

# Favorite Scriptures

Issue #22  
Spring 2013

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### **Psalms 19:7-11**

The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

**Hebrews 4:12** *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

These passages from both Testaments give us a glimpse into God’s amazing Word. His word is powerful, it touches our spirits and hearts; it’s much more than just another influential tome, it truly is unique.

Thanks to Ron Gray for the “favorite scriptures” theme for this issue. This overall theme has given several brothers and sisters in the congregation the opportunity to share their thoughts about their favorite scripture. As you read these articles, we trust that you’ll be encouraged and edified. Please show the writers your appreciation for their efforts and willingness to participate.

### **Matthew 6:34**

Ashley Browning

Anxiety and worry are common traits among all of us. This ranges from things as small as worrying about being on time for an appointment to things of greater importance, such as how to pay the bills when your spouse gets laid off. Worry and anxiety is not just for us adults; young children and adolescents have these problems, too. What may be insignificant to some may in fact be quite significant to someone else. As Christians, we have the comfort of knowing that our God will provide for needs. We have to remember that it is in His time, not ours, that these needs will be met. To help remind us of these things, I often like to turn to Matthew 6:34 for encouragement: *“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”* (ESV) If we spend too much time worrying about future problems and how to deal with them, we lose sight of what is happening in the present. We forget to be thankful for what we are blessed with in the here and now. Today has its own challenges to be faced. By putting our faith in God that He will bring us through our challenges and provide for us, we can have comfort for tomorrow and focus on today and how to better serve Him.

Matthew 6:34 is a great verse in isolation; however, when reading it in the context of its preceding verses (Matthew 6:25-34) the reminder that God provides for all of His creation is evident. God tells us not to

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be anxious for our necessities. If He provides for the smallest of His creation, will He not provide for the greatest of His creation? When we seek the Father and His kingdom and do His will, we will be taken care of. There is no greater joy and comfort than knowing that we will all be provided for if we first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

### **John 14:27**

**Berna McDonald**

Working and dealing with death on a daily basis for over twenty-five years, I found myself having to explain to family members what was happening with their loved ones. This was hard sometimes when people would say, "Why does God allow death to happen", or being told there is no God. From my lack of experience with God, I needed to find the truth first for myself, then be able to help others.

I studied many denominations only to find myself unhappy. I heard more free love; do as I say and not as I do. This made no sense to me.

In 1995 I was invited to attend service with a friend at a church of Christ. My life took a change. First, I was ready to study God's word and was full of questions. As I studied I learned things that other churches didn't teach.

I lived many years with the fear of the unknown until I truly studied the Bible. To be loved by the Father to the point that He sent His son to be a ransomed sacrifice is true love. Jesus taught many things, but I studied

the book of John repeatedly because John 3:16 says, *"For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

What a promise to take away fear. John is full of truths and promises.

John chapter 14 is my favorite scripture of all the books in the Bible. Verse one starts with, *"Let not your heart be troubled..."* and this is said again in verse 27, *"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* What love! What promise!

I serve a risen Savior, why should I fear? I no longer fear because I believe and draw strength from God's words. I can now pray with people for loved ones that may be dying. I do a better job explaining we serve a good God. We were condemned with the sin of Adam, but Jesus Christ bought our redemption when He was nailed to the cross.

Although we all suffer the consequences of Adam's sin, we also can share a common hope through the redemption we have in Jesus Christ.

I don't work any longer, but I volunteer several days a week at Harris Methodist Hospital in Fort Worth. I talk to family members who are afraid and I share Jesus' promise from John 14:27 and I can see stress and fear leave the people I talk with.

I no longer experience fear of the unknown because Jesus has promised me peace.

Peace in Greek is *eireine*. This refers to

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a mental attitude of tranquility based on a relationship with God. The Bible uses peace in two ways; 1) personal peace with God by accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and 2) peace with God on a daily basis by staying rooted in His word.

### **John 1:1-3**

**David Parks**

*<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>The same was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made."*

When I read this passage it reminds me of the truly awesome nature of the sacrifice that Jesus made for mankind. We live in a world that does not know Jesus or who He is. Some people think He was a good man who taught moral lessons to an immoral generation. There are others that think He was a prophet. Some teach He was an angel or in some way created by God. Who is Jesus is the most important question anyone will ever answer in their life. In this passage John gave us his thesis statement then takes us on a journey that leaves Thomas on his knees saying ( Jn 20:28 ) **"My Lord and my God!"**

We see the Word of God all through the bible. The first time we see the Word in the bible is at the beginning when God said, "let there be light." John tells us this Word is Jesus. Later Moses hears God's Word at the burning bush. This Word gives him directions to go forth and free a nation of slaves. Moses, following God's Word, takes this nation

of complaining slaves to Mount Sinai to hear the Word of God. They hear this Word of God thundering from the mountain that is filled with smoke and fire. They are so frightened they beg Moses to ask God to only speak to him. Then Moses goes on the mountain and receives the Word of God. He then recounted all the words of the Lord to the people and wrote them down.

God continues at various times and through different prophets to send His Word to this nation of slaves He has built into a holy nation. Then this Word which brought the universe into existence and spoke to the people from Mount Sinai becomes a living breathing man. It is when I think about John's passage that I understand Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. Matthew 23:37, *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling."* This knowledge of just who this Jesus is should bring us to our knees saying as the Psalmist wrote in Psalms 144:3 *"O LORD, what is man, that You take knowledge of him?"* That the creator of the universe would come to earth as a man to help us is amazing enough, but to suffer in our place is beyond what any words can express. Peter said it about as well as it can be said, *"and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."* 1 Peter 2:24 The Creator of the universe became flesh and dwelt among us. While we were still in our sins He healed us with His wounds.

## **Philippians 2:1-8**

Ivana Baxley

*“Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”* Phil 2:3 We often hear today, “You deserve it.” “Do something for yourself.” Many people talk only about themselves, which reveals they only think about themselves. We live in the days of what is called the “ME” generation, a selfish generation interested primarily in pleasing themselves.

Paul admonishes the Christians in Philippi that *“if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”* Phil 2:1-2 We should look to the interests of others (Phil 2:4).

Paul calls us to give up what we consider is our right. It is a strange message to many ears today. In these verses Paul shows us that we can accomplish much if we think the way Jesus did and have the same attitudes He had. We need to understand that having the mind of Christ means having the mind of humility. Jesus was God, with a right to all power. But he left the power to become a servant. He even allowed himself to be humiliated on the cross, so that He could accomplish our salvation (Phil 2:6-7). That is the ultimate, living example of humility.

When we express the mind of humility in the same way Christ Jesus did, we willingly obey God regardless of the cost, promote peace and unity among our brothers and sisters in Christ, and look out for the good of

others, not our own selfish interests. Thus we are demonstrating the mind of Christ, the mind of humility. This is the key to joy and peace. Our happiness is not dependent on getting what we want. It depends on doing the will of God.

Let’s consider our own home or work place. If we were to step with Jesus into the path of self-denial, into the path of giving up what we consider is our right, and listen to our spouses, co-workers, or friends, and do nothing out of selfish ambition, how much goodness would we unleash? We would disarm the power of sin to control our circumstances, and we would be happier if others around us are happy. Let’s think it over: Wouldn’t our relationships improve if we stopped trying to have our own way all the time?

The most joyful people in the world are those who have the mind of Christ, the mind of humility. They put obedience to Christ above all else, service to others second, and themselves last (Romans 12:9-21). They do not have time to worry about or feel sorry for themselves, for their minds are too occupied with obedience to God and service to others. Do we have the mind of Christ?

## **Philippians 4:11**

Jim Mitchell

Webster defines content as satisfied. I often think of Paul and Philippians 4:11b. For I, not so much unlike Paul, have learned to be content with whatever circumstance I find myself. I too have lived in both poverty and

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prosperity. I have seen times when I couldn't feed my family and bill collectors were calling wanting their money. I have owned expensive vehicles and been debt free. The Lord has blessed me greatly.

When I look back over my life and at the people I've known. Some of the happiest and most content have been ones that had little or nothing. An example is the migrant worker that sweats and works hard all day then goes home to his loving wife and children to enjoy a meal of beans and bread. Military families cling together, for the vast majority can barely make ends meet, but they are content for they have military brothers and sisters all over the world to comfort and help each other.

However contentment can be like a two headed snake, it can bite you coming and going. We need to be on guard that contentment doesn't become complacency. We need to be on alert for the many opportunities the Lord gives us. If you offer the migrant worker the opportunity to drive the truck instead of picking the fruit, he will take it and do a good job to help improve his family's standard of living. You offer the military person a promotion he will take it to help improve his family's standard of living.

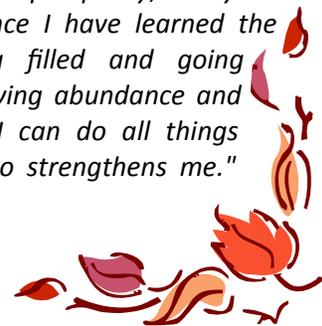
A number of years ago while working at Bell Helicopter I was offered a different job, (not a promotion), it consisted of working 10 to 12 hours a day 5 to 6 days a week. The actual work I performed took about 1.5 to 2.0 hours a day. Because Bell is a union shop they were required to have a machine parts inspector on sight to check the holes and bushings in a helicopter blade when it was installed. I was content and happy, good pay

little effort and could relax for no one would tell me what to do. After a month I became complacent, not interested in doing anything, no drive. After six months I asked to be moved back to my old job for I was no longer content and needed the drive to improve my standard of living.

When John the Baptist told some soldiers to be content with their wages and not take money from anyone by force (Luke 3:14), he didn't mean they shouldn't improve their standard by working hard and getting promotions.

When I was younger I tried to keep up with my neighbors and was not content with the things that I had. As I have grown older, I've learned that when I want something I take pen and paper to justify the thing that I want. I have found that our house, cars and other worldly things, while not being the latest style or the biggest, they are sufficient for our needs. Therefore I'm content with what we have. So when you see me with my outdated things, know that I am content with what the Lord has provided.

For as Paul said *"Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."*  
Phil 4:11-13



### **Malachi 3:3**

Rachael Durost

I have several “favorite” verses in the Bible and Malachi 3:3 was not one of them until I read this story that my aunt shared with me after she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2009. It has stuck with me, and as I strive to live my life in obedience to His will, I am reminded about all of the ways that God watches over, cares for, protects and refines me.

"The first part of Malachi 3:3 says: *“He will sit as a refiner & purifier of silver.”* This verse puzzled some women in a Bible study & they wondered what it meant about the character & nature of God. One of the women offered to find out the process of refining silver & get back to the group at their next Bible Study. That week, the woman called a Silversmith & made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver. As she watched the Silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire & let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest as to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot; then she thought again about the verse that says: *“He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.”* She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time. The man answered that, ‘yes,’ he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it

was in the fire. If the silver was left a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, ‘How do you know when the silver is fully refined?’ He smiled at her & answered, ‘Oh, that's easy -- when I see my image in it.’”

Sometimes life is just plain hard and things just don't seem fair, but no matter what our circumstances may be, we must remember that God is with us, sitting by the hot fire, refining every detail of our lives. So choose to trust the Silversmith! Trust that He's watching every second and paying close attention until He sees His own merciful reflection in your life!

### **Jeremiah 9:23-24**

Ron Gray

The people of Judah had turned their backs on the Lord, having gone after idols and worldly pleasures. They were guilty of “perpetual backsliding” and had “rejected the word of the Lord.” Through all of that, “they were not at all ashamed” of the abominations that they committed, nor did they “know how to blush.” They had become adulterers who provoked God to anger with their idols.

In the midst of the lamentations for the iniquities of the people and the prophecies of imminent doom, these words of beauty are spoken, offering hope to the people of Judah. They also offer hope to all of us who live in a time and place that appears frighten-

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ingly similar to the kingdom of Judah at that time.

*“Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.’” Jer 9:23-24 (ESV)*

Mankind likes to boast about his accomplishments and abilities. This scripture in the Old King James Version tells us not to “glory” in those things.

- Do not boast in accumulated knowledge and wisdom. Though a man may be well educated in the things of this world and has “more degrees than a thermometer” (as the saying goes), he should not glory in that. Don’t let this be the foundation that you build your life upon.
- God tells the mighty man, who may be an athlete making millions of dollars from his abilities, do not boast in that. Do you remember Cassius Clay (aka Mohammed Ali)? He declared, “I am the greatest!” How mighty is he now? Do not boast in your might.

There are men and women on this earth with more riches than they can spend in a lifetime. There is nothing sinful about being wealthy, but do not glory in that.

We do not have to be at the pinnacle of wisdom, might, or riches before we are tempted to boast. God knows that we as human beings often tend to put our confidence

in these things. Our Father does allow us to boast about one thing, to glory in that one thing; that we understand and know God.

What a marvelous thought that the Eternal God of Heaven actually desires that I know Him and understand Him! The God who created the heavens and the earth has time for me. He spoke over 1000 pages of words so that I *can* know and understand Him. He listens to every word that I pray to Him, without ever ignoring me.

Jehovah tells us in these comforting words, that He practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness right here on earth, not just in Heaven. Steadfast love is love that never quits. The KJV uses the word that I really cherish, “lovingkindness.” It is more than kindness and more than love; it is special and it is from our God in Heaven!

The last sentence is beautiful to me, that God tells us intimately that He *delights* in these things. We *can* truly know God. We *can* understand Him. He loves us with a love that never quits.

## **1 Peter 3:8-17**

**James Hinton**

A few years ago, I made a decision where I thought I was being a helpful person to a friend. Without boring you with all the details, 1 Peter 3:8-17 got me through the difficult situation that ensued. Verses 8 & 9 speak to how we are to be of one mind and have compassion for one another and love as brothers and not return evil for evil. Now, as I read these verses more and more, I real-

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ized that Peter may be speaking to us about issues with fellow brethren. But, I also believe that it is a good principle to live by with everyone. We should never return evil for evil in any circumstance. Verse 12 tells us, *"the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,... but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."*

As we read on into verses 13-17, we receive a wonderful reassurance. We all seem to, at some point in our lives, suffer for doing the right thing. After further thinking, the decision I made to help the former friend may have not been the right decision, but it was made with the intention of being helpful to someone. It was turned around on me and I suffered for the decisions that they made. However hard it got, I always tried to turn to these four scriptures. No matter how much wrong we may suffer for following God's Word, verse 14 says we are blessed. I had many opportunities to take revenge on what happened, but after much prayer and study I realized that by being a faithful Christian and trusting in the Word I would not suffer more than I could handle.

In the few months after my decision, I was able to use it as a way to teach others of the compassion we should have for others as well as explain the hope that I have through our Lord and Savior. Verse 16 sums up the opportunity I had. If we live our lives as we should and give a true defense, then those who attempt to defame us with slander or evil should be ashamed. We should not strive to have that happen, but strive to do the will of God in all things. As verse 17 says, *"For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."*

## Psalm 37:4

Linda Lowe

*"Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart."* These words are accredited to David who was a man himself after God's own heart. This verse is one of many of my favorite verses. It is a verse I have reflected on many times in my life - as a reminder in difficult times and an affirmation in pleasurable times. It's a verse that takes me back to my childhood and brings me back to the present and causes me to look heavenward. It's one of those verses for me that just keeps on giving. The more years I rack up in life, the more I can read and reflect on this verse and affirm that every word is true. It's a verse of few words, but packed with a whole lot of punch.

How do I delight myself in the LORD? Well I've got to *get to know the Father* first so that I can know what delights and pleases Him. So for starters I'm going to need to read what is on His mind and - that - He has shared with all in His written word - the Bible. I'm going to spend time with Him reading and meditating and finding out what my God is all about. God has revealed things to all that He wants all to know while on this earth and He has saved some secret things for later maybe (Deuteronomy 29:29). It is my responsibility to learn what pleases God and what displeases Him so I can set about to live a life and do the things that please and delight Him. I John 2:3 says *"By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments."* Well I'm going to need to keep on reading and meditating in

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order to find out what His commandments are for me. John 14:15 says *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”*

So the more I read His word and meditate on it, the more intimate my relationship becomes and His every delight has now molted into those very things that I too delight in.

Concurrently, my Lord wants to hear from me too. He wants me to reveal to Him what is on my heart and what my requests are of Him. Phil 4:6 *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”* He talks to me through His written word and I talk to Him through prayer. In His time and in His way my prayers are answered. Every word He speaks I believe. Every command He gives, I want to obey. He wants to bless me with the desires of my heart. He told me so in Psalm 37:4. He knows the desires of my heart and He continues to make them happen. I BELIEVE!

### **Daniel 3:16-18**

**Steven D. Baxley**

The Book of Daniel is one of my favorite books of the Bible. Its stories of courage and faith in the midst of an unbelieving pagan society resound to me as a follower of God in today’s society. Among the stories in Daniel, is the story of his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and their refusal to obey the king’s command by falling down and worshipping the image on the Dura Plain.

When word came to the king that these three had disobeyed the command, he gave them another opportunity to obey, and warned them that they would be immediately thrown into the fiery furnace if they refused. The answer the three gave the king had three parts:

*“O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.”* (verse 16)

The three make it plain that there is not going to be a long answer to this question, nor will they try to persuade the king to change his mind. Their God was the same God who had revealed to Daniel the meaning of the king’s dream. He is not worshipped by worshipping an image of any kind. This was not up for discussion.

*“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.”* (verse 17)

They express an unshakeable faith that God is most certainly able to deliver them from the fiery furnace, and they are certain that they will be delivered out of the king’s power. This is the kind of faith that these three as well as Daniel demonstrate throughout the book. They know God’s limitless power.

*“But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”* (verse 18)

This is the part of the statement that I like the most. Even if God chose not to deliver them, they will simply not worship any other god. Sometimes, we think that it would

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be easy to serve God believing that He will always deliver us from any problem and any situation. But these three demonstrate a faith that shows they know that God can deliver, but at the same time He may choose not to. They will serve Him anyways. The truth is, God's people sometimes horribly suffer because of the decision they made to serve Him. Their actions are not founded on deliverance from earthly trials (although God does deliver them), but rather on an unshakable desire to serve the true God without wavering.

### **Philippians 4:13; Romans 8:28**

Thelma Arnold

We live in a busy, uncertain, even frightening time. Daily life often presents stresses that can cause troublesome problems, leaving us feeling exhausted and wondering what to do. It seems inevitable that as long as we live on this earth, we must endure some unpleasant times. Everyone does in some way, at sometime. Even the children of God do not escape! We need all of the help we can get! As in the title of a book I read for class, "I Never Promised You A Rose Garden," the book has nothing to do with God's plans, but the idea fits. Also a saying we have all heard, "Life is not a bed of roses!" As beautiful and fragrant as they can be, many roses have pesky thorns! Life has "thorns!"

We witness fine loved ones and friends weekly as they struggle with debilitating illnesses that take them to the brink of death, sometimes to get better, but often the struggle becomes a part of the rest of their life. It could happen to anyone or all of us!

Well, what are we to do? Wring our hands in doubt, giving up in despair? That would be a big mistake! Those among us who are experiencing the pain and frustration of long illnesses show us by their example that they accept what comes, going on about life as best they can. While taking time to look at each person's picture in the directory, most of our members in the above category included their favorite scriptures!

We are not left alone to deal with the valleys and dark shadows of life, but we can go on, fearing nothing, because God is with us! (Psalm 23) Instead of giving up, we are free to try God's way, finding answers and encouraging help in the scriptures.

The younger a person is when he/she is exposed to truth in the Word of God, the better off is that person as life proceeds. Like Timothy, taught at the knees of his loving mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, he was faithfully taught during his childhood years. (1 Tim 3:15-19) Timothy's "bag" of memory verses must have been full! Although it was not known by them during the early years, he was being prepared to work with Paul later.

Finally my favorite verses are always there! Old reliables! My helpers when I need them! I cannot remember how long ago I first began relying on Philippians 4:13. It may have been a class memory verse as a young person, but it has been my faithful companion for many years when I have needed strength! Maybe at first I quoted it to myself when I faced an important exam in school! *"I can do all things through Christ*

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*who strengthens me!*" I got strength because I believed Jesus!

It is still comforting to me although today's circumstances are more serious! Older years are a testing ground for Christians who have been around for awhile! I have all but worn this verse out now as I must function alone since losing my husband ten years ago. (Did I appreciate him enough? Sometimes I wonder!) Work that he automatically did – "man's work" – and without complaining, is now attempted by me. I don't do as good a job as he did, but the verse tells me "I can" with help from Christ!

Living a long life is a blessing – a true, God given blessing - but it has its challenges! Eyesight dims, hearing is not as acute, getting around can be a problem and memory sometimes gets fuzzy!

So coupled with Philippians 4:13 is my second favorite verse, Romans 8:28. *"All things work together for good to those who love God who are the called according to His purposes."* There's the little word all again! I can do all things – all – everything, the entirety! All the obstacles I allow to get in the way of a peaceful, happy life I think, "get lost." But it must be His way. *"He who heeds the word wisely will find good and whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he."* Prov 16:20

The Bible is replete with useful verses covering any subject. It's there for our use because, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* 2 Tim 3:16-17

## **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

**Tim McCarthy**

Time has been defined as the indefinite continued progress of existence and events in the past, present and future regarded as a whole. We use time as measurement from the here and now to the possible future that we will have. We use it in calculating mathematical problems. We use it to measure the times of a specific task. We use it to plan future events and coordinate with others by it. Our whole lives are time based. We all have it, but sometimes we feel we just don't have enough of it. Other times we seem to have too much of it, and then we have "time to kill." As mortal man we cannot escape time. We cannot go back in time and change events. Once time "happens", it's gone and now becomes history.

God is not bound by time or any of its characteristics. Yet He knows that we are and has given us guidance, so that we are not caught unaware when events out of our control happen. He gives us comfort in knowing that whether good or bad times are happening, it's for a reason.

One of my favorite passages in the Bible is Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, *"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under the heaven."* These scriptures are not challenging for us to understand, nor are they difficult to relate to. They are very simple and straightforward. We can read these verses and immediately see the common sense and reality of them. Each and every moment in our lives has a purpose and that purpose has balance. True balance though

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only comes through God, who gives all understanding (2 Tim.2:7). So whether it is a good time or a bad time, know that this too will pass and that each and every thing has a time and a season. And always remember, as it says in Hosea 10:12, "...for it is time to seek the Lord..." we should always make time for the Lord.

### **Luke 7:47**

**Donna Davis**

#### A LESSON IN LOVE, HUMILITY AND FORGIVENESS

*" . . . Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."* Luke 7:47

In the Parable of the Two Debtors, two "sinners" with differing attitudes and responses toward sin and our Savior, Jesus Christ, are under consideration.

One is Simon, the Pharisee (invites Jesus to his house to eat). Luke 7:36

The other is described as a woman in the city who was a sinner. v.37

Pharisees were religious and some were well known as having an outward form of righteousness, but inwardly were full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matthew 23:28). Some are described as self-righteous, "*God, I thank You that I am not like other men - extortioners, unjust, adulterers . . .*" Luke 18:11

Although no specific information is given about the lifestyle of the woman, her sins were publicly known. v.39

The attitude of the woman towards her

sins leads her to seek out our Savior, Jesus, at the house of Simon, the Pharisee. v. 37.

Simon (the master of the house) fails to honor his guest (Jesus). Luke 7:44-47

After entering the house of the Pharisee, the woman takes on the form of a humble host and begins to:

(1) Wash the feet of Jesus with her tears. v.38

(2) Wipe his feet with the hair of her head. v.38

(3) Kiss His feet and anoint them with fragrant oil from the alabaster flask. v.37,39

Foot washing, when done by the master of the house, was a mark of respect and honor to the guest (Gen 18:4). Anointing of the feet or head was used to show honor (Psa 23:5); kissing of the feet was symbolical to show submission (1 Sam 25:24).

In contrast, instead of showing ordinary courtesy to our Savior, and acknowledgment of his sins, Simon criticizes and condemns Jesus and the woman. (in his heart): he spoke to himself saying, "*This man, (referring to Jesus), if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him (Jesus), for she is a sinner.*" v.39.

Consequently, Jesus rebukes Simon because of his failure to honor and respect him and demonstrate his own need for forgiveness. He elevates the woman and commends her actions toward Him and forgives her sins. (Luke 7:44-48)

It is often easy for us (as it was for Simon) to find fault, condemn, see the shortcomings of others, when we use ourselves as

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the standard of righteousness.

Jesus said, “. . . *those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*” Mark 2:17

“. . . *for with what judgment you judge, you will be judged, and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you.*” Matthew 7:2

We are commanded to show mercy, “. . . *Therefore be merciful , just as your Father also is merciful.*” Luke 6:36; Matthew 18:23-27

Unless we see ourselves as “SINNERS” as did the woman in the parable, we will find ourselves in the same spiritual condition of Simon, the Pharisee “. . . *but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.*” Luke 7:47

LESSON WE CAN LEARN: “*FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD.*” Romans 3:23

## **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

**Ephriam C. Davis**

Our society generally accepts various units of measurement as absolute standards: weight-(pounds), time-(hours), length-(inches), volume-(gallons); or even the current federal minimum wage-(\$7.25 an hour). How would a person react who worked 20 hours on a minimum wage job and then received a \$10.00 gross amount in their pay check? While the employer and employee might have different opinions about the \$10.00 pay check, would justice prevail, based on the written law and facts of the case in an appeal to an un-biased court-of-

law that is established to administer righteous judgments? Many in a society have the idea that there is no absolute standard of authority in religious matters. We hear statements like: “You have your opinion, and I have mine, so mine is as good as yours”; or “It does not matter what religion you are in, we are all serving the same God”. If all of this were true, then the difference between right and wrong is just a matter of personal opinion. This creates confusion.

This author was particularly struck when first introduced to the subject passage, and so much so that it became one of the first passages committed to memory:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV) 16 ***All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

The bold font highlighted key phrase is worthy of discussion. While this author is not a New Testament (NT) Greek scholar, there are at least three study techniques that can be useful in helping us to be assured that scripture is God’s absolute standard to avoid the pitfalls of confusion, (1 Corinthians 14:33).

First, we may use study aids like the Vine’s Expository Dictionary, and the Inter-linear Greek NT.

**All** = [*pas*], any, every, the whole.

**Scripture** = [*graf-ay*’], a document, that is, holy Writ.

**Given by inspiration of God** = [*theh-op*’-

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*nyoo-stos* ], divinely breathed in.

Second, we can compare the text of multiple English bible translations. The NIV and ESV literally translate the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of this key phrase as, “God-breathed” and “breathed out by God” respectively.

Third, and perhaps this author’s favorite comes from the realization and understanding, which is developed over years of study, that the bible is its own best commentary. It contains many passages that express the same teachings with no contradictions. For example:

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NKJV) *“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”*

Finally, we can take a lot of pressure off ourselves when we teach others about God, if we are careful to avoid phrases like: “Well I think ...”, “In my opinion...”, or “My preacher says...”. In Paul’s example, he appeals to the absolute standard of authority using the phrase, “According to the Scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

### **Psalm 46:1**

**Jordan McCarthy**

*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”* (ESV)

This verse, to me, is the key description of God’s nature and God’s desire. This verse

is in the bible, telling everyone that there is a safe haven to come to in times of need; a place to come if you are hurt; a place to visit when you are alone...the list goes on. The point of this verse is just to let people know God is a God of compassion, of mercy, and of love. We may stray away from His fold or venture out into the darkness from time to time, but God wants us to know that He loves us nonetheless and as long as we follow the rules of the house, we are always permitted to return to His shelter.

No matter what people may do, or how many times people may fall, it comforts me to know that our God is one of sympathy and those people can always be redeemed no matter who they are. This is why it is vital to spread the word, because as long as people truly understand this concept it dramatically increases the chances that they will be saved.

Most people shy away because of that sole fact that they just think that their life has been full of so much sin that they could never be forgiven, but that is not the case. A refuge is a place to go to hide from the world, danger, or even your past and God’s shelter is no different. As long as you have true repentance in your heart, you are allowed into the shelter and there you can find help for your troubles, to escape your past, or even break old habits.

God will never leave you in a situation where there is no way out, and will always offer help in troubling times. It may not necessarily be an easy task you may have to overcome, but God will always be there.

## Romans 8:35-39

Russ Ward

“Troublesome times are here, filling men’s hearts with fear, freedom we all hold dear now is at stake; humbling your heart to God saves from the chastening rod, seek the way pilgrims trod, Christians awake.” You may recognize this verse in one of the hymns often sung in worship. The song is an exhortation to be ready when Jesus comes yet it also points out the state of the world throughout all generations. Paul, speaking to the church in Rome, could tell them first about troublesome times that come from both outside of the person and those that come from within. He as well as anyone had known persecution, rejection, pain, hunger, and fear. He also understood the frailties of mankind both physically and mentally. In all of this Paul boldly speaks out **“WHO shall separate us from the love of Christ. Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?”** (vs 35) Paul answers his own rhetorical question **“... no in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”** (vs 37)

How can I know, how can one be convinced that this is true? Where does my confidence lie? It is here Paul continues his response. **“... for I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation, is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (vs 38-39) The simplicity and power found in FAITH and OBEDIENCE within the

Gospel of Christ. What did Paul miss? Is there something out there that can keep us from God? If it is self, then deny self, and humble your heart (Mt 16:24). If it is persecution, then trust not in those who kill the body but He who is able to destroy both body and soul (Mt 10:28). If it is fear, then find your faith for there is no fear in faith (2 Tim 1:7). Is that not really where Paul is going? When all is said and done, when all things are broken down to their finest points, we are left with this consideration; is there a God? What am I willing to do to be pleasing to Him? Will He in return hold true to His promise of faithfulness so that I am never ever separated from Him? Paul answers, “I am convinced,” what is our answer?

## Joshua 24:15

Megan Elmore

Joshua 24:15 *“And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods of your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in the whole land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”*

I grew up in a Christian household. I never knew anything different (even though I knew plenty of people who did not follow Christ), and often took it for granted. I had the same challenges as any other kid growing up, but I had the advantage of having Christian parents to be my constant every time I needed that stability. There was never a question where I would be on Sunday Morn-

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ing, Sunday Evening or Wednesday Evening. If a school event came up on those days, I didn't go. I don't think I really knew *why* then, but it didn't matter, it was what I did. I don't think I really fully understood why until I became a parent myself and had to give that stability, had to be that constant and had to set that priority in the hearts of my children. Jason and I made a decision before we even got married that God would be #1 in our lives so that He would be #1 in our children's lives.

In the Bible we read of Joshua and the trials he faced in fulfilling the inheritance of the Promised Land for God's people: Crossing the Jordan, battling at Jericho, and defeating and conquering the Land. In the midst of settling in there, Joshua challenges them to renew their covenant with God, to remember everything that God has done for them. He makes a final declaration to the people that no matter what they choose, he and his household would follow God. They all decide that they would forsake all other gods to worship the one and only God, remembering everything God had done for them all! Do we make the same declaration beyond any doubt like the Israelites?

We live in a world torn apart by sin. With every generation, new challenges arise that make it more and more difficult to do the right thing, to make the right choice, to follow Christ. I fear for my children and the world they are growing up in and also for the world they will be a part of when they are grown. It is sure to be a world led by selfishness, deceit and immorality. Do we have the courage to stand up to that world? Do we say that no matter which direction the world

goes that our household will stand firm and decide, no matter what, that we will follow God? We have to practice it in our lives and write on our children's hearts that no matter what their (or ours for that matter) friends, teachers or co-workers choose, they must decide to serve God, even if they are the only ones!

I love this verse for so many reasons but mostly for its unwavering faith. I hope that my whole family grows to have faith like that! My children are very young, and I certainly do not have it all figured out. I do know one thing, though. No matter what this world throws at us, big or small, I am confident because of this decision: *"... as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"*

### **Isaiah 40:28-31**

**Debra Sweet**

Many years ago, when our country didn't have the internet or telephones, peddlers would bring their tonics, promising perfect health, great wealth and unbridled happiness! A one-stop ticket for whatever ailed you. Purchasing their elixirs would renew hope for people suffering from various maladies. Today, many use our more technological based methods to find their elixir, purchasing products and services claiming to make them feel younger, healthier and whole. I've found that reading Isaiah 40:28-31 can energize one, as well as inspire me to serve our Lord more completely. This passage allows me to overcome my malady, and realize a relief that no medicine or treatment can supply.

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I can almost hear Isaiah, saying:

*Have you not known? Have you not heard?*

*The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.*

*He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.*

*He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.*

*Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:28-31 ESV)*

I find a softening to the fatigue and discomfort when reading that our Lord can provide such a guerdon! Our balm is found in His word. Even the strongest and healthiest grow weary; but those who wait for the Lord will be able to run and not grow tired. The “waiting” isn’t a passive action, nor is it a pouring out, as we wait and serve and obey, we experience growth as we rely on Him instead of our own strength. I see the “waiting” as a time to focus on a spiritual preparation for His coming. The strength to soar up into a stronger relationship with our heavenly Father is available as we actively set ourselves on a course to run the race, and as we increase our endurance, our walk will be a joyful pace.

The peddlers of old promised a relief; but our Lord provides a plan, the inspirational pep talk, and He has already made the purchase, by sacrificing his Son. A life

breathing therapy is provided! No tonic to drink, just the pleasure of serving our Creator while looking forward to experiencing the eternal home with Him.

### **Psalm 51:16-17**

**Jason & Rebekah Bewley**

When David wrote Psalm 51, he was humbly pouring his heart out to God. He knew that he had committed a great sin and had disappointed God, and desperately sought God’s forgiveness and mercy. In verses 16-17 David said, “*For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise.*”

David’s words teach us an important lesson. Just as God desired a broken and contrite heart when David sinned against God, He still desires that of us today. It sometimes becomes easy to get lost in the ‘motions’ of being a Christian: go to church, take the Lord’s supper, read the Bible, pray, do good works etc. It becomes easy to forget that God doesn’t just want our actions. He doesn’t call us to simply act like Christians or to simply sin less than the world; He calls us to obey Him and to follow His Word with all of our hearts.

David understood that God desired more from him than simply working off his sins; so too, God desires more from us than simply going through the motions of Christianity and repentance. He wants a “broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart.”

## Micah 6:6-8

Phil Lumpkin

Micah was one of the minor prophets who prophesied to both Israel and Judah over 700 years before Christ. He was a contemporary of Isaiah. While little is revealed about Micah, he seems to have been a simple, country prophet with close connections to the people and the land. He recognized that the Lord's favor could only be expected when the people practiced righteousness and faithfulness. Unfortunately, the people tended to place their trust in their own strength and worldly wisdom.

Micah identified several moral and social sins of the people. In 2:1-2, he says, "*Woe to those who scheme iniquity, who work out evil on their beds, when morning comes, they do it . . . They covet fields and they seize them, and houses and take them away, they rob a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.*" In 2:8-9, he says, "*. . . You strip the robe off a fellow-Israelite, from unsuspecting passers-by, from those returned from war. The women of My people you evict, each one from her pleasant house.*" Again in 3:1-2,9, "*And rulers of the house of Israel, is it not for you to know justice, you who hate good and love evil; who abhor justice and twist everything that is straight?*" He identifies other sins, but these illustrate how far the people had strayed from God. Unfortunately, if we close our eyes, we might think we were listening to a local, evening news broadcast.

As he indicts the people with his white hot indignation, he counseled them to repent and return to the righteousness and holiness of the Lord. In 6:6 he wrote, "*With*

*what shall I come to the LORD and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"* The Lord desires these same qualities from His children today.

**Do justice.** There are many unjust situations in life that we can't control, but there are many others that we can. For those situations within our control, we can be fair, we can be unbiased, we can be just in our personal, professional, family and social dealings. For instance, Jacob was not fair in his dealing with his sons and we know the heart break that brought on his family.

**Love kindness.** People may or may not be kind to us. But we have the power within ourselves to be kind, to never return evil for evil. Jesus said, "*whatever you want others to do for you, do so for them.*" Mt 7:12 People in ancient societies, as well as our modern day world, tend to respond in kind, to take revenge. But God is pleased with us when we love and practice kindness.

**Walk humbly with our God.** It is good, in fact necessary, to comply with collective worship requirements, such as assembling with the saints to worship. But the Lord requires more, He wants us to humbly walk and talk with Him day by day, much like Adam and Eve in the garden. He wants an intimate relationship with us. He wants to answer our prayers, but not meet us there.

**Psalm 62:8**

**Craig Sweet**

*“Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.”*

Often, we use the word “emotionalism” in conjunction with our relationship to God and it alludes to a negative connotation; it suggests a superficial display of emotions for all to see. However, the scriptures clearly tell us that we are to give God our whole heart. There is a place for emotion in our relationship to God. James (Jas 5:13) says if we are suffering, we should pray. If we are cheerful, we should sing. This implies emotion is involved in our walk with the Lord.

One of my favorite spiritual songs is titled “Pour Out My Heart.” It goes like this:

Here I am once again, I pour out my heart,  
For I know that You hear every cry,  
You are listening no matter what state my heart is in...

You are faithful to answer with words that are true  
And a hope that is real as I feel Your touch  
You bring a freedom to all that's within  
In the safety of this place I'm longing to...

Pour out my heart, to say that I love you  
Pour out my heart, to say that I need you  
Pour out my heart, to say that I'm thankful

Pour out my heart, to say that you're wonderful.

The idea is that no matter what is going

on in our life, if we pour out our heart to Him, He will hear us! We should tell Him that we love Him (Psm 18:1) and when we are happy, sad or thankful, He will hear us, He will listen and He will always answer! Part of our spiritual walk with God is emotional and He always demands our walk with Him to be from our heart. It is only natural that we need Him when our burdens are great or our sorrow is beyond what we think we can bear.

Jesus showed us his heart in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk 22:43) where he was described as, “... being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood...” I believe it is safe to say that Jesus was pouring out his heart to God! What a wonderful example for us to lay our troubles at God’s feet. We may not always get the answer we expect, but God will always listen and He will always answer. In Jn 14:27, when Jesus spoke to the apostles, He said to them, “Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” He told them that He was going to have to leave them, but He would return. He knew that His leaving was weighing heavy on their hearts, but He gave them something to look forward to and to help them keep going for His sake. Jesus gives us heaven to look forward to after this life. For that, we should pour out to God our thanksgiving for what he has done for us. After all, God gave his only begotten son for us to have the hope of eternal life! (Jn 3:16)

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