



Daily God Walk

Virtures Series

Goodness

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Virtues Series**

Goodness

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the New
International Version (NIV). All other translations used
will be credited using these abbreviations:
(KJV) – King James Version
(NKJV) – New King James Version
(TLB) – The Living Bible
(TM) – The Message

Features of the Daily God Walk

Daily God Walk Online

We are now offering internet access to the Daily God Walk. We are posting the Daily God Walk as an e-book and giving our readers an opportunity to register to receive it monthly. At present we are only offering it in a format for the computer, but we will soon have it available for mobile devices.

Small Group Study Guide for Daily God Walk

So many people are responding to the messages in our devotional that we are now offering a study guide each month to help those who want to use the Daily God Walk for discussions in small groups. The study guide is available online.

Tips on Leading a Small Group

We have found that there are many folks who want to lead small groups so now you will also find, in the back of the book each month, tips on using the Daily God Walk as a text for small group discussions as well.

Small Group Coaching Online

For many years a focus of our ministry has been small group meetings. We have found that spiritual growth takes place when small groups of believers gather to discuss the Scripture, pray together, share the issues of life and fellowship together.

That is our motivation for expanding our ministry to include small group coaching. If you lead a small group, sometimes called cell group, or if you would like to be a leader, I encourage you to check out our small group site:

www.dailygodwalk.org/small-groups.html

Our hope is that the entire Daily God Walk program will be a blessing to you, a help for spiritual growth and an asset to your ministry.

Day One

Fruit of Spirit: Goodness

The fruit of the Spirit is... goodness... Against such there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. – Galatians 5:22-24

I was talking to a friend recently. He is a good man and lives a morally upright life. We were talking about the Christian life and the varying opinions about how a believer should live. He stated his belief as this; “As long as a person tries to do what is right he is going to be alright.”

We would all agree that a person should try to do what is right, but is that really the answer to the question, “How should a believer live?” In our theme passage for this series of devotions we are given a number of virtues that are called “Fruit of the Spirit.” We are also given a contrasting set of characteristics that are called, “Acts of the sinful nature.” How does one change from doing the behaviors of the sinful nature to exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit?

Can we grow the fruit of the Spirit in our lives by “trying to do good?” We can reach a certain level of success in that endeavor, but inevitably we fall short. In fact, when we are trying to do what is right according to what we feel is right we are often at odds with what the Spirit is trying to lead us to do.

Paul deals with this dilemma in Romans 7. He concludes that the law is good, but man by his own efforts cannot successfully perform its obligations. This leaves man frustrated with the realization that, though he struggle valiantly, he is bound to a body of sin that separates from God and leads to death. What then is the answer?

He gives us the answer in Romans 7:24-25, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

The Holy Spirit, through his indwelling presence, produces the fruit of goodness in us. All he asks is that we give him control of our life and allow him to produce the fruit that we could never produce on our own.

Prayer: Lord, you know I have tried to do right, but I so often fall short. Grant me the grace of surrendering to the Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Two

Add To Your Faith Goodness

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him... Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises... For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness... If you possess these qualities... they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive. – 2 Peter 1:3-8

It is interesting that Peter uses a different word for goodness here than Paul uses for goodness in Galatians. Paul uses the Greek word, “*agathosune*,” which means “virtue, beneficence” or simply goodness. Peter uses the word, “*arête*.” This word means “Any excellence of a person, or of a thing, an eminent endowment, property or quality. Used of the human mind and in an ethical sense, it denotes a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action; virtue, moral goodness” (Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament).

In the devotion for yesterday we looked at man’s inability to be good, or virtuous, on his own, yet Peter is telling believers to add virtue, or goodness to their faith. How does one do that? We’ll be exploring that question throughout this series of devotions, but let’s begin with Paul’s instruction in Philipians.

In Philipians 4:8 Paul writes, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.” The word translated “excellent” in this passage is the same word as “goodness” in our text passage. The KJV translates this word “virtue.”

Peter is telling us to add the virtue of excellence to our faith, and Paul, in Philipians is telling us how to do that. We add excellence, or virtue, by guarding what we think. He instructs us to think on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable.

We all know that is what we are supposed to do, but how do we do that? We appeal to the Holy Spirit. We first submit to the Lordship of Christ then we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we open ourselves to become bearers of his fruit. We do that with our focus on the virtuous thoughts Paul mentions.

Prayer: Lord, help me to think the thoughts that produce the virtue of excellence. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Three

The Holy Spirit Makes Us A Good Tree

Make a tree good and the fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad...The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. – Matthew 12:33,35

Jesus uses this apt analogy of a tree that produces fruit to demonstrate how our lives produce fruit. Just as with the tree, the fruit we produce comes from the life that is within us. If our life has been infected by the world's attitudes, desires and ambitions, then the fruit of our life will reflect that.

Christ was teaching this lesson in response to the Pharisees who were spreading the rumor that he did his works by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons. He begins a rebuke of the Pharisees by inquiring, "If I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out?" (v27). The unspoken answer is that they do not drive out demons.

It was by the power of God that Jesus did good works, and it is by the power of God that we are enabled to do good works. If we are to produce good fruit it will only be because the Holy Spirit has placed his life in us. When we live out the life of Christ, as we are enabled by the Holy Spirit, we will only have good stored inside us. If we only have good stored inside us then only good will come out of us. Thus, the Holy Spirit makes us a good tree.

One Spring we bought three tomato plants to raise a few tomatoes. We watched anxiously as the plants grew and began to sprout tiny buds. Soon the buds turned to very small tomatoes. They were at first green, then slowly they turned red. They looked very good, but the first one we pulled off was rotten on the bottom. Then we watched each tomato ripen and become rotten on the bottom.

What was wrong with our tomatoes? We found out that these otherwise healthy looking plants had a disease. We weren't aware of the disease until the fruit was tested. When the fruit of your life is tested, what will it reflect?

Prayer: Lord, I tend to be tainted by the world around me. Grant me the grace of being committed to the work of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Four

Overcome Evil With Good

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- Romans 12:21

It seems that the rule of thumb before the age of grace was “an eye for an eye.” In fact, that is what is stated in the law. However, that particular law was not given as an exact measure by which all things should be judged. Rather it was given as a rule of maximum retribution.

This law was designed to set limits on retribution. If by the fault of another one’s eye was put out the offended party is not given the right to go on a rampage and kill the offender. The offending party could only exact as much from the offender as the damage he had caused.

In the age of grace we are given a new law regarding retribution for offense. The new law is “overcome evil by returning kindness for evil.” How does one do that? By trusting God to be our avenger. When we take heed to his warning, “Do not take revenge... but leave room for God’s wrath,” we are affirming our faith in the Lord to be both our protector and our avenger.

There are few things more humbling to those who have done evil toward us than for us to shower kindness upon them. When we return kindness for evil we demonstrate a goodness that can only be gained through being born into God’s kingdom and submitted to the Holy Spirit.

The idea of returning kindness for evil is not so we can hide around the corner and wait for the judgment of God to fall upon our enemies. God’s purpose is to give the offender an opportunity to repent, turning to God and asking forgiveness for their sins.

If we exact justice and demand retribution from the offender they will not have an opportunity to see the love of God in action. Yes, we will be vindicated, but the probable result is that our enemy will still be our enemy and they will not come to repentance because we did not allow God to use us as an instrument of grace.

Prayer: Lord, it isn’t easy foregoing the right to exact equal justice from my enemies. Grant me the grace to do that. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Five

Goodness Comes From The Light

You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consist in all goodness, righteousness and truth.) – Ephesians 5:8-9

The things we did before we knew Christ may not have been evil in the sense of being sinister or malicious, but they were certainly evil in the sense that our will is at odds with God's will. Many times Jesus refers to the evil of man, but not always in the sense of being malicious. He is usually addressing the nature of man to be contrary to the nature of God.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:11, "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him." When Jesus called the crowd evil he did not imply that they were mean, he was simply showing that even flawed humanity will treat their children well and in like manner the Father treats us well.

If we understand that the evil which is in all men is the darkness that keeps men separated from God, then we can better understand the value of being in the light. In this passage Paul is making a distinction between those who are in darkness, satisfying their worldly desires, and those who have entered the light and whose deeds consist of all goodness, righteousness and truth.

This fruit of the Spirit we call goodness is more than good deeds. It is what is alive on the inside of us. In darkness we gratified the fleshly desires but in the light our desires have changed. The fruit of being light is that we desire goodness. Righteousness flows from us because of the goodness of the Holy Spirit in us.

Far too many believers see the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit only in the light of eternal redemption and do not see how our everyday life is to be affected. We cannot live in the Spirit and respond as the world responds; we cannot live in the Spirit and desire wealth, fame and ambition as the world does. If those things have a strong influence in our life then we have not fully come out of the darkness. Think about it.

Prayer: Lord, at times I can feel the tug of this world drawing me back toward the darkness. Grant me grace to continue in the light. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Six

Believers Are Full Of Goodness

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. - Romans 15:14

Mankind by nature has some sense of goodness about him. We tend to want the best for everyone and we are willing to help others, as long as it doesn't interfere with what we are trying to achieve for ourselves. By nature we are benevolent to the point that our benevolence begins to affect our own lifestyle. At that point we begin to choose our own comfort and satisfaction over the needs of others.

While that is the nature of man in his natural state, we who have been born into the family of God possess a different nature. When we are enthused with the nature of Christ our purposes change and our objectives are set by *agape* love rather than desiring self-fulfillment.

Paul is expressing to the church at Rome the concept that believers are given to a different standard than the world. He writes, "you are full of goodness." The Greek word used here for goodness is "*agathosune*." The meaning of this word is "virtue," or "beneficence." Virtue I know, but beneficence I had to look up.

Virtue is simply moral excellence. Paul was saying that the Roman church was full of moral excellence. But the word beneficence is more than that. A benefice is an endowment, as in the case of a wealthy person giving an endowment to a university with the goal of granting scholarships to worthy students from the interest produced by wise investment of the endowment. Beneficence is the state of being enabled by the benefice to do good works.

When Paul tells the Romans that they are full of goodness he is telling them that the Spirit of Christ has filled them with moral excellence and has equipped and enabled them to accomplish beneficent, or benevolent, works.

It is the virtue of Christ that has been placed in us as an endowment that enables us to reach beyond our own comfort to serve the needs of others.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to allow your virtue to be my guide in life and to serve the needs of others with *agape* love. In Jesus name.

Day Seven

His Power In Us Fulfills Every Good Purpose

We constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. – 2 Thessalonians 1:11

I have often been amused by new converts who are so excited about what God has done in them that they believe everyone in the world would believe if they just had the chance. With faith, courage and boldness they set out to win the world only to find out that the rest of the world is just as disinterested in hearing the gospel as they were before their conversion.

It has saddened me to watch as these newly enthused believers become disillusioned with witnessing and conclude that “no one wants to hear the gospel.” The fact is that people do not want the gospel preached to them – they want to see it lived before them.

What is the gospel? It is not the doctrine that we have developed from the life of Christ, but it is the effect of the Christ-life. Jesus came with the purpose of bringing the good news of restoration to the poor, the broken hearted, the afflicted and the oppressed – and he did restore them. Jesus opened the doors to the prison of oppression, depression, and He set men and women free.

I believe that Paul’s prayer in this passage is that we who have received the grace of God, and have been empowered by the Holy Spirit, will affect the world with the good works produced by our faith. It is not the words of the gospel that changes lives it is the work of the gospel.

The most respected person of the modern age is a woman who surrendered all of her life to serving needy children in India. Just the mention of Mother Theresa evokes reverence and admiration. The power of this woman of God was not in her words but in her deeds. As she served the people saw Christ incarnate.

Our prayer for the church today should be that we who are believers in the Christ will accept the power he has given us to do the good works of the gospel so that the world will know that God is alive and will give them life.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to show the world the good purposes you have placed in me by serving them with good works. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Eight

Called By The Goodness Of God

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. – 2 Peter 1:3

From before the age of time and creation God had a purpose for mankind. Even before the first man walked on this earth God had already planned to have a people to whom he could show his glory and the goodness of his nature.

It was with his purpose in mind that God established the laws that govern nature and man's relationship with him. God knows that by living in harmony with the laws of nature we are in harmony with creation and with him. The problem that we as humans have is that we are not inclined to submit to a higher order, but our desire is to establish our own order.

From Adam and Eve partaking of the forbidden fruit to the Tower of Babel man has shown himself to be in rebellion against God's order. It is that warring against the divinely established order that has created the ills of the world. War, famine and disease are all the result of man's rebellion against God.

The good news is that God has made available to us all that we need to live in harmony with him. By grace he has given us the ability to live godly through faith in our knowledge of him. It is his goodness that has called us into his glory and by his grace he has given us life.

God has not only called us, but he has also empowered us, to show the world his glory through living out the goodness of a godly life. Our challenge is that we must turn loose of our self-oriented nature and commit ourselves to living according to his purposes. When we do that he graciously honors our faith by releasing his goodness to us. That is his glory in the world today.

Colossians 1:27, speaks of God's hope and says it is "Christ in you." The purpose of God from before creation was for his goodness to be known to the world through the Christ he would birth in us.

Prayer: Lord, it is my nature to want to do it my way, but I am learning that my way is not adequate. Grant me the grace to walk in your way. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Nine

Jesus – Our Example Of Doing Good

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and... he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. – Acts 10:38

God was not only in the Christ but it was the God in Christ that anointed him with power to go around doing good, healing the sick and casting out demons. The good that Jesus did is an example of the good God wants to continue to do through those who have the Spirit of the Christ in them today.

There is far less of the power of God being made manifest in the world of believers today because too many of us receive the power of God unto salvation, and the power of God to live a godly life, but we do not receive the power of God to affect the world around us.

Our relationship with God is more ego-centric than it is theocentric and others oriented. We tend to be in relationship with God because of what he can do for us rather than for what we can do for him and the world around us.

The primary function of the power of God in Jesus when he was on the earth was to do the works of God. The works of God include teaching the truth of the kingdom of God, restoring mankind to relationship with God and answering the ills of mankind, including poverty, sickness and demonization, by the power of God.

Those of us who have received the Spirit of the Christ, and claim the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, have access to the same power and have the same responsibility to carry the message of the kingdom to our world. Jesus said as he was leaving this world, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Mark 16 records certain signs that would be evidences of believing in the Christ. The book of mark ends with this verse: “Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.” Think about it.

Prayer: Lord, help me to take the focus off of what you can do for me and focus on what I can do for you and the world around me. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Ten

The Goodness Of God Leads Us To Repentance

Despise thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? – Romans 2:4 (KJV)

In this passage Paul is addressing the issue of believers who will judge others for their sins while doing the same, or similar things themselves. The point seems to be that we who have received the grace of God should not pronounce judgment upon those who are still involved in sins.

We are being reminded of the goodness of God in that he did not judge us when we were in sin, but rather Christ was judged sin for us and God waited patiently upon us to come to repentance.

Through many years of ministry I have seen men shake their fist at heaven and curse God, yet fire was not sent to consume them. I have seen the same men at an altar weeping before the Lord as he washed their sins away. The only reason they could come to him after such defiance is that God is longsuffering and waits patiently for the slightest opportunity to lead men to repentance.

The goodness of God is not driven by man and the desires of men. The goodness of God is driven by his love. He forbears judgment for sin because he has the hope that one day we will listen. He suffers long with those who defy him to indulge their own lusts because he has the hope that one day they will come to themselves and turn to him.

When you are tempted to judge another harshly remember the goodness that God has shown you. Remember how you struggled on in rebellion to him and his way because you had to do it your way. Remember the depths of sin to which you had plunged before you finally submitted to his love.

At any point in your journey before you came to faith God could have said, "That's enough," and it would have been over for you. But he didn't because his goodness demanded that he wait patiently until you were ready.

Prayer: Lord, I tend to judge others for doing the same things you have forgiven me for. Grant me the grace to love as you love. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Eleven

The Lord's Favor Endures Forever

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

- Psalm 100:5

I can remember clearly the troubling times of being a teenager. I was a believer, yet I struggled with all the same issues that my peers faced. I wanted to be identified as a believer in Christ, but I was also struggling with finding an identity among my peers. Add to that my raging testosterone and I had some thoroughly frustrating times.

It was during that time of growing from puberty to adolescence that I discovered the value of the house of the Lord. There were many times as a teen that I would go to the church when no one else was around. All alone I would kneel at the altar and pour my soul out to the Lord who is good and whose love endures forever.

At that young age God gave me something that I have never lost; it was a love for the house of God. It didn't make any difference how bad things were outside of his house I knew I could enter his gates with thanksgiving and go into his courts with praise, and he would be there for me.

That was nearly 50 years ago and today, as I am writing, I am overwhelmed with his presence. Yes, setting in my office at home I have entered his gates and in the courts of the Lord I am praising him for his faithfulness that continues through all generations.

The habitation of the Lord is not buildings made by the hands of man, rather it is the special place in the heart of all men that he has reserved just for himself. If we will take the time and make the effort to go to that place we will find him there waiting for us.

Come, let us go into the house of the Lord. Let us come with thankfulness and let us enter the rooms of grace with praise for the Lord is good and his love endures forever.

Prayer: Lord, I just want to praise you for your goodness to me and for your faithfulness to love even when I have been unlovely. In Jesus name, amen.

Give Thanks To The Lord For He Is Good

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say this – those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south. – Psalm 107:1-3

The entire revelation of God, from Genesis to Revelation is about redemption. From Adam to Noah and from the Tower of Babel to David the story is about man's fall from favor and God's attempt to restore him. Psalm 107 is about this struggle. If you haven't read it recently you should.

The psalmist recounts many instances of the blessings of the Lord being forgotten as man in his self willed way follows after other gods. He recounts the cycle of blessing, falling away, judgment and finally redemption. The story of redemption is as new as today and as old as Genesis.

I'll never forget the night that Randy was baptized in the Holy Spirit. He was deep in prayer when a peace and a then a joy washed over him. He began to laugh and continued to laugh for some time. Then he got to his feet and declared, "I can't believe it. All of those years, and all of that money spent on drugs and I could have done Jesus for free." Randy had been redeemed.

What makes this story of redemption so wonderful is the story of Randy himself. You see, Randy was a drug dealer, a drug addict, a pimp and anything else he needed to be to indulge his habits. He also had AIDS and each of his four children were HIV positive. His wife also had full blown AIDS.

There is not enough space to tell the full story here, just let it be said that we will give thanks to the Lord for he is good and his love endures forever. Randy's children are no longer HIV positive; his wife, who had been given three days to live is healthier today than she had ever been. That was over 15 years ago and they are still free of the effects of this dreaded disease. Let the redeemed of the Lord say this: The Lord is good and his love endures forever.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for the hope of being redeemed from my own mistakes. You are good and your love does endure. Thank you in Jesus name.

Give Thanks To The Lord For He Is Good

Gives Thanks For His Love Endures Forever

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good – *His love endures forever.*

Give thanks to the God of gods – *His love endures forever.*

Give thanks to the Lord of Lords – *His love endures forever.*

To him who alone does great wonders – *His love endures forever*

... who by his understanding made the heavens – *His love endures forever.*

... who spread out the earth upon the waters – *His love endures forever.*

Who made the great lights – *His love endures forever.*

... the sun to govern the day – *His love endures forever.*

... the moon and stars to govern the night – *His love endures forever.*

[Give thanks to the Lord of Lords]... to the One who remembered us in our low estate – *His love endures forever*

...and freed us from our enemies – *His love endures forever*

...and who gives food to every creature – *His love endures forever*

Give thanks to the God of heaven – *His love endures forever.*

~ Psalm 136

The psalmist is heralding the goodness of God as he tells the story of Israel being led out of Egypt to the promised land. This psalm is antiphonal, much the same as scripture reading in a service when a leader will read a portion of scripture, or make a declaration, and the congregation will affirm what is said in unison.

You can imagine the emotion generated when hearing these statements made to the congregation then hearing thousands of people respond with, “His love endures forever.” The purpose of this psalm is to point to the goodness of God in redemption and to reiterate his enduring love and grace.

I encourage you to make a list of events in your life when the hand of the Lord was evident and after each entry write, “His love endures forever.” When you have done that get with friends or family and recite it together.

I have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God... *His love endures forever!*

Prayer: Lord, you have been so good to me and my family. I agree with the psalmist that your love does endure forever. Amen.

Day Fourteen

Remember... Only God Is Good

One came and said unto him, Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God; but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

- Matthew 19:16-17 (KJV)

A very religious young man came to Jesus asking about eternal life. It is hard to tell if he was trying to use this event to boost his ego, or whether he was sincere in his quest for life. Jesus tested his sincerity by posing a challenge.

The young man responded to Jesus by asking which commands he should keep. I think this is where his arrogance may show because he knew what his life was and that he had kept the letter of the law. When Jesus recited a few of the commands he replied, "I have kept those since I was a small boy."

Jesus saw directly into his heart and said, "Sell all that you have and give it to the poor then you will have treasure in heaven." Here was the true test of his sincerity; could he surrender his earthly treasure to secure a heavenly treasure?

The test we face today is no less challenging. Can we surrender to him all that we have and all that we ever hope to have?

A misconception the young man had was a man could become good enough to enter eternal life. He recognized Jesus as good, and perhaps in doing so implied that if Jesus was good surely he could be good too. Jesus surprised this young man by saying, "Why do you call me good - there is just one who is good and that is God."

Man can perform good deeds, but man cannot on his own become good. Only God can make one good. The point that Jesus seemed to be making was that all we can do by good deeds is transfer our treasure, but we cannot earn a place where only good resides without a transformation taking place in us.

Only God is good, but we, through Christ, can taste of his goodness and receive the nature of God's goodness through the work Of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Lord, we receive recognition through good works, but we can only become good by your grace. Grant me your grace. Amen.

Day Fifteen

God's Goodness Fills The Committed Heart

The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. – 2 Chronicles 16:9

Asa was king of Judah for many years and for about 35 years there was peace in the land. At the beginning of his reign the prophet Azariah prophesied to Asa; “The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you” (2 Chron. 15:1-3).

In the beginning Asa trusted the Lord and would seek him in all things. He destroyed the idols and repaired the altar of the Lord. He even deposed his grandmother from her position as queen mother because she had made a repulsive Asherah pole. He then returned the silver and gold to the temple.

He made a covenant with all the people to “seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and soul” (15:10-15). Asa truly walked with the Lord and the Lord was with him.

After ruling faithfully for 35 years a severe trial came. The king of the northern tribes came against him and he was fearful of being overrun so he took the gold and silver he had restored to the temple and made a treaty with a foreign king. He trusted that king to protect him rather than God.

It was in that context that the prophet came to him with a word of warning, chastisement, and promise. He was chastised for finding security in others rather than the Lord, yet there was the promise that if he would recommit his heart to the Lord he would be blessed.

The tragedy of this story is that Asa never turned back to God. Even when he contracted a fatal disease he did not seek the Lord (16:12). There is a warning to all of us in this. How we run the race is important, but not as important as how we finish the race. God is looking for men and women who will run well and finish well.

How well are you running and will you finish well?

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to stay faithful to the end so that your goodness and blessing will continue with me. Help me to guard against a hardened heart that trusts men rather than you. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Sixteen

God Answers A Good Man's Prayer

[Cornelius] and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. – Acts 10:2

We don't know the level of exposure to Judaism that Cornelius had, we only knew he feared God and was devoted in his faith. He was probably wealthy, as were most of the Roman officers at his level. Because of his wealth he was able to bless those less fortunate and he was known to give generously.

Is God impressed by our generosity? The story of Cornelius seems to indicate so. One day he had a vision of an angel standing before him. The angel said, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God" (v4).

It wasn't just his gifts to the poor that got God's attention, but it was the attitude of his heart. He was not only a strong believer but he had led his family into faith and all that were in his household. Not only was he a witness to his family but apparently he also had an influence on his soldiers as verse 7 would seem to indicate.

Cornelius may not have had everything right doctrinally, we don't really know; but he certainly had things right in his heart. In fact, God was so impressed with his life that he chose to use Cornelius as the door which opened the New Testament relationship with God to the Gentiles.

God used two visions to open the door of grace to the gentiles. First to Cornelius, then to Peter. Peter had to receive a revelation from God before he was willing to share the gospel with the Gentiles.

One of the lessons I get from the story of Cornelius is that God is looking for people who will be devout in their faith and demonstrate their faith by being generous to people in need. Doing good deeds will not make you good, but being good will lead you to do good deeds.

If God was wanting to reveal himself to your neighborhood, would he see in you the qualities and characteristics that he could use to reveal himself? Have you developed the kind of relationship within your community that would make it easy for God use you?

Prayer: Lord, Help me to have a heart that leads me to generosity to those whose needs are greater than mine. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Seventeen

Noah – A Man Of Grace And Goodness

God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil... And the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth"... But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

- Genesis 6:5-8

What a statement! "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." All the people of the earth were filled with evil imaginations and God said he would destroy all of mankind, but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

The Hebrew word translated "grace" means graciousness, kindness or goodness. When God was contemplating the destruction that would come upon the world he looked at Noah and saw that he was a good, kind and gracious man. The Message says it this way; "God liked what he saw in Noah."

Because of what God saw in Noah he gave him grace, or favor. It would be a wonderful testimony if it was said of any of us, "When God looked at so and so he liked what he saw." We don't know just what God saw in Noah, but it seems that he was gracious enough to get the attention of the Lord and for God to use him as an instrument of salvation for his family and the animals of the world.

One of the lessons we learn from the example of Noah is that God didn't call Noah because he was building a big boat. Noah wasn't trying to be something he wasn't, neither was he trying to become something that was beyond him - Noah was just being Noah; a gracious, kind and good man. He was an anomaly in his culture, but that didn't bother him.

Another lesson we can learn from Noah is that when God spoke to him he listened. He not only listened but he did what God instructed him to do even though it was a hard thing to understand. A big part of gaining the favor of God is being obedient to what he has instructed us to do. God is not looking for super stars, but he is looking for someone whose ego doesn't get in the way.

Prayer: Lord, I don't want to be a Noah or anything, but I do want to live so that when you look at me you like what you see. Help me live that way. Amen.

Day Eighteen

A Gracious Rebuilder Of The Faith

[Ezra] arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel. - Ezra 7:9-10

This was an exciting time for the Jews. They had been taken from their land many years before and had been in exile under several kings until they were finally allowed to go back to their homes in Jerusalem and Judah. There were over 40,000 in the first group to return.

The Jews had been sent back to Jerusalem by Cyrus king of Persia to rebuild the city and the temple of the Lord. That work was stopped by the next king, Artaxerxes. Another king, Darius, ordered the completion of the project that had begun years earlier. After all of this Ezra was sent to Jerusalem.

Ezra was touched by the hand of the Lord. Our text for today says, "the gracious hand of his God was on him." The temple had been rebuilt and Ezra had been anointed by God to reinstitute the law among the people.

Nehemiah records the work of Ezra in helping to restore the faith of the Jews at Jerusalem. Nehemiah chapter 8 tells of his work of rebuilding the spirit of the law in the hearts of the people. He appointed the Levites to read the law to the people, but they were not only to read the law - but "They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read" (Nehemiah 8:8).

It was because Ezra had been given a gracious spirit by the Lord that he was able to lead the people to understand the purposes of the Law of God and subsequently the people began to celebrate with great joy. "Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that been made known to them."

A gracious spirit will lead people into the joy of the Lord - and the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

Prayer: Lord, I desire your gracious hand to be upon me so that I may help others to understand your ways. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Nineteen

Nehemiah – A Man With God’s Favor

Remember me with favor, O my God, for all I have done for these people. – Nehemiah 5:19

The book of Nehemiah has long been one of my favorite books of the Bible. It tells the story of Nehemiah, who held a high position in the palace of Artaxerxes king of Persia, and his devotion to Jerusalem, his home land.

Visitors from Jerusalem had arrived and Nehemiah inquired about the state of affairs there. He was greatly disturbed by the news that the city was in bad shape. The walls were destroyed and the gates to the city had been burned.

The king noticed that Nehemiah seemed discouraged and asked what was wrong. When he shared the news God gave him favor with the king and the king took up the cause with him. He was sent to Jerusalem with enough money and supplies to rebuild the walls.

When he arrived there he was as moved by the condition of the people as he was the condition of the walls. The elders and leaders were taking advantage of the poor farmers and the workers. They were extracting heavy taxes from their own people, causing them to have to sell their children into slavery so the elders could live in luxury.

The true character of Nehemiah was shown when he refused to live lavishly and demanded that the elders return the monies they had unfairly extracted from the people. All of this is recorded in Nehemiah chapter five. Nehemiah’s prayer for God’s favor at the end of this chapter tells of the reform he brought to the leaders.

The true character of a person is shown when he is given authority over others. Nehemiah had been appointed governor over Jerusalem, but he did not use his office to demand payment from the people. He had God’s favor because he was gracious to those over whom he had authority. We should learn from Nehemiah’s example. Our character is tested and demonstrated by how we treat people of less standing than ourselves.

Prayer: Lord, I know that it is less than noble to gain at the expense of others and I need your grace to consider the needs of others first. In Jesus name, amen.

Nehemiah – A Man With God’s Favor

Message: The true character of a person is shown when he is given authority over others. Nehemiah had God’s favor because he was gracious to those over whom he had authority. Our character is tested and demonstrated by how we treat people of less standing than ourselves.

Affirmation: I treat people with grace who some may think are of less standing than myself for two reasons. First because it is the right thing to do, and second, because doing the right thing releases God's favor upon me.

Reflection: Imagine yourself having authority over many thousands of people who are accustomed to treating their leaders lavishly while they go without themselves. Would you have the grace to resist the lavish lifestyle and live among the common folk? Think about it.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty

God's Grace To Build The Temple

Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.

- Ezra 3:2

There were three notables in the era of the Jews returning to Jerusalem. We have already taken a brief look at Ezra, the scholar priest, who was given the responsibility to re-establish the Law of Moses and Jehovah worship. And we have looked at Nehemiah who was called by God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem so that those who were committed to serving the true God could live in safety. Now we take a brief look at Zerubbabel and his work.

Little is known of Zerubbabel except that he was committed to rebuilding the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem. He knew the Jews needed a physical place where they could connect with their God.

Without the temple there was no point of focus for believers. One reason the people kept falling into idolatry was that idol worship provided a focal point for them. The people needed the temple to remain faithful to the Law that had been restored to them. Zerubbabel was given grace to build the temple.

The need for people to have a focal point for worship has not changed. We still need the temple of the Lord; and we still have the temple of the Lord, but it is different than the old temple. In the old temple there must be a priest who brought their sin offerings before the Lord and offer the blood of animals for atonement, in the new temple the Lord himself is the priest.

Today, there is no longer a physical temple in which the Lord dwells, but he dwells in the heart of every believer. There are no more priests making sacrifice because Jesus, the high priest of our faith, has made the final sacrifice for sin. Jesus, the high priest, now dwells in his temple; our heart.

God chose to make his temple in the hearts of men. We have learned that the law alone will not save us and that we must open our hearts to be the temple of the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, give me grace to build walls around my heart so that I might keep your temple pure. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty One

Daniel – A Man Of Principle

The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Zariah; so they entered the kings' service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. – Daniel 1:19-20

Daniel was one of the young princes of Judah that was taken to Babylon under king Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, better known as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were chosen by the king for service because of their extreme intelligence and their attitude in service.

These mighty men of God were committed to the principles they had learned as children and were not willing to compromise, even if it meant their own lives were at stake.

The story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego going into the furnace of fire and God's miraculous deliverance is well known among believers. Daniel in the den of lions is another well known story. A lesser known story is the one that got them admitted into the king's service.

These young men were chosen to be trained for the position that the king had chosen for them. They were to be fed a certain diet and they were to be trained in all manner of wisdom. These young Hebrews refused to eat the diet they were offered and insisted on food that they were allowed to eat by the law.

Their character was shown when they stood up to their trainers and insisted on food they were accustomed to. Because they lived in obedience to God they were more healthy than others and God gave them exceptional wisdom in all things.

It was their principled stand that released God's favor upon them and ultimately led to the recognition they received from the king. And because of their principled stand on these matters the king eventually declared, "In every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel."

Prayer: Lord, it isn't easy to stand when everyone else is bowing. Give me convictions from your word and grant me the grace to stand on your principles. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Two

Saved To Do Good Works

It is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves. It is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one boast. We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ-Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

– Ephesians 2:8-10

There is much discussion in the body of Christ concerning this statement made by Paul to the church at Ephesus. He declares that it is by faith alone that we are saved and not by any works that we have done, or any works that we could do.

Some have felt that because we are saved by grace through faith that once we are saved we have no responsibility to the kingdom of God. We’re saved and that’s that. However, Paul doesn’t stop with the declaration of salvation, he also explains what we are saved to.

“We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ-Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” This is not about getting saved it is about who we are once we have become saved. This concept of being saved to do good works is not to be confused with the idea that we are saved by doing good works.

I love what C.S. Lewis writes in *Mere Christianity*; “The Christian is in a different position from other people who are trying to be good. They hope, by being good, to please God, if there is one; or – if they think there is not – at least they hope to deserve approval from good men. But the Christian thinks any good he does comes from the Christ-life inside him. He does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because he loves us.” (As quoted in *God’s Treasury of Virtues*, page 276).

If we are still having to try very hard to do good then it is possible that we have not yet actually partaken of the grace of God. When we become born again we are truly new creatures in Christ-Jesus as Paul declares. As new born Christ-creatures we should reflect the nature of God. We truly are not good because we have tried to be – we are good because the love of God has made us good.

Prayer: Lord, I have often grown weary of trying to be good. Grant me the grace of your goodness that I might reflect your love. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Three

A Good Man Trusts God In All Things

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.... I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. – Philippians 4:11-13

The Apostle Paul endured a lot to be recognized as an apostle. He even calls himself an “apostle out of due season.” It took a while for the church leaders to accept him, and even then his road was not easy. Persecution and hardships became the norm for him.

When he wrote this letter to the church at Philippi he was in a Roman prison. What makes this passage so inspiring is that in the midst of such trials he writes, “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation.” He said that in chains.

Paul had learned that his life was in God’s hands and that he would accept whatever God brought his way. He wrote in Romans, “All things work together for the good to those who love the Lord and are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). That was his philosophy of life.

Paul knew that God was working out the circumstances of his life for his ultimate good and for the benefit of the kingdom of God, and he was able to say, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” Because his eyes were on God he could endure all things.

Most of us would have complained about being kept from the ministry if we were in chains as Paul was. We would write letters to garner support to hire the best attorneys to get us out of prison. What did Paul do? He wrote encouraging letters to believers in the churches where he had ministered.

A large portion of the New Testament was written by Paul when he was in prison. Can you see the hand of God? It would have been difficult, if not impossible, for him to do all that writing while he was walking through Europe and Asia preaching the gospel. He trusted the purposes of God.

Prayer: Lord, like everyone else I tend to be influenced by the circumstances. Give me grace to trust you in all things – the good and the bad. Amen.

Day Twenty Four

Good People Are Enabled To Do Good Things

God is able to make all grace abound to you so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

- 2 Corinthians 9:8

The distinction between what God calls “evil” and what he calls “good” is very clear. Most of the time when God is speaking of evil he is talking about behavior that is common to mankind. He is usually referring to the self-willed and selfish behavior that drives the natural person. What God calls good is usually behavior that is for the benefit of another or to please another.

We have spoken about the fact that we are saved by grace and not by works, but we are saved to do good works. What are good works? They are the works that benefit others and that produce no direct benefit to ourselves. Jesus gave a list of examples in Matthew 25; feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, visit the sick, and... well, you get the point.

John Wesley had this rule for life: Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can (quoted from Bartlett’s Quotations in God’s Treasury of Virtues).

The primary factor in defeating evil is for people to do good. Edmond Burke, an Irish statesmen once stated, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” Unfortunately, too many of us are more into our own ambitions and self-fulfillment than we are doing good.

Polls have consistently shown that about 75% of Americans believe in the deity of Christ, but my question is if that is true then why don’t more people follow the teachings of Christ? He consistently taught people to return good for evil, yet we haven’t learned that lesson.

I challenge you today to adopt the philosophy of John Wesley and become forever committed to doing good – that is to live in a way that benefits others rather ourselves.

Prayer: Lord, my natural way is to pursue those things that benefit me. Grant me grace to abound in every good work. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Five

Faith Produces Obedience In Good People

Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. – James 21-22

We live in a world where far too few believers are taking responsibility for their actions. How often have we heard the phrase, “We’re under grace my brother” to justify behaviors that the scriptures teach against? James, in this passage, is demonstrating how our faith will produce works of obedience.

In the Genesis story of Abraham we learn that God gave him a son in his old age. This son, Isaac, was a child of promise. In time God asked Abraham to offer Isaac back to him as a sacrifice. You can imagine the agony this caused Abraham. “Do I keep my son, or do I offer him to God?”

We all face the same dilemma as Abraham faced: Do I keep the good things God has given me for myself, or do I offer them back to God? Am I willing to give up all that is precious to me to bless the one who supplied them?

In Romans Paul used the story of Abraham to demonstrate how we are justified before God by our faith in Christ (Romans 4-5). James uses the same story to demonstrate how our actions reveal whether we have faith. The message is the same from both, but each one presents a different aspect of faith.

When we have been born into the kingdom of God a change takes place inside of us. We are no longer motivated by our base desires but we are inspired toward righteousness. Does that mean that we now live perfectly, without sin? Not necessarily, but it should be a goal.

If you had passed from this life and those who knew you were talking about your life, what would they say? Would they say, “He was very successful, look what he achieved;” or would they say, “You can see how he loved the Lord by how he invested himself in others”? Something to think about.

Prayer: Lord, help me to accept that my faith is demonstrated by my actions and to be sure that my actions reflect your righteousness. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Six

Listening To Spirit's Promptings Produces Goodness

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. ...The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

- 1 Corinthians 2:12-13

We have come to understand that the person who is influenced by the way the world thinks cannot understand, or accept, things that come from the Spirit of God.

Trying to convince someone who is not interested in God to live by the leading of the Holy Spirit is like trying to describe sights and sounds of the ocean to a blind and deaf person. We are talking about two different worlds.

The Holy Spirit that is given us when we receive Christ is the Spirit of the eternal God. He is given to us for inspiration and direction. It is God's plan for us to live in harmony with his law as we follow the gentle promptings of the Holy Spirit.

When we walk in the Spirit we will not fulfill our worldly desires (Romans 8:5), but we will fulfill the desires of the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is more than just making a profession of faith. It is actually communicating with him.

If we are going to live in the Spirit we are going to have to learn how to listen to his promptings. He is constantly sending us messages of direction and inspiration, but most of the time we aren't listening. The Scriptures teach that God reveals his will to us through his Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10).

Paul instructs us in Philippians to work out the details of our life as a saved person very carefully allowing God to work his will in us (Philippians 2:12-13). How does God work his will in us? By giving us the desire to serve him well, and by giving us directions through the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Lord, I have gotten myself in trouble in the past for doing a good thing in my own way. Grant me the grace to listen carefully to the Holy Spirit and to follow his directions.

Day Twenty Seven

The Transforming Grace Of Goodness

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will. - Romans 12:2

All of us who are believers desire to be transformed into the image of Christ, but we have a problem. We are conformed to the pattern of the world. What is the pattern of this world?

The pattern of this world is real simple. It is all wrapped up in the attitude that says, "It's all about me." It got started with Adam and Eve in the garden. God said don't eat the fruit, but, "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it." It was all about Eve.

From that time until now the pattern of the world has been WIIFM - What's In It For Me. When we are born into the Christ world our inner spirit has been changed, but our outward patterns have yet to be totally changed. God changes the heart but we have to change the patterns of behavior.

Notice the three words in Genesis that described how the woman felt about the fruit of the tree. "good," "pleasing," "desirable." Now look at the three words that describe the will of God; "good," "pleasing," and "perfect." God's way is good but it is also perfect.

The pattern of the world is to pursue what is desirable to our natural person, but the way of God is to lead us into righteousness that produces peace and contentment which can never come from pursuing what we desire. God's goal for us is to give us everlasting contentment by his Spirit.

How do we renew our mind to the point of being transformed? First we must fully submit ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Then we must begin to cleanse our mind of unwanted thought patterns by being careful about what we allow ourselves to think about. We must establish new patterns of thinking if we are going to establish new patterns of behavior.

Prayer: Lord, the old pattern promised to fulfill my desires, but simply left me wanting more. Grant me the grace to pursue your way. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Eight

Goodness Helps Us Understand God's Authority

The Spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely... That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.

- James 4:5-7

There is so much said in this chapter of James that we could take a month of devotions to cover it all. I'm going to try to summarize the thoughts in just a few paragraphs.

He addresses the tension that is among believers produced by each one trying to have things their own way. He basically says that they fight among themselves and only pray to gain more things to satisfy their cravings.

James speaks some pretty harsh words about the folks he was addressing and sums it up with, "Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." That's very strong language. I wonder how that would go over in churches today.

I can't say it any better than The Message, so here is how it reads:

"You're cheating on God. If all you want is your own way, flirting with the world every chance you get, you end up enemies of God and his way. And do you suppose God doesn't care? The proverb has it that "he's a fiercely jealous lover." And what he gives in love is far better than anything else you'll find. It's common knowledge that "God goes against the willful proud; God gives grace to the willing humble."

If we can learn the lesson that "The Spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely" we will pursue him with passion. It is with these things in mind that James writes, "Submit yourselves then to God." The Spirit in us desires the way of God and calls us to surrender our will and our way to him.

Are you having trouble resisting temptation? Try fully submitting to God and see if temptation doesn't flee.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see beyond my own desires to your will and your way. Help me surrender my all to you so that your goodness lives through me. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Nine

The Power Of A Good Eye

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! – Matthew 6:22-23

Truth has little value if it is obscured by darkness. I have looked into many religions over the years and I have found that there is some truth in all religions. The unfortunate reality is that the effect of the truth is often overshadowed by the philosophies of men that house that truth.

Jesus was born into a religious community that was looking for a messiah to bring them deliverance from oppression. Jesus came to be that messiah, but he was not received by the religious leaders because the truth they had was obscured by the traditions they carried.

If Jesus had limited his mission to the philosophies and traditions of men he would not have accomplished the purposes he came to earth to accomplish.

Our traditions tend to put us in the position of covering our truth with the philosophies of men rather than exploring truth to find current applications. If the Jews of Jesus time would have followed his instructions to search the scriptures that testified of him they would have been able to reexamine their traditions in the light of who Jesus really was and what he came to do.

Most of us begin our journey of faith with a commitment to Christ then we become associated with a body of believers where we learn more truth along with the traditions of that body. The task which faces us is discerning what is truth and what is tradition. Truth should be held on to at any cost; tradition should only be kept as long as it is functional and does not shield us from truth.

Jesus said, "If the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness?" I take that to mean some folks who have a light are afraid of a greater light and consequently the light they shelter protects them from the light they could have, resulting in a form of darkness.

Prayer: Lord, I realize the value of tradition, but help me to be willing to release traditions if those traditions prevent me from growing in grace. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Thirty

Be Strong In Grace

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

- 2 Timothy 2:1

Paul was instructing Timothy to be strong in the *charis* (grace) that he has received in Christ. A meaning of this Greek word, *charis*, is graciousness, or some would say, goodness. It especially applies to the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life (Strong's Concordance).

How does one become strong in grace? By practicing grace, or goodness. The tendency for most of us is to learn a good thing, practice it for a while, then move on to another good thing. The result is that we know many things but do few things well.

Timothy and every believer who would read this passage is being instructed to continue practicing grace so that they would be strong in goodness. Practice gracious works of goodness and you will discover that grace will become the standard of your life.

Some have limited the word of grace to salvation, and missed the greater effect of grace in their lives. As we serve others graciously God's gift of grace grows within us and we become stronger in our faith.

Another aspect of applying this passage is the "pass it on" concept. The lessons of faith we have learned are to be passed on to others. We are given the instruction to find others who will become faithful in grace, train them in being gracious, then challenge them to teach others the concepts of gracious living.

We are concluding this series of devotions, a month of devotions on the virtue of goodness, with a challenge to seek the Lord for more grace, more goodness, in your life. Ask him how you can affect the world around you with kind acts of goodness. By practicing this you will grow strong in grace.

Prayer: Lord, help me understand what it means to live my life in such a way that others are impacted by your goodness. Amen.

Tips On Leading A Small Group

You might find the Daily God Walk Study Guide Edition a blessing. One of the purposes of the Study Guide Edition is to provide a tool for leading small groups.

At the end of each day's devotion there are four additional sections: Principle, Affirmation, Reflection, and My Thoughts. below is an explanation of how to use each of them in a small group discussion.

Principle: This is a principle pulled out of the devotion for the day. Ask the group to express how they can see this principle in the devotion then use that to kick off the discussion.

Affirmation: The affirmation is an example of how we can begin to internalize the principle of the devotion. We can repeat the affirmation in a prayer making it personal. We can also just repeat it throughout the day while giving thought to the principle.

Reflection: These statements and questions are designed to help guide discussion and make application of the devotion in the daily life of the participant.

My Thoughts: This section is just blank lines. Encourage your group to "Journal" their thoughts on the devotion each day. By writing out the thoughts that come from the devotion and the discussion on the devotion the individuals will find that their walk of faith is enhanced.

My experience is that we usually only make it through one or two of the daily devotions at one group setting, but it is good to encourage the group to work through the principle, affirmation, reflection and my thoughts section for each daily devotion at home.

For more information on using the Daily God Walk Study Guide Edition for small groups, go online at:

www.dailygodwalk.org/small-groups.html

We value your comments on the Daily God Walk. It would be a blessing if you sent us an email with your comments about our program. Our email address is: paul@nhmresources.org

Are You Having Trouble With Temptation?

Here is a prayer to help growing followers of Christ overcome the temptations in their lives

The Temptation Prayer

Most of us have a primary temptation that has plagued us for many years. For too many of us that primary temptation has been our downfall and for many years we were defeated in this area.

Now we are struggling to be free, but the temptation keeps coming back to us and it becomes frustrating. We agree with Apostle Paul in Romans 7:15, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." Does that sound like you? If it does, this pamphlet holds good news for you.

Many years ago when I was struggling with a behavioral addiction in my life I went through a period of intensive searching. I was making a fearless and searching moral inventory of myself and was discouraged at what I was discovering.

When I became fully aware that I couldn't be victorious over my addiction alone I realized that it was only through the power of God that I would ever be free.

During that time I discovered a very important passage of scripture. It was 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. The part that stood out to me was that When Paul appealed to God concerning his weakness, or "thorn in my flesh" as he called it, God simply told him, "My grace is sufficient."

In God's answer to Paul he gave us tremendous insight into the process of living in victory over our addictions. In verse 9 God says, "My power is made perfect in weakness." God is literally telling us that the weaker we are in any area, the stronger he becomes in us and

if we will rely upon his strength he will give us his power to overcome.

In gaining an understanding of this process God gave me a prayer that has been vital in my restoration process and has helped many people that have used it in their own restoration. I call it the temptation prayer. It provides a format for praying when we are in temptation in the area of our primary weakness. Here is the prayer:

The Temptation Prayer

Father God, I come to you in weakness today. I am being tempted by _____ . I cannot tell you that I desire you above this thing, but I desire this thing. If I did not desire it I would not be tempted, because James wrote, “Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed” (James 1:14).

I now make a conscious decision of my will to surrender this evil desire to you. Your Word says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Even though my desire is for evil, my decision is to submit to you. I know surrender my will to you.

I ask you to take this evil desire from me. James also wrote, “You have not because you ask not” (James 4:2). I am asking that you take this desire from me.

You have said, “Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7). Just know I am asking, seeking and knocking at your door. Receive me into your presence and take this desire from me in Jesus name.

Now I praise and thank you for answering my prayer. Paul told us “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). Therefore I am giving you praise and thanksgiving for what you are doing for me this very minute.

Father God, I am thankful for your help. Thank you for answering this prayer. Thank you for receiving me. Thank you for the peace I am feeling just now. Thank you for caring friends and family. I give you praise for all things, in Jesus name, amen.

Pray this prayer as often as you need, many times an hour if necessary. You will find that the more consistently you apply this prayer in your times of temptation that the times of temptation will become less frequent.

It is not essential that you use the exact wording given in this pamphlet, but it is important that you keep the essential elements. Let's take a closer look at the prayer.

Examining The Temptation Prayer

Notice in the prayer that every point carries with it a passage from the scripture. It is vitally important to commit passages of scripture to memory so that you can use them in prayer and in your daily life as you grow in the grace of God.

Joshua began to realize the value of God's word when the Lord gave him this instruction; "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8).

"I come to you in weakness"—we are acknowledging our inability to overcome this temptation alone. (God's power is made perfect in weakness)

"I cannot tell you that I desire you above this thing, but I desire this thing"—This is being honest with God. We honestly do not desire him when we are tempted. We may know that we should desire him, but we must confess that we desire the object of our temptation at that moment.

“I now make a conscious decision of my will to surrender this evil desire to you”—This vital step is important because we are making a conscious decision to surrender our will over to God. This step is absolutely necessary if we are to live in victory over our undesirable behaviors.

“I ask you to take it from me”—This part of the prayer implies that you have already become willing to have God remove this desire. Though you want it, you have, by a choice of the will, decided to surrender it to God. This is simply the asking part. God waits for you to ask so he can do what he does so well.

“You have said”—When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4) he said repeatedly, “It is written...” When we bring our petitions to God with his word it not only restates his promises, but it shows our commitment to him and his word.

“Now I praise and thank you for answering my prayer”—As we begin to praise God for his goodness and mercy His spirit begins to bring our hearts back to him. All at once we realize that the thing we desire *is him*, and that the other thing is not a temptation now.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to give you a tool to help you in your Christian walk. If you would like more information or if you desire encouragement or fellowship, feel free to call the person whose name and phone number appears below.

If you desire copies of this pamphlet, or just want to communicate with us at the address or telephone on the front page.

For more materials on recovery, prayer and your journey of faith visit our website at www.nhmresources.org