

Prayer Devotions



November 2020

Luke 18:1

Pray Always and Never Give Up

Prayer for Persecuted Church

Pray for those in the midst of persecution

Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Hebrews 13:3

Global watchdog Open Doors reports that 322 Christians are killed every month for their faith while millions more suffer persecution on a routine basis.

Please pray that these believers will not only stay committed to the call of Christ but also will respond in love to the evil shown by their aggressors. God's love will open doors for these believers to share the Gospel even more.

This Month's Countries, these are some of the most dangerous countries to follow Jesus:

Algeria

Uzbekistan

Myanmar

Daily Prayers for November “Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor– and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.” (Opening quote from the Thanksgiving Proclamation signed by President George Washington, October 3, 1789)

Sunday, November 1st: I sometimes wonder how often God may be trying to get my attention in order to call me into His Presence, to detach myself from everything else going on around me and just step *away from* in order to step *into*. When Moses had his burning bush experience he was on the far side of Horeb, the mountain of God, tending the flock of his father-in-law. We read that the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the phenomenon of a burning bush, but it wasn't until Moses turned aside that the Lord called out to him. God saw that he was willing to push pause and focus on the interruption. And because of that willingness to look deeper into the distraction, Moses received his destiny. What we encounter may not be as dramatic as a burning bush, but I would say a global pandemic definitely qualifies as an extraordinary occurrence that may be His call for us to pause and investigate more closely to discover how He is seeking to give us our destinies. The more perceptive we become to His omnipresence, the greater the likelihood that we will see the hidden purposes that He desires to reveal to those who are willing to stop, look and listen.

Exodus 3:1-4; Luke 10:38-42; Hebrews 4:11-16

Monday, November 2nd: You have undoubtedly heard the admonition for us to follow the science, because everyone knows that this is the only way to battle a new strain of virus. The subtle deception here is that intellect – human intellect – is somehow the end-all answer to our dilemmas. In 1847 a respected Hungarian doctor was ridiculed for requiring hand washing prior to entering a maternity ward in order to reduce infant mortality. It wasn't until thirteen years later that surgeons realized the need to wash their hands or sterilize instruments between surgeries to impede infection. There are four-year-olds today that are smarter than that. At one point the most brilliant scientists alive purported that the earth was flat! (And some people *still* believe that!) Science is fallible, and all of those brilliant minds fail to acknowledge the source of their intellect. Doesn't it make more sense to follow the Savior who participated in creation rather than the scientists who are still postulating answers based on what they know at this point? If we trust science *more* than we trust God, we've made science or human intelligence an idol because we are placing our trust in it above Him. This is not to say that we ignore scientific evidence, but we must keep it in perspective and not allow it to dictate behavior that would be contradictory to placing our faith in Him. Remember, the sin that got Adam and Eve expelled from Eden was wanting to have the same degree of knowledge as God – in other words, be equal to Him. If only they had believed Him and not been tempted to pursue something He had forbidden for their own protection. Whose voice are we going to choose to follow?

Psalm 118:8; Proverb 3:5-6; Isaiah 12:2; 1 Corinthians 2:4-9

Tuesday, November 3rd: Tomorrow is a big day – a huge day – in the future of our country and there are many who are stressed, militant and just downright ugly about the possible outcome. And that’s on both sides of the aisle! I’m not downplaying the importance of the election and the absolute responsibility for Christians to vote to support godly principles, but at the end of the day we need to remember who is actually in charge and in whom we must place our hope and trust. In the days of Jeremiah the kingdom of Judah had largely forsaken godly principles and as a result received a harsh warning from the Lord. He told them that those who trust in man and make flesh their strength are cursed and like a shrub in the desert – translation: little hope for a healthy environment or relief from the “heat” both literal and figurative. We need to lift our eyes higher than the election results for our help and our hope; it’s the Lord who is our keeper.

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 91, 121; Hebrews 10:23

Wednesday, November 4th: We have become such a technology driven society that actual face-to-face dialogue is almost becoming obsolete, or at least a dying art form. So what does this have to do with our prayer life? Oftentimes we will put our prayer requests on a prayer line or send an email, but we all know that we receive a plethora of emails on a daily basis, and if we’re honest about it, it’s pretty easy to either put off opening or delete them because of the volume with which we’re bombarded. However, most of us are pretty diligent about opening text messages, so when you either have a prayer need or you feel prompted to pray specifically for someone, why not put it into a text? The prayer line is definitely a powerful resource, but think of how effective prayers would be from a few very close friends with whom you can be real and raw about the need and who will be vested and diligent in continuing to lift up your request to Father. Additionally, imagine how encouraging it could be to someone to receive an impromptu prayer text. This could be a word of encouragement, support, sympathy or affirmation to someone who is struggling or going through a difficult time, or it could be as simple as reminding them how loved they are. And who knows but that God may be using you as an instrument to bring His words of encouragement or love to someone at just the right moment!

Galatians 6:2; Colossians 1:9; James 5:16

Thursday, November 5th: Why call Me good? - Matthew 19:17

Jesus' response to a student who had addressed him as "Good Teacher" is shocking. It reminds me of a scene in The Hobbit in which an Old Traveler answers Bilbo's cheery "Good Morning" with these words: "*What do you mean,*" he said, "*do you mean that you feel good this morning; or that it is a morning to be good on?*" Bilbo's words helped me understand that Jesus was making the point that in its proper sense the term "good" belongs to God alone so that no other person can be "good" as God is. What I missed was the importance of God's holiness, His separateness. The Old Traveler's words offered a clearer picture of Jesus identifying a need to emphasize that holiness can be obscured in people's minds when a term becomes a mere expression of courtesy separated from its divine source. After all, God alone is worthy of praise. Paul makes this point clearly in Philippians 4:8 when He links truth, purity, goodness and holiness as worthy of praise. Let us always remember only God is good and any goodness or virtue a person may have is only a reflection of the source of all goodness itself.

Friday, November 6th: I was blown away when I read in Isaiah a passage that I've read many times but have never picked up on a particular phrase. Isaiah 43:25 reads, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions *for My own sake*; and I will not remember your sins." For His own sake! I had to ask myself why He would do that. And then it occurred to me that He has such an intense desire to be in relationship with us but because He is altogether holy, we cannot approach Him if we are still in our sin. Enter His mercy and grace and promise. I know this was the reason that He sent Jesus – to save us, but the realization that He did this for Himself in addition to doing it for us was a game changer. I don't know about you, but that thought totally captivated me. The God of all creation saved me – **me** - from the penalty and stain of my sin for His sake. He did it to reveal to me His character, His glory, and the magnitude of His love for me...and for you. With that knowledge, how can my response be anything other than humility, ultimate gratitude, love, and a desire to return that kind of devotion?

John 3:16; Colossians 2:13-14; 1 John 4:9-19

Saturday, November 7th: Every thought we entertain and every choice or decision we make plays a part in forming our character. So are we being *conformed* or *transformed*? It all hinges on what influences us. If we are allowing ourselves to listen to what the world has to offer as our plumb line, then we're being conformed as we are molded by the flesh. What's on the outside determines what we become on the inside. But if we are basing those thoughts, actions and choices on the word of God, we are being transformed from the inside out. When the Israelites fled Egypt they were in a hurry, so they didn't really have a chance to say good-bye and they had no idea what to expect in the future. There was no closure, and as a result they refused to bury Egypt in order to embrace the promise. They yearned to go back to what was familiar from the past. We need to choose to live in the present in a state of expectation for the future. I think of when Paul and Silas were in prison after being stripped and beaten with rods. They were in an inner dungeon with their feet in stocks. This was on the heels of preaching with great power in Philippi and converting Lydia among others. Suffice it to say, they had gone from feast to famine and it would have been easy to choose to allow the circumstances to shape their attitude. Instead, their indwelling living hope prompted them to break out in praise choruses. The result of their choice was an earthquake that broke every chain – literally. Did Paul and Silas do the natural thing and make a run for it with the rest of the prisoners? No. Knowing the understandable panic of the jailer, Paul cried out that they were all present and accounted for! The end result was a transformation in the jailer. First he washed their wounds, and then he and his household decided to be baptized into this incomprehensible life. What was on the inside made what was on the outside irresistible. Sometimes we need to offer up the greatest sacrifices of praise in the tightest places. Do not (allow yourself to) be conformed. We who have been washed with the blood have a living hope, and our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. Be transformed. **Acts 16:25-34; Romans 12:1-2**

Sunday, November 8th: Can I tell you how many times I've read the passage in Mark 2 (verses 23-28) and thought, "OK...what is Jesus saying here?" If I had lived during that time when our dear Savior walked around in Galilee, I would have been hanging with the Scribes and Pharisees, no doubt. Born into a Christian home with a heritage of Bible-believing relatives and many opportunities to be part of various Christian environments, I developed a deep-rooted spiritual pride similar to an invasive root system that the Holy Spirit continues to expose and allow the Son to shine on it and shrivel it up. Much of my Christian life has been about being a good Christian. I conscientiously read my Bible, pray, go to church, tithe, etc. Don't get me wrong—there have been many wonderful results to these habits, and many sweet times with the Lord. But as always, the Lord looks at the motives of our heart, and wants us to recognize it as well. As I read Jesus' words about the Sabbath to the indignant group of people watching and questioning His disciples that were picking grain and munching on it, the Holy Spirit whispered to me, "**Don't look at the rules; look at Jesus.**" In everything, we are to look at Jesus first. We are to put His face before us. We are to step in close and be filled up with all that He has for us.

"Just Be Held," a song by Casting Crowns, has lyrics that encourage us to give up our own efforts and receive the amazing grace of God. Let me close with some of these lyrics:

*Lift your hands, lift your eyes
In the storm is where you'll find Me
And where you are, I'll hold your heart
I'll hold your heart
Come to Me, find your rest
In the arms of the God who won't let go
So when you're on your knees and answers seem so far away
You're not alone, stop holding on and just be held
Your world's not falling apart, it's falling into place
I'm on the throne, stop holding on and just be held
(Stop holding on and just be held)
Just be held, just be held
Just be held, just be held*

Monday, November 9th: Some years back when our son was in middle school we were driving past the house of one of his friends when we noticed smoke billowing from the garage. We immediately sprang into action and pounded on the front door to alert them of the danger and help them evacuate to safety. What kind of friends would we have been if we had merely kept driving assuming someone else would tell them about the impending threat? Yet how often do we do just that when we fail to tell others about the reality of hell? Alarmingly a study done by the Pew Research Center revealed that 58% of professing Christians do not even believe that Hell is real. They believe that a loving God would never condemn people to eternal damnation and suffering. The truth is, God never intended for us to go to Hell; it was a place prepared for the devil and his angels. But because of sin and a refusal to accept the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, people make a choice to condemn themselves. Those who deny Christ will be cast into the furnace of fire or Gehenna, the word translated Hell eleven times. Gehenna, or the Valley of Hinnom, ran along the southern border of Jerusalem. It was where the garbage was burned and where children were sacrificed to Molech, sometimes being thrown alive into the pit. Hence the reference to hell being a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth was something those of Jesus' day could easily understand. Hell is a horrific place, eternally separated from God, and a place of utter darkness. Would you be comfortable not warning your neighbor, your co-worker, your unsaved family member that this would be the reality of their final destination if they refused Jesus' free gift of forgiveness and salvation? Telling them is not an act of condemnation but rather one of love. I feel fearing their potential rejection or ridicule is a lesser price to pay than knowing that when they die they may spend eternity in hell because I never warned them.

Matthew 25:41, 13:41-42, 49-50; Revelation 14:9-11, 20:13-14

Tuesday, November 10th: Sometimes I read the words of Jesus in the gospels and am simply puzzled. Jesus said if we want rest, we should come to Him. “Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” (Matthew 11: 29, 30) Yet a little while later in the same gospel He says, “Then Jesus told His disciples, ‘If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.’” (Matthew 16: 24) I’m thinking, “wait a minute! A cross is a big thing...in fact, it seems like a very heavy thing, not at all a light burden. So which is it, Jesus? Am I dragging a load through life if I want to follow you, or is my soul at rest and the pack on my back is like a feather?”

When I read this passage again recently (Matthew 16:24), the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to the verses just before it (21-23). This is where Peter actually lays into Jesus, reprimanding Him for saying He had to go to Jerusalem, suffer and die, and be raised on the third day. Jesus responded with some pretty strong words for Peter: “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” I suddenly realized that my cross is simply looking to God and asking Him, “Father, what are You interested in today? What is on Your heart? What do You want to accomplish that will give You pleasure and bring You glory? That’s what I want to be interested in too!” We give up our own plans at the beginning of the day - releasing them into the loving hands of Jesus - and we listen for the Holy Spirit. Whatever nudges we sense from Him, we do. We may not be 100% sure if they are from Him, especially if we’re new in listening and recognizing His voice, but it’s better to err on the side of following Him than ignoring Him. This is what makes our burden incredibly light and gives us amazing soul-rest, also spelled p-e-a-c-e. It’s what makes our lives an adventure as we trust and obey, and leaves our jaw hanging open as the Holy Spirit shows up in sweet and powerful ways. My prayer for all of us is to yoke up with Jesus and let Him teach us and to enjoy the rest He gives us for our souls.

Wednesday, November 11th: We all experience grief and loss. It could be the death of a loved one, a dream, loss of security or a relationship, but regardless of the circumstance we are faced with the question of how we will deal with it and how we can approach God for His comfort and understanding. Pastor Covert shared the comfort and faith in how to press in and press on through the example of Jesus when His dear friend Lazarus died and the way He ministered to Mary and Martha. One of the first things that is so powerful is recorded in the shortest verse in the Bible – He wept. He entered into their pain. We need to acknowledge our own pain and allow others to do the same as we participate in it with them. Next Jesus called for the stone to be rolled away, even though that presented some pretty obvious drawbacks. Pray for God to reveal any obstacles that may be a hindrance to the healing process. Finally, He told Mary and Martha to take comfort in the fact that they would see the glory of God, but they needed to trust Him. We may not experience the dramatic release that Mary, Martha and Lazarus did, but we can all trust in the fact that He has our backs and at some point we will indeed see His glory if we only ask it of Him. He promises to be with us in our sorrow and suffering and He tells us that as we have found comfort we should also share that same consolation and reassurance with others in their time of suffering. If you are in a season of grief or pain right now or know of someone who is, write down the specific need and ask Jesus to enter into the midst of the pain. Then ask Him to help you hand it over to Him and to reveal Himself in a fresh and deeper way that His glory may surround and assuage the sorrow that His healing may begin. **Psalm 147:3; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Philippians 4:6-7**

Thursday, November 12th: Many times in my life the estuary of a river or the cascading of an ocean wave provides an illustration of how God's love is a constant flow of grace and mercy. How He calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee despite the disciples' lack of faith. He rebuked the wind, "Quiet, be still." We have many situations that will rock our boat, or as the French call it: Mal de Debarquement Syndrome (a type of vertigo and imbalance that occurs after getting off a boat). When we take our eyes off of our Messiah, the flesh takes over and down we go. When I live close to the Spirit, I can hear His voice, the voice of the Holy Spirit.

John 10:2-4 "The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. His sheep follow him because they know His voice." It is a constant undertaking, the action of dying to self in order to receive God's love. John 7:37 "On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, the streams of living water will flow from within him." By this He meant the Spirit.

Friday, November 13th: Isaiah 64 gives us a pretty stark picture of some of what we have been experiencing. We've seen devastating fires, unprecedented hurricane activity, record breaking heat, freak storms in the Midwest, and of course Covid-19. I would say it's reasonable to assume these were phenomenon which we were not expecting. And yet in the midst of it all, we who are called by His name nevertheless know that we need to hang in there and rest in the assurance that He's still in control and He *will* show Himself active on behalf of those who earnestly wait for Him. In the midst of it all we must become introspective in examining our heart condition and purging any habits, attitudes, or false assumptions that fail to fall in line with His sovereignty and holiness. We are just the clay; He is the master potter who has the blueprint for our lives and the skillful hands to fashion us accordingly if we will only be still and submit to His Lordship. We desperately need saving on every front, and He's the only one who can accomplish it.
Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 46, Job 6:24

Saturday, November 14th: The job of a servant is not usually considered one of status, although there is a hierarchy even among the hired help. There is the lady's maid and the valet who answer directly to the mistress or master of the house. Then you have the housemaid and valet who direct the daily operation of the household with the remainder of the staff below them. They all know their place and to whom they must answer, but they have the privilege of living in the manor. Those who are guests may come for a special occasion, but oftentimes they are somewhat aloof to the servants and they come with an expectation of receiving something from the host and possibly of being recognized as someone of elevated status. The Bible gives an insight to benefits afforded servants that are not enjoyed by visitors. The first, of course, is that they live with the master of the house and thus enjoy his provision all the time. And if their master is especially important and powerful he probably has a sophisticated surveillance system and many safeguards to ensure the safety of his property, including everyone and everything in his household. Isaiah tells us that when we are servants of the Most High God that no weapon formed against us will prosper because that is our heritage. God also reveals that His kindness will never depart from us nor will His covenant of peace ever be removed. If our relationship is based on what we get from it either in material blessing or in a sense of seemingly spiritual superiority, we are more like the rude visitors. Instead when we come to Him, may we always come as humble servants, knowing our role is in serving Him and gladly celebrating the benefits we can enjoy as a result of being His. For in His Presence is fullness of joy!

Isaiah 54:10, 17; Deuteronomy 10:12-13; John. 12:26; Mark 10:45

Sunday, November 15th: In his book *All In* Mark Batterson makes a provocative observation. He says we have conveniently forgotten that we were born into a battlefield with the cosmic battle between good and evil raging all around us. The problem is that many of us live like it's peacetime. If that were truly the case, why would we need armor? And let's be honest, any level headed person wouldn't go around wearing that heavy gear if there wasn't an imminent need. So there must be a reason that we are instructed to daily put on the full armor. But it can't stop there. We may be fully protected in our armor, but wars are not won by the side that suits up the best. It's reminiscent of the Israelites facing Goliath for days on end with nothing more than an exchange of insults. Victories are not achieved in doing nothing. We have to be willing to sound the alarm and lead the charge. Batterson reminds us that, "...faithfulness is not just holding the fort. It's storming the gates of hell and taking back enemy territory that belongs to God." The apostle John tells us that if we are born of God we overcome the world and our victory is our faith. It doesn't take a lot of faith to sit back and play it safe. Overcome is what is referred to as an action verb. It means to get the better of in a struggle or conflict; overpower or overwhelm; vanquish or defeat. This is not a spectator sport – it's all out war and we're the ones who have been commissioned to win the battle. So suit up in your battle fatigues and be prepared to go on the offensive.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:11-17; 1 John 5:4-5

Monday, November 16th: Giving Thanks Always to God - Ephesians 5:20
During the holidays TV stations will make appeals for canned goods as does my church. Whenever I go to the store these days, I am often asked if I want to add something to my bill to support a good cause. The fact is I remember when my church was the only community organization understood to be providing for the needy. Today it is good business and the donations may be used for projects with which I disagree. The situation seems much like what is described in Amos 8:5-6.

Perhaps that explains what happened to me one day after I heard, "It only take a spark to set a fire glowing." The words were set to a kind of catchy tune. I didn't hear the rest of the song. Maybe that explains why I really thought some marketers had come up with a great line for Smokey the Bear to use to remind us how easy it is to start forest fires. I even mentioned to my friends that I had heard a great Smokey the Bear commercial and sang the words as I recalled them. "How fitting!" they said. No one told me I had the context wrong or that I was passing on a misimpression. Much later, I learned "It only takes a spark to set a fire glowing" had been followed by the words "that's how it is with God's love." The song wasn't about literal sparks, or the emotional sparks of passion. They were about God's love. 1Timothy 6:18 reminds us to be willing to be rich in good deeds and willing to share so that **God** may be glorified. Now I understand protecting forests may be a good cause. But, whether the cause is saving a pine tree or saving a hungry person, I think those who benefit from a CBS collection are more likely to say thank you to CBS than to say, "Thank you, God, for causing CBS to provide this food." Let us remember God intends to share his glory with no man.

Tuesday, November 17th: January of 2020 marched us into new year, a new decade and a new reality in the form of Covid-19. For me, as this new year came to be, my thoughts went back 10 years. It was the May 17, 2009 when my son succumbed to a severe infection E-Coli and peacefully passed away to Christ's paradise. It was a heart-wrenching day. I sobbed for hours, and then frequently grief would wash over me with no warning. My mental anguish was so acute that it turned into physical pain. I would go to church and weep openly, but with total acceptance from our Pastor Dan Steffen when he was preaching. I couldn't comprehend the fact that my beloved only child had died, and with it, no more possibility of grandchildren, no more humor that we shared as he yet penned another poem with the grace and agility of a writer twice his age.

One of the biggest changes is that I have transitioned to a point where grief is a journey, not a destination. As the years have passed, there has been a sense of peace and a purpose for what happened - an understanding that we cannot prevent the unavoidable, the unforeseen anguish that life may bring us. 2 Corinthians 1:3 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

Wednesday, November 18th: This week's creative way to pray is one that would be excellent for a small group. It's about developing discernment in listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Divide into two equal groups and have them form two lines facing one another. Instruct those in one line to ask the Holy Spirit what they should pray for the person standing across from them and then have them just listen for what the Lord would have them pray. After a few minutes have each person in the listening line go over to the person they're facing in the receiving line and pray over them. Then have the two lines switch roles. When everyone has finished have a debriefing where people can share things that may have been particularly meaningful. As this is practiced it increases faith, sharpens our sensitivity, and hones our ability to be still and listen. It also is a tremendous encouragement to both those who have received a word from God and those to whom He has given those words. **2 Peter 1:19-21; John 16:13**

Thursday, November 19th: You've probably heard before about how much your perspective determines how you handle any given situation. This can certainly be true with how you assess your life story. I found it interesting that oftentimes a news writer will write a story, but the editor will choose the headline based on what their own takeaway is when they read the text or how they want the perspective readers to interpret the material. We live in an era of sensationalism and are drawn to salacious headlines, which may or may not be accurate but they will definitely influence how we react to what we read. How might Joseph's life story have been different if he had allowed the enemy to write his headline? *Arrogant young man is beaten and betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, wrongly accused of rape and thrown into prison for over a decade.* If anyone had cause to question God's perfect plan for their life, Joseph would be right up there near the top of the list. But Joseph did not allow present difficulties to dictate his life's story. Instead he chose to focus on where he was headed based on God's promise to him. We can't control many parts of our own life stories, but we do have editorial rights to how the headline will be written. If we view our story only from something negative happening at the moment, we're allowing the enemy to write it. But if we have God's perspective, we can let Him write it, and we know that the ending will always be glorious and victorious. Let Him tell you what part of the story to focus on. The enemy may have meant it for evil, but God always will use it for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. **Genesis 50:20; Jeremiah 29:7, 11; Romans 8:26-30**

Friday, November 20th: It's worth noting that right after God had so miraculously showed up for Elijah in raining fire from heaven to prove to the false prophets of Baal and the kingdom of Israel that He was indeed God and Lord, he fled with fear at the threat of Jezebel. We read that he ran to the wilderness and hid in a cave where the word of the Lord came to him asking, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He tried to justify his hiding, reminding God of all he had done in serving Him and how now he was alone and everyone was out to get him. I don't think God was surprised, either by Elijah's predicament or his sudden loss of confidence. Instead God directed him to come out of the cave and revealed Himself not in the mighty power of a great wind or earthquake or fire but in a gentle breeze. When Elijah realized God was *always* with him, he returned in His power and saw God's plan come to fruition. Don't we tend to find ourselves sometimes hiding out in caves too? We try to distance ourselves from any possibility of persecution or being singled out as "one of those radical Christians" who *try to impose their morality* on others. It's not our morality – it's His. We are called to be salt and light. The benefits of light in a cave are only experienced by the cave dweller. The purpose of salt in Biblical times was not to preserve meat but rather to delay the effects of decay. We are surrounded by ungodly influences and practices, and if we choose to hide out in caves we by default share in the responsibility of passively allowing our nation to crumble and rot and its unsaved to die without hope. God is still on the throne, He can still breathe life into dry bones, and His desire is still that none be lost; but He has appointed us to be the vehicles through which He accomplishes those things. Lord, forgive us for choosing safe caves over supernatural callings.

Matthew 5:11-15; 1 Peter 3:13-20; John 3:16-17

Saturday, November 21st: Recently I have read and done much concerning repentance and revival for myself, my family, our home group, our church, and for our country, the United States of America. Galatians 5:25 reads, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." In my everyday English the phrase is: "Easy to say, much harder to do."

Repentance is the activity of reviewing one's actions and feeling contrition or regret for past wrongs. We must have true remorse for doing wrong and for the pain and problems we have caused accompanied by a commitment to turn from one way of life to another. Jesus always is gentle in leading you back to Him.

Revelations 3:20 states, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hear my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." (NIV) Do you remember that artwork that shows Jesus in a long white robe, gently knocking at a door that is surrounded by a garden of flowers? That image has brought me much comfort.

Repentance of what I have done wrong, not what another has done against ME. I endured much physical and mental abuse from one brother in my family. As I grew, I asked the Lord to show me WHY. WHY would You allow this to happen to me? As I began to understand the why, I longed for my brother's admission of wrong, hoping for restitution. That has never come. The Lord told me that I have no control over my brother, but I have the power to change my response to that abuse. I tried time and again to seek restitution, but that has never happened. Once I had released the pain from his aggression toward me, it no longer had control over me, and I can now rest in His peace, that peace that passes all understanding. I don't have to figure this out by myself. II Chronicles 25:8 says, "God has the power to help or to overthrow." Jesus provides me wonderful compassion together with unflinching determination to fight for me and that which is true in my life. I leave you with this thought, that He gives power to the faint, and to those who have not might, He increases strength. (Isaiah 40:29).

Sunday, November 22nd: Most of us are familiar with the beautiful “Footprints in the Sand” poem which reassures us of God’s presence with us even when we’re unaware of it. Those in between times are sometimes the most difficult for us to bear or to understand. Those are the times when our faith is most greatly tested. We want to know what it is we’re dealing with and just how long it’s going to last. But we don’t always have that luxury. Sometimes we just need to accept the fact that the waiting period is allowing something really of great value to be conceived, formed and birthed – something new or in a form we weren’t expecting. Perhaps a new life such as a baby or a transformed life like a butterfly. You can’t rush the process. The disciples didn’t understand why Jesus had to leave, and after he had risen from the grave He spent 40 days with them before gathering them together in Jerusalem and instructed them not to leave until they received the Holy Spirit. Wait. And they waited for ten long days – days of seclusion and absence. Jesus had not left them; they were just going to experience the Presence in a different form. As one pastor put it, He hadn’t ghosted them; He was gifting them with a deeper understanding of who He was to them. Lord, teach us how to abide with You in the middle of the waiting, knowing that You are working Your perfect plan and that at the proper time You will reveal to us the glorious fulfillment. Show us that in the absence of answers is where faith is born. **Exodus 14:14; Psalm 27:13-14, 62:5; John 16:7**

Monday, November 23rd: Feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace - Ephesians 6:15

One Fall I bought a pair of thermal boots from L. L. Bean's catalogue. I was preparing for the wet and the cold of winter snowstorms. It was a precaution to avoid the misery of cold, wet feet as well as the misery of a cold or flu virus the immune system had not previously encountered. The soles offered more stability in slippery conditions than the leather soles of a dress shoe. They were a natural precaution suited to address a natural enemy.

Following his brain operation, Philip Johnson, an atheist to that point, praised God for guiding his surgeon's hands. Dennis Dennett, also an atheist, acknowledged his surgeon's skill claiming that skill alone had saved his life. Johnson saw the spiritual force behind the natural event and testified to it. Dennett, like the Pharisees

of Jesus' day, saw only the natural. In this passage Paul reminds the members of the church they must be prepared to meet the deceptions of mankind's spiritual enemies with the words of the Gospel. Only such preparation would lead to the stable footing required to proclaim The Good News of the Gospel which was the task the church had been given by Christ. Lord, in our technological age, help us to be prepared to see and proclaim Your hand behind the appearances.

Tuesday, November 24rd: LIGHT OF THE WORLD: Jesus said to the people, "I am the light of the world. If you follow Me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." (John 8:12 NLT) When the world seems to get darker, the light shines brighter. Jesus is the light of the world. His light shines for all to see. Jesus is the way the truth and the life. Those stumbling in darkness need the light of His Spirit to shine in their heart. We are His ambassadors to bring the light to those sitting in darkness. Our calling is clear. We are to let our light shine so that others are drawn to the light of His presence. Where is God leading you? Hear the call of the Lord, you are My special treasure and I have given you the grace to share what you have freely received. You are chosen to share the love of Jesus with those in need. My spirit is upon you to touch others with God's mercy and grace. Ask of Me and I will send you to those who need the light of Christ to shine in their darkness. Remember, it is not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, sayeth the Lord. Let your light so shine that your Father in heaven is glorified. **John 14:6; Zechariah 4:6**

Wednesday, November 25th: When Jesus washed the feet of the disciples He was leaving us an example of humility and of serving others, including those with whom we may have a strained relationship (i.e. Judas). Intercessory prayer for others is one form of serving them, or in other words, washing their feet. This is a prayer for someone we don't regularly include in our prayer time but for whom the Holy Spirit has prompted us to intervene, and it involves intensified and specific intercession through His guidance. Ask Him to reveal Scriptures to pray and perhaps even to share with that person if it would be appropriate to do so. Write the person's name down to remind you to pray for them and either determine for yourself a time frame to continue interceding for them or ask God to direct you as to how long and often you should persevere. It's possible He may tell you once is enough, or He may direct you to a new person whose feet you could humbly and sacrificially wash. Such a heart attitude is definitely pleasing to the Father and you may find a fresh appreciation or empathy for someone you previously overlooked or may have wanted to write off. Jesus set the example not only by washing feet but also by always interceding for us, so let's determine to become more and more like Him...for the sake of others and ourselves!

Job 42:10; Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27-28; Hebrew 7:25

Thursday, November 26th: "A thankful heart is one of the primary identifying characteristics of a believer. It stands in stark contrast to pride, selfishness, and worry. And it helps fortify the believer's trust in the Lord and reliance of His provision, even in the toughest times. No matter how choppy the seas become, a believer's heart is buoyed by constant praise and gratefulness to the Lord." (John MacArthur) As we approach the conclusion of a year that few of us would have expected or wished for, the real question will be for us, how did we choose to deal with it? We can look back at all the inconveniences and limitations and pray that they would just end, or we can recognize the wealth of opportunities we've been given to extend the hope of Jesus to the lost and to spur one another on to love and good deeds, cleaning house in our own lives and in the body of His church. The seas may be choppy, but we've been invited to get out of the boat and walk on the water. Let's keep our eyes focused on Jesus and those things for which we can be thankful. Even when it feels like we're going under, His hand is always outstretched to us, and regardless of how limited we may feel He has given us resources to lift up others as well. How much does a smile, a prayer for someone, or a word of encouragement cost? Today is a day of Thanksgiving and we can give thanks in anything because Jesus Christ is still Lord and He has overcome the world! **John 16:32-33; 2 Cor. 9:8**

Friday, November 27th: Let him... who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one. - Luke 22:36

There are different opinions about this particular verse. One set of opinions claims Jesus was the strictly non-violent Prince of Peace. Jesus rebuked that notion saying "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth...Nay but rather division! (Luke 12:51) Nor, did Jesus meekly approach the money changers in the temple. His action in John 2:15 was more in accord with his claim "I am come to send fire upon the earth" (Luke 12:49) The situation of His disciples was not unlike that of the Jewish nation as described in the Book of Esther when the civil authority declared the Jews could defend themselves with physical force from physical attack.(Esther 8:8-14) Josephus tells us the Essenes could travel and be supported by generous members of the communities they entered and so Jesus in Luke 10: 4-7 had told His disciples to do likewise. But the situation was changed. Jesus' favor with the people had fallen and He knew His disciples might need to defend themselves from townspeople and brigands. Christians today also face attack. Some believe they should not defend themselves. Although this verse doesn't condone aggressive violence, it does remind us the people of God, whether Christian or Jew, need to make an appropriate defense.

Saturday, November 28th: Last month was Pastor Appreciation and hopefully we all expressed our thanks to our leadership for their dedication in service. They both need and deserve our support and our prayers. There is a danger, however, that can arise from the extent to which we esteem our pastors or anyone else from whom we receive counsel, teaching, or encouragement. They are not the source of our strength and if we put them in such a position we are inviting disaster for both ourselves and them. The story of King Uzziah illustrates what can happen. Uzziah was only 16 when he took the throne and he reigned for 52 years. Despite his youth and inexperience, he prospered in his leading and became very powerful because he sought the Lord and did right in His sight. But after the death of Zechariah the prophet, who apparently advised him, we read that when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly. Basically, to the people of Judah he was a rock star and it went to his head. As a result he presumptuously and arrogantly did something that God had not directed him to do and there were serious consequences. Pride always causes spiritual blindness and regret, and when we look to anyone other than God as our source of strength or significance we are tempting them to step outside their assigned role and we are diverting our own allegiance from God to man. It's interesting that Isaiah in chapter six the prophet relates that *in the year of Uzziah's death* he saw the Lord sitting on His throne. It would seem to imply that perhaps Uzziah needed to be taken out of the way for the people to return to the Lord and fix their eyes on Him. Honor your leaders, but don't worship or idolize them. Instead pray that they would always be submitted to the Lord and find their identity and reward in Him alone.

Proverb 3:5-6; 2 Chronicles 26:3-5, 16-21; Matthew 23:8-12

Sunday, November 29th: VICTORY: "Listen carefully, I am about to do a new thing. Now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even put a road in the wilderness, rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:19 AMP) No matter what the enemy tries to throw your way, you have the greater one living inside of you. There is nothing too difficult for God. No situation can defeat you if you turn your problems over to the Lord. He is ready to fight your battles. If God be for you, who can be against you? The Lord is on your side to show you the way to the victory. There is a mighty battle cry in your spirit. Take up your sword against the enemy and let the Lord strengthen you in the day of battle. The Lord will go before you and be a shield to you. Put on the whole armor of God. He will direct your steps. He will guide you with His eye. He already knows the end from the beginning. The Lord has made a way for you "The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to get angry, full of unfailing love. The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all His creation. All of Your works will thank You, Lord, and Your faithful followers will bless You." (Psalm 145:8-9 NLT) Again I say," Listen carefully, I am about to do a new thing." You will see victory!

Romans 8:31; Ephesians 6:13; Psalm 37:23; Psalm 32:8

Monday, November 30th: COME UNTO ME: I hear your cry. I come to you, gently whispering softly in the still small voice. I know the depth of your heart. I know the pain of loss you feel. I am on your side. I will not leave you helpless. I will send the Helper to you. I will give you wisdom and understanding. The battle is Mine and the victory is yours. I delight to fight for you. Your part is to give Me your cares. Roll them over on Me for I have said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) I will heal the broken hearted. Trust Me to give you joy instead of sorrow. "Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5) "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

My love for you is an everlasting love. I will be with you always. Come to Me, surrender all of your burdens, disappointments, anxiety, heartache and pain and lay it all at My feet. I will do the work and transform your heart. I will lift your cares from you and give you joy unspeakable and full of glory. Today is a new day. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Jeremiah 29:11; 1 Kings 19:13; John 14:6; 1Peter 1:8