

# **A Short Thought from God's Word**

## **Year 4**

Short, concise daily devotions from God's Word

By David Dennis

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## 1/1 - A Change in World View

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

We must never lose sight of the fact Christ's coming is imminent, and that He wants us to expect it. This will radically change the way we live.

## 1/2 - A Kingdom of Priests

Revelation 1:5-6: To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

We are more than just the church. We are a kingdom under the King of Kings, and a priesthood serving the Great High Priest. It is awesome to realize what God has chosen for His people.

## 1/3 - Coming With the Clouds

Revelation 1:7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

Everyone will acknowledge the deity of Christ some day. It will be far better for those who do it today. They will have nothing to mourn about.

## 1/4 - From Beginning to End

Revelation 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet. God says He is the Beginning and the End. It is wonderful to know we serve a God who reigns as supreme Lord in all corners of eternity.

## 1/5 - Three Things that are Ours

Revelation 1:9: I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus.

Notice the list of things that John claims belong to us: suffering, kingdom, and patient endurance. As children of God, we face hardships in this world which we can endure with joy because of the promise of eternal reward.

## 1/6 - Keeper of the Keys

Revelation 1:17-18: When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Our Lord was dead, and is alive forever, and holds the keys of death. Because of this, he can secure

everlasting life for us.

#### 1/7 - Intolerance Commanded

Revelation 2:2-3: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

Notice that the Ephesians are commended by Jesus Christ for intolerance. We are to tolerate those who sin against us, but we must not tolerate wickedness amongst us.

#### 1/8 - Lost Your First Love

Revelation 2:4-5: Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.

The religion of the Ephesians had become a matter of duty and not of love. It is a most remarkable thing that God not only deserves our love, but that He desires it.

#### 1/9 - God's Rich Poor People

Revelation 2:8-9: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. I know your afflictions and your poverty--yet you are rich!

Abundant life is not just for the next world. We are rich in this world when we have the love of God and the family of Christ to sustain us. "No one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life." --Luke 18:29

#### 1/10 - The Devil's Prison

Revelations 2:10: Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Satan is very real and actively involved in the oppression of believers. God allows this so that we can be tested and rewarded for faithfulness.

#### 1/11 - Remaining True

Revelation 2:12-13: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live--where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city--where Satan lives.

We also live in a wicked world. Can we remain true to His name?

#### 1/12 - Tolerating Nicolaitans

Revelation 2:14-16: Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

The Nicolaitans compromised greatly with the culture. In Revelations 2:6, Ephesus was commended for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. In Pergamum, however, their deeds are not only not hated, but they are tolerated within the church. God desires greatly that His people not be spotted by the world.

#### 1/13 - More Than You Used to Do

Revelation 2:18-19: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

Are you growing in your work for God? Are you doing more than you did at first?

#### 1/14 - Authority Over the Nations

Revelation 2:26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations.

If we have been faithful in small things, we will be entrusted with larger.

#### 1/15 - Incomplete Deeds

Revelation 3:1-2: I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.

It is easy to fall into a spiritual stupor and forget about the work that God has called us to do. What a tragedy it will be if we have to stand before God and hear Him say "I have not found your deeds complete."

#### 1/16 - Receive, Hear, Obey

Revelation 3:3: Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

We are held responsible to obey the things we have heard and received. Let us be prepared so that day does not take us like a thief.

#### 1/17 - Dressed in White

Revelation 3:4-5: Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

Our goal should be to be unspotted in the eyes of our Lord.

#### 1/18 - Absolute Sovereign

Revelation 3:7 These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

God is the absolute sovereign of the universe. We may trust then, that no one can form any plan that He does not allow, nor accomplish anything against His will. If this is true, then we can trust, when facing trials, that He knows what's best for us and will keep us through it.

#### 1/19 - Little Strength, Great Faithfulness

Revelation 3:8 I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

The church at Philadelphia is praised for keeping Christ's Word even though they have little strength. They are not criticized for anything. Being strong and having strength were not the objects of God's wrath or reward. The church was commended for obedience even though they had little strength. Sometimes God will not use us unless our strength is exhausted so that what we accomplish can be seen to have come from Him.

#### 1/20 - The Reward for Overcoming

Revelation 3:11-13: I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

An amazing reward is promised for the overcomer.

#### 1/21 - The Fence Sitter

Revelation 3:15-16: I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

God does not reward the fence sitter for being half way committed. He wants us to make a solid choice, and then live by it.

#### 1/22 - Pitiful, poor, blind and Rich

Revelation 3:17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Man looks upon the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Let us be careful not to become

complacent about spiritual things, or we also will be wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked in the eyes of God.

#### 1/23 - Love and Discipline at the Door

Revelation 3:19-20: Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

God does punish his people in this world if it will lead to repentance. His love for us would not allow Him to do otherwise. Standing at the door and knocking (when he disciplines us) requires a response, and if we respond correctly it will mean sweet fellowship with Him.

#### 1/24 - Sitting on His Throne

Revelation 3:21-22: To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Incredible rewards are promised to the overcomer. Therefore, let us be like Paul and “press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” (Philippians 3:12)

#### 1/25 - Awesome God

Revelation 4:8: Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

Often we think of God as our companion and our friend, and I believe this pleases Him. But we must not lose sight of His awesome aspect. He transcends time, and His holiness is a thing so remarkable that angelic beings sing of it.

#### 1/26 - Glory, Honor and Power

Revelation 4:11: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Do we honor, praise and glorify God? He is worthy to receive it. If the redeemed of the Lord in heaven proclaim it, can we not proclaim it in this world?

#### 1/27 - A New Song, Some New Priests

Revelation 5:9-10: And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

It is remarkable that each of us has been chosen to be a priest to serve God. How are we doing in that roll?

## 1/28 - A Great Many People from All Over the Earth

Revelation 7:9-10: After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Those who are about to see the final judgments on the world cry out that salvation belongs to our God. There is no salvation anywhere else. It is God's alone to give.

## 1/29 - Doing Laundry and Eternal Bliss

Revelation 7:14-17: These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Why should we be discouraged at facing persecution in this world when we know what awaits us in the next.

## 1/30 - A Forecast of Reign

Revelation 11:15-17: The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.

Jesus Christ is truly the high king over all kings, and one day everyone will acknowledge it. It will go far better for those who acknowledge Him now though.

## 1/31 - A Day is Coming

Revelation 15:3-4: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

God's ways are not always easy to understand, but they are just and true. He may allow evildoers to prosper for a time, but there will be a day of reckoning. And on that day everyone will have to worship the Lord our God, and we will be vindicated or condemned for the things we have done.

## 2/1 - The Final Judgment

Revelation 20:11-15: Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The

dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Even death will not save one from coming face to face with his Creator. Every man and woman will stand before Him to give an accounting. Decisions made in this world have eternal consequences.

## 2/2 - A New World and A New World Order

Revelation 21:1-4: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

This is the heritage of the disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## 2/3 - Making Everything New

Revelation 21:5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

It would be well to memorize this verse. Everything will be made over again, perfect, and with no curse, for the believer. It is a sure thing, for it comes from the very mouth of God. We can live our lives based on this promise.

## 2/4 - The Beginning and the End

Revelation 21:6-7: He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

This verse promises a struggle and a wonderful reward. Let us remember it as we live in the midst of the struggle, so that we have strength to be overcomers.

## 2/5 - The Second Death

Revelation 21:8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

The Bible teaches of a very real place of torment for the unbeliever. Let us take it to heart and have the courage and determination to snatch as many from this fire as we can.

## 2/6 - Always Open, but Some Will be Barred



Revelation 21:22-27: I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Just think: We will live in the very presence of almighty God, everyday, forever. How awesome will that be?

## 2/7 - The River of Life

Revelation 22:1-4: Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

In Genesis 3 we find that the world was cursed and that Adam and Eve were banned from the Garden of Eden to keep them from the tree of life. These things will all be reversed, and God will provide healing for every sort of ailment. We will live in His very presence. These are the heritage of the believer.

## 2/8 - An Open Invitation

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

God extends this open invitation that anyone can be a partaker of these wonderful promises. We must respond now, and urge others to do so also, before it is too late.

## 2/9 - A Parent With Rebellious Children

Isaiah 1:2 Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me.

It is a terrible thing to be a parent with rebellious children, but even more painful to God, of infinite love, who created His children. Those who have returned to His love have all the more reason to love Him with all their hearts.

## 2/10 - Injured Head and Afflicted Heart

Isaiah 1:5-7: Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness--only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil. Your country is desolate, your cities burned with fire; your fields are being stripped by foreigners right

before you, laid waste as when overthrown by strangers.

The desolation of the human condition should cause people to look for God, but instead it seems to cause more rebellion. The words “why should you be beaten anymore” ring with compassion. Return to the Lord and find shelter and protection.

#### 2/11 - Detestable Burnt Offerings

Isaiah 1:11 "The multitude of your sacrifices--what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations--I cannot bear your evil assemblies.

God does not need our service. He desires our love. Service that is done in love to Him is acceptable. The verses that follow this passage indicate that what he really wanted was for the people to find His favor through forgiveness, not through their service.

#### 2/12 - Making Yourself Clean

Isaiah 1:16-17: Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

Repentance means taking a new direction. The people had been trying to please God with sacrifices, when he desired them to repent. It is easy to fall into this trap of doing all the outward things without changing the heart.

#### 2/13 - Reasoning With God

Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

This poetic invitation to forgiveness is one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible. It does not matter how terrible our sins may be, the forgiveness of God makes us clean.

#### 2/14 - Blessings and Cursings

Isaiah 1:19-20: If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

There are always blessings in obeying God, and curses in rebelling. Obeying God can NEVER be the wrong thing to do.

#### 2/15 - Walking in the Light

Isaiah 2:5 Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Do we, as believers, walk in the light of God's Word, or do we blunder though without remembering to

read and study those things that could keep us from stumbling.

#### 2/16 - Ultimate Destiny

Isaiah 2:11-12: The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled).

The ultimate destiny of mankind is humility, except for those that God exalts. There is nothing that mankind can accomplish that will last outside of those things that are truly done in His name. If this is so, let us begin to seek to do the things that will last.

#### 2/17 - The Folly of Trusting Man

Isaiah 2:22 Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?

We tend to fear what mortal men can do to us, whether it is pain or shame, and we tend to trust mortal men for protection and help. Both are unwarranted. There is no plan that a man can do that can thwart God's plan. He is the only One we can trust, and the only One we should fear.

#### 2/18 - Calling Evil Good

Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

So it is in our age. Many call evil good and good evil. But God is the only true source of truth. What God says is good, is good. What he declares to be evil is evil. The opinions of anyone else do not matter.

#### 2/19 - Wise in Our Own Eyes

Isaiah 5:21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.

All of our wisdom and cleverness is nothing compared to His. It is a dangerous thing, then, to trust ourselves and not our Lord for making the decisions of our lives.

#### 2/20 - Sin Atoned For

Isaiah 6:5-7: "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

Like Isaiah, to stand in the presence of this Holy God would bring us ruin, were it not for the atonement made on our behalf by Jesus Christ.

#### 2/21 - Answering God's Call

Isaiah 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Do we respond to God's call as willingly as Isaiah did?

## 2/22 - A Sign for All Ages

Isaiah 7:13-14: Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Isaiah had offered to give King Ahaz a sign to prove God would keep His promise, but Ahaz refused. God gave the sign anyway, the sign of the virgin birth: The sign of peace on Earth and God's good will toward man. It is a sign given to all ages.

## 2/23 - The One to Regard

Isaiah 8:13-14: The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate choice. He is the rock of fortress for those who trust Him, and the stumbling stone which causes destruction to those who reject Him. There are no other ultimate choices.

## 2/24 - A Decision to Wait

Isaiah 8:16-17: Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples. I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in him.

Isaiah had heard the Word of God. He makes his decision to believe it and wait for its fulfillment. That is essence of the faith that saves us. Do we trust God that He loves us and has provided for our redemption? Will we trust and wait for the promises His redemption brings?

## 2/25 - A Son Who Will Reign

Isaiah 9:6-7: For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

God's ultimate promise of good will toward man is recorded here. Seven blessings of Jesus Christ and His reign on Earth are listed:

- 1) He is a Wonderful Counselor
- 2) He is Mighty God
- 3) He is Everlasting Father
- 4) He is Prince of Peace
- 5) His kingdom will never end.

- 6) He will bring justice
- 7) He will reign in righteousness.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

## 2/26 - Mistreating the Poor

Isaiah 10:1-3: Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches?

Let us be careful how we treat the poor, for God takes a close personal interest in the way they are treated.

## 2/27 - Good Tools

Isaiah 10:15 Does the ax raise itself above him who swings it, or the saw boast against him who uses it? As if a rod were to wield him who lifts it up, or a club brandish him who is not wood!

We should be obedient tools in the hands of our creator. We should trust God that what He says and does are right.

## 2/28 - Anger Turned Away

Isaiah 12:1-2: In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation."

This verse refers to the day when Christ returns and makes everything right, but it should also be the statement of faith of all believers.

## 3/1 - Singing to God

Isaiah 12:5-6: Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."

Admonishments to sing to the Lord are found often in the Bible (and often with a good reason to sing). They are commands, and not options. This verse was written as a command to sing to the Lord for what He will do on the day of His return. It is praise based on faith.

## 3/2 - A Day of Reckoning

Isaiah 13:11 I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.

When we get discouraged by the injustices in the world, and when the wicked seem to prosper, let us remember that we have the promise of God that there will be a day of reckoning.

### 3/3 - As God Has Planned, So It Will Be

Isaiah 14:24 The LORD Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand.

Isaiah 14:27 For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

It is a great comfort to know that God's purpose is sure, and that His purpose involves only love for us.

### 3/4 - A King of Love

Isaiah 16:5 In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it--one from the house of David--one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness.

The throne of Jesus Christ will be established for one overall purpose: Love. Has there ever been another king or world leader to compare to our King?

### 3/5 - A Forgotten God

Isaiah 17:10-11: You have forgotten God your Savior; you have not remembered the Rock, your fortress. Therefore, though you set out the finest plants and plant imported vines, though on the day you set them out, you make them grow, and on the morning when you plant them, you bring them to bud, yet the harvest will be as nothing in the day of disease and incurable pain.

Let us remember that all our plans come to nothing if we leave God out of our reckoning.

### 3/6 - Wrong Solutions

Isaiah 22:8-11: And you looked in that day to the weapons in the Palace of the Forest; you saw that the City of David had many breaches in its defenses; you stored up water in the Lower Pool. You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses to strengthen the wall. You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the Old Pool, but you did not look to the One who made it, or have regard for the One who planned it long ago.

This is spoken concerning Judah in the days of the invasion by Assyria. They were quick to see their need, and quick to try to remedy their need. But they were slow in finding the real source of their help: the Lord God. Let us take note of their mistake and remember, when we have need, not to forget to call upon God as our first priority.

### 3/7 - Reflecting on Marvelous Things

Isaiah 25:1 O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago.

God's plan from ages past has been made for our best good. What a marvelous thought.

### 3/8 - A Refuge for the Poor

Isaiah 25:4 You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat.

God has a long history of being a defender of the poor and needy. If you are poor and needy, you can call upon Him. If you are not, you should become a defender of those who are, and in that way you will be doing the work of God.

### 3/9 - The Shroud that Enfolds Everyone

Isaiah 25:6-8: On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine--the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.

On Mt. Calvary, Christ offered His body which was broken for us. In so doing, he conquered death forever, and purchased for us the right to stand righteous before the judgment of God.

### 3/10 - Hope Finally Fulfilled

Isaiah 25:9 In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

It will be a wonderful day of rejoicing when we see the end result of our hope, and know that it was not in vain.

### 3/11 - Perfect Peace

Isaiah 26:3-4: You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.

Let us make it our goal to have minds that are steadfast in our faith. Then we can rest in perfect peace.

### 3/12 - Yearning for the Lord

Isaiah 26:8-9: Yes, LORD, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts. My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you.

We will only yearn for the Lord if we walk in His ways, and have no fear of meeting with Him.

### 3/13 - Not Seeing the Hand of God

Isaiah 26:10-11: Though grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness; even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and regard not the majesty of the LORD. O LORD, your hand is lifted high, but they do not see it.

Pray that we are not among those who trample the grace of God under our feet. The more grace we are shown, the sooner we should learn from it and turn from evil.

### 3/14 - The Dead Will Live

Isaiah 26:19 But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.

It is a wonderful thing to know that death is not the end of life to those who trust the Lord. A time of great eternal joy awaits such people.

### 3/15 - A Spirit of Justice

Isaiah 28:5-6: In that day the LORD Almighty will be a glorious crown, a beautiful wreath for the remnant of his people. He will be a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, a source of strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

On the day of judgment, God will meet all our needs and turn all wrongs into rights.

### 3/16 - A Covenant With Death is Annulled

Isaiah 28:15-18: You boast, "We have entered into a covenant with death, with the grave we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place."

So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place. Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the grave will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it.

These evil men had reasoned that they could do whatever evil they desired, for in death there would be no punishment for their sins. God declares that death itself will not keep them from standing before Him in judgment and paying a terrible penalty for their sins.



### 3/17 - Honor with Lips but Not with Heart

Isaiah 29:13 The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.

Jesus quoted this verse as referring to the religious leaders of His day, but we should beware lest it become true of us also.

### 3/18 - Turning Things Upside Down

Isaiah 29:15-16: Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, "Who sees us? Who will know?"

You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "He did not make me"? Can the pot say of the potter, "He knows nothing"?

There is no hiding from God's justice, nor outsmarting Him. God is all in all, and His wisdom and knowledge is beyond our understanding.

### 3/19 – Seeking Help in the Wrong Place

Isaiah 30:1-2: "Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin; who go down to Egypt without consulting me; who look for help to Pharaoh's protection, to Egypt's shade for refuge.

Isaiah 31:1: Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD.

Often in Israel's history, the nation would face danger and turn to another nation instead of to the Lord to get help out of their situation. It takes faith to please God, and this showed a significant lack of faith. Our first choice should always be to turn to the Lord.

### 3/20 - Repentance and Rest

Isaiah 30:15-16: This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. You said, 'No, we will flee on horses.' Therefore you will flee! You said, 'We will ride off on swift horses.' Therefore your pursuers will be swift!

There is great peace in trusting God, and great afflictions in store for those who cannot.

### 3/21 - Longing to be Gracious

Isaiah 30:18-19: Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you.

If we serve such a God, why should we be slow to cry out to Him for help?

### 3/22 - Longing for the Lord

Isaiah 33:2 O LORD, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress.

This is a simple prayer, but take note of the faith behind it. In his trouble, he longs for the Lord because He knows that only God is the answer to all of life's questions.

### 3/23 - The Key to Treasure

Isaiah 33:5-6: The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness. He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.

The fear of the Lord is the key to six treasures: justice, righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, wisdom and knowledge. It pays to fear the Lord.

### 3/24 – The Lame Leap for Joy

Isaiah 35:3-6: Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.

A day of great dread for those who are not ready to meet the Lord will be a day of great joy for those who are ready. Let us be among those who are ready.

### 3/25 - When the Saints Go Marching In

Isaiah 35:8-10: And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

In the words of the old song: "Lord, I long to be in that number, when the saints go marching in." What a joyful day that will be.

### 3/26 - Delivered from Death

Isaiah 38:18-20: For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. The living, the living--they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell their children about your faithfulness. The LORD will save me, and we will sing with stringed instruments all the days of our lives in the temple of the LORD.

This is part of Hezekiah's song that he made after God had healed him from a fatal disease, but it reminds us of how God gave us Christ as the remedy to sin that leads to death.

### 3/27 - Comfort For a Weary People

Isaiah 40:1-2: Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

The Lord disciplines those He loves, but only for their own good. His discipline leads to a harvest of righteousness which is a glorious thing. What rejoicing there is when discipline is replaced by mercy.

### 3/28 - Men Are Like Grass

Isaiah 40:6-8: A voice says, "Cry out."

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

"All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."

This passage, which is quoted in 1 Peter 1:24, reminds us that our days in this world are very temporary, especially compared to eternity. It is only in obeying His word that we can accomplish anything that will stand forever.

### 3/29 - Power and Tenderness

Isaiah 40:10-11: See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

This passage teaches us that God is awesome, but he is also tender in His love for us. His mighty power is used on our behalf.

### 3/30 - Weighing the Mountains

Isaiah 40:12-14: Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance? Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor? Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?

God's knowledge and wisdom and understanding go way beyond anything we can imagine, so we should trust Him when we don't understand His ways.

### 3/31 - Grasshoppers on a Round Earth

Isaiah 40:21-23: Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

God is the supreme ruler over all the earth. No ruler can rule without God's permission. No nation can rise without the hand of God. Once again we find a clear indication that we can trust God in all circumstances, even if we don't understand. (Also note God has always known the world was round and tells us so in this passage.)

#### 4/1 - A Soaring Like an Eagle

Isaiah 40:30-31: Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

This is a promise that looks into eternal life. Even the old or the infirm who know Christ can know that their strength will some day be renewed. We are told to trust and to wait.

#### 4/2 - No Fear

Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

This passage was written to Israel during hard times caused by their sin. But it can be claimed by all who put their faith in Almighty God.

#### 4/3 - A Worm and a Mighty God

Isaiah 41:13-14: For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you," declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Though the nation of Israel was a "worm" compared to Almighty God, He was willing to personally take up Israel's cause. The same holds true with each and every one of us. We may seem insignificant compared to all of creation, but the creator has a deep and personal love for each of us.

#### 4/4 - Positive Proof God Exists

Isaiah 41:21-23: "Present your case," says the LORD. "Set forth your arguments," says Jacob's King. "Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods.

Isaiah 42:8-9: "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."

God's personal proof of His own reality and the absurdity in serving other gods was his ability to predict the future. The Bible is full of accurate predictions, and some of these are easily seen in the life of Christ. If God can predict the future, it is considerable evidence as to His reality and His power.

#### 4/5 - Called by the Awesome God

Isaiah 42:5-7: This is what God the LORD says--he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Here we are first told of God's incredible power, and then we are told of His decision to tenderly care for us. It is magnificent to know that all that power is at work for us.

#### 4/6 - Redeemed and Protected

Isaiah 43:1-2: But now, this is what the LORD says--he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

We are not told that we will never have trials, but only that He will be with us through every one.

#### 4/7 - Only the LORD

Isaiah 43:11-13: I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior. I have revealed and saved and proclaimed--I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "that I am God. Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?"

In the end, only Our God makes the final decisions. There is no one else who can save. He who chooses Christ as his Savior chooses the only Savior.

#### 4/8 - Not Wearied Yourself for the Lord

Isaiah 43:22-24: "Yet you have not called upon me, O Jacob, you have not wearied yourselves for me, O Israel. You have not brought me sheep for burnt offerings, nor honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with grain offerings nor wearied you with demands for incense. You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses."

It is not that the Israelites were doing sinful things. It is that they were not doing anything to show love to their God. "You have not wearied yourselves for me," is a charge that could easily be made of the church today. Let us be careful that we do not share in this guilt.

#### 4/9 - Like the Morning Mist

Isaiah 44:22-23: I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you." Sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel.

It is a beautiful picture to see our sins as disappearing like the morning mist. It is remarkable that we have a God who can deal with our transgressions in such a way. He is indeed worthy of our praise.

#### 4/10 - A Vow that Everyone Will Make

Isaiah 45:22-24: "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.' " All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.

At the coming of Christ, every man, woman and child will have to acknowledge that Christ is Lord. That day will be a day of rejoicing for those who have already done so, but a day of terrible sorrow for those who wait.

#### 4/11 - Sustained, Carried and Rescued

Isaiah 46:4 Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

This is a beautiful promise that God will care for us all our lives. Notice the verbs. He promises to sustain, carry and rescue us.

#### 4/12 - What's Best for You

Isaiah 48:17-18: This is what the LORD says--your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

There is a saying: "Doing what God says to do will always be what's best for you." God is telling the Israelites this. If only they had listened, their lives would have been so much better. This is a message we should hear also.

#### 4/13 - No Peace for the Wicked

Isaiah 48:22 "There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked."

This is often quoted but true. The believer may have trials and hard times, but he has peace with God. The wicked may seem to prosper, but he will have no peace with God, and ultimately will face judgment.

#### 4/14 - Laboring to no Purpose

Isaiah 49:3-4: He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor." But I said, "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God."

It often seems like our labor for the Lord is fruitless, but we must recognize that God can take even our smallest gifts to Him and use them in a mighty way. Also remember that our labor on His behalf will be richly rewarded.

#### 4/15 - A Mother Forgetting her Baby

Isaiah 49:13-15: Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me."

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!

These words were spoken concerning Israel, but they are true toward us as well. God will never forget His compassion toward us.

#### 4/16 - A Face Set Like Flint

Isaiah 50:6-7: I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.

These verses remind us of Christ during His arrest, but they also remind us of His command to "turn the other cheek." To "set my face like flint" means to be ready and prepared to meet the challenge without any thought of turning back. There is no shame in our obedience, and God will reward us.

#### 4/17 - Worn Out Like a Garment

Isaiah 50:8-9: He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up.

We need never walk in guilt when we've been forgiven by God.

#### 4/18 - Lighting Your Own Torch

Isaiah 50:10-11: Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment.

This passage compares *light* with *truth*. It tells those who don't know the truth to seek it from the Lord. But those who have made their own truth (provide yourselves with flaming torches) will follow that "light" to a terrible end.

#### 4/19 - Dying Like Flies

Isaiah 51:6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail.

We should often be reminded of the temporary nature of this world, especially as it compares to

eternity. This world is temporary, but to those who are saved, that salvation will last forever.

#### 4/20 - Fearing Mortal Men

Isaiah 51:7-8: "Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have my law in your hearts: Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool. But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations."

Isaiah 51:12 "I, even I, am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass.

We are told not to be afraid of those who would persecute us for doing what's right. Unless they repent, their days among the living are numbered, and our reward will last forever.

#### 4/21 - The Return of the Ransomed

Isaiah 51:11 The ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

What a day that will be, when all those whom God has redeemed enter New Jerusalem with the joy of victory, the fulfillment of hope, and the presence of the Lord God.

#### 4/22 - Understanding the Appalling One

Isaiah 52:13-15: See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him--his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness--so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

This is the beginning of a description of "the servant of the Lord," a beautiful and incredible prophecy describing Jesus Christ and His ministry. He was lifted up on the cross, and the sight was appalling, but on the day of His return all will know him as King of kings and Lord of lords.

#### 4/23 - Rejected and Despised

This is a continuation of the prophetic description of the servant of God: Jesus Christ:

Isaiah 53:2-3: He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

When people do not esteem us, when they reject us or despise us, let us remember that we are walking in the sandals of our Lord.

#### 4/24 - Crushed by God



This is a continuation of the prophetic description of the servant of God: Jesus Christ:

Isaiah 53:4-6: Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Here is the essence of the gospel: Jesus took upon Himself the punishment that we deserved.

4/25 - Like a Lamb to the Slaughter

This is a continuation of the prophetic description of the servant of God: Jesus Christ:

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

This was the passage that the eunuch was reading when he was met by Philip in Acts 8. It describes Jesus' humility during his arrest and crucifixion. We should follow Christ's example of humility in our own lives, especially when we suffer for doing good.

4/26 - Light After Suffering

This is a continuation of the prophetic description of the servant of God: Jesus Christ:

Isaiah 53:10-11: Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Because Jesus died, our sins are atoned from. He carried our sins and purchased justification for us, so that we can become his "offspring," the children of God.

4/27 - Numbered with the Sinners

This is the last section of the prophetic description of the servant of God: Jesus Christ:

Isaiah 53:12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Both the death and resurrection of Christ are predicted in this verse. For his sacrifice, he will be given a name above every other name. If we take our cross and follow Christ, we will share in His reward.

4/28 – Forget Your Shame

Isaiah 54:4-5: "Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood. For your Maker is your husband- the Lord Almighty is his name- the Holy One of Israel is

your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.

This refers to Israel, who is shamed by the punishment received for their sin. But God forgives, and the day of their shame and reproach will end, and prosperity will return. It can also refer to us when we are disciplined by God. He disciplines those He loves, and forgiveness will follow.

#### 4/29 – Anger and Everlasting Compassion

Isaiah 54:7-8: For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the Lord your Redeemer.

What a beautiful picture we have of God's love in discipline and reconciliation. The Psalmist wrote, "For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5)

#### 4/30 - Total Vindication

Isaiah 54:17 No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD.

It is wonderful to remember when we are opposed, ridiculed or oppressed that it is Jesus Christ who justifies us. We may be subject to suffering caused by these things for a short time, but ultimately we will be vindicated by Christ.

#### 5/1 - Delight in the Richest of Fair

Isaiah 55:1-3: Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.

As when Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that he could give her water which would cause her to never thirst again, God is here promising the richest of fare. What he offers is free, and has everlasting benefit. Notice especially here, though, the comment "why labor for what does not satisfy." We should look at the things we pursue and decide if they are eternal things, or things which will not last and will not give peace to our souls.

#### 5/2 - Pardon offered Freely

Isaiah 55:6-7: Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

It doesn't matter how evil a man has been. It doesn't matter if he was once good. Pardon is freely given. But notice two things: He must seek and turn to the Lord, and also, he must forsake his evil ways.

### 5/3 - Significantly Higher Thoughts

Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

It may have seemed like a useless thing for the Israelites under Joshua to march around Jericho for seven days, but God commanded it, and so they did it. In the same way, we can't begin to understand Him, but it should not stop us from trusting and obeying him.

### 5/4 - Purpose Driven Words

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

God is infinitely too wise to do anything feeble. Whatever he does will accomplish its purpose, but its purpose is not always understood by those of less understanding. (An example would be his sending prophets to preach repentance to a people that would not listen. The original hearers may have refused to listen, but they will know on the day of judgment that they were warned by God. Also, the prophets' words were recorded and subsequent generations were able to see the truth of God's words and the reality of His judgment.

### 5/5 - The Curse is Over

Isaiah 55:12-13: You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed."

In a new heaven and a new earth, God will present to his people a paradise with no curse, no sickness, no crying, and no pain. Everlasting rejoicing will replace all of our sorrows.

### 5/6 - Holding On Tight

Isaiah 56:1-2: This is what the LORD says: "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, the man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

This is the same thought found in Hebrews 10:35-37: "Do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, 'He who is coming will come and will not delay.'" Blessing and reward are promised to those who persevere.

### 5/7 - Being Spared from Evil

Isaiah 57:1-2: The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.

Death, to the righteous, is not an end or a curse, but a blessing, for it is the beginning of our rest, our reward, and blessings unimaginable.

#### 5/8 - The High and the Humble

Isaiah 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says--he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."

God greatly identifies with the humble and the lowly. It should be our ambition to be humble, and our goal to be loving to the lowly.

#### 5/9 - Punishment and Healing

Isaiah 57:16-18: "I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry, for then the spirit of man would grow faint before me--the breath of man that I have created. I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways. I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him, creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the LORD. "And I will heal them."

This passage is a beautiful picture of the justice and the love of the Lord, both of which found expression in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God promises to heal, guide, and restore comfort to the sinner, and give him peace.

#### 5/10 - Like the Tossing Sea

Isaiah 57:20-21: But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

This statement is written immediately after the prophet proclaims that man is a willful sinner, but God would heal him and give him peace. Together they imply that the one who continues in willful sin, in spite of the work of God, will never find peace, even after death.

#### 5/11 - The Fasting God Prefers

Isaiah 58:6-8: "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter--when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

The people had complained that they fasted and prayed but God did not hear them. God states that they missed the point of fasting, and here he spells it out. If the people were going to claim to turn their hearts to God, they should be doing the kinds of things that are the fruits of a heart turned to God.

## 5/12 - A Short Thought from God's Word

Isaiah 58:9-12: "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

God urges them to spend themselves on behalf of the poor and the oppressed. Do we spend ourselves for others?

## 5/13 - Separated from God

Isaiah 59:1-2: Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

The Lord reaches out to us in the most loving way, but our willful sins can continue to separate us from Him. This might be one cause for unanswered prayer.

## 5/14 - No Need for the Sun

Isaiah 60:18-20: No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end.

Here is a beautiful description of the inheritance of God's people.

## 5/15 - A crown of Beauty

Isaiah 61:1-3: The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Jesus Christ (in Luke 24:18-21) proclaimed this verse as a prophecy which is fulfilled in Him. Read it again and take note of the various ministries in Jesus' work.

## 5/16 - A Double Portion and Everlasting Joy

Isaiah 61:7-8: Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs. For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity. In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them.

We may suffer shame, disgrace and injustice in this world, but the day will come when God will have the final word, and our righteousness will shine like the sun.

#### 5/17 - A Garden of Righteousness

Isaiah 61:10-11: I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

Isaiah takes such delight in the Lord because of the promise he holds and the hope that it brings him. Just as the soil takes time to produce the sprout, our salvation may take time before it appears, but it will surely come.

#### 5/18 - A Telling of Kindness

Isaiah 63:7 I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us--yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

God has done many good things, and it is right that we should speak of them. But too often when we get together, our conversations lean more toward the complaints we have, or the shortcomings of others. We should practice the self discipline we have from the Holy Spirit, and try to tame the tongue.

#### 5/19 - Distressed by Our Distresses

Isaiah 63:9 In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

It is a touching thought to know that our distress makes God distressed also.

#### 5/20 - Beyond Imagining

Isaiah 64:4 Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.

We have discussed God's love and care and sympathy. This verse teaches us that the things God will do for his children are beyond imagination.

#### 5/21 - Shriveled Like a Leaf

Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

The best we can do with all our efforts is to simply beg God for mercy. Nothing but the work of Jesus Christ can cure the sinfulness in our nature.

## 5/22 - The Potter and the Clay

Isaiah 64:7-9: No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins. Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people.

We are flawed by our sin nature, and by our own sinfulness. Yet we are still the workmanship of the Lord, and we loved by Him for that reason.

## 5/23 - A Brand New World

Isaiah 65:17 Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.

This passage is echoed in Revelations 21, and is a beautiful promise concerning the hope to which we are called.

## 5/24 - Esteemed and Humble

Isaiah 66:2: This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

It is not the mighty, the rich or the talented that are highly esteemed in God's eyes. It is the one who sees himself as humble and who fears the Lord with all his heart.

## 5/25 - Both Destinations of Eternity

Isaiah 66:22-24: "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD. "And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."

This passage that looks out on eternity should encourage us to both to love the Lord and to fear Him.

## 5/26 - In A Nutshell

Titus 1:1-3: Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness-- a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior.

The book of Titus begins with a complete summary of what the Christian faith is all about. We have a hope and faith that the God who does not lie will give us eternal life if we trust in Him.

## 5/27 - Mere Talkers

Titus 1:10-11: For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach--and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

Paul is talking about people in the church with selfish ambitions who are divisive. We should beware that we do not become such people, nor follow them.

#### 5/28 - Purity and Corruption

Titus 1:15-16 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

The pure are known by their actions, and the corrupt by theirs. Do our actions deny Christ? Then we must repent and turn back to God.

#### 5/29 - Older Teaching the Younger

Titus 2:3-5 Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

It is the model in the church that the older teach the younger what they have learned in the Lord. The young must never despise the old, or think that they have nothing to offer.

#### 5/30 - Importance of Integrity

Titus 2:6-8 Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

The integrity (built on honesty) of a leader is his most important tool. If he loses his integrity, all his work will suffer.

#### 5/31 - How to Treat Your Boss

Titus 2:9-10 Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

If slaves should treat masters so, how much more should an employee treat the employer. This is how we should treat all in authority: bosses, parents, teachers, police or anyone else that God has put in authority over us.

#### 6/1 - God's Grace Does the Teaching

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say



"No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

God's grace through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ has done so much for us, that to live for Him with all our hearts should be our whole hearted response.

#### 6/2 - How to Treat Everyone

Titus 3:1-2: Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

This theme comes up repeatedly in this book because it is so important. We must be humble upright men and women of God. Those who oppose us should find nothing in our lives with which they can attack us unless they tell lies about us. We do good in every situation that we are able.

#### 6/3 - Malice, Envy and Mercy

Titus 3:3-5: At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

Malice, envy and hate are a normal part of the unredeemed life. But it should not be so among the redeemed. Our past sins should be an incentive to live differently now, because we don't deserve the forgiveness that God offers.

#### 6/4 - Rebirth and Inheritance

Titus 3:5-7 He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

God has not only given us grace, He has made us heirs. And on top of all that, He has given us His Spirit. We should be full of praise and thanksgiving to Him.

#### 6/5 - Self-Condemned

Titus 3:9-10 But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

Jesus prayed that his disciples and those who believed through their word would be one in unity. Therefore, the one who brings about division is worse than useless. He is self-condemned. Take the warning to heart and don't argue about foolish things, nor oppose someone that God may have called. Follow the example of David, who recognized God's calling on Saul even when Saul was doing evil.

## 6/6 - Living Productively

Titus 3:14 Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.

A final summary of what has been said so many times in this book. God's people should live good productive lives in Him.

## 6/7 - Chosen for Pain and Glory

Matthew 1:18-19: This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

Mary and Joseph were both chosen for the task of parenting the Christ. Neither were asked their opinion. It is a great honor to be used by God, but it is a great responsibility as well.

## 6/8 - The Name of Jesus

Matthew 1:20-21: But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

The name "Jesus" was the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "Joshua." Just as Joshua in the old testament could take the people where Moses could not, so Jesus brought all believers into righteousness even though the law could not.

## 6/9 - The Pregnant Virgin

Matthew 1:22-23: All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" --which means, "God with us."

God Himself lay in that manger in Bethlehem.

## 6/10 - A Choice of Faith

Matthew 1:24-25: When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Joseph had a choice: he could have refused to marry a pregnant woman and kept control of his life, or he could obey the angel of the Lord. Joseph's choice was the choice of faith in God (which led him to obedience).

## 6/11 - A Miracle of Science and Love

Matthew 1:24-25: When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Mary was a true virgin when Jesus was born. This means that Christ really was begotten of the Father, a miracle of science as well as a miracle of love.

#### 6/12 – Prophecy Fulfilled

Matthew 2:1-5: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

The birthplace of Jesus was not a secret. God had proclaimed it in prophecy as a sign of the genuine Christ.

#### 6/13 - A Plot to Stop God

Matthew 2:7-8: Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

Herod lied when he said he wanted to worship the child. In truth he wanted to murder Him and prevent Jesus from becoming a King. How foolish he was to think that He could stop God's grand plan.

#### 6/14 - Seeing a Star

Matthew 2:9-11: The star they had seen in the east went ahead of [the Magi] until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

Our desire should be that we can encounter Christ, and that He can bring us joy. And our response should also be a desire to give to Him.

#### 6/15 - Trying to Thwart God's Plan

Matthew 2:12-15: And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod.

Did Herod really think that he could thwart God's plan? Do people still think they can thwart Him

today?

#### 6/16 - Herod's Plan verses God's Plan

Matthew 2:16-18: When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

Herod's attempt to stop God's plan only brought pain and sorrow, but God's plan ultimately brings joy and life to those of faith.

#### 6/17 – Spoken by the prophets

Matthew 2:17-18: Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

Matthew 2:23: [And](#) he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."

These are just two of the many prophecies that Jesus fulfilled in His lifetime. This is a glorious proof of the truth of the Bible and of the identity of Jesus.

#### 6/18 - Simple Message, Simple Faith

Matthew 3:4-6: John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

John came dressed just like Elijah the prophet. His message was simple: repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Those who believed God's message obeyed and were baptized by faith. When God gives a simple message, it should be a simple matter to obey.

#### 6/19 - Fruits of Repentance

Matthew 3:7-8: But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance."

John preached that people should repent of their sins and be baptized. When many of the self-righteous religious leaders turned out and asked for baptism, he proved to them that they were not truly repentant by demanding that their deeds change to go along with their repentance.

#### 6/20 - A Superior Calling

Matthew 3:11-12: "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into

the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

These words by John the Baptist indicate that Jesus ministry was far superior to John's. John could call the people to repentance, but only Jesus could truly cleanse sin and set those cleansed apart.

#### 6/21 - Not by Bread Alone

Matthew 4:1-4: Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

The temptation was for Jesus to put his physical needs above the things of God. To obey God is always a first priority.

#### 6/22 - Taking a Flying Leap

Matthew 4:5-7: Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: " 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.' "

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "

Jesus was being tempted to jump off and force God to have to save Him. This is like what the children of Israel had done in the wilderness when they willfully sinned and then expected God to have to save them. That is what "putting God to the test" means. We should never deliberately put ourselves in danger so that we expect God to have to fix things.

#### 6/23 - The Short Road or the Long Road

Matthew 4:8-9: Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' "

The temptation here was to become a king without going to the cross first. But such a kingdom would have been temporary. By doing things God's way, Jesus will be King of kings and Lord of lords for all eternity. In the same way, it is always better for us to suffer whatever cross we are called to bear now, and wait for eternal rewards later.

#### 6/24 - Life Changing Decisions

Matthew 4:18-20: As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.

Simon and Andrew had already heard the message of John the Baptist, and they believed his testimony concerning Jesus. Still, it took tremendous faith to just quit their jobs and follow on command. Do we have that kind of faith today?

#### 6/25 - Amazing Stuff

Matthew 4:23-24: Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them.

Jesus was acclaimed by his miracles wherever he went. Ordinary people believed in Him, but those who thought they were wise rejected Him.

#### 6/26 - Logic Turned Upside Down

Matthew 5:3-5: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Jesus begins the process of turning natural logic upside down. All of these blessings are pronounced on those that would not normally be seen as blessed. The blessings come in the future for those who suffer today.

#### 6/27 - Hungry for Something Specific

Matthew 5:6: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

To earnestly desire righteousness is a good thing, and those who do so will have what they desire.

#### 6/28 - Mercy for the Merciful

Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

This is a principle that is taught throughout the New Testament. We cannot expect to be forgiven if we are unwilling to forgive. We cannot expect God's mercy if we are unwilling to give mercy to others.

#### 6/29 - Persecution and Blessing

Matthew 5:10-12: Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Everyone who tries to live a life pleasing to God will find persecution. But persecution in this life will be followed by great reward in the next life.

#### 6/30 - Bad Salt

Matthew 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty

again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

Of all the people in the world, the believer is the most distinctive and desirable to God. But if we compromise ourselves and begin to live like the rest of the world, how are we any different?

### 7/1 - A City on a Hill

Matthew 5:14-16: "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

The world should see who we are by what we do, so that glory is given to God by the actions of His people.

### 7/2 - Surpassing Righteousness

Matthew 5:20: For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

We cannot hope to enter the kingdom of God by our own righteousness. It can only be obtained through the gift of God that comes through the work of Jesus Christ. He was punished for our sins so that His righteousness could be ours.

### 7/3 - Your Gift Can Wait

Matthew 5:23-24: Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Bitterness gives the devil a foothold in our lives. Jesus teaches us here that we must work to resolve our differences if we want God's blessings in our lives.

### 7/4 - Settling Matters Quickly

Matthew 5:25-26: "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

It is much better to settle our differences here in this life than to stand before our eternal judge and try to give a reason for our failure to do so.

### 7/5 - A Matter of the Heart

Matthew 5:27-28 You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Sin is not a matter of deed, but of heart.

## 7/6 - The Logic of Jesus

Matthew 5:29-30: If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

What I call the “logic of Jesus” is this: This world is temporary and the next one is eternal. Nothing of this world has any value compared to the next world.

## 7/7 - Do Not Resist

Matthew 5:38-40: You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

These are easy words to say, but hard to practice. It is better to be wronged and hurt than to strike back. This is a way to show that the love of Christ is in us.

## 7/8 - The Second Mile

Matthew 5:41-42: If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

We should not only be willing to accommodate others, but we should be willing to go above and beyond. This is another way to show that the love of Christ is in us.

## 7/9 - Loving Enemies and Being God’s Child

Matthew 5:43-45: You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

God cares for the good and the evil, and He commands us to do so as well.

## 7/10 - Loving Beyond Normal

Matthew 5:46-48: If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

We are to be different from the world around us. We are to be known by our love.

## 7/11 - Trumpeting Good Deeds

Matthew 6:1-4: Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not



announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

The motivation for our deeds is critical. If we do them simply to please God, then we won't care whether others know or not.

#### 7/12 - Secret Prayers

Matthew 6:6-8: But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

There is no magic formula for prayer. It is not necessary to pray in King James English or to repeat certain words or phrases. We simply need to present our requests to God and leave the answer to Him.

#### 7/13 - A Prayer for Today

Matthew 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.

Jesus does not teach us to pray for great things, but only for our daily needs. If more comes from the hands of God, we can be grateful, but we should also be grateful for our basic needs.

#### 7/14 - Critical Forgiveness

Matthew 6:12-15: Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

The Lord's prayer teaches us the importance of forgiveness. It is critical that we find forgiveness from our Lord, and so it is critical that we learn to forgive others.

#### 7/15 - Hungry with a Clean Face

Matthew 6:17-18: But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

The love we have for others will be seen by all, and so our light shines, but we should not try to do good works in order to be seen, or we have no reward from God.

#### 7/16 - A Thief Proof Storage System

Matthew 6:19-21 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart

will be also.

Everything in this world is temporary, but whatever we give of ourselves to God we invest in eternity.

#### 7/17 - Two Masters

Matthew 6:24 No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Greed is a type of idolatry. If we are spending our lives and our money to enrich ourselves, we cannot serve God, who wants us to give our all to Him.

#### 7/18 - More Important than Food

Matthew 6:25: Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?

Food and clothes are important, but they are not what life is all about. Life is about faith and hope and love. These are the things we should be most concerned with.

#### 7/19 - Better than Birds

Matthew 6:26: Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

Our value to our Heavenly Father is way beyond that of the sparrow, yet He cares for each and every one. He is singularly concerned about every detail of your life.

#### 7/20 - Looking for a Kingdom

Matthew 6:31-33: So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Trusting in God for the physical things we need is a spiritual victory. It is a victory of faith. If our thoughts move on to more important spiritual matters, it demonstrates our faith and gives us opportunity to have even greater spiritual victories.

#### 7/21 - Judging Badly

Matthew 7:1-2: Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

It is especially important that we judge others through the same mercy God has showed to us.

#### 7/22 - Sawdust in you Eye

Matthew 7:3-5: Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Christians can be relentless in their criticism of each other. We should be more anxious about our own faults than about the faults of others.

#### 7/23 - Powerful Perseverance

Matthew 7:7-8: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

The underlying principle here is that faith in action combined with perseverance is powerful. Implied in this verse is that we are asking and searching from God for things of true spiritual value.

#### 7/24 - Fish and Snakes

Matthew 7:9-11: "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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!

We go to great lengths to give to our children, especially if we think the things we are giving will have long term value. How much more willing is God to do so for us, especially when we ask Him.

#### 7/25 - Something Golden

Matthew 7:12: So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

All of the Old Testament can be summed up with the golden rule. That is why it is so important. Memorize this, and use it as a rule of life.

#### 7/26 - Two Roads and Two Gates

Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

It is never enough to "follow the crowd." We must follow the Word of our God instead.

#### 7/27 - Astonished Evildoers

Matthew 7:21-23: Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

It is not those who claim knowledge of Christ who are true followers. It is those who obey Him by faith.

#### 7/28 - Houses on the Beach

Matthew 7:24-27: Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

We must not be just hearers of God's Word. We must be doers.

#### 7/29 - Faith in Christ's Words

Matthew 8:8-10 The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."

The man believed so much in Christ that He believed Christ could heal with a word and did not even need a touch. His faith was rewarded, and it was also commended. We should remember that our faith rests on the Christ who could do such things.

#### 7/30 - Proof of the miracles of Jesus

Matthew 8:16-17: When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah : "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."

Jesus' ministry was affirmed by many great and remarkable miracles. Proof that these miracles took place can be seen by the fact that so many who witnessed them were willing to die for their faith in Christ.

#### 7/31 - Master of the Winds

Matthew 8:23-27: Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

Jesus Christ is Lord over all creation. Doesn't He deserve our devotion and obedience?

## 8/1 - Quitting a Job

Matthew 9:9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

There's no doubt that God prepared Matthew's heart before that day. But Matthew showed remarkable faith in that he walked away from his livelihood at two words from Christ. Would we do the same?

## 8/2 - Hanging With the Bad Crowd

Matthew 9:10-13: While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and `sinners'?"

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: `I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

The religious leaders didn't like the company that Jesus kept. Jesus' whole ministry was to reconcile sinners to God through his death on the cross. It would be astonishing if Jesus didn't care for them. And it is important that we do so also.

## 8/3 - An Act of Faith

Matthew 9:20-22: Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."

Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment.

It wasn't Jesus' clothes that healed the woman. It was her faith. She believed in Jesus and the power of God rested on Him. She acted on her faith. Her faith and actions brought about her healing.

## 8/4 - A Sleeping Girl

Matthew 9:23-25: When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. News of this spread through all that region.

If God can do such things, then surely our problems are not too big for Him. Never lose faith.

## 8/5 - Calling Out by Faith

Matthew 9:27-30: As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

"Yes, Lord," they replied.

Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you"; and their sight was restored.

They had faith in Christ, but if they had not called out they would not have been healed. Their faith was so strong that calling out was natural. Once again we see faith in action.

#### 8/6 - Harassed and Helpless

Matthew 9:35-36: Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

The religious leaders did not believe in Christ, but the crowds did. They were starving for truth, and Jesus' miracles gave witness to His message. They followed Him, and His response was compassion.

#### 8/7 - Hated Like Our Master

Matthew 10:24-25: A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!

If the world hated Jesus, it is only natural that they hate the followers of Jesus. Our reward will come in the New World.

#### 8/8 - Fear but Don't Be Afraid

Matthew 10:28-31: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

We have no need to be afraid of persecution. The worst they can do is kill the believer, but they can never kill the soul. And the one who is persecuted in this life will be eternally rewarded in the next.

#### 8/9 - Acknowledged or Disowned

Matthew 10:32-33: Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

Never be ashamed of Christ. There is no true shame, and reward is more than worth the trial.

#### 8/10 - Nothing Compares

Matthew 10:37-39: Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Nothing in this life compares to Christ. Life itself is of no value compared to the glory to come. This is the overwhelming logic of the Christian walk.

## 8/11 - Rewards for Small Deeds

Matthew 10:40-42: He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.

Even the smallest deeds done for God's people will be rewarded as if we had done it for Jesus Himself. If we believe this, it should move us to acts of love for one another.

## 8/12 - An Easy Burden

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

We do indeed have a yoke, and a "cross" to bear if we follow Christ. But we also gain a good shepherd will give us rest and lead us to safety.

## 8/13 - Gathering and Scattering

Matthew 12:30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

There is no middle ground. Either we serve God or we don't. Either we work for God or we work against Him.

## 8/14 - Fruity Living

Matthew 12:33 Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

What kind of fruit is produced in your life?

## 8/15 - Mother and Brother to Christ

Matthew 12:47-50: Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."

He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

It was not the crowd that Jesus pointed to. It was His disciples. It is not those who hear God's will, but those who do it.

## 8/16 - Lack of Understanding

Matthew 13:19: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the

evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

Some hear God's Word, but lack of understanding causes it to be of no effect. Let us pray for understanding in our lives.

#### 8/17 - No Roots

Matthew 13:20-21: The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

The Word of God has no effect because it has no roots or nourishment. Let us pray to be rooted in God's Word.

#### 8/18 - Worries and Wealth

Matthew 13:22 The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

For some, God's Word is choked by worry, for others by wealth. Either one can be deadly. Let us pray that we are kept free from worry and from the deceit of wealth.

#### 8/19 - High Yield

Matthew 13:23 But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Why does God continue to hold out His Word to a world where most people reject it? It is because those who respond are highly productive in those things that God desires most: faith, hope and love.

#### 8/20 - Weeds in the Fire

Matthew 13:40-43: "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

There is a day coming when all injustice will end and those who love God will find their reward.

#### 8/21 - Costing Everything

Matthew 13:44-46: The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

The rewards of the believer are such that nothing else compares, and everything else pales by comparison.



## 8/22 - Faulty Logic

Matthew 13:54-57: Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" And they took offense at him.

Their logic was based on their own perception and seemed sound. But they did account for the deeper ways of God, and so their logic was flawed. Let us remember from their lesson when we try to limit God by our logic.

## 8/23 - Unwillingness to Ask

Matthew 13:58 And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

It was not that he did not have the power. It was that no one had the faith to ask. Do we limit God by our unwillingness to ask for things we don't believe He can do?

## 8/24 - Ghost on a Lake

Matthew 14:25-27: During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

Jesus could have prevented the storm, but he chose to test the faith of His disciples. Going through such a trial taught them about the great power of God and the benefits of trusting Him.

## 8/25 - Focusing on Doubt

Matthew 14:28-31: "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

"Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

Peter had the confidence to start, but his faith grew weak even as it should have grown stronger. We should keep our eyes on Jesus and remember what He has promised. Focusing on our doubts gives them more power.

## 8/26 - Clean Hands and Dirty Heart

Matthew 15:17-20: "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not

make him 'unclean.' "

This is why hating and lusting are as bad as murder and adultery. If there is evil in the heart, it will overflow to the mouth.

#### 8/27 - Proof that Jesus is God

Matthew 15:29-31: Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

The proof of the truth of these miracles is that those who witnessed them were willing to die for Christ. If the miracles of Christ had not been genuine, His followers would not have given their lives for Him.

#### 8/28 - Fish for All

Matthew 15:34-38: "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked.

"Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish."

He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was four thousand, besides women and children.

"Our Provider" had no trouble providing food for the multitude, and He has no trouble providing for our needs.

#### 8/29 - A Wrong Point of View

Matthew 16:21-23: From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

When Peter looked at things from his own point of view, the crucifixion seemed like a tragedy to be avoided. But God saw it as the only remedy for the sin of all.

#### 8/30 - Saving and Losing

Matthew 16:24-26: If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

There is not anything in this life that is worth losing one's soul for in the next life. And there is nothing

too costly to give to our Lord in this life, that we may gain His favor in the next.

#### 8/31 - Promised Reward

Matthew 16:27: For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

The day is coming when God will reward believers for every righteous act and every right decision. Salvation comes only by grace, but He still promises rewards to those who are most faithful.

#### 9/1 - Nothing Impossible

Matthew 17:20 I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there" and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.

Faith is never something apart from God. It is the belief that God will do what he says, and the willingness to act on that belief.

#### 9/2 - Like a Child

Matthew 18:1-4: At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

In approaching God, we must begin in humility or we will never be able enter the kingdom of God. This is true of all of Adam's offspring who desire to obtain the kingdom of God.

#### 9/3 - In the Water with a Millstone

Matthew 18:5-6: And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

We need to watch how we treat other believers because God identifies so closely with his people.

#### 9/4 - A Hand, a Foot, or an Eye

Matthew 18:8-9: If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

The logic of Jesus is that nothing in this life compares to just making into the kingdom of God.

#### 9/5 - Guardian Angels

Matthew 18:10-11: See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their

angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

Even the smallest of children are watched over by the angels of God.

#### 9/6 - Losing Sheep

Matthew 18:12-14: "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

The value God places on us is infinite, and so He was willing to send His son to die to save us.

#### 9/7 - Winning Him Over

Matthew 18:15: If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

There is no place for grudges or bitterness among God's people. As far as it lies in our own abilities, we need to work out all our differences.

#### 9/8 - Power of Unity

Matthew 18:19-20: Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

God has commanded that Christians should live in unity, and so he has chosen that the He Himself will be among us when we pray together.

#### 9/9 - Counting on Forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-22: Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Jesus was trying to show by exaggeration that we should always be willing to forgive, again and again.

#### 9/10 - A Cancelled Debt

Matthew 18:23-27 Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

The debt of sin that we owe is far greater than anything we could ever repay. Our only solution is

forgiveness.

#### 9/11 - The Forgiven Refuses Forgiveness

Matthew 18:28-31: But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

It is a great injustice when people who have been forgiven refuse to forgive others.

#### 9/12 - A Stern Warning

Matthew 18:32-35: Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.

This is a very stern warning and so we should take it to heart. Forgiving others is mandatory to those who have been forgiven.

#### 9/13 - A Permanent Arrangement

Matthew 19:4-6: "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' ? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

God designed marriage to be a lifetime commitment. In the law, God allowed for divorce because He knew the sin nature of man, but His ideal is "until death do us part."

#### 9/14 - Valuable People

Matthew 19:13-15: Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them.

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

The disciples thought that children were less important than adults. In God's eyes, the very humble are very worthy of His love.

#### 9/15 - A Problem for the Rich

Matthew 19:21-23: Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the

poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

It is much easier for a poor man to give all He has for Christ. Those with many possessions come to trust that their things will keep them safe. They have difficulty putting their full trust in God. But trust is the essence of faith, and only faith can save us.

#### 9/16 - Giving All and Getting More

Matthew 19:28-29: Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

God asks us to give our all to Him, but we cannot outgive God. Whatever we give to Him will be richly rewarded on that day.

#### 9/17 - Dealing with Terrible News

Matthew 20:17-19: Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"

The disciples were warned of what would happen, and should have believed Jesus when he predicted his resurrection. The problem was that they were too caught up in the events to see the whole picture, and so they suffered excessive sorrow and much doubt. If we learn to trust, even the most terrible circumstances will be viewed differently.

#### 9/18 - Authority and Love

Matthew 20:25-28: Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

It is the natural outgrowth of love. If we love those that we are in authority over, then our ultimate goal will be their well being. This is easily seen in a mother's love for her child.

#### 9/19 - Treating God's Temple Badly

Matthew 21:12-13: Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, " 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.' "

Our own bodies are the temple of God. Let us beware what we do with God's temple.

#### 9/20 - The Power of Faith

Matthew 21:21-22: Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

God has ordained faith to be an incredible spiritual tool. We should nurture our faith and encourage each other in faith.

#### 9/21 - Paying Taxes

Matthew 22:15-20: "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

We owe respect, obedience, and maybe even finances to those in authority over us. But we owe our very lives to the creator who made us and again for redeeming us from our sin.

#### 9/22 - All Boiled Down

Matthew 22:35-40: One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

This is the "law of love." Everything we do boils down to faith, hope and love, and the greatest is love.

#### 9/23 - Leading as a Servant

Matthew 23:8-12: "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Christians should never seek acclaim, nor authority for its own sake. If we lead, it should be as a servant. We should follow the example of Jesus Christ, who had all right to all authority, but was willing to be tortured to death to save us.

#### 9/24 - Practicing the Big and the Small

Matthew 23:23-24: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of

your spices--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law-- justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

They were critical of the smallest violations, but were guilty of the greatest, in that they neglected to love. If you are critical of others, beware that you are not following in their footsteps.

#### 9/25 - A Heartbroken Love

Matthew 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

Our Lord is so grieved when He reaches out to those who refuse to respond to His love.

#### 9/26 - Hated Like Our Lord

Matthew 24:9-13 "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Being a Christian has never meant that all our problems will be solved in this world. The world hated Jesus, and so the more like Him we become, the less we will be tolerated, especially as we come closer to the day of His return.

#### 9/27 - Everyone Knows at Once

Matthew 24:26-27: "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Jesus' coming will be an event that no one will miss. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Revelation 1:7 says that every eye shall see Him. So don't be fooled by those who say He has already come or that His coming will be in secret.

#### 9/28 - A Very Special Gathering

Matthew 24:30-31: "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

What a great and wonderful day that will be.

#### 9/29 - Having No Idea

Matthew 24:36-39: No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in



the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Here is the first of five great parables that Jesus tells to warn us that we must always be ready for His return. Here we are warned not to be among those who have no idea as to what will take place until it is too late.

#### 9/30 - Keep Your Eyes Wide Open

Matthew 24:42-44: Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

In this parable, Jesus warns us that we must always be ready. We are admonished that we should always keep watch.

#### 10/1 - Doing the Right Stff

Matthew 24:45-51: Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus tells this parable to warn us that we must always be ready, we are told that it would be best if we were doing what God commanded us to do on the day He returns.

#### 10/2 - No Way to Predict

Matthew 25:13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Many have endeavored to make a prediction concerning the return of Christ, and many have looked foolish in doing so. The point Jesus made is that you don't know, so you must always be prepared.

#### 10/3 - The Great Separation

Matthew 25:31-32: When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

There is a real day of judgment coming when the destinies of all mankind will be separated, and on that day, there will be no turning back the clock. It would be wise to keep that day in mind as we live our lives and consider the fate of those around us.

## 10/4 - How To Treat Jesus

Matthew 25:34-38: "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. . . . I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Since Christ lives in each believer, we should treat each other as we would treat Jesus.

## 10/5 - Not Tragedy

Matthew 26:1-2: When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, "As you know, the Passover is two days away--and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."

It was not a tragedy that Christ was crucified. It was the only way that fallen mankind could be redeemed from the curse of sin. It was the plan of God from the beginning.

## 10/6 - Selling Out

Matthew 26:14-16: Then one of the Twelve--the one called Judas Iscariot--went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Judas sold Jesus out for thirty silver coins, but many times we sell Him out for even less when we deny Him or disobey Him for any kind of reason.

## 10/7 - Remembering Jesus

Matthew 26:26-29: While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

And so we continue to remember the price Jesus paid so that we could be forgiven.

## 10/8 - So Certain, but So Wrong

Matthew 26:31-35: Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."

But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

Peter was so certain of His faith, but the reality was something different. We should closely examine our own faith to make sure we stand firmly with our Lord.

#### 10/9 - Compelled By Love

Matthew 26:39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

Jesus went willingly to His death, not because he desired it, but because love compelled Him. There was no other way that we could be redeemed.

#### 10/10 - Willing Spirit, Weak Flesh

Matthew 26:40-41: Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

The disciples desired to watch and pray, but they were too weary and weak in the flesh. It is often true that we desire to do what is right, but our flesh is weak. If you have this struggle in your life, you might want to read Romans 7 and 8.

#### 10/11 - Asleep at a Time Like That

Matthew 26:45-46 Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Here is a reminder to believers that we should not slumber, for the work of our Lord is urgent.

#### 10/12 - An Ironic Kiss

Matthew 26:47-49: While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

The irony of that kiss still shocks and amazes people. Judas had seen all of Jesus' miracles. He had even been given power to work miracles himself. But he was still willing to sell out Christ for a few pieces of silver. Even so, people still betray Christ today.

#### 10/13 - Not Taken by Force

Matthew 26:50-53: Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for."

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve

legions of angels?"

Nothing could have forced Jesus to die on the cross if He had not allowed it. But He came to die because of His great love for us.

10/14 - Jesus, Before and After

Matthew 26:62-64: Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Jesus came then as our savior. He will come again as High King above all Kings forever.

10/15 - Courage Unequal to the Task

Matthew 26:73-75: After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away."

Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!"

Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Peter was willing to draw sword and fight for Christ in the garden, but here his courage fails. Just as Jesus forgave Peter, He will forgive our failures also.

10/16 - The Righteous Dying for the Wicked

Matthew 27:24-26: When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"

Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Barabbas, the murderer was released, and Jesus the righteous One, was crucified. And so it is with us also. He died so that we, who are worthy of death, can live.

10/17 – The Crown of the True King

Matthew 27:27-31: Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

See what He endured because of His love for you and me.

## 10/18 - The Sign of the King

Matthew 27:35-37: When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Let us sit at the foot of the cross, and see the salvation of God.

## 10/19 - A Willing Gift

Matthew 27:50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

They didn't take His life that day. He gave it willingly for us.

## 10/20 - Convinced of the Truth

Matthew 27:54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

Surely He was, and still is the Son of God.

## 10/21 - An Interesting Turn

Matthew 27:62-64: The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

It is interesting that the chief priests and Pharisees understood Jesus to say He would rise again, but His disciples seemed to have missed that altogether. It does not appear that any of them expected anything to happen.

## 10/22 - Death is Conquered

Matthew 28:1-6: After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.

The power of death was broken that day. Because He lives, we can live also.

## 10/23 - Proof of the Reality of Christ

Matthew 28:8-10 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell

his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

The resurrection of Christ is the proof of the reality of Christ. His disciples were afterward willing to give their lives for Him, something they would not have done if they had not been witnesses to the resurrection.

#### 10/24 - A Really Bad Lie

Matthew 28:11-15: While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

The story the guards told would not really have happened. The guards were set there for the purpose of preventing the body from being stolen. Also, a guard who failed on his watch was executed. Here is another proof that Christ is indeed risen from the dead.

#### 10/25 - Sent on a Quest

Matthew 28:18-20: Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus has the authority of the King of all kings and Lord of all Lords. Here, He commands his followers to take up His mission until the end of the age. This mission is to make disciples everywhere.

#### 10/26 - Pure Joy

James 1:2-4: Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

We should look at any kind of trouble as a chance for God to work in our lives, and an opportunity to display our love for Him through it.

#### 10/27 - A Generous Father

James 1:5-8: If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

Our God is a generous loving Father who will give us anything that is best for us, and wisdom always falls into that category. But we must have faith in God, for without faith it is impossible to please Him.

## 10/28 - Advice for the Rich

James 1:9-11: The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

Nothing in this world is permanent, and in other places our lives are compared to the grass and the flowers that are there for a season and then they wither and die. This truth has a special meaning to those who are rich or powerful. They must recognize that all these things are temporary. We should live our lives with eternal things as our priorities.

## 10/29 - Passing a Test

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

God has special rewards for those who stand up through trials. A marathon runner might hurt while he runs, but he knows that the pain is temporary, but the glory will remain.

## 10/30 - Your Real Temptor

James 1:13-15: When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

We cannot blame God, society, or anyone else for our sin. It comes from our own evil desires. Then end result of sin is death: the death of the sinner, or the death of Jesus Christ for those who believe.

## 10/31 - Forever Unchanging

James 1:16-18: Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

There is no good thing that does not have its ultimate source in God. And God does not change unpredictably, but remains constant and faithful in all things. The gift of life that he gave us is a testimony to the wonderful God that we serve.

## 11/1 - Quick Anger

James 1:19-21: My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

The implication in this verse is that quick anger is part of the moral filth which needs to be done away

with. Instead we must remember with humility how much God has done for us, and our relationship with others should be a reflection of that love.

### 11/2 - Deceiving Yourself

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

One can deceive oneself by attending church and understanding the Scriptures very well. It makes it easy to think of yourself as a believer. But a true believer obeys the Word, and this is a giant step beyond. Have you learned to obey our Lord's command to love others? This is the mark of the true believer.

### 11/3 - A Useless Mirror

James 1:23-25: Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.

There's no point in looking into a mirror and then forgetting. And there is no point in hearing God's Word and not obeying. But we will receive great blessings if we hear and obey.

### 11/4 - A Lose Tongue

James 1:26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

Later in the book, James will be more specific about the problems with the tongue. But here he simply states that you cannot please God with a lose tongue. We must guard what we say carefully.

### 11/5 - A Gold Ring and Fine Clothes

James 2:1-4: My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

We should never give special favor to the rich, powerful or popular. If the Lord judges on the heart, why should we honor external things.

### 11/6 - Poor, but Rich in Faith

James 2:5-7 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

God has a history of caring for and using the poor and the destitute. His laws are meant to defend them



against the oppressive. If we would be like God, we should have a like attitude.

#### 11/7 - Breaking All God's Laws

James 2:9-11 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

We tend to think showing favoritism is not as bad as adultery, but both displease God, and both make us lawbreakers.

#### 11/8 - Showing Mercy Freely

James 2:12-13 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

This is a very severe warning to us, that we should be imitators of God. If God shows mercy freely, we should also. When God forgives, we had better not hold grudges. And we should never be harsh judges.

#### 11/9 - Faith and Deeds

James 2:14-17 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Faith, in its simplest form, is nothing more than trust. And trust has no purpose if it does not motivate the person who trusts do to things based on the trust they have. We are not saved by our deeds, but by our faith and God's grace. But faith that saves will result in deeds, or it is not true faith.

#### 11/10 - A Trophy Case of Faith

James 2:18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

Our actions are the trophy case of our faith. By what we do, we display our faith to all the world (like a candle on a candlestick).

#### 11/11 - Christians and Demons both Believe

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.

Believing in the existence of God is not relevant to salvation, or even the demons would be saved. What saves a person is having faith in God, and this passage teaches us that this faith will produce accompanying good works.

#### 11/12 - Abe's Extremem Faith

James 2:20-23: You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 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. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.

He trusted (had faith in) God enough to offer to kill his son at God's command. That is an incredible amount of faith. And he was willing to obey God in anything because of that trust.

#### 11/13 - The Faith of a Prostitute

James 2:24-26: You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Faith that does not inspire actions is not true faith.

#### 11/14 - A Strong Warning

James 3:1 Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

This is a strong warning against hypocrisy. If you presume to be telling others how to live, you better be careful how you live.

#### 11/15 - Stumbling

James 3:2 We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

There is nobody who does not stumble, but the one who wants to be as holy as possible should learn to control the tongue.

#### 11/16 - A Bit in the Mouth

James 3:3-5 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts.

If we lie, complain, or gossip, the rudder of our lives steers our whole being toward disaster. It is a small thing, but it sets in motion the practices of our lives. Therefore, it is essential that we watch what we say.

#### 11/17 - A Great Forest Fire

James 3:5-6: Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a

world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

A small spark can set a forest ablaze. Just one word wrongly said can corrupt a whole person. No wonder James warned us in 1:19 to be "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

#### 11/18 - Deadly Poison

James 3:7-8: All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

In spite of these commands to control our tongues, we are told here that it is not possible to tame it completely. So what James is trying to teach us is this: Be on guard, you will always have to battle the temptation to sin in the things you say.

#### 11/19 - Praising and Cursing

James 3:9-12 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

James says that this should not be, but the fact remains that it is so. Christians need to realize how feeble their praise of God is when they curse, criticize or lie. It would be good to heed this warning and examine whether there are people in our lives who are the victims of our tongues.

#### 11/20 - Humility that Comes by Wisdom

James 3:13-14: Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

Good deeds and humility should be the calling card of the man and woman of God. Envy and selfish ambition are the opposites of these traits, and if they exist should be confessed and repented of. James wants us to examine ourselves to see if such things do exist.

#### 11/21 - Good Deeds with Bad Motive

James 3:15-16 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

The "wisdom" referred to here is the person who is doing good deeds because of envy or selfish ambitions (see verses 13-14). Doing good deeds with bad motives is as evil as doing none.

#### 11/22 - Wisdom From Heaven

James 3:17-18: But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

Here are the motives of the truly wise person. When we do good things for good motives, the result is a harvest of truly good things.

#### 11/23 - Quarrels and Fights

James 4:1-3: What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

These verses are still another part of the same theme that has been discussed: The evils of doing good with bad motives. Here James is pointing out that bad motives inevitably lead to fighting and quarreling. This is why it is important to keep our motives pure.

#### 11/24 - Making God Your Enemy

James 4:4-5 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?

Do you love the world, and the things in it? Then beware, for you make God your enemy.

#### 11/25 - Opposing God

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

This states from a different view the same thought in the verse before, that the proud person becomes the opponent of God. It would be far wiser to put aside our pride.

#### 11/26 - The Fleeing Devil

James 4:7-8 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.

The solution to pride is full submission, not only of our lives and our deeds, but of our motives. One cannot be proud and truly submissive at the same time. Also, notice that the devil is very real in his opposition to us, but our submission causes him to flee.

#### 11/27 - Grieving, Mourning and Wailing

James 4:8-10 Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

The pride problem is not taken lightly. It is a catastrophe which should result in grief, mourning and wailing. Instead the proud refuse to see a problem, and so they set themselves up to face the wrath of God. It would be good for all believers to make sure that this is not a problem in their lives.

## 11/28 - The Danger of Slander

James 4:11-12 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you--who are you to judge your neighbor?

In our daily conversations with each other, it is imperative that we watch what we say about each other. To criticize harshly or accuse unjustly is to break this commandment, even if we are just talking to a friend in private.

## 11/29 - Bragging About Tomorrow

James 4:13-16 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.

The issue here is submission once again. Any plans we make apart from God are made from the pride and arrogance of a belief that we have the right to plan our own lives.

## 11/30 - Sin by Omission

James 4:17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

Even if we don't break a commandment, but we fail to submit ourselves to our Lord, we are sinning.

## 12/1 - Hoarding Wealth

James 5:1-3: Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.

The day is coming when we will have to give account to God as to how we used all the things He gave us. If we have accumulated wealth which has not been used to love others (and even at the expense of others), that wealth will be a testimony against us on that day.

## 12/2 - Luxury and Self-Indulgence

James 5:4-6: Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

To live in luxury and self-indulgence on earth, and especially at the expense of the poor, is a sin that grieves God greatly. And in the wealthy culture that we live in, it is very easy to do so without even

realizing it. It would be wise to examine ourselves closely to see if this warning is meant for us.

### 12/3 - The Patient Farmer

James 5:7-8: Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

Serving God with a whole heart is not always a pleasant thing to do, but we have this promise of a sure reward if we are patient.

### 12/4 - The Judge at the Door

James 5:9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Grumbling against each other is common enough that we don't take it seriously. James warns us that it is a sin which we will be accountable for on the day of judgment.

### 12/5 - The Patience of Job

James 5:10-11: Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

We have here an illustrated (by the story of Job) promise that patience in suffering will bring great reward.

### 12/6 - Arrogant Oaths

James 5:12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear--not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

God hold our lives in His hands, and we have no true knowledge that we will even be alive tomorrow. Therefore it is arrogant and unwise to make oaths of any kind.

### 12/7 - An Response to Everything

James 5:13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.

There is a proper spiritual response to all things. This response demonstrates the faith of the believer.

### 12/8 - The Prayer of Faith

James 5:14-16: Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to

each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

It is important, if we want God to work in our lives in healing or in any other area, that sin be confessed and forgiven. This is what makes our prayers powerful. It is also important to note that God desires us to confess to one another and pray for one another.

#### 12/9 - The Power of Prayer

James 5:16-17-18 The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

The important thing to notice here is that Elijah is no different than us. His prayers were answered, and ours can be too.

#### 12/10 - The Wandering Brother

James 5:19-20 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

It is important that we look after one another and bear each other's burdens.

#### 12/11 - Judgment for Both

Ecclesiastes 3:16-17: And I saw something else under the sun: In the place of judgment wickedness was there, in the place of justice-wickedness was there. I thought in my heart, "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed."

Solomon recognized that justice does not always exist in this world, but that God would bring about judgment at the proper time.

#### 12/12 - Two are Better

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10: Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

Always it is better to have a companion on any endeavor than to try to do things alone. This is true both physically and spiritually.

#### 12/13 - A Foolish Vow

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5: When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it.

God is not impressed by our vows. He can be impressed by how we live. Breaking a vow to God is not the way to do that.

## 12/14 - Much Dreaming and Many Words

Ecclesiastes 4:7 Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God.

The logic and imagination of man falls far short understanding the reality of God. God is beyond all such things, so we should be in awe of Him.

## 12/15 - The True Value of Money

Ecclesiastes 5:10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

Only Pursuing God and the righteousness that comes by faith brings any fulfillment. Everything else is meaningless.

## 12/16 - Wisdom as a shelter

Ecclesiastes 7:12 Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: that wisdom preserves the life of its possessor.

Having money may be a protection against some types of harm, but having wisdom is better, because it helps protect us in this world and leads us to the world to come.

## 12/17 - Considering All Righteous People

Ecclesiastes 7:20 There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

Nobody is righteous by their own efforts. The only way to find righteousness is the kind that is given to us by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

## 12/18 - Slow Coming Justice

Ecclesiastes 8:11 When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong.

This is seen in raising children, in criminal justice, and in the ultimate justice that comes from God. The longer God waits in patience for repentance, the more the wicked rejoice in their wickedness. But God will not wait forever.

## 12/19 - Dead Flies

Ecclesiastes 10:1 As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

One act of foolishness can mar a great life. It would be wise to live with our eyes wide open to avoid that foolishness. But it is good to remember that if God can forgive the act of foolishness committed by King David (adultery and murder) he can forgive us also.

## 12/20 - The Pain in Finding Favor



Luke 1:26-33: In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

It is most amazing that the angel told Mary that she had found favor with God. This "favor" meant that Mary had to suffer many things. The embarrassment of being unwed and pregnant, the frustration of seeing her other children struggle with their belief in Jesus, and, especially, the pain of watching Him being crucified. In this world, favor with God can mean many trials, but there will be many more rewards in the next world.

#### 12/21 - The Creator in the Manger

Luke 2:4-7: So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

How magnificent, that the God who created the universe should choose to identify with the poor and the needy, even in this weakest moment.

#### 12/22 - Choosing Humility

Luke 2:8-11: And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

If the creator of the world can choose such humility for Himself, shouldn't we imitate His example and humbly take up our crosses and follow Him? Let us make that our challenge for the coming millenium, and for the rest of our lives.

#### 12/23 - A season for Praise

Luke 2:13-14: Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Let us not forget to praise God for that event which was so glorious that even the angels sang.

#### 12/24 - Pursuing Truth

Luke 2:15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

There was no questioning the faith of these men. What was told them by the angel was true and was worth pursuing.

#### 12/25 - Great Events and a Small Child

Luke 2:16-20: So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Today, let us join the shepherds, and stand in awe at the manger, and glorify God for His love to us.

#### 12/26 - Cast Your Bread on the Waters

Ecclesiastes 11:1 Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again.  
Ecclesiastes 11:6 Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.

We will reap what we sow, and we cannot expect a harvest unless we do so.

#### 12/27 - The Path of the Wind

Ecclesiastes 11:5 As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.

Even the greatest theologian cannot understand. God is awesome beyond our understanding.

#### 12/28 - The Conclusion of Wisdom

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon has attempted to understand everything that happens under the sun. He has admitted that it cannot be understood, but he has come to this amazing conclusion.

#### 12/29 - Three Great Benefits

1 Peter 1:3-5: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Three incredible reasons to praise God: He has given us new birth, an inheritance that can never perish, and has shielded us by his power. How awesome to be loved by One who does such things for us.

## 12/30 - Genuine Proven Faith

1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

In our hope of eternal reward we can rejoice even while suffering now. Our present suffering will only increase our reward.

## 12/31 - The Goal of Your Faith

1 Peter 1:8-9 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

This is a beautifully artistic statement of the definition of faith. We love the One we do not see, and are filled with joy for the promise of what we will receive. Inexpressible joy should come from a full confidence in Him.