

FOR DAILY MEDITATION

MONDAY, 25 Feb. Dan. 5:13-21.

The Lord deals with the mighty. It is clear that the Lord sets up strong rulers for His own purposes. Yet even these must acknowledge the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man in his time, and eventually it all went to his head. But God will not permit man to usurp His authority—then or now. Sooner or later, judgment will come.

TUESDAY, 26 Feb. Dan. 5:22-31.

The Lord judges the powerful. After a time, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the Lord's authority, and he was given back his kingdom. These events were well-known, even to his grandson. However, Belshazzar did not gain wisdom from his grandfather's folly. He blatantly and willfully offended the Most High God. There would be no restoration for Belshazzar. God had judged his heart and already determined what his fate would be. He lost his life, and his kingdom was taken away and given to others.

WEDNESDAY, 27 Feb. Dan. 6:1-10.

The plot to undermine Daniel. It was apparent to everyone that Daniel was a special person. The Spirit of the Most High God was with him, and he lived a life characterized by righteousness. No one could find fault with him. Yet the inadequacies and jealousies of others made them determined to bring him down. Through trickery they sought to use Daniel's devotion to God to bring about his demise.

THURSDAY, 28 Feb. Dan. 6:11-23.

The plot fails. Sometimes we are all like Daniel, finding ourselves in a terrible situation through no fault of

our own. In Daniel's case, even Darius the king could not save him. But when human strength fails, God shows Himself to be ever more powerful. God saved Daniel from certain death. He will not forsake His righteous ones.

FRIDAY, 1 Mar. Dan. 6:24-28.

Daniel's God is exalted. Daniel never sought praise for his gifts and talents. He understood and fully acknowledged God as the source of all wisdom. Because of Daniel's actions, the glory and might of his God—our God—were obvious for all to see. King Darius was so overcome by God's might that he ordered every person in his vast kingdom to acknowledge the Lord's supremacy over all.

SATURDAY, 2 Mar. Dan. 7:1-8.

Daniel's vision. Daniel's mind was always tuned to the heart of God. For all his wisdom, he saw many things that he did not understand. Yet he wrote them down for others to know. Sometimes God gives us a word that makes no sense to us; but when we share it, it is very meaningful to others. It is important to be like Daniel—to remember God's words for others to know and understand.

SUNDAY, 3 Mar. Dan. 7:9-14.

The exaltation of the coming One. The life of man is short; with each new generation, another one is forgotten. Yet the Lord does not forget. Everything that has happened and will happen is for the culmination of the moment in time when Christ, the Coming One, receives His kingdom and is served by those of every nation. All peoples will acknowledge His authority.

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MONDAY, 4 Mar. Dan. 1:8-15.

Daniel's resolve. Daniel decided that to partake of the king's food would defile him. He chose instead to have only vegetables and water. An aspect of this can be paralleled in our lives. Do we choose that which the world considers "good," or do we choose that which the Lord considers wholesome?

TUESDAY, 5 Mar. Dan. 1:16-21.

Daniel's recognition. Daniel and his three friends stayed faithful to their sensitivities to their God. Therefore, God did not abandon them to the world's wisdom but instilled in them knowledge that no other "wise" man could rival. Because of this, they were valued instruments of the king. When we keep our commitment to God as they did, we shall also be great instruments of our King.

WEDNESDAY, 6 Mar. Dan. 2:1-11.

The king's challenge. Nebuchadnezzar was greatly troubled by his dream and demanded to know what it meant—something he knew he would not receive from the world's wise men. His magicians did tell him a truth, however: no one could declare what the king demanded. This wisdom comes only from a source outside of human knowledge and understanding. But these wise men did not know the Most High God, who now does indeed dwell with men through the Holy Spirit. He is the source of our wisdom, which is far greater than that of others.

THURSDAY, 7 Mar. Dan. 2:12-16.

Daniel's intervention. Daniel and his friends were included in the decree to kill all the king's wise men, even

though they had not been present when the magicians failed to answer the king's demands. Yet Daniel did not give up hope. He requested that he have time to learn the answer from the Lord. Daniel's first recourse was not himself. He knew that any wisdom or knowledge he possessed had been given to him by God. When we are faced with troubles, we should do exactly as Daniel did and go to the Lord for answers.

FRIDAY, 8 Mar. Dan. 2:36-49.

Daniel's success. The Lord granted Daniel the wisdom to know the king's dream and interpret it. The Lord was foretelling what would take place in future times. We are blessed to have this history behind us, and we know that His word spoken to Daniel was true. We can therefore be confident in knowing that what He said will happen in the future is just as sure and true.

SATURDAY, 9 Mar. Dan. 9:15-19.

Daniel's prayer of supplication. There are times when our prayers are soft and quiet, and there are times when they are full of urgency and force. In his prayer, Daniel was not whispering prayers on the winds of the night but engaging in bold supplication not only for himself but also for his people. He implored God to hear, to see, and to act. The Lord hears all our prayers, and He sees the urgency of our hearts.

SUNDAY, 10 Mar. Dan. 9:4-14.

Daniel's prayer of confession. Daniel knew the sins of his people, and he did not exclude himself in his confession before the Lord. There will be times when we must ask forgiveness for our people, our nation, or our church. The prayer of one can affect many.

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MONDAY, 11 Mar. Exod. 23:20-25.

A guide into the future. Although God requires that we have faith to do His will even when we do not understand what is going on, He never leaves us without direction. The Israelites were to obey the Lord's Angel; we are to obey Christ. The Israelites were not to worship pagan gods; we are not to practice worldly living. He will bless us with His presence as we listen and obey.

TUESDAY, 12 Mar. Judg. 2:1-5.

A messenger of rebuke. When we refuse to listen to God's instruction and instead do what we want, it opens us up to trouble and hardship. Since the Israelites did not do as God commanded with the inhabitants of the land, these people became thorns in their side. When we refuse to completely get rid of sin in our lives, it leaves us vulnerable to more temptation and sin.

WEDNESDAY, 13 Mar. Luke 1:8-20.

A messenger with good news. Zacharias was a righteous man, and he was honored by the Lord. Yet Zacharias responded to the angel's message with disbelief. The angel essentially said, "I stand before the Most High God in heaven, and you are going to doubt what I say?" Everything came to pass as the angel said, but the blessing was tempered by Zacharias's muteness, a result of his unbelief.

THURSDAY, 14 Mar. Luke 1:26-38.

A messenger from God. If you were met by an angel and he told you something impossible would happen, how would you respond? Would you respond like Zacharias, or would you respond like Mary? Mary asked how it would happen, but Zacharias demanded proof that it

would. That is the difference in attitude. Mary went on her way in peace, and Zacharias got his proof—the angel made him mute for nine months.

FRIDAY, 15 Mar. Dan. 8:13-18.

A Helper in understanding. God is a master of communication. Sometimes His words are simple and straightforward. But when they are not, He will not leave us perplexed. No one knows the answer to everything. As we see in Daniel 8:13, even the holy ones in heaven ask questions! If we are having a hard time understanding something, we should always ask God for answers. How He decides to answer us can come in many ways and forms, so it is important to keep watch and to listen for His understanding.

SATURDAY, 16 Mar. Dan. 9:20-27.

A Helper in response to prayer. Prayer always seems to quicken things. Yesterday we read that Daniel sought to understand the meaning of the vision he saw (Dan. 8:15). Was he trying to figure it out in his own mind? We do not really know, but it is never God's intention that we trust in our own understanding. As soon as Daniel started praying, the command was given for Gabriel to come give him insight with understanding. If we seek understanding on an issue, the first thing we should always do is pray.

SUNDAY, 17 Mar. Dan. 8:19-26.

A Helper in facing the future. Daniel was the prophet who received this vision. Even so, it was not meant solely for him. This vision pertains to a time far off from Daniel's day. Daniel and his visions are important for us today. God has written down what must happen in the future so that we may have knowledge of it beforehand. Through those who have lived before us, we have the words of God to guide us for every tomorrow.

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MONDAY, 18 Mar. Deut. 16:1-8.

Keeping the Passover. The Passover rituals instituted by God were done in remembrance of what the Lord did for the Israelites the night they left Egypt. It was a way for the people of God to honor the Lord's delivering them from bondage. As humans, we have limited memories that can forget the mighty things that God has done for us and for others.

TUESDAY, 19 Mar. Exod. 12:21-27.

The meaning of the Passover. Why did God command the Israelites to place sacrificial blood on their doorposts? Surely the Lord knew where the Israelites lived, did He not? Of course He did. When God instructs us to do something, it is never for Him but for us. It is a way that we may experience the power and work of God.

WEDNESDAY, 20 Mar. Luke 22:7-13.

Preparations for the Last Supper. There is no timing as exact and precise as God's. It really is amazing. How is it that the disciples entered Jerusalem at the same time a man walking by with a pitcher of water was there to meet them? How did the owner of the house know to prepare the guest room ahead of the Lord's arrival? Such intricacies we may never know, but one thing is sure. God may have prepared the seemingly mundane daily events of our lives ahead of time for His eternal purpose, whether for us or for others.

THURSDAY, 21 Mar. I Cor. 10:14-22.

Partaking of the Lord's Table. The ritual of the Lord's Supper has very real meaning. By partaking of it, you are exclaiming before God and others that you are a part of Christ's body. This therefore

identifies you with Christ. It is a statement that says, "I do not belong to myself. I belong to Christ." Are you living a life that manifests this statement, or is your life declaring something else?

FRIDAY, 22 Mar. I Cor. 11:17-22.

Showing contempt for the church. Have you ever walked into a church on Sunday with the intention of worshipping God, only to be told that a private worship service was taking place and you were not welcome? I would certainly hope not! What about the humiliation of showing up at a community dinner and being told that those living on your street could not come in? These extreme examples are similar to the scenarios in the Corinthian church. Is this type of attitude felt by those who enter your church?

SATURDAY, 23 Mar. I Cor. 11:23-32.

Examine yourselves. The taking of communion is not something that should ever be done lightly or for the wrong reasons. If there is unconfessed sin in your heart or you are angry, do not partake of the Lord's Supper. It is worse to take it when your heart is not right than not to take it at all. God is not impressed by outward appearances. What matters to Him is what is in the heart.

SUNDAY, 24 Mar. Luke 22:14-30.

The Last Supper. Jesus was looking forward to this meal, the last He would eat before His death. It was important not so much for the sustenance it would give as for the symbolism He gave it. It was a portrayal of what He was going to do for His church. And yet, did you notice what the disciples did? There, in the presence of the Son of God, they argued among themselves about which of them would be the greatest! What nerve! Let us remember that we are called to His church to praise our Saviour, not ourselves.

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MONDAY, 25 Mar. Luke 23:13-25.

The trial before Pilate. The will of God supersedes that of men. Still, God works through the strengths and weaknesses of man. Pilate was a weak ruler. Even though he thought Jesus was innocent, he was willing to have Him flogged for appearances' sake in an attempt to appease the crowd! And when the people demanded Jesus be crucified, Pilate did as they wanted, even against his own judgment.

TUESDAY, 26 Mar. Luke 23:32-38.

The crucifixion of Jesus. Did the leaders experience guilt when they saw the Lamb of God hanging on a tree? Is that why they called out, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ" (Luke 23:35)? In their wounded pride and shame, were they giving an ultimatum to God? Have you ever done something wrong and then dared God to fix your mistake? If you ever find yourself feeling this way, stop! Remember those who mocked our Lord as He hung on the cross.

WEDNESDAY, 27 Mar. Luke 23:44-49.

The death of Jesus. Jesus' death was no small thing to the Father. It was an event that had to take place in order to fulfill the plan of God. Sometimes we must witness our loved ones going through difficult circumstances. Do we walk away in sadness, or do we stand with them until the end, giving support?

THURSDAY, 28 Mar. Luke 23:50-56.

The burial of Jesus. Those who loved Jesus in life also loved Him in death. They showed this by lovingly taking care of His body and preparing it for burial. They did not do it because they

were required or obligated to but out of simple devotion. When we perform simple acts of love for others, it is counted as being done for our Lord (Matt. 25:40).

FRIDAY, 29 Mar. Isa. 53:3-9.

The Messiah's suffering. When we read of this prophecy that was fulfilled by Jesus, what comes to mind? For me, it is hard to read this and not be overcome with emotion. How does one understand the power of God's love—that He should offer His Son up to torment and death for someone who is so undeserving of it? And how does one say thank You to the One who willingly walked a path of sorrows for his sake?

SATURDAY, 30 Mar. Luke 24:1-12.

The empty tomb. This story shows such a range of emotions. The women anxiously waited for the Sabbath to end. As they walked to the tomb, their hearts were no doubt full of sadness and grief. When they reached the tomb, they discovered Jesus' body was gone! They were aghast and distressed. Then two dazzling men appeared out of nowhere, and the women were overcome with fear. Finally, when they heard that Jesus was alive, they were excited and full of joy. Talk about a roller coaster of emotions!

SUNDAY, 31 Mar. Luke 24:13-21, 28-35.

The Lord has risen indeed! People in Jesus' time were the same as we are today. We tend not to believe things unless we witness them ourselves. The women were told by angels that Jesus was alive, and Peter himself examined the empty tomb and discarded burial linens. But when Jesus appeared to the disciples, they thought they were seeing a ghost! It took some convincing on Jesus' part to prove His identity to those who knew Him best. If Jesus showed up in your life, would you recognize Him?

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MONDAY, 1 Apr. I Cor. 15:1-8.

Appearances of the risen Lord. Jesus did not keep the evidence of His resurrection for a chosen few. If only His disciples claimed to see Him, their stories might be suspect. But as it was, He made a number of private and public appearances. The testimonies of those who witnessed these amazing occurrences were still available to the Corinthian church.

TUESDAY, 2 Apr. John 20:11-18.

The appearance to Mary Magdalene. Mary had every reason to be upset. If the death of her Teacher was not enough, she now had to deal with His precious body being taken away. Just as with Mary, sometimes when we are experiencing profound sadness, we cannot recognize when the Lord is speaking to us. Is there something the Lord is trying to show you but you are too blinded by emotion to see?

WEDNESDAY, 3 Apr. John 20:24-29.

The appearance to Thomas. Poor Thomas! He is possibly remembered best for this episode of his life. But is it not the truth that we all have been doubting Thomases at some point? Thomas no longer has an opportunity to go back and change his reaction to hearing of the risen Lord. His deed has been recorded forever and recounted by countless souls. But we still have the opportunity to be called “blessed” by our Lord—for that is truly what faith in Christ ultimately does for us. It brings us blessing upon blessing. When we stand before Him, may we all be called blessed because even though we saw not, we still believed!

THURSDAY, 4 Apr. John 21:1-8.

The appearance to seven disciples. The resurrection of Jesus was a marvelous and miraculous event, especially for His disciples. But they still had to live their daily lives. In this account, Simon Peter decided to go fishing, and the others went along. All night they fished but had no catch. When Jesus gave them instruction from the shore, their catch was massive. There was much work to do! But what did Simon Peter do when he realized the Man on shore was Jesus? He put on his clothes, jumped into the water, and swam to shore. Do we show such devotion and excitement for our Lord?

FRIDAY, 5 Apr. John 21:9-14.

Breakfast with the disciples. As the disciples stood by the risen Jesus, eating breakfast was probably the last thing on their minds and hearts. But the Lord knows all our needs, and He provides. Not only did He have breakfast waiting on the shore, but He even served the food Himself. What love Jesus has for His followers that He, the risen Son of God, would act as servant to His followers!

SATURDAY, 6 Apr. John 21:15-19.

Simon Peter called to follow. Simon Peter’s call to follow Christ, to carry on His work and follow in His death, is a mirror for our own spiritual lives. Before we knew Christ, we went wherever we wanted and did whatever we pleased. But loving Jesus means that we set aside our desires in order to follow His.

SUNDAY, 7 Apr. Luke 24:36-53.

You are witnesses of these things. They say that seeing is believing, but this is not always the case. We can read the Scriptures and have great theological knowledge; but unless the Lord opens our understanding, the words we read have no meaning.

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MONDAY, 8 Apr. John 14:18-24.

I will not leave you orphaned.

Those who obey Jesus are the ones who love Him. Jesus promises not to leave us or abandon us in this world. He has sent the Holy Spirit to guide us while abiding in our hearts.

TUESDAY, 9 Apr. John 15:1-7.

Abide in Me. Jesus portrayed a very serious picture of spiritual life and death.

It is imperative that we stay in Christ, as if He were a lifeboat that can take us to safety in the midst of a fierce storm. If we climb out of that lifeboat, we will perish. Flailing our arms and kicking our legs will not save us. Despite our best efforts, the sea will swallow us up. But if we cling to Jesus by being obedient to Him, He will not only bring us to safety but also equip us to help others find the way to life.

WEDNESDAY, 10 Apr. John 16:1-11.

The coming of the Advocate. Jesus' ministry did not end at the Cross.

Although His followers were dismayed that He spoke of going away, He knew His departure would bring about greater things. The Holy Spirit allows the work of Christ to expand all over the world, beyond the confines of the walls of Jerusalem and the hills of Israel.

THURSDAY, 11 Apr. Acts 2:22-28.

Raised up and freed from death.

Like David, we can walk confidently in this life because the Lord walks beside us. And when our physical life is over, we have hope, knowing that because Jesus was raised to eternal life in a physical body, we will be also. If we are found in Him, He will also raise us to eternal life. Death has surely lost its sting. Now, that is something to praise God about!

FRIDAY, 12 Apr. Acts 2:14-21.

The promise of the Spirit. It is always a marvelous thing when the Lord brings about that which He promised. In prior days, the prophets received the Holy Spirit for the purpose of prophesying and imparting God's word to the people. But because the Lord has given us His Spirit, every believer can have communication with God and experience the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives each of us.

SATURDAY, 13 Apr. Acts 2:29-36.

The promise received. It is impossible for a person to have the Holy Spirit without first knowing Christ. "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this" (Acts 2:33). So we see that it is Jesus who gives us the Holy Spirit. This passage speaks of many promises the Lord has made: the promise to David that one of his descendants would sit upon his throne; the promise to us that He would give us the Holy Spirit; and a future promise to Jesus that His enemies would become as a footstool under His feet.

SUNDAY, 14 Apr. Acts 2:1-13.

The Day of Pentecost. Why do you think the Holy Spirit chose to give the believers the gift of tongues on the Day of Pentecost? This passage of Scripture tells us that there were many devout Jews from other parts of the world in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud wind sound, a lot of people ran to the house to see what was going on. The foreign Jews were amazed to hear their own languages being spoken by a bunch of country bumpkins from Galilee, telling about the many wonderful things God has done. Those who were truly seeking truth wanted to know more about what the Lord was doing, while those of the world thought it was drunken foolishness.

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FOR DAILY MEDITATION

MONDAY, 15 Apr. Isa. 59:9-15a.

The hopeless human situation. This is a sad portrayal of the human condition when the Lord is not obeyed and honored. The problem lies at our core, in our hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Since sin separates us from God and wickedness is born in our hearts, how can we ever escape the wrath of judgment?

TUESDAY, 16 Apr. Isa. 59:15b-21.

The source of hope. Who indeed can save the human race from such darkness? It is the Redeemer of Israel, who buys back the souls of those who have turned from their sin. Yet for those who choose to continue in wickedness, there is no place to hide from the Lord’s wrath. Paul told us to follow the pattern of the Redeemer’s spiritual power (Eph. 6:13-17). Both Isaiah and Ephesians speak of the armor of righteousness and the helmet of salvation. And the shield of faith protects us from all of the evil one’s attacks.

WEDNESDAY, 17 Apr. Ps. 38:9-15.

Waiting in hope. It did not matter to David what his enemies thought or did. He knew their attacks and treachery were founded in lies, so he did not respond to their words. Instead, he chose to wait for the Lord to declare His judgment to his foes. Jesus responded the same way when He stood before the Jewish leaders just prior to His death. Sometimes it is not worth defending yourself among those who have no desire to hear the truth.

THURSDAY, 18 Apr. Rom. 4:16-25.

Hoping against hope. Abraham was counted a righteous man because of his great faith. Even though all physical

evidence pointed to the fact that he was unlikely to receive God’s promise of many children, he still chose to believe what God said. He knew that God was perfectly capable of bringing about His promises. Abraham lived to see the birth of his two sons; yet he died before he witnessed the greatness of his offspring. Even though he must wait until this world ends to fully experience the magnitude of God’s promise, Abraham never lost hope in God’s word.

FRIDAY, 19 Apr. Heb. 6:13-20.

Seizing the hope set before us. The Lord’s promises to us are like an anchor for the soul. What gladness there is in knowing that the Lord does not waver or lie! Our hope in Him is secure. During old covenant days, only the high priest could enter the inner sanctuary one day a year. Because of God’s holiness, sinful man could not stand in His presence. This changed when Christ died and was resurrected. He is our High Priest, and we can now enter the dwelling place of God through Him.

SATURDAY, 20 Apr. Rom. 15:7-13.

The God of hope. Satan and the world can never give authentic hope. Those who put their hope in the wealth or strength of man will surely know disappointment when they realize they bought the lie. Only our Lord is the Author of Hope who gives peace and joy to those who put their trust in Him.

SUNDAY, 21 Apr. I Thess. 4:13—5:11.

Encourage one another with hope. Sometimes we can become discouraged in this life, and being obedient to God can be hard. We might ask ourselves, “What is the point in doing this?” But we are told to encourage one another with the hope of eternal life through Jesus not only for us but also for all who place their trust in Him.

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MONDAY, 22 Apr. Ps. 75:1-10.

An appointed time. God's judgment comes according to His discretion and will. God abhors evildoers and those who exalt themselves above Him. But He is also gracious and slow to anger. He permits the wicked to have an opportunity to change their ways before it is too late. He has done the same for us.

TUESDAY, 23 Apr. Mal. 4:1-6.

The day is coming. Great calamity and destruction are in store for those who rebel against God. It will be a day of judgment for those who do wrong. But those who revere the Lord and do what is right will see salvation and experience the joy of the Lord's coming. With His coming He will heal all our hurts. Our troubles will end.

WEDNESDAY, 24 Apr. Ps. 84:1-12.

No good thing withheld. This sentiment is mirrored in what Jesus said: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:11). God desires to bless us in so many ways. The things God considers good are far more valuable than what the world values.

THURSDAY, 25 Apr. Ps. 121:1-8.

My help comes from the Lord. This psalm is a beautiful picture of the Lord's protection. There is no greater safety that can be found on the earth than the Lord's unseen presence, right by our side. There is no danger that He cannot protect us from. Our Lord does not sleep, and nothing can surprise Him, for all knowledge and wisdom belong to Him. We are watched over day and night by the Creator, the eternal Holy God of heaven and earth!

FRIDAY, 26 Apr. Titus 3:1-7.

The hope of eternal life. The world says that there are many ways to achieve eternal life. It speaks loudly of relativism, which is the belief that there is no absolute truth—only what seems to be true for the individual. That is in complete contrast to the light of truth illuminated by Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The world hates God's truth, so people will ridicule any mention of Jesus and call His followers intolerant and bigoted. Yet for those who know they are perishing and are seeking the truth, there is no greater comfort than knowing they can inherit eternal life through the only one who can give it—Jesus.

SATURDAY, 27 Apr. I Thess. 5:23-28.

Kept sound and blameless. Apart from the Holy Spirit, there is no way that we can remain sinless and holy. The Holy Spirit gives us everything we need to be blameless before the Lord. If we give our lives and control over to God, His Spirit will overflow within us, keeping us in obedience to God and His will. The Bible is very clear on what will happen when Jesus returns. Those who are obedient and remain vigilant in spirit will receive God's reward; but for those who are found spiritually asleep, there will be great sadness.

SUNDAY, 28 Apr. II Thess. 2:1-3, 9-17.

Eternal comfort and good hope. We find rest in the truth and in God's grace and love. For those who love the truth and live by it, there is comfort in knowing they will live eternally with God. However, there is no such hope for those who refuse to see God's truth and willingly follow lies. They will be broken and destroyed.

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MONDAY, 29 Apr. Job 6:8-13.

A desperate cry for hope. Job was so miserable that he cried out for God to end his life. No human strength could give him hope for the future. He understood that the strength of the flesh is doomed to fail. When we walk through the dark nights of the soul, let us remember Job. Had Job known the wonderful blessings God would give him in the end, his attitude might have been different.

TUESDAY, 30 Apr. Job 7:1-6.

Days without hope. Job pondered the meaningless futility of man's existence. He found no peace or joy in the struggle to simply survive. Each day was like the day before, and he had no hope that tomorrow would be any different. The sad thing is that there are so many people living a hopeless life today. Their hearts are weary, and their eyes are blurred with sadness. Every day without Jesus is a day of no hope.

WEDNESDAY, 1 May. Job 14:7-17.

Will mortals live again? The promise of life after death was an obscure concept to people of ancient days. Job was a righteous man, but he did not have the assurance of eternal life. The ancient Egyptians believed in an afterlife, but their reasoning for storing up worldly goods in the tombs for the deceased to use after death was misguided at best! We know that when we die, we cannot take our earthly possessions with us. Instead, we should store up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20).

THURSDAY, 2 May. Ps. 31:9-16.

My times are in Your hands. The psalmist was going through a rough time. He was sick, guilty of sin, and sad. His enemies were closing in. He knew he was in a terrible position. He

asked God to help him in his troubles. He knew there was no earthly help that could aid him. He also understood that his life lay in the hands of the Lord. So he begged for God's mercy. When we have absolute trust in God, there is nothing that can shake us from that perfect peace that only faith can give.

FRIDAY, 3 May. Ps. 31:19-24.

The Lord preserves the faithful. The psalmist said if we trust in God, He will deliver us from harm—and He can. But the preservation the Lord provides does not always come the way we expect. God did not save Jesus from death on the cross. Nor was Stephen saved from a death by stoning. Yet God gave Stephen something even better—the preservation of his soul. Nothing happens to us without passing through God's hands first. We can rest in His strength, knowing He will give us everything we need during our struggles.

SATURDAY, 4 May. Lam. 3:19-24.

Hope in God's faithfulness. There is purpose in every hardship and pain in life. The Lord is faithful in His love for us, even in the midst of troubles. Our finite minds cannot know where God is going to take us during painful journeys. Did Joseph know that through the jealousy of his brothers and the trials of captivity, God would bring about the deliverance of many?

SUNDAY, 5 May. I Pet. 1:3-12.

New birth into a living hope. The hymn "In Christ Alone" (Townsend and Getty) says, "No power of hell, no scheme of man, / Can ever pluck me from His hand; / Till He returns or calls me home, / Here in the power of Christ I'll stand." As we live, obey, and trust in Him, God is testing and purifying our faith. He does this so that we may know His joy and share in Christ's glory.

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MONDAY, 6 May. Rom. 15:14-21.

Full of goodness and knowledge.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church in Rome was very evident. The church understood the Scriptures and God's plan very well. Paul delayed his visit to Rome for so long because he was more concerned about sharing the good news about Jesus with people who had never heard. Jesus said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Matt. 9:12).

TUESDAY, 7 May. Prov. 1:2-7.

The beginning of knowledge.

The "fear of the Lord" is not the same as a fear of snakes. It means that we acknowledge God above all things. We know that without Him, our lives are meaningless and our souls are spiritually dead. We also know that the Lord will judge every deed ever done by man. Knowing that God holds both life and death in His hands, we strive to please Him by doing what is right.

WEDNESDAY, 8 May. Titus 1:5-9.

An example in self-control.

In order for a man to become a church elder, he had to meet certain requirements that showed he was full of the Spirit and disciplined in his living. People who cannot control their words or actions show that they are immature in their faith. God does not want such a person to be responsible for other believers in spiritual matters lest he lead others away from the truth.

THURSDAY, 9 May. Matt. 24:9-14.

Enduring to the end.

Jesus never said the lives of His followers would be easy. In fact, just the opposite is true. Those who do not have a firm foundation of faith and obedience will act the same way worldly people do. Some-

times it is just much easier to go along with the crowd. But the crowd is headed straight to hell and permanent separation from God. If we continue to do what is right and refuse to follow the world and all its deceptions, we know we have eternal life.

FRIDAY, 10 May. I Tim. 2:1-7.

A life of godliness and dignity.

Through the Holy Spirit, God gives us everything we need to live lives that are pleasing to Him. The word "dignity" has several different meanings. It can refer to "worthiness." Jesus died on the cross for our sins and the opportunity to have eternal life through Him. It is only fitting that we live lives in which God can find worth.

SATURDAY, 11 May. I Pet. 3:8-12.

Love for one another.

What we do should be guided by our love for others. Some people are very hard to love because they have hurt us in some way. When someone speaks harshly to us, it is very hard to respond with kindness. But we have the best model of how to love—Jesus. Jesus loved even those who hated Him and put Him to death. He died so that humankind could be redeemed and returned to God.

SUNDAY, 12 May. II Pet. 1:3-14.

Standing on God's precious promises.

Jesus is the firm Rock whom we cling to in this corrupt world. Through love and obedience, He will give us everything we need to receive His promise of eternal life and future glory. We should desire salvation not only for ourselves but also for everyone. Just as God loves those who are perishing in the world, so must we. Love can help us overcome every situation life throws at us. Love sums up all the commandments given by God. And love will keep us standing on God's promises.

—Christina Futrell.

FOR DAILY MEDITATION

MONDAY, 13 May. Luke 12:22-28.

Trust God to provide. Jesus often used the natural world in order to explain the spiritual world. He reminded us that God loves all of His creation and provides for even the smallest flowers. How much more will He provide for us, who are more valuable than birds? Worrying about things will not add anything to our lives; it could actually shorten them. God does not want us to become bogged down with the stresses of life.

TUESDAY, 14 May. Luke 12:29-34.

The unfailing treasure. Jesus told us that we should not be concerned about temporal things like food and clothes. The Lord brought each of us into existence for a far greater purpose. He wants to share and enjoy His kingdom with us. Jesus made a very telling statement. Where our treasures are, there our hearts are as well. Is your goal in life to be wealthy, famous, or good at other worldly pursuits? Being any of these things is not inherently wrong. What is bad is if one is focused on making money or being famous for selfish ambitions instead of using the gifts from God to enlarge His kingdom.

WEDNESDAY, 15 May. Luke 12:35-40.

Be alert and ready. What is Jesus telling us when He says we are to be alert and ready? It is not a physical vigilance but a spiritual one. It means that we live righteously every moment of the day so that we will be ready to go before Jesus when He returns. Those who are spiritually sleeping might say, "Oh, I know I should stop stealing; but God will forgive me, and I have the rest of my life to be good. I'll just keep having fun and doing what I like." This type of attitude is a delusion from Satan.

THURSDAY, 16 May. Luke 12:41-48.

The thoughtful and prudent manager. Today's message is similar to yesterday's. We are responsible for everything the Lord has entrusted to us. We own nothing on our own. We are like stewards, caring for all that belongs to our Heavenly Master. If He finds that we have misused or abused His possessions, He will banish us from His presence. Since we want Him to be pleased with us when He returns, we must strive to take care of everything He has given us on loan.

FRIDAY, 17 May. Jas. 1:12-18.

The perfect gift from above. We must strive to be strong in the face of temptation in order to endure until the end. Satan knows our vulnerabilities and will use our weaknesses against us. So we must always stay in the Spirit of Christ, who can help us overcome all things. And the Lord will give us good and perfect gifts from above out of His love for us.

SATURDAY, 18 May. Luke 16:10-13.

Faithful in little and much. Character counts for a lot. It does not matter whether we are cashiers or chief executive officers. If the Lord finds us faithful in small, day-to-day matters, then He knows we can be trusted with more responsibility. But if one misuses what has been given to him, everything will be taken away.

SUNDAY, 19 May. I Pet. 4:1-11.

Good stewards of God's grace. The Lord gives us spiritual gifts so that we may encourage other believers and be lights in the perishing world. Whatever we have talent in, we should use it for God's glory. Everyone has different abilities, and none are superior to others. We are many parts in one body (the church). God can and will work through us.

—Christina Futrell

FOR DAILY MEDITATION

MONDAY, 20 May. II Tim. 3:1-9.

Distressing times will come. We are indeed living in stressful times. Over fifty thousand people in Mexico have died because of the drug trade. Why? For power and greed. We hear of young people assaulting others simply for the fun of hurting someone else and then boasting about it. These people have a seared conscience and lack love, even for themselves. If they cared about their eternal future, they would not do such things. We must not be taken over by hatred and anger. Instead, we must remember that while we were yet sinners, Christ loved us enough to die for us.

TUESDAY, 21 May. Jer. 23:23-32.

Warnings for false prophets. Satan is very clever at deceiving people and turning them away from God. He loves to make trouble for everyone. He will cause a false prophet's destruction because of the prophet's willingness to lie, and he will cause the believer of the lie to be destroyed out of his ignorance of God's truth. This is why it is so important for us to be like a strongly rooted tree, deeply anchored into the life and truth of Jesus.

WEDNESDAY, 22 May. Jas. 5:1-6.

Warnings for rich oppressors. All things in this world must deteriorate. Those who trust in their greed and wealth to save them from destruction are blind to reality. Out of their selfishness they treat others unfairly and unjustly. There have been a few examples of this lately. They kill their own people and keep all the money for themselves. What will happen to them? To paraphrase Jesus' words on violence, if you live by the sword, you will die by the sword (cf. Matt. 26:52).

THURSDAY, 23 May. Hos. 14:1-7.

Return to the Lord. The Lord desires that everyone turn back from sin and return to Him. He is full of grace and mercy for those who repent of their sinful ways. He will never stop showing His wonderful love for us. When we abide in God's will, He will provide for us, and we will grow strong in His truth and grace.

FRIDAY, 24 May. Mic. 4:1-5.

Teaching the ways of God. How wonderful will the time be when all things are set right and Jesus comes to rule over men! It will be a time when the Lord is honored, His ways are taught to all people, and everyone will desire to worship the one true God. No longer will men die in battle, for they will live in peace and use their weapons for good. All will live without fear. What a contrast to today's world, where suffering is common and strife abounds!

SATURDAY, 25 May. John 14:1-7.

I will come again. Jesus' returning will be like someone who moves from one place to another. Often a father will go to a new town and find a job and a home. When the time is right, he will bring his family to their new home. This is the concept that Jesus is illustrating. "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9).

SUNDAY, 26 May. II Pet. 3:3-15a.

The promise of the Lord's coming. God always delivers on His promises. He promises eternal life for those who believe Christ and His message, but He also promises destruction and death for those who refuse to repent. Knowing God will bring all this to pass, let us live worthy of His calling!

—Christina Futrell.