

Walking in Christ's Light
Daily Prayer Journal

July 4-9, 2011

*Growing our souls is a partnership with Christ.
To enable your soul's growth, use this material with Christ as your guide.*

MONDAY

July 4, 2011

Read: 2 Corinthians 9 (NRSV) (<http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm>)

Now it is not necessary for me to write to you about the ministry to the saints, for I know your eagerness, which is the subject of my boasting about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you may not prove to have been empty in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—in this undertaking. So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you, and arrange in advance for this bountiful gift that you have promised, so that it may be ready as a voluntary gift and not as an extortion.

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written,
'He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
his righteousness endures for ever.'

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Reflection: A wise man once said, "There's nothing more powerful than the heart of a volunteer". Webster describes a volunteer this way — one who renders a service or receives a conveyance or transfer of property without giving valuable consideration.

God loves a cheerful giver. God loves a volunteer. The passage above from 2 Corinthians is about much more than giving money. God wants us to cheerfully volunteer every good thing God has so graciously allowed us to have including the things we so often take for granted: our time, our energy, our abilities, our talents, our homes, our cars, our families - all that we have, all that God has cheerfully given to us!

What can you volunteer in service to God this week?

TUESDAY

July 5, 2011

Read: Psalm 126 (NRSV) (<http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm>)

A Song of Ascents.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;

then it was said among the nations,
'The Lord has done great things for them.'

The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

Those who go out weeping,

bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Reflection: (from Charles Spurgeon): Some Christians are sadly prone to look on the dark side of everything, and to dwell more upon what they have gone through than upon what God has done for them. Ask for their impression of the Christian life, and they will describe their continual conflicts, their deep afflictions, their sad adversities, and the sinfulness of their hearts, yet with scarcely any allusion to the mercy and help which God has vouchsafed them. But a Christian whose soul is in a healthy state, will come forward joyously, and say, "I will speak, not about myself, but to the honor of my God. He hath brought me up out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings: and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God. The Lord hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad." Such an abstract of experience as this is the very best that any child of God can present. It is true that we endure trials, but it is just as true that we are delivered out of them. It is true that we have our corruptions, and mournfully do we know this, but it is quite as true that we have an all-sufficient Savior, who overcomes these corruptions, and delivers us from their dominion. In looking back, it would be wrong to deny that we have been in the Slough of Despond, and have crept along the Valley of Humiliation, but it would be equally wicked to forget that we have been through them safely and profitably; we have not remained in them, thanks to our Almighty Helper and Leader, who has brought us "out into a wealthy place." The deeper our troubles, the louder our thanks to God, who has led us through all, and preserved us until now. Our griefs cannot mar the melody of our praise, we reckon them to be the bass part of our life's song, "He hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

WEDNESDAY **July 6, 2011**

Read: Colossians 4:10-14 (NRSV) (<http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm>)

Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner greets you, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him. And Jesus who is called Justus greets you. These are the only ones of the circumcision among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills. For I testify for him that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you.

Reflection: (from Mary Baird in Texas): Recently I was approached by a friend who was distressed about a situation in her family, and she asked me to pray for her. I assured her I would. After uttering a quick prayer, I went about my business, never thinking of her again until I saw her a few weeks later.

Scripture tells us to pray for one another and to pray without ceasing. God hears all our prayers. But I have to admit that my prayers, unlike Epaphras's, are less than an act of labor. I wonder how serious God believes we are when our manner in prayer is hurried and automatic.

Considering prayer as labor seemed strange to me until I gave it serious thought. It takes work to bring our thoughts, our hearts, and our souls into deep attention to God. Our minds have a tendency to drift into the next item on our agenda, and before long, we're detached from the prayer we began.

I'd love to have an Epaphras earnestly laboring in prayer for me. And I want to be like him in the way I pray for others.

THURSDAY **July 7, 2011**

Read: Genesis 18:1-8 (NRSV) (<http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm>)

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, 'My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.' So they said, 'Do as you have said.' And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.' Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

Reflection: Christ calls us to welcome the stranger, to look after the widow and orphan, to bring comfort and welcome to those whom society ignores. God challenges us to make a difference in the lives of those near us who are in need. Who can you welcome today?

FRIDAY **July 8, 2011**

Read: Luke 22:24-27 (NRSV) (<http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm>)

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Reflection: (from Ted De Hass in Iowa): When students graduate from Sioux Falls University in South Dakota, they receive a diploma, shake hands with the president of the school, and then are given a special gift. The dean of the chapel hands each graduate a towel, and that towel is a reminder to go into the world to serve others.

This servant image comes from the story of the Last Supper. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus met with his disciples in an upper room to celebrate Passover. But before they shared the meal, Jesus got up from the table and washed his disciples' feet. He taught them by example that they were to be servants. In Luke's account of this night, the disciples argue about which of them is the greatest. In the lowly act of washing their feet, Jesus turns them away from seeking power and control. Instead, Jesus models becoming a servant, humble and vulnerable, striving to meet the needs of others. Jesus said to them, "I am among you as one who serves."

If we want to do something for Christ in this world, we do that by following his model of servant leadership and ministry. We pick up the towel.

SATURDAY **July 9, 2011**

Read: Hebrews 10: 19-25 (NRSV) (<http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm>)WEB

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Reflection: (from Todd Outcalt in Indiana): MY friend Tom recently moved to Guatemala as a missionary. Tom serves in a small, remote village where he oversees a health clinic that helps women and children, especially, who struggle with despair, sickness, and malnutrition.

Some months after Tom arrived, he sent me a small supply of prayer bracelets -- small, cloth bands that the women of the village had made. I tied one of these bands around my wrist so that I would remember to pray for Tom's work and for the people of Guatemala. Every time I looked at the band or became aware of it on my wrist, I whispered a prayer, asking that Tom would be encouraged and that his good work would continue.

I've prayed for Tom and the people of Guatemala while I was in some interesting places -- while watching a high school football game, driving my car, and drinking a cup of coffee. What I've learned is this: Our prayers don't have to be flowery or lengthy. But whenever and wherever we pray for others, it can encourage them to continue in the good work God has set before them.