

FOLLOWING JESUS DAY BY DAY

# PURE

**P**eople

**U**ndergoing

**R**egeneration

**E**veryday

**PURE**

Devotional Ministry

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*Our prayer for this devotional booklet is that you would meditate on the thoughts presented here, drawing closer to the Lord in your daily walk, and begin "reflecting the glory of the Lord...being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit". (2 Corinthians 3:18 HCSB\*)*

### *PURE Devotional Ministry*

*Donations towards the PURE or CURL ministries can be made to*

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*\*Unless otherwise noted, all quotes are from the NIV translation of the Holy Bible.*



## 1 January

*"Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ..." Ps 95:6*

As we begin this new year, come, let us adore Him.

This is a refrain we commonly sing at Christmas time. Yet, it should not be limited to the newborn Christ Child, any more than worshipping God should be limited to hymns on Sunday!

Our God is God over all of our life, or He is simply not our God. When we call Him "Lord," we are declaring His Lordship. Then let's live it! And not simply on Sundays, at church, but every day. Each day can be offered in worship to the Lord.

We do not expect to be able to pray only on Sundays. No, God is open to hear our prayers each and every day. Come, let us adore and worship Him, our Saviour and our King.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, joyfully I come before You in worship and praise.*

## 2 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

In this first week of the new year, let us resolve to worship our God more frequently (Ps 95:6).

Perhaps we could create a new morning routine, including a special time for honouring and adoring God?

Yes, this represents lavishing our love on God, which is good. However, as we lavish our love and adoration on God, it has another effect on us. Through worshipping our Great God we affirm our wonder of Him. We realise afresh how incredible God is in His love, power, faithfulness, and provision. As we see this afresh, our fears are stilled, and our anxieties melt away.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, I honour and worship You.*



## 3 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

Come, let us adore God.

God is the only One truly deserving of our adoration. Yet we can sometimes flippantly toss ‘adore’ in many other directions, both animate and inanimate. We do not truly mean ‘adore’ in those senses. Would we honestly get down with our foreheads to the ground and pay homage to a dress, a cute baby, or another person? I’d hope not!

Worship and adoration can be safely reserved for our Mighty God. God is at no risk of becoming prideful through our adoration. However, mere humans are at risk. Rather than adore another, let us admire their beauty or gifts, and let us love them with sincerity. God alone deserves our adoration.

*Pray: Dearest Creator God, I adore You. Let me not be drawn away toward giving my worship to a creature in favour of lavishing it on our Creator.*

## 4 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

As we come to kneel before the Lord our Maker (Ps 95:6) it is good to know that He is worthy of all adoration and worship.

We can kneel before Him in prayer and supplication, confident that He is Sovereign. God is good, and God is wise. Whatever our supplication, we can trust in His might and His wisdom.

Come with confident hope.

*Pray: Dearest Lord Jesus, You said that we could ask anything in Your name. Thank You that I can come with confident hope.*



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The Mighty One, God, the LORD, speaks and summons  
the earth from the rising of the sun to where it sets.  
~ Ps 50:1



## 5 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

God is our Maker. Although there have been, and are, many millions of people in the world, God does not mass produce. Each is unique. Each has been called for a purpose (Eph 2:10).

If you are not yet certain of the purpose which God declared over your life, come to Him. Come, kneel before the Lord and ask Him to reveal the path which you should take. He will provide a lamp to your feet and a light to your path (Ps 119:105).

It may be that God will open a door, or He may call someone to speak a word of encouragement or direction. Look to Him in trust.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for preparing and guiding me.*

## 6 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

Yesterday we recognised that God has prepared a specific path for each of our lives (Eph 2:10). More than that, for God, who exists outside of our time and space, *“all the days ordained for me were written in [His] book before one of them came to be”* (Ps 139:16).

Our lives are not a mistake. You are not a mistake!

Yes, sometimes we can make mistakes. Sometimes we can make poor choices. That does not make us a failure.

God can use even these missteps, which He works into His plan for us. Our mistakes do not, and cannot, diminish His love for us (Rom 8:31-39).

Come and adore our Worthy King (Ps 95:6).

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for Your perfect plan for me. Please help me to know and deeply experience Your love.*



## 7 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

Yesterday we talked about how God has pre-planned each day we will live out, before any has come to pass (Ps 139:16).

Does that mean that the terrible things which have befallen us have been pre-planned by God?

No. These can happen because of mistaken choices on our part, or the part of others, and also because we exist within a fallen world.

Remember that God was with Joseph for all of his life. Although some horrendous things happened to Joseph, *“the LORD was with him; [God] showed him kindness and granted him favour ...”* Gen 39:21).

Know that our Creator God is true. Worship Him with faithfulness, just as He is faithful.

*Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You. I adore You.*

## 8 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

Yesterday we considered the story of Joseph in Genesis.

Some of the incidents which befell him were a result of mistaken choices on his part.

If you are not familiar with Joseph’s story, you will find the beginning of it in Genesis 37. You would be forgiven for considering that Joseph was somewhat spoiled. He was a most precious son to his father, Jacob, as he was one of only two sons who were given birth by Jacob’s favourite wife, Rachel. Potentially it was this favoured position which led to Joseph’s pridefulness and associated naivety.

Joseph shared a dream from God with his brothers, and they *“hated him all the more”* (Gen 37:5). He also had another dream, which he shared, making him sound quite boastful (v9). Be careful of boasting.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, please help me to grow in wisdom.*



## 9 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

Are we sometimes susceptible to boastfulness?

Joseph recognised that God had given him a dream, and he, perhaps innocently, shared it with his brothers. The dream held the suggestion that Joseph, one of the youngest, would rule over his brothers. As you can imagine that dream was not well received by his brothers (Gen 37:5).

Do we sometimes experience errors of judgment?

This error of judgment may be related to pridefulness. Alternatively, it may relate to temptation-bargaining. This is the sense that ‘just once more’ or ‘just a little bit’ will somehow lead to resolution of the temptation. The opposite is probably true. Let us draw near to God, avoiding temptation.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, please hold me back from boastfulness or pride.*

## 10 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

When Joseph had another dream, Joseph again shared the details with his brothers (Gen 37:9). As before, the dream represented an opportunity for boastfulness. In the dreams, Joseph ruled over the others.

Greater discernment on Joseph’s part might have led to a better outcome. May we too grow in wisdom, being respectful of the experiences of those around us. It can happen that moments of joy for us coincide with moments of pain for another. Let us tread carefully, without diminishing the joy, which we can share with others. Let us also take the time to keep company with friends suffering loss.

*Pray: Dearest Father God, how I love and adore You. Thank You for all the good things which come into my life. Thank You for keeping us company at all times, in tough times, and in good times.*



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Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” ~ Luke 4:8



## 11 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

Returning to the difficulties Joseph faced, some were due to the actions and bad choices which others took.

His brothers, jealous of the attention which their father paid to Joseph, plotted how to get rid of him (Gen 37:19-20). This led to Joseph being sold into slavery and carried off to Egypt.

Sometimes we may want to ‘deal with’ those creating difficulties in our lives. Selling them as slaves to be transported to Egypt is not a good option. Instead, pray for them, and pray that God may use the situation to transform both your heart and theirs.

*Pray: Dearest Father God, please help me to engage well with others.*



## 12 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

Through all of Joseph’s challenges and difficulties, God was faithful.

God has promised that same faithfulness to you and me. The God whom we adore has promised to be with us and to never forsake us (Heb 13:5). No matter what happens, we can count on God’s promises, His presence, and His power.

Earlier we mentioned that God knew each day ordained for us before any came to pass. We recognised that some bad things happen because of our choices, and some because of the choices of others. We also know that we live in a fallen world. After Joseph was sold into slavery, it was the fallenness of the world which sent him into prison (Gen 39:11-20).

*Pray: Dearest Lord, I kneel before You in humble adoration. Please keep me free from sinful ways, and guide my path through this fallen world.*



## 13 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

We continue to adore our Saviour God, knowing His faithfulness.

Even as Joseph was imprisoned, God was with him (Gen 39:21). God showed favour to Joseph even during this season. Joseph remained in prison, but God was working out His plans.

Where before Joseph had been somewhat boastful and prideful, God was working to transform Joseph’s heart and spirit.

Although our character flaws may not be obvious to us, God knows them well. He is helping us to mature in body, mind, and spirit. Yes, it will sometimes be tough, just as a prison sentence must have been. Yet, God is working all things together in order to complete His perfect plan.

*Pray: Dearest Holy Spirit, thank You for being my close companion.*

## 14 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

During his prison experience, Joseph was able to interpret two dreams, with God’s help. After a positive interpretation, Joseph asked the dreamer, *“when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness”* (Gen 40:14). However, Joseph’s help was forgotten.

You may have experienced a time when the good you did was forgotten, or simply absorbed within the work or contribution of another. Your contribution was simply ignored. Yet, while others may ignore what you have done, God does not. God knows your heart and your generosity of spirit. Offer your service to the God you adore. He appreciates you and your generosity.

When your work is forgotten or ignored, know that God sees, and His reward will be a special blessing (Jas 1:12).

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for all You do. I notice Your blessings, and I appreciate Your love.*



## 15 January

*“Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker ...” Ps 95:6*

In Joseph’s case, the person assisted with the dream interpretation eventually remembered Joseph. Two years after that dream, the Pharaoh had a dream (Gen 41:1). Then the chief cupbearer was *“reminded of [his] shortcomings (v9)*. God helped Joseph to interpret the Pharaoh’s dreams, and Joseph’s life was changed (v15-40).

Possibly you have had the experience of being forgotten. You have had a friend or associate betray, forget, or reject you. That is challenging. But, while people may forget, God will never forget, betray, or forsake you. God, our life-giving God, is faithful. Come and rejoice in His presence.

*Pray: Dearest Father God, my trust is in You. I trust in Your faithfulness.*

## 16 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

It is right to give honour and glory and praise to our God. We are His, and He cares for us (Ps 95:7).

God cares for us. That includes the beautiful double meaning. He loves and cares for us with a sacrificial love. God the Father allowed Himself to be separated from His only Son, Jesus, so that we might be saved.

God the Son suffered incredible injustices, pain, grief, and severe physical abuse so that He could rise as our Saviour.

God as Holy Spirit is with us, tenderly shining His love in us and through us.

Pray: *Thank You, Triune God, for Your faithful love.*



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Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud  
to the Rock of our salvation.

~ Ps 95:1



## 17 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

Yesterday we considered and thanked God for His amazing sacrificial love. God cares for us.

Today, we can see afresh how wonderfully God cares for us. We are beloved to Him, and He guides, protects, strengthens, feeds, and provides for us.

We are *"the flock under His care"* (Ps 95:7).

See afresh today the wonderful way that God has been lovingly caring for you.

Come let us adore Him (Ps 95:6).

Pray: *Dear Lord, thank You for Your incredible care and protection and strengthening of me. I love You.*

## 18 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

Since God shows His incredible, sacrificial, and generous love to us, how should we respond?

Firstly, let us come before Him in thankfulness.

When thankfulness and gratitude are our first responses, we are closer to knowing and acknowledging the wonder of God.

Soak in God's presence. Take time to get out among the beauty of His natural wonders. See the amazing way that He graces the sky with breathtaking colours both morning and night.

See these things, and praise God.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for the wonder and beauty which You have poured out over us. I thank You with a grateful heart.*



## 19 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

God surrounds us with His loving care (Ps 95:7). He provides for us, surrounding us with the wonder of His creation and His creativity.

Yet do we daily take the time to thank Him?

Are you likely to spend time today oohing over something you see online? Will you share it with friends, or repost it, so that others may also enjoy it?

Maybe instead you could capture some of the glory or wonder in God's great creation? It might be the way a little flower pokes up through the dirt, the fleeting beauty of a bird, or the stately strength in a tree. Share these, and give rightful glory to our Great God.

Be thankful.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for the incredible creativity which You have poured into our world. I appreciate the wonder and joy of You.*

## 20 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

Have you ever had your work go unnoticed?

You commit faithfully, day after day, in whatever capacity. You give your best. Yet sometimes it can seem as though nobody notices. God does.

But it is encouraging when someone takes the time to notice. They may indicate their encouragement, support, or delight with words, a simple nod, or a glowing and elaborate celebration.

It is nice to feel appreciated.

As we go about the business of our lives, God notices. I am sure that He sometimes sends another to encourage us. Thank the person He sends, but do not forget to thank Him too.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You that You appreciate my efforts. Thank You for the skills which You helped me to develop. Thank You for noticing.*



## 21 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

Does God's work go unnoticed in your sphere?

We affirmed yesterday that it is encouraging when someone notices the work to which we have been faithful. It is an acknowledgement of effort expended, creativity shown, or simple faithfulness to a task. That person was appreciative.

Do we show appreciation when God coordinates special blessings, shows His spectacular creativity, or is simply faithful and dependable in supplying strength, protection, and our daily needs?

Come before Him now in grateful appreciation.

*Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for Your incredible, ongoing faithfulness in so many ways. I honour and worship You.*

## 22 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

What an honour and comfort it is to know that we are "the flock under [God's] care" (Ps 95:7).

Yesterday we talked about thanking God for His faithfulness. And what a comfort and joy it is to know that He is ever-faithful.

When money is running tight, God is faithful. When the children are sick, God is faithful. While cars and equipment fail, God is faithful. While relationships can become stretched or strained, God is faithful. When darkness crowds in, God is faithful.

Reach out and grasp His hand through prayer; He is faithful.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, I bow down in thankfulness for the many ways that You have proved Yourself faithful. Thank You.*



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Let us come before him with thanksgiving, and extol him  
with music and song.

~ Ps 95:2



## 23 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

*"[H]e is our God" (Ps 95:7a).*

God is a God of might and majesty. He can step in and solve in a way that nobody else could. How incredibly blessed we are to be "*the flock under [H]is care.*" Ps 95:7b). Honour God. But thank too those He has placed around us to effect His care. These may be political leaders, medical staff, teachers, neighbours, dear friends.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for holding me in Your grip, covering me with Your strength and protection. I am grateful, and offer You my worship and adoration.*

## 24 January

*“... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.” Ps 95:7*

Our God is truly amazing. We worship and honour Him. He is Sovereign, and we seek to give Him all the glory. That is right.

God also works through others. Yes, God gets the glory, but He would not want those who are obedient to go unthanked.

Show thankfulness to those who help, support, or encourage. As we mentioned yesterday, these are the people around us who effect His care for us. We need to be thankful.

We need to be mindful too that we do not consider ourselves to be the centre of their universe. Other people are not placed around us in order to serve us. Their service is to God. We just happen to be the grateful recipients. Thank God, but thank and appreciate them too.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for those You send to support and help me.*



## 25 January

*“... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.” Ps 95:7*

Those God sends as instruments of His will may not simply be supporters and helpers. Sometimes they may be chosen by God to disciple us, to correct us, or to turn us from a wrong direction (Jas 5:19-20).

Respect them as God's instruments, and be attentive to their guidance. Honour them. They will lead you closer to compliance with God's will. If what they propose is in conflict with God's will or God's Word, then they are not God's instruments. They may still be fully committed to God, but have misinterpreted His will.

Remain faithful to God, and pray for those He has led to you.

*Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for those You send to be part of my story. Please help us to positively impact each other's lives, as You will.*

## 26 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

Happy Australia Day!

Jesus, during His time on earth, knew the path that His life would take. He knew that He would die for us. Peter sought to protect Jesus from that pain. Jesus needed to correct Peter. Jesus told him, *"you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns"* (Matt 16:23).

Yesterday we mentioned that those sent as God's instruments may sometimes speak contrary to God's Word or God's will. It does not mean they are actively working against God. Like Peter, they may have inadvertently been confused by the enemy. Stay firmly focused on what God has planned and promised, and remind them too to stay faithful.

Today, *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone"* (Rom 12:18). Pray for God's wisdom and guidance.

*Pray: Dearest Father God, please guide me by Your wisdom to show grace.*



## 27 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

We are *"the flock under [God's] care"* (Ps 95:7), but does He sometimes call us to be His instruments in caring for others?

These others may be fellow believers to whom we can show grace.

Sometimes the help we can offer is practical help. During the beginning days and weeks of Covid, we were very aware of the needs of others, and sometimes fearful of how our needs might be met. God made a way.

Perhaps now God is calling you to be the way-maker for a neighbour, friend, family member, or work colleague?

Pray for them, and be attentive to ways where you can help.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, please show me what I can do to help.*



## 28 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

Sometimes the one to whom God asks us to offer His care is not among our fellow believers.

God may be calling us to generously care for them as witnesses to His loving care. Let us be faithful.

It could be that God is actively calling this person to Himself. Let us respond, ready to generously bless and welcome this one for whom Jesus died. Let us see them as a 'beloved' whom God is wooing to Himself.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, Please help me to be faithful in sharing Your love.*



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Today, if only you would hear his voice, "Do not harden your hearts ..."

~ Ps 95:7-8



## 29 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

Sometimes the one to whom God asks us to offer His care is someone with whom we do not amicably get on. More than that, we may regard ourselves as enemies.

Jesus Himself called us to *"love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"* (Matt 5:44). If you do truly regard each other as enemies, how much more real and moving will your care appear. They may even recognise it as a God-move.

If that is God's call, do not harden your heart. Be His loving instrument. Follow in obedience. You could gain a heavenly-brother or -sister.

Pray: *Dearest Lord Jesus, thank You for Your example of faithfully loving Your enemies. Please help me.*

## 30 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

It may be that the care God is calling you to show is someone whom you are struggling to forgive.

Unforgiveness is a painful weight to carry. It can gnaw at your heart, mind, and spirit. It needs to be stopped!

The solution? Give it to the Lord. God can wrangle that unforgiving spirit into compliance. He will save you from its vicious barbs and clinging tendrils.

Take this unresolved wound to the Lord, casting it before the Lord's throne (1 Pet 5:7). Ask God for His cleansing care. Then this unforgiveness, which has stood as a blockage in your relationship with God and this person, can be addressed. Lean in to know God's grace. Then stand ready to show grace.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for Your healing touch on my unforgiveness.*



## 31 January

*"... for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." Ps 95:7*

Rather than holding on to unforgiveness, as yesterday, maybe you had a part in hurting the heart of another.

Is God calling you toward reconciliation?

You cannot stand in judgment of the one who may be holding unforgiveness in their heart. Your actions may have caused pain to another, and for this you need to reconcile with God, asking forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Ask Him to soften both your hearts so that you may be prepared for reconciliation. Listen to how God wants you to act, and be obedient.

If God is calling you to offer His care, then do all that you can to reconcile.

Pray: *Thank You, Lord, for Your example of whole-hearted forgiveness.*

# 1 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says ...." Ps 85:8a*

And so the second month begins! I can just imagine you saying, "What, February already?" How quickly time flies!

Yes, it is the second month of 2023. Are all the New Year's resolutions forgotten?

However you answered, my prayer is that you have reached or maintained a new commitment to daily time in God's Word.

How can we say, *"I will listen to what God the LORD says"* (Ps 85:8) if we never take the time to be attentive?

Today, this week, let us make time for just five minutes a day spent in God's Word. If you are already doing that, well done! If so, can you add another five minutes? If not, can you find five minutes? Let us commit some time each day for a 1:1 with God.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You that You want to spend 1:1 time with me.*



# 2 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says ...." Ps 85:8a*

God fashioned you (Ps 139:13), and now He is preparing you to meet Him. When you do, you will be like His Son in glory (2 Cor 3:18).

*"We all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18).*

How are we being transformed?

As we spend more and more time in God's Word, contemplating the Lord's glory, we are being transformed. But we must *"listen to what God the LORD says ...."* (Ps 85:8a). We need to be attentive. And not just attentive, we need to be obedient to do. We will unpack this more tomorrow.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You that I am called to behold Your glory.*

## 3 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says ...." Ps 85:8a*

Listening well is a regular call in the Bible. It appears in the Hebrew Bible and also in the New Testament. But is listening enough?

The Hebrew word for 'listen' also includes obedience. When the Sons of Korah sang, *"I will listen to what God the LORD says"* (Ps 85:8a), they were making a commitment to obedience as well as hearing.

James stressed this in his letter. *"But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves"* (Jas 1:22 NLT).

Listen and be obedient to what the Lord says.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for giving us Your Word to guide us. Please help us to be diligent in reading it, and also in being obedient to it.*



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... You, LORD, showed favor to your land ... You  
forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all  
their sins.  
~ Ps 85:1-2



## 4 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says ...." Ps 85:8a*

A commitment to listening and to doing God's Word are important. Let us make a regular habit of spending one on One time with God.

As we become more familiar with more of God's Word, we will learn more about it. We will see that some parts are poetic, some are in story form, some are historical recounts, and some are expressed in incredible imagery. This means that it needs to be read and experienced differently.

We will explore this a little more in the coming days.

*Pray: Dearest Holy Spirit, please guide me as I read and listen to God's Word, that I may be obedient.*

## 5 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says ...." Ps 85:8a*

When Jesus shared His parables, He spoke in language which was familiar to His hearers. Yet He knew that there were still puzzling aspects to them.

*"To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them" (Matt 13:12 NLT).*

James reminds us that as we draw near to God, God will draw near to us (Jas 4:8). As we spend time in God's Word, He will continue to draw near and open our understanding. It was in such fashion that Jesus unpacked the Scripture references about Him with His companions on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:27). Oh to have overheard that conversation!

*Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, thank You for the insights You bring to help my understanding of God's Word.*



## 6 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says ...." Ps 85:8a*

Do you sometimes find that talking to your grandparents about their childhood experiences would be enriched with explanatory notes? Those born in the war years, during the Great Depression, or other times in the twentieth century may need to explain specific details from their early lives.

In a similar way, some of the practices in biblical times are unfamiliar to us, and need further explanation. Sometimes the words themselves have changed meanings or, like the Hebrew word for listen, have hidden depths and understandings. Continue to invest time in God's Word. Holy Spirit can give understanding. We will explore some ways from tomorrow.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, please forgive me when I get exasperated with my lack of understanding. Please help me to grow in knowledge and awareness. Please help me too to be patient when others do not understand me.*

## 7 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says ...." Ps 85:8a*

Jesus said, *"Listen to me, everyone, and understand this"* (Mark 7:14). Jesus was calling all present to be attentive to what He wanted to say to them. He also wanted them to gain understanding. That seems simple enough, right?

Sometimes, though, what we read in God's Word may be more difficult to process. For instance, what did Jesus mean *"if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out"* (Mark 9:47)? Or what about when Jesus calls Himself *"the gate for the sheep"* (John 10:7).

You would likely be familiar with the saying about not throwing out the baby with the bath water. If not, it simply means, dependent on context, either that you are at risk of losing something of value, or that your priorities need to be re-examined, etc. Context will clarify.

When we come to draw understanding from God's Word, context will also guide us. Ask Holy Spirit to lead our understanding.

*Pray: Dearest Holy Spirit, please guide my understanding.*



## 8 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says ...." Ps 85:8a*

The more time we spend in God's Word, the more our understanding is opened to what the Lord is revealing.

Holy Spirit works in us and through us, and in and through God's Word. Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans that *"the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God"* (Rom 8:27).

Ask Holy Spirit to open your understanding. He will do this as you actively commit to reading God's Word. God's Word will never contradict itself. If it appears to do so, it is because you have somehow misinterpreted what God was communicating. Ask Holy Spirit to help.

*Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, I need Your help in understanding what is shared in God's Word. Please open its treasures to me.*

## 9 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says ...." Ps 85:8a*

We want to *listen to what God the LORD says*" (Ps 85:8a), but sometimes God's Word can be a little challenging to unpack. What do we do?

We can pray to God that Holy Spirit might open our understanding, as Jesus did with His friends on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:27). As mentioned yesterday, God's Word will not self-contradict. This means that a truth in one part of Scripture may shed light to enable our understanding of another part.

Holy Spirit also helps grow our understanding through those He places in our lives. The church leaders of our Bible-believing church will responsibly preach God's Word in a way which will help our understanding. They will also give us practical application methods so that we may live in faithfulness.

*Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for those You have called to shepherd.*



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Restore us again, God our Savior,  
and put away your displeasure toward us.

~ Ps 85:4



## 10 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says ...." Ps 85:8a*

Those who shepherd our churches can be Holy Spirit's instruments in helping to guide us in wisdom and understanding. Are there others?

Yes, Bible Study leaders, lecturers at Bible College, and many other Bible-believing teachers may be leaders in guiding our understanding.

Further, as we grow in understanding, we may become iron-sharpening tools for our fellow believers (Prov 27:17). Let us encourage each other to spend more time together in God's Word.

*Pray: Thank You, Lord, for those You have sent to be my guides and teachers. Please help me to be obedient too in discernment.*

## 11 February

*“I will listen to what God the LORD says ....” Ps 85:8a*

As we begin to grow in our understanding of God’s Word, there are a few things which we need to bear in mind. We must *listen to what God the LORD says*” (Ps 85:8a). The Lord is our Guide. Whatever we say must remain true to what He has said.

James offers some good advice for engaging with others. *“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry”* (Jas 1:19).

As we practice James’s advice, we will be less likely to jump to conclusions, to offer unwelcome advice, to plan a response before actually hearing, or to share words which cannot be retracted.

Listening to God’s Word helps us to be better listeners. Listen well.

*Pray: Dearest Holy Spirit, please forgive me for the times when I have jumped ahead of You. Please help me to slow down and to listen well to what is actually said.*



## 12 February

*“I will listen to what God the LORD says ....” Ps 85:8a*

As mentioned yesterday, we need to practice better listening skills.

First we listen *“to what God the LORD says”* (Ps 85:8a). Then we commit to good listening skills before others.

That will take time. Our instinct will be to jump in, to want to share how we have had a similar experience, or to tell either our solution or how we would have done things differently. In each of these cases, does the person feel heard? Only partially, at best.

Listen. Love this person before you by how well you listen to what they are sharing. It may be an experience. It may be a shocking revelation. It may be a hurtful truth. It may be a joke. Listen. Tomorrow we’ll unpack more.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for Your example of good listening when You engaged with the fallen people of this world. Please help me.*



## 13 February

*“I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants ....” Ps 85:8a-b*

As we listen attentively to God’s Word, we hear His promises.

God makes many incredible promises in His Word. In Psalm 85, God *promises peace to his people, his faithful servants”* (Ps 85:8b).

In our contemporary world, how incredible to know that God promises us peace!

God’s peace is a peace unlike any the world could offer. This is a peace *“which transcends all understanding”* (Phil 4:7).

How do we step into this peace? Believe that our Lord Jesus has gifted it to you. Step into that peace through trusting in Jesus as Lord.

*Pray: My Lord Jesus, I seek to live in submission to You as my Lord, and to know and deeply experience Your peace.*



## 14 February

*“I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants ....” Ps 85:8a-b*

Today is a special day for love. Today, may we turn from the world’s idea of love, and celebrate true love wherever it is found.

My prayer is that you know and experience God’s incredible and unending love for you.

Yesterday we talked about the multitude of promises which God makes in His Word. Today, let us look at God’s love promise. With Paul, we can be *“convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom 8:38-39).

*Pray: Thank You, Lord, for the rich experience of Your unending love.*

## 15 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people,  
his faithful servants ...." Ps 85:8a-b*

As we submit to *"the sanctifying work of the Spirit"* (1 Pet 1:2), we can know peace. We turn from those things which are not of God (v14), and embrace the richness that can be ours in Jesus (1 Pet 1:13; John 10:10b).

This is how we embrace God's promised peace as *"his faithful servants"* (Ps 85:8b).

Yes, it can be challenging to live as faithful servants, but that is God's call to us. Then, as we live this out, we realise that Jesus actually regards us as His true brothers and sisters (Matt 12:50; John 15:15).

Pray: *Thank You, my Lord, for Your incomprehensible peace.*



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Love and faithfulness meet together;  
Righteousness and peace kiss each other.  
~ Ps 85:10



## 16 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people,  
his faithful servants ...." Ps 85:8a-b*

How do we show our faithfulness to *God the LORD* (Ps 85:8a-b)?

We stay true to His calling on our lives. We remain faithful to what He has called us to do, even when it involves difficulties, pain, and loss. We remain true even when our work goes unappreciated, or is even ridiculed.

We know Him to whom we are dedicating our time, lives, and resources. As long as we are walking in faithfulness to His call, we do not need to be concerned about the opinions of people.

This does not mean that we should undertake illegal or irresponsible activities. Our God is a God of order (1 Cor 14:33). If you are concerned, seek confirmation from God's Word and from His holy people.

Pray: *Dearest Father God, I seek to be faithful to You.*

## 17 February

*“I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly.” Ps 85:8*

Yesterday we briefly touched on staying true to God’s Word, even if it appears as foolishness to others.

There are several aspects of this which need unpacking. Firstly, we live in this world, but we belong to a different Kingdom. Just as in Australia the seasons occur at a different time of the year from many European countries, so also our Lord’s Kingdom operates differently. While many would prefer to hate or ignore their enemies, our Lord calls us to love and pray for them (Matt 5:44). Being faithful to God in this obviously looks like foolishness to those living according to the world’s standards.

James, the Lord’s brother, tells us that friendship with the world is enmity with God (Jas 4:4). I know which I would prefer; how about you?

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for showing us how to live in faithfulness to the Father’s wishes.*



## 18 February

*“I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly.” Ps 85:8*

As we live in faithfulness to God’s wishes, our actions should be affirmed by other sections of God’s Word.

Where, instead, our actions appear to contradict God’s Word, it may be that we are following a rule but taking it out of context.

Please come before the Father in supplication. Even if you do not know how to clearly articulate your need, Holy Spirit interprets and intercedes for you (Rom 8:26-27). Trust yourself to Him.

However God leads, follow in faithfulness. He will forgive any steps taken in error (1 John 1:9).

*Pray: Dearest Holy Spirit, please lead me in the true path,*

## 19 February

*“I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly.” Ps 85:8*

Covid changed some of our practices. We introduced hybrid meetings, we found ways to engage more in off-site work patterns, and we became more conscious of health issues. Things changed.

God is unchanging. However, God is making changes in our lives. He is transforming us. Just as we removed the training wheels on our children’s bikes, there may be some spiritual practices which need updating.

Paul mentions *“I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it”* (1 Cor 3:2). The writer of Hebrews also mentions, *“solid food is for the mature”* (Heb 5:14). Different things are needed at different times.

If you might have ‘out-grown’ the earlier call from the Father, seek His face. He will give you discernment on whether to stop or change.

Pray: *Dear Father God, I seek to live in conformity to Your will.*



## 20 February

*“I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly.” Ps 85:8*

Belonging to an upside-down Kingdom, we are sometimes called to do things which seem like foolishness to the world. We can live with that.

However, yesterday we considered if the ‘foolish’ things we do might be things we were called to do as immature Christians. Now God may have different plans for us.

We need to be mindful too that we remain true to God’s heart in whatever He calls us to do. We should not *“turn to folly”* (Ps 85:8). This could include following the ways of the world too closely (Jas 4:4).

On the other hand, it could include indulging in behaviour which the world also considers ‘folly,’ such as careless risks or idle chatter.

Pray: *Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for the opportunities You place before me. Please help me to stay true in my commitments.*

## 21 February

*"I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly." Ps 85:8*

Rather than be carried along by the foolishness or distractions of this world, let us be faithful servants (Ps 85:8).

Jesus came "among [us] as one who serves" (Luke 22:27). Yes, Jesus chose to call us friends rather than servants (John 15:15), but He still asks us to have servant hearts (Matt 25:35-45).

Let us serve in faithfulness, being willing to be inconvenienced, delayed, and misunderstood. Those are small prices to pay compared to sacrificing your life, as Jesus did for us.

Pray: *Thank You, Lord, for the incredible sacrifice You were willing to make.*



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Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,  
that his glory may dwell in our land.

~ Ps 85:19



## 22 February

*"... so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." Heb 9:28*

Today we begin our pilgrimage toward Easter.

Today, let us remember especially the amazing legacy Jesus left from His three years of public ministry. In the weeks leading up to Easter, is there a special way that we may be preparing our hearts, minds, and spirits?

Let us commit in whatever way we can. If we falter in doing or failing to do what we have promised, let us know restoration and a new commitment for the remaining time.

Pray: *Oh Lord Jesus, I could not possibly every repay You for the sacrifice You made on my behalf. Please accept this offering from a grateful heart.*

## 23 February

*"... set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming." 1 Pet 1:13*

We walk this journey of Lent because we recognise that we are the grateful recipients of what Jesus achieved.

We know the grace covering which will be ours, and we know that we will spend eternity with the Lord.

How incredible is that hope!

Is there someone in your life who needs to receive that hope today?

Maybe you could try to find opportunities to mention Jesus, Easter, or Lent. Perhaps, by sharing one special aspect of Easter or your Lenten journey, you might whet their appetite to know more.

Would they be open to joining you for a weekly or fortnightly Bible study just until Easter?

Even if they are not incredibly enthusiastic now, you may have sown a seed of interest or intrigue. Keep watering it.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for the opportunity to sow a seed.*



## 24 February

*"... set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming." 1 Pet 1:13*

Yesterday we explored the possibility of inviting a neighbour, friend, work colleague, or family member to join you for a Lenten Bible Study. Perhaps it did not work out quite as well as you might have planned. Perhaps you lost courage before the actual invitation was given.

These things can take time. If it did not work out yesterday, it would be good to find ways to share the hope you hold (1 Pet 1:13). God's desire is that none would be lost (2 Pet 3:9).

*Pray: Dearest Father God, thank You for the hope I have in You. Please show me some ways that I may share my hope in You.*

## 25 February

*"... set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming." 1 Pet 1:13*

With the many private, family, regional, country, and worldwide challenges at present, many are suggesting that the Lord's second coming is close.

What does that mean in how we are to live out our daily lives?

Truly, as the time draws nearer, we need to shine more brightly for the Lord. He is *"the light of the world"* (John 9:5). Yet Jesus also calls us the *"light of the world"* (Matt 5:14). How can that be?

In a different analogy, Jesus told us, *"I am the vine; you are the branches ... apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5).

My suggestion is that our 'light' works in the same way. While we remain connected to the true light (John 1:9), we are called to shine His light through our lives. Shine, that God may be glorified.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, please help me to shine brightly for You.*



## 26 February

*"... set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming." 1 Pet 1:13*

Yesterday, we considered how we can be the light of the world (Matt 5:14). This is the call which Jesus put on our lives. As we remain in Him, and He in us, through His Spirit, we can shine His light.

With the current state of this dark world, we need to shine the light of Christ as brightly as we know how!

Be the Lord's witness in your life, in your community, on your frontlines, in your family, and on every occasion where a light might bring fresh hope. Shine brightly, Beloved.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, it is incredibly amazing that You have entrusted Your light to us. Please help me to shine brightly.*

## 27 February

*"... set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming." 1 Pet 1:13*

On this second week of Lent, come afresh before the Lord's throne.

Yes, there may be times when you will get disheartened. You may look to your 'light' and see but a tiny spark. Yet, in darkness, each tiny spark shines brightly.

Come away if you can today. Know re-ignition of your light through close fellowship with the Lord. He will restore and re-new you.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, I am grateful that You understand the challenges of this world. Please strengthen us to persevere when times are tough.*



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Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

~2 Pet 3:11-12



## 28 February

*"... set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming." 1 Pet 1:13*

Today, Beloved, turn your gaze afresh to Jesus.

He is returning soon.

Meantime, through His Holy Spirit, He walks beside us. He knows the challenges we face. Continue to walk in faithfulness, knowing that *"great is [God's] faithfulness (Lam 3:22-23).*

Look up from anything that is making you down-spirited, distracted, or anxious. You are not alone. Spend time with the Lord, and then take time to encourage others. We wait in expectant hope.

*Pray: Dearest Father God, please open my eyes to Your blessings.*



# 1 March

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....” Rom 5:1*

Even though our Lenten journey has not long started, we know how the story ends. We know the miracle of Easter.

Therefore, we have hope. Since *“we have been justified through faith”* (Rom 5:1), our confident hope rests in what God has achieved through Jesus.

As we grow in our knowledge and acceptance of this truth, may we know greater fellowship with the Father, with the Lord Jesus, with Holy Spirit, and with each other. May we live this truth out in our lives and, through our lives, bring God greater glory.

May our lives and hope more deeply touch the lives of those around us (1 Pet 1:22).

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for sacrificing Yourself so that we might know reconciliation and hope.*



# 2 March

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....” Rom 5:1*

It is through our faith that *“we have been justified”* (Rom 5:1a).

It is *“by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast”* (Eph 2:8-9). We did nothing to achieve it, and we do not deserve it. Our gifts of faith and grace are entirely poured out because of God’s incredible love.

Considering the sacrifices that Jesus endured that we might have these gifts, let us be prepared to sacrificially love others.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for those You have placed in my life. I seek to love them well and sincerely, for Your glory.*

## 3 March

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....” Rom 5:1*

Yesterday we recognised the incredible love that God poured out on us at the cross and resurrection. Prompted by love, Jesus came to suffer the punishment that we deserved. He paid the price for every sin we committed, every failure in doing and in not doing (Jas 4:17).

Yet God’s love was not extinguished at the cross or when the stone was rolled away. God still loves us.

Live in the richness of that love, and pass it on!

*Pray: Thank You, Father God, for Your incredible, faithful and ongoing love for me. Please give me clear eyes to see it, and ways to offer it generously to those You have placed around me.*



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See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious  
cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be  
put to shame.

~1 Pet 2:6



## 4 March

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....” Rom 5:1*

God’s love is enduring.

Our love is less so.

We see God’s amazing examples of sacrificial love, and yet we, forgiven so much, get nit-picky about the smallest and meanest things. As James says about blessing and cursing coming from the same mouth, *“this should not be”* (Jas 3:10).

Let us begin with our words, that they may be God-honouring.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, please prompt me in showing kindness.*

## 5 March

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....” Rom 5:1*

As we live out the love that God is calling us into, we will also know a greater depth of His peace. When instead we are puffed up and squabbling or envious of those around us, we will not know God’s peace.

Think of Haman in the story of Esther. Although Haman’s career and potential were skyrocketing, Haman could only focus on Mordecai (Est 5:9-13). *“Yet all this is worth nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate”* (Est 5: 13 ESV).

Rather than be jealous of what God is doing in the lives of others, let us maintain our peace in God’s favour on us (Rom 5:1).

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for the incredible peace You have made available to me. May I fully step into it, and also offer it to others.*



## 6 March

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....” Rom 5:1*

Yesterday we briefly glanced at the story of Haman and Mordecai in the book of Esther.

What about you? Are you able to sincerely and graciously celebrate your good fortune even when you have a ‘bone of contention’ with another?

What if, instead, the good fortune is experienced by another. Could you be happy for them?

There may be occasions when someone dear to you lands the job, house, partner, or other gain which you have dreamed and prayed for yourself. It can be challenging, and yet love must win out. If you do not have a deep love for the recipient, let your love for the Lord, from whom these blessings flow (Jas 1:17) stay your hand, mouth and heart.

*Pray: Please forgive me, Lord, for feelings of jealousy, envy, or self-pity. I trust that You will fulfill Your promises to me.*

## 7 March

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....” Rom 5:1*

It is our faith which guides our steps. This faith is a gift from God. Further, He wants us to invite others to partake of that gift.

When jealousy rather than love is the dominant ‘vibe’ around us, our faith may stink rather than allure. We want to represent our Lord well. Then what needs to change?

Let us come before our kind and loving Father, confessing, and seeking His forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Our Lord will reinstate us. He is for us, not against us.

Let us be His instruments in calling others to know faith, grace, and peace in Him. Pray that God may guide your steps.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, I seek to honour You in the love I share with others. Please guide my choices, and lead me toward those You are calling.*



## 8 March

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” Rom 5:1-2*

We stand in God’s grace. This is not because of anything that we have done. Sometimes, it is exactly contrary to the actions that we have taken, or those we failed to take (Jas 4:17). Yet, God, in His kindness and love, has covered us by His grace.

We stand in God’s grace simply because of what our Lord Jesus has achieved on our behalf. Have we fully grasped that? If we have fully embraced the incredible grace which we have received, are we inviting others to partake too? This truly is Good News. Let us shout it from the rooftops!

*Pray: Dearest Lord, I am sorry that I do not always walk in Your grace. I want to invite others into Your grace too, through the faith You are offering to them. Please give me the right words to share.*

## 9 March

*“And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.”*

Rom 5:2b

When we began this Devotional in January, we were repeating the “Come, let us adore Him” refrain of our recent Christmas experience.

Now, as we draw nearer to Easter, come, let us worship the Lord together again. When we do, we can *“boast in the hope of the glory of God”* (Rom 5:2b). God is our God. God is our King. At Christmas we celebrate Him as our new-born Saviour. At Easter we will celebrate as our Risen Saviour.

To God belongs all the glory. Let our boast be in Him.

*Pray: Dearest Father God, I bow down in worship before You. Thank You for the grace You extended to me.*



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But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

~ Rom 5:8



## 10 March

*“And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.”*

Rom 5:2b

As this year continues to flash quickly by, we may find multiple reasons to boast. Good grades, a newborn baby, a family engagement, a new home, or a great promotion. These are all good reasons to feel satisfaction in our achievements. However, let us also remember that all good gifts come from our faithful and unchanging God (Jas 1:17).

Yes, we can accept accolades for our part, but it is good to recognise that ours was simply a part. God is our Creator. He is the One who has brought skills, people, opportunities and multiple blessings into our lives.

To God be the glory.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for the abundance of Your blessings. Thank You for Your opportunities and faithful care. I worship You.*

## 11 March

*“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance ...” Rom 5:3*

Paul, like James, would have us see the wonderful work that God achieves in us through sufferings.

James calls us to consider it a joy when we face trials and difficulties (Jas 1:2). Paul tells us to *“glory in our sufferings”* (Rom 5:3). Their reasoning is the same — perseverance.

When we walk together with God through our trials, we build perseverance. Without consciously including God, we risk burying seeds of bitterness instead.

It is not that God will not be there if He is not included. The ‘including’ part is up to us. God is there. We include Him when we look to Him to be our Companion in negotiating the trials and sufferings.

*Pray: Dearest Lord God, that You have journeyed with me. Thank You.*



## 12 March

*“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance ...” Rom 5:3*

Yesterday we touched on including God in the trials and sufferings which come to us.

We include God when we invite His input into our situations. We do that when we bring them to Him in prayer.

No, this is not a very placid, “Oh, I have a problem; I should pray to God.”

No, these are commitments from real, flesh-and-blood people. They do not like these trials. They struggle with these sufferings. They would like a way out. But God is their God. They know, often from earlier sufferings, that God can bring miracles to pass through problems handled well. They resolve to cooperate with God.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for holding me through trials and pain. I am so glad that You will not leave me to do this alone.*

## 13 March

*“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance ...” Rom 5:3*

Yesterday, I mentioned resolving to cooperate with God.

Does that mean that there was no sense of disappointment? No!

Does that mean that there was no sense of unfairness that suffering had to happen, or that trials were taking place? No!

The pain was still real. The consequences were still costly. But, through keeping God on the throne, and regularly wetting the floor before that throne, God’s peace began to settle. Earlier trials, and what God produced through those, came to mind. Lament was put aside, hope was dusted off, and perseverance developed prayer’s knees. Through it all, God was faithful.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for staying with me during my times of anxiety, stress, lament, and self-pitying. Please help me to keep my eyes on You.*



## 14 March

*“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance ...” Rom 5:3*

After yesterday’s Devotion, you may ask what non-persevering might look like?

Firstly, yes it is possible to lament, experience some anxiety, some self-pitying, and even some anger. But God can handle all that. We are not expressing our anger or anxiety about God. We are coming to God as His beloved child. In a way, it is a little like Jesus asking the Father if there was another way during His time in the Garden of Gethsemane. Of course, Jesus did not express any self-pity.

What is the alternative? This is closer to the foolish prompt of Job’s wife, that Job should curse God. It is giving up on working a solution with God. When you honestly recognise God as God, He must be part of the solution.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You for handling my frustrations well.*

## 15 March

*“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance ...” Rom 5:3*

Knowing God, and having Him walk through several seasons of trials and suffering with you, is perseverance-building too. You know that you can trust Him. You know that He will come through.

With practice, you begin to recognise His hand and heart at work. Then, almost as soon as the trial comes along, your hope begins to ignite.

Perhaps this is the ‘joy’ of which James speaks. *“Consider it pure joy ... whenever you face trials of many kinds”* (Jas 1:2). Choose to allow God into your times of trials. He is already present.

Pray: *Dear Lord, thank You for Your faithful presence.*



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This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us  
and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.  
~1 John 4:9



## 16 March

*“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character ...” Rom 5:3-4*

These verses, which Paul wrote to the Roman churches, show a great sense of the ‘pushing through’ required. As each word is added and repeated, there is a greater sense of the physical, emotional, and spiritual energy needed. There is also a sense of blossoming within the concepts.

The first word, perseverance, may bring to mind the “I think I can, I think I can” perseverance of the little train. Character, on the other hand, sounds more like someone who has experienced a few trials, and learned to laugh them off. Perhaps they take themselves, and their situation, a little less seriously than they once might have done. Experience has mellowed them.

Those who make it this far will likely remain.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You for how You are growing me.*



## 17 March

*“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Rom 5:3-4*

Happy St Patrick’s Day!

St Patrick is remembered as the one who brought the Christian faith to Ireland. As such, Patrick would have been God’s instrument in bringing hope!

While Patrick faced many difficulties during his earlier excursion to Ireland, God used these trials to grow Patrick’s character. From these, Patrick was able to share God’s hope with the Irish.

We too can share our hope in Jesus, *“the way, the truth and the life”* (John 14:6). We do not need to make the trip to Ireland, we can simply invite those closer to home to follow Him.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, please guide me in seeking, hearing, discerning, and engaging opportunities to share Your truth.*



## 18 March

*“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Rom 5:3-4*

The ‘hope’ of which Paul writes in his letter to the Roman churches is not like our ‘hope’ in avoiding Covid.

No, the hope we have in God is a certain trust which feels us with hope. It is a hope that is confident of fulfillment. As we persevere through the trials, God begins to transform our character. As our character strengthens, we deepen our understanding of the God who will never forsake us (Heb 13:5). It is in Him that we can confidently rest our hope. Is your hope firmly resting in our unchanging God? If not, please contact someone at your church today, or ask a Christian friend.

*Pray: Dearest Lord, thank You that we can place our firm hope in You.*

## 19 March

*“And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”*

Rom 5:53

Yesterday we looked at how our hope is not the same as the ‘hope’ expressed by the world.

Though worldly ‘hope’ may not come to fruition, Paul assures us that our *“hope does not put us to shame”* (Rom 5:53).

Our hope is resting in our faithful and everlasting God. He can bring to pass what He has promised.

*Pray: Dear Father God, thank You that Your promises are faithful and true. Thank You that I can firmly and completely rest my hope confidently in You. I worship and honour You.*



## 20 March

*“And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”*

Rom 5:53

Our confidence remains secure because it rests in God.

We can experience the joy and trustworthiness of God through His love which *“has been poured out into our hearts”* (Rom 5:53b).

God’s infinite love has come to us through Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit’s involvement affirms the Trinitarian involvement in our hope.

We have access to faith through the work of Jesus Christ. Holding that faith, gifted by God, we can persevere and grow toward hope through the trials we endure. This hope is satisfied by God’s love in our hearts, poured out through Holy Spirit. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all engaged in our hope. Let us praise our Triune God.

*Pray: Dear Triune God, thank You for all that You achieve in bringing me toward hope in You.*

## 21 March

*"... the word of the Lord endures forever." 1 Pet 1:25*

When the Lenten season began last month, we considered a commitment to daily engagement with God's Word.

How has that gone for you?

If you did not start then, or if you lapsed along the way, there is still time for a restart. As Peter's first letter reminds, *"the word of the Lord endures forever"* (1 Pet 1:25).

God's Word is true, His promises are certain, and we are also incredibly blessed to have easy access to a Bible in our own language.

Although God's Word endures forever, let us not take advantage of its availability and simply ignore it.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You that You speak to me through Your Word.*



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... those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ~ Rom 8:5b-6



## 22 March

*"See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in [H]im will never be put to shame." 1 Pet 2:6*

At Christmas we celebrated a precious Baby placed in a manger in swaddling cloths (Luke 2:7). Now, as Easter approaches, we are celebrating that Baby as a chosen and precious Cornerstone (1 Pet 2:6a). He is the integral connection in God's kingdom plan. The one trusting in Him will *"never be put to shame"* (v6b).

At His birth, the shepherds were given the Good News, and they came and worshipped Him. Now the same Good News, of joy for all the world (Luke 2:10), draws others to honour and worship. Come and trust in Him.

Pray: *Dearest God, how joyfully we put our trust in Jesus, our Saviour.*

## 23 March

*“Now to you who believe, this stone is precious” 1 Pet 2:7a*

As those who believe in the Lord Jesus, we recognise that He, epitomised by the cornerstone, is precious. Jesus is the Living Proof of God’s perfect plan coming to completion.

Jesus is our Lord and Saviour, and we adore Him. We recognise and are awed by His incredible love and sacrifice on our behalf. He is God, yet He, though divine, chose to be born as a human Baby. He went through the struggles of learning and growing as a Child so that He could experience life as we do. He is truly our perfect High Priest (Heb 4:14-16).

Jesus also tasted death for us, the death we deserved for our sinfulness (Rom 3:23: 6:23). He took our punishment upon Himself (2 Cor 5:21). He suffered death on our behalf, the death we deserved (John 3:16).

*Pray: Dearest Lord Jesus, I honour and joyfully accept You as my Lord and Saviour. Truly You are most precious to me.*



## 24 March

*“The stone the builders rejected has become ... A stone that causes people to stumble ...” 1 Pet 2:7-8*

Jesus went first to His own people, but they rejected Him (John 1:11). The Lord’s own people, His chosen people, did not see Him as precious (1 Pet 2:7a).

*“Yet to all who did receive [H]im, to those who believed in [H]is name, [H]e gave the right to become children of God” (v12).*

We are the children of God (1 Pet 1:2-3). As chosen and precious to the Father, let us delight in God’s eternal plan (v10-12). Let us rejoice and walk steadfastly with our God.

*Pray: Dearest Lord Jesus, please forgive me for any instances where I seem to have rejected You or Your message. I seek to stay loyal and steadfast in all of my thoughts and all of my ways.*

## 25 March

*"... declare the praises of [H]im who called you out of darkness into [H]is wonderful light." 1 Pet 2:9*

At various times, we may have sought darkness. The stars are so much easier to see when it is dark. At other times, semi-darkness can creep up on us without quite realising how dark it has become.

Spiritual darkness can also creep up on us unexpectedly. We made one decision here, then another there, not realising the risk. Before we realised it, we were further into darkness than we had thought possible. What initially seemed like a simple step, became a significant directional change.

As we look back, we may be able to point to the unsavoury turns. As we look back, we can be thankful that the Lord *"called [us] out of darkness into [H]is wonderful light"* (1 Pet 2:9).

Pray: *Dear God, thank You for turning me back from darkness into Your wonderful light. I seek to always know Your light, and to point others to it.*



## 26 March

*"... declare the praises of [H]im who called you out of darkness into [H]is wonderful light." 1 Pet 2:9*

How joyful to live in God's wonderful light (1 Pet 2:9). In Him *"there is no darkness at all"* (1 John 1:5). Jesus declared, *"I am the light of the world"* (John 9:5).

While we walk in the light, we can know God and have fellowship with Him. God is light (John 8:12), He is goodness, and He is love (1 John 4:16).

Praise and thank God for coming to rescue you. Though in darkness, God's light showed us another way. In darkness, even the smallest light shines brightly. No matter how weak you may feel your witness will be, shine brightly for the Lord. It can mean a world of difference for the one trapped in darkness, even unawares.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, thank You that we can be a light for Your glory.*

## 27 March

*“... declare the praises of [H]im who called you out of darkness into [H]is wonderful light.” 1 Pet 2:9*

God rescued us from our ways of darkness. Although we may not have realised the darkness of our ways, in God’s light all things are made clear (John 3:21).

When Jesus shines His light into your life, fears drop away. He is your Saviour, your rescuer, your comforter. Like the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-6), the Lord will seek you, drawing you to Himself, turning you from darkness, and into the light of His love and grace (John 8:12).

*Pray: Dearest Lord Jesus, thank You for calling me into the light of Your love and grace. My hope is in You.*



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... if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. ~ Rom 8:11



## 28 March

*“Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God ...”  
1 Pet 2:10*

As Easter draws near, we are preparing ourselves for the moment when Jesus will sacrifice His body on the cross for us. He, the perfect Lamb of God, will be nailed to the cross in our place. At Easter, we celebrate His resurrection and, as His people, as the Body of Christ, His Church, we gather together in homage (1 Pet 2:9).

We are thankful to be united as one in God. We are His people, united for His glory, according to His perfect plan. Let us honour and worship Him.

*Pray: Dearest Father God, how joyfully we praise You for making us Your special people. We commit together in union and communion as the Body of Christ. Though we have some difference, we all call Jesus our Lord.*

## 29 March

*“Live as free people ... Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.” 1 Pet 2:16, 17*

In his first letter, Peter assured us that we are free. We have freedom because of what Jesus achieved through the cross and resurrection.

Does that mean that we can simply do whatever we choose?

Peter goes on to say that we should not use our *“freedom as a cover-up for evil”* (! Pet 2:16). Peter also makes some requirements of us about respect, love, and honour (v17). Does that mean that we are not free? No!

Peter would have any freedom offered back to God for His glory. He reminds us that we are committed to serving God (v16). By our actions, we are able to show our respect, love, and honour to God, as well as to others. These are not freedom-limiters or freedom-inhibitors. Instead they are opportunities to serve God for His glory.

Pray: *Dearest Lord, please forgive me for those times when I demanded my freedom even when it did not suit Your kingdom purposes.*



## 30 March

*“Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.” 1 Pet 2:16 ESV*

Freedom is as much about head space as it is about physical or legal capacity.

When Paul and Silas were singing in jail (Acts 16:25), their expression of freedom of spirit was in contrast to their physical detention. In contrast, when the jailer felt prompted to kill himself (v27), he was responding as one enslaved to the system, while being one physically free.

When we know freedom in the Lord, we can know freedom in body, mind, and spirit. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were walking in the fire, they were experiencing freedom. (Dan 3:25). Though we may live within limits and constraints, we can still know freedom.

Pray: *Dear Lord, thank You for the freedom we know in You. Please help us to live lives of freedom, for Your glory.*

# 31 March

*"Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil ..."*

1 Pet 2:16

As we come to the end of another devotional, let us remember to prayerfully seek God's wisdom in each decision (Jas 1:5-8). Make time for quality engagement with God, and with loved ones too.

Let us offer our freedom for God's glory. May we use that freedom too to call others to know freedom in God.

In all things, let us commit ourselves, our hearts, minds, and spirits, to the Lord, for His glory.

Continue to look to the Lord, knowing that He is transforming you. And be constant in persevering, even when you may temporarily lose ground.

Pray: *Dear God, thank You for how You are moulding and shaping us to be more faithful followers. Our trust is in You, and we are glad.*



*"Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.*

*God has given each of us a gift from [H]is great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.*

*Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ.*

*All glory and power to [H]im forever and ever! Amen. (1 Pet 4:8, 10-11 NLT)*

*The Holy Spirit was the inspiration behind these thoughts and we pray that they will encourage, challenge and stretch you in your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the will of the Heavenly Father.*

*Gelly McAuliffe-Bunker for PURE Devotional Ministry*





# Notes

are taken from

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