

Good News Daily

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Sunday, September 8

Psalm 63:1-11 *O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.* (v.1 NRSV)

Surely such desire for His mighty presence pleases God. Yet, when we pray these words of the psalm, do we *really* feel such ardor for Him? Do we seek Him in this way, with all of our hearts? Unfortunately, the desires most encouraged in our culture are those that result in self-fulfillment, self-sufficiency, and self-promotion. We long to have it all: prestige, power, and all the comforts of life. We absorb ourselves in the latest gadgets and seek relaxation via television.

God can become an after-thought in our lives so filled with activity and acquisition. We manage to fit church into our busy schedules, but how does this token gesture affect us spiritually? A.W. Tozer suspects, “The stiff and wooden quality of our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to his people. He waits to be wanted” (*Pursuit of God*). Let us pray fervently for a heart filled with desire for him, until our soul truly clings to him!

1 Kings 12:21-33; Psalm 98; Acts 4:18-31; John 10:31-42

Monday, September 9

Philippians 1:1-11 *I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.* (v.6)

This verse proclaims *total* trust. This is truly remarkable, since the words are those of a man who had every reason to be in despair! Paul was imprisoned as he wrote this stirring word of hope to his beloved friends. Had we been in his circumstances, we probably would be whining to our companions and wallowing in self-pity. But Paul was so centered in the Lord and filled with His Spirit, that he could put aside self and provide his friends with the encouragement and blessing they needed.

We wonder just how Paul could have been so unconcerned about his own personal situation. It was *not* by practicing the power of positive thinking! Paul was so immersed in the “living waters” of Jesus Christ, that this soothed his soul in any trial. He had the joy of knowing Christ, which gave him strength and the ability to articulate hope to others. He had discovered that Jesus was his source, his strength, his everything. Paul had discovered and was living the abundant life that Jesus promised!

1 Kings 13:1-10; Psalms 41, 52; Mark 15:40-47

Tuesday, September 10

Philippians 1:12-30 *Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance.* (vv.18b-19).

When things go wrong in our lives, we tend to become grouchy. Then, before we know it, we have taken a nose-dive and are wallowing in self-pity. When we encounter Paul in this epistle, we are struck by the intensity of his joy and the immensity of his faith! He was jailed, in chains, yet he could rejoice and praise his Lord! He knew without a shadow of doubt that God was in control of his circumstances and could bring something good out of his suffering.

There are times we can feel bound and chained by the circumstances in our lives. We can feel hopeless and helpless. Take heart! You do not have to fear, and you don't have to be the one to fix things. Let go of whatever burdens you are carrying and rejoice in faith, believing for a positive outcome. Receive the comfort and strength the Spirit of Jesus Christ provides, and then you will have sufficient courage so that now, as always, "Christ will be exalted in my body" (v.20b).

1 Kings 16:23-34; Psalm 45; Mark 16:1-20

Wednesday, September 11

Philippians 2:1-11 *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.* (v.3).

Modern culture calls us to promote self and to thoroughly indulge ourselves. If we get caught up in this cultural ideation of "self as god," we are doomed to constant striving, self-satisfaction, and virulent attacks on those who don't recognize our perfection and who won't defer to us. The pursuit of the "high and mighty me" is so rampant in our society that we can accidentally fall into it if we are not vigilant.

The prescription for avoiding this trap is to recognize God as our source in everything. Even Jesus recognized that he could do nothing without his Father. By taking a daily inventory of our sins and weaknesses, and asking God to reveal our blind spots, we can then repent and ask His forgiveness. We must go to Him, recognizing that we are powerless without Him! All of our self-seeking and self-satisfaction must be submitted to Him. God is our provider. We can do nothing without Him. It is actually comforting to know that you are God's dependent child!

1 Kings 17:1-24; Psalm 119:49-72; Matthew 2:1-12

Thursday, September 12

Philippians 2:12-30 *Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out*

your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (vv.12-13)

Becoming an obedient child of God can be a painful adventure! If we resist Him, intent on going our own way and doing our own thing in the flesh, then His discipline is sure to follow. When we come to know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we cannot continue in our old reckless habits and selfish desires. If we do so, we will soon be backsliding down a slippery slope of our own making, wondering why we have no peace, murmuring, “God, where are You?”

Acknowledging Jesus as Lord obligates us to become cognizant of God’s word, and to be willing to obey Him in all areas of our life. It has been said that God takes us just as we are but loves us enough not to leave us that way! By cooperating with God’s reshaping of my life, I become a partner with Him in working out my sanctification. This means that I will deliberately and faithfully submit to God, allowing Him to mold and shape my life according to *His* will.

1 Kings 18:1-19; Psalm 50; Matthew 2:13-23

Friday, September 13

Philippians 3:1-16 More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. (vv.8-9)

This is indeed radical Christianity. As I await the arrival of a hurricane, concerned about family, property, and possessions, Paul’s words hit me squarely and powerfully! To Paul, Christ was everything, and absolutely nothing else mattered! All of his previous accomplishments and advantages were garbage compared to knowing Christ. Anything that might rival Paul’s total dependence on and love of Christ was to be rejected as worthless trash. Paul recognized that he had everything; yet in material goods, he possessed nothing. As I ponder this, I am confronted with things or possessions in my life that I hold as significant or precious. These cannot displace the position that Jesus wants to have in my life. He wants nothing to rival his place in my heart! I must be willing to “let go” and relinquish everything to him.

1 Kings 18:20-40; Psalms 40, 54; Matthew 3:1-12

Saturday, September 14

Philippians 3:17—4:7 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known

to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (vv.6-7)

It's so easy to glibly say to someone, "Don't worry!" Yet when we are walking in the midst of a crisis, anxiety can overwhelm us. We are constantly bombarded with negative world news, and without Jesus, we can become lost in a state of despair. Presently, a monstrous hurricane approaches, and I am deluged with thoughts which, if I entertain them, could lead to panic and fear. Yet Paul, who was no stranger to crisis, commands that I not be anxious about *anything*! In faith, I am to let go of my burden of fear and put it in God's hands. With prayer and supplication, I turn it all over to Him, with *thanksgiving*, knowing that I am in His constant, loving care. When I can come to Him with that "attitude of gratitude," it is easy for me to trust Him, and His peace floods me and permeates my heart!

1 Kings 18:41—19:8; Psalm 55; Matthew 3:13-17

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