

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Monday, March 1 – A Cry For Help

I sought the Lord, and he answered me.

Psalm 34:4

When the hut of a settler in a mountainous region of Alaska caught fire, the settler was left without adequate shelter and with few provisions in the coldest state in the US—in the middle of a frigid winter. Three weeks later, the man was finally rescued when an aircraft flew over and spied the large SOS he had stamped out in the snow and darkened with soot.

The psalmist David was certainly in dire straits. He was being pursued by a jealous King Saul who sought to kill him. And so he fled to the city of Gath, where he pretended to be insane in order to preserve his life (see 1 Samuel 21). Out of those events emerged Psalm 34, where David cried out in prayer to God and found peace (vv. 4, 6). God heard his pleas and delivered him.

Are you in a desperate situation and crying out for help? Be assured that God still hears and responds to our desperate prayers today. As with David, He's attentive to our distress calls and takes away our fears (v. 4)—and sometimes even saves us “out of [our] troubles” (v. 6).

Scripture urges us to “*cast [our] cares on the Lord and he will sustain [us]*” (Psalm 55:22). When we turn our difficult circumstances over to God, we can trust that He'll provide the help we need. We're secure in His capable hands.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for hearing my prayers and bringing comfort, peace—whatever I need most. And thank You especially for rescuing me from my sin. Amen!

Tuesday, March 2 – Remember Praise

How good it is to sing praises to our God.

Psalm 147:1

Nancy Gustafson, a retired opera singer, was devastated when she visited her mother and observed her decline from dementia. Her mom no longer recognized her and barely spoke. After several monthly visits, Nancy had an idea. She started singing to her. Her mother's eyes lit up at the musical sounds, and she began singing too—for twenty minutes! Then Nancy's mom laughed, joking they were "The Gustafson Family Singers!" The dramatic turnaround suggested the power of music, as some therapists conclude, to evoke lost memories. Singing "old favorites" has also been shown to boost mood, reduce falls, lessen visits to the emergency room, and decrease the need for sedative drugs.

More research is underway on a music-memory link. Yet, as the Bible reveals, the joy that comes from singing is a gift from God—and it's real. "*How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!*" (Psalm 147:1).

Throughout the Scriptures, in fact, God's people are urged to lift their voices in songs of praise to Him. "Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things" (Isaiah 12:5). "*He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him*" (Psalm 40:3). Our singing inspires us but also those who hear it. May we all remember: our God is great and worthy of praise.

PRAYER:

Father, may I sing praises to You. Songs that touch Your heart and moves Your hand. Thank You for so often unlocking the minds of those with memory problems through the beauty and power of song. Amen!

Wednesday, March 3 – He Speaks in the Dark

Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in light: and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.

Matthew 10:27

At times God puts us through the discipline of darkness to teach us to heed Him. Song birds are taught to sing in the dark, and we are put into the shadow of God's hand until we learn to hear Him. "*What I tell you in darkness*" – watch where God puts you into darkness, and when you are there keep your mouth shut.

Are you in the dark just now in your circumstances, or in your life with God? Then remain quiet. If you open your mouth in the dark, you will talk in the wrong mood: darkness is the time to listen. Don't talk to other people about it; don't read books to find out the reason of the darkness, but listen and take heed. If you talk to other people, you cannot hear what God is saying. When you are in the dark, listen, and God will give you a very precious message for someone else when you get into the light.

After every time of darkness there comes a mixture of delight and humiliation (if there is only delight, I question whether we have heard God at all), delight in hearing God speak, but mainly in humiliation – it took a long time I was in hearing that! How slow I have been in understanding that! And yet God has been saying it all these days and weeks." Now He gives you the gift of humiliation which brings the softness of heart that will always listen to God now.

PRAYER:

Father, I am grateful that it is in the dark places that I am able to hear You speak clearly. When it seems we are all alone, You are always there. We pray today that our ability to listen becomes much greater than our ability to speak. So, even though for some it may seem dark, we wait to hear Your voice! Amen.

Thursday, March 4 – Difficult People

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Romans 12:18

“Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it stands than to anything on which it is poured.”

Jesus' own life was anything but peaceful. He was born in a stable after a extremely difficult journey. His family was forced to flee to Egypt when He was an infant because a madman was murdering baby boys. He became the most celebrated teacher of His country, drawing the wrath of the religious and political establishment. Ultimately, He died on the cross.

One of the most important skills we can develop as we walk with Christ is to love difficult people. Here are four methods Jesus modeled when He encountered difficult people:

- Realize you can't please everybody. (Matthew 22:18).
- Learn to say no to unrealistic expectations. (Ephesians 4:15a NIV).
- Never retaliate (Matthew 5:38-39).
- Pray for them (Matthew 5:44).

Jesus brought peace: between God and man; between estranged family members; and even between enemies.

Why don't we see more evidence of it? As long as humans have the freedom to live for or against God, we will not see peace in full bloom. But the seed is planted. Sprigs and shoots can be seen in the most unlikely places. The promise of what is to fully be!

PRAYER:

Father, God of peace, thank You for sending the Prince of Peace to bring hope and promise to the world. I thank You for speaking to my heart today. I repent for my carnal response toward certain people in my life. I confess that I have allowed myself to become irritated with them, and at times I have even been judgmental of them. Today I release forgiveness toward them, and I choose from this point onward to see myself as a force for peace. I purpose in my heart to exercise the patience that is a quality of Your love within me. I ask You for wisdom to know what to say and do and what not to say and do when I am in the presence of these individuals. Thank You for leading and guiding me in each contact I make with them. In the Name of Jesus, I pray, Amen!

Friday, March 5 – Friends

The LORD confides in those who fear Him; He makes His covenant known to them. Psalm 25:14

Friendship and fear don't naturally go together. You're probably not too scared of the people you call friends. And yet our relationship with God is characterized by familiarity and formality, closeness and reverence. Friendship with God is a miraculous gift. In the Old Testament, only a few were said to enjoy friendship with God; in the New Testament, Jesus tells His disciples, "Today I have called you friends."

“A proper fear of God is that indefinable mixture of reverence and pleasure, joy and awe which fills our hearts when we realize who God is and what He has done for us. It is a love for God which is so great that we would be ashamed to do anything which would displease or grieve Him, and makes us happiest when we are doing what pleases Him.” Sinclair B. Ferguson

The necessary attitude for anyone who wants to be friends with God is to "fear" Him. This doesn't mean we regard Him as someone who might unpredictably harm us. But it does mean recognizing how much we need Him, how we would be lost without Him, and that He is the center of all life and deserves our respect.

When we fear God - hold Him in reverence and respect - we get to enjoy His company and guidance through prayer and His Word. And that is truly a friendship to celebrate.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for reaching out to me. Please cultivate in my heart a healthy fear of You and help me to walk in Your ways. Lord, I am running to You! I want to be as close to You as I can possibly be! I don't want even the smallest hint of worldliness in my life. I want to be like You, to think like You, and to please You in every part of my life — my family, my job, my relationships, and my finances. Holy Spirit, if there is any part of me that has been influenced wrongly by the world, I ask You to please show it to me and help me get it corrected. In Jesus' Name, I pray, Amen!

Saturday, March 6 – Adjusting Our Focus

"Pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

1 Thess. 5:17-18

There is power in taking our eyes off everything that's not right in our lives — things that aren't exactly like we want them to be or that didn't turn out the way we'd planned.

There's a certain inner strength that comes when we turn our focus from what we don't have and actively focus on what we do have — for example, the bed we lie on to sleep, the house or apartment that protects us from the elements, the food we eat, our families, a mother or father who is still alive and well, etc.

When we think about it, there's so much in life to be thankful for. And once we start thanking God and acknowledging Him for what we already have, we completely move into the arena of faith to receive even more from Him. We step out of that place of struggling and striving where we're trying to figure out everything on our own. Instead, we find ourselves resting under the shadow of the Almighty where the devil cannot touch us (see Psalm 91:1,10) — all because we're thankful to God!

PRAYER:

Father, we are thankful for the friends you have given us. We are thankful for the praise that radiates from our hearts. No matter what The future holds, we have come to the place we will trust you completely. Your thoughtful, kind and tender touch has brought us to a place of joy and contentment in You. We will serve You with a willing heart and with determination to reach our community for You. Amen.

Sunday, March 7 – God’s Hand of Protection

***For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in His dwelling;
He will hide me in the shelter of His tabernacle and set me high upon a
rock.*** Psalm 27:5

Saint Teresa said this: Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you: everything passes away except God; God alone is sufficient.

The shepherd boy who wrote and played music that touched the hearts of many had grown into a mighty warrior. He was Saul's beloved champion in battle - and yet the disturbed king burned with jealousy and rage at David's exploits.

He needed and wanted David close, but uncontrollable fits would overcome Saul and he would strike out to slay him. David's life was not safe. He lived in a state of constant terrifying fear, wondering what mood the king would be in at a particular moment.

But even in these unreliable circumstances, David believed God's hand of mercy and protection was on his life - that God would "hide me" or "set me high upon a rock." Few of us live in such an insecure state as David did. But we have troubles of our own. How is your faith?

PRAYER:

Lord, You do protect and provide for me in all circumstances of life. Thank You for Your hand of mercy. I want to thank You for loving me so much that You placed people in my life to help build a solid foundation underneath me. Because of what they invested in me, my life is set on a firm foundation. I am so thankful for everything that was graciously done on my behalf! Please help me fortify my own foundation in every area that might need shoring up or strengthening. And I ask that You open my eyes to people around me who need the same kindness and care shown to them. Your Word says “freely ye have received, freely give,” so I know I have a responsibility to give of myself as others gave to me. I want to be a positive influence in someone else’s life, so I ask You, Holy Spirit, to show me how to be the same kind of blessing that others have been to me. In Jesus’ Name, I pray, Amen!