of love and belonging. ***As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love*** (2:3-4). Physical desires were kept in check (2:7) even as the couple spent more and more time together, discussing everything from their hopes, dreams, and insecurities (1:1-17) to all the small but still significant differ-

ences they needed to settle before attempting to make a home together (2:15).

After they marry, God then goes on to share with us the beauty of marital intimacy and stresses the importance of maintaining a deep and passionate connection with your spouse. ***Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon (4:11). How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights (7:6)!***

The picture He paints is not one of shallow perfection but rather of determined, loving commitment. The couple makes mistakes, as all couples do. They have times where they don't connect, where they take each other for granted, and where they seem to be drifting apart (5:2-6). But when they realize what is happening, they immediately seek each other out to make amends. Through dedication and perseverance, they come to realize that well-tended marital love is stronger than any outside force.

I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves (Song. 7:10-12).

Thought for the Day: *True marriage is a celebration of faith and devotion; by honoring our spouse, we honor God.*

Christ Revealed: As the chiefest (outstanding) among ten thousand (Song 5:10). Jesus is the KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev. 19:16).

Word Studies: 1:3 **savour** = fragrance; 1:11 **borders** = ornaments; 1:12 **spikenard** = perfume; 1:16 **our bed is green** = we recline on a grassy field; 2:5 **Stay me** = Invigorate me; **flagons** = delicacies; **sick of love** = overcome; lovesick; 4:4 **bucklers** = small shields; 5:4 **bowels** = heart; 8:5 **raised** = awakened.

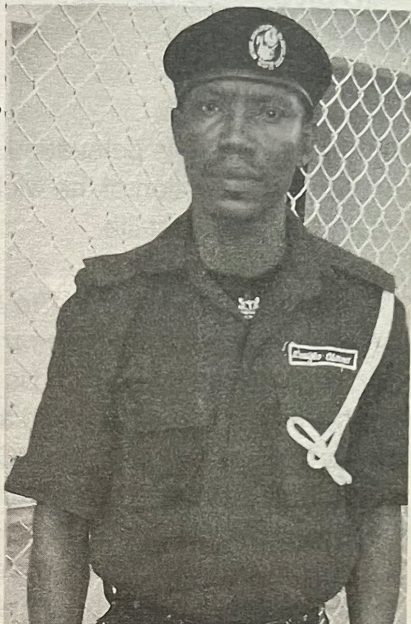
Pray For Government Officials: Rep. Joe Wilson (SC) • **Country:** Ukraine (44,291,413) East-central Europe • Major Languages: Ukrainian, Russian • Religious Freedom • 83.7% Orthodox (various jurisdictions); 10.2% Catholic (mainly Greek-Catholic); 2.2% Protestant; 0.6% Jews; 3.3% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart (Ps. 37:4).

Optional Reading: Hebrews 8

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– Dorris Dasakabi, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

Go ye . . . teach all nations (Matt. 28:18-20)

We invite those of you who desire to be a part of this **Rescue Mission** to join us through your gifts and prayers for **The Dr. John A. Hash Memorial Fund**.

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