

Daily Devotions

Monday, Feb. 15: Overcomers

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:21

In 1994, when South Africa made the transition from government by apartheid (imposed racial segregation) to a democracy, it faced the difficult question of how to address the crimes committed under apartheid. The country's leaders couldn't ignore the past, but merely imposing harsh punishments on the guilty risked deepening the country's wounds. As Desmond Tutu, the first black Anglican Archbishop of South Africa, explained in his book *No Future Without Forgiveness*, "We could very well have had justice, retributive justice, and had a South Africa lying in ashes."

Through establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, the new democracy chose the difficult path of pursuing truth, justice, and mercy. Those guilty of crimes were offered a path to restoration—if they were willing to confess their crimes and seek to make restitution. Only by courageously facing the truth could the country begin to find healing.

In a way, South Africa's dilemma mirrors the struggle we all face. We're called to pursue both justice and mercy (Micah 6:8), but mercy is often misunderstood to be a lack of accountability, while pursuing justice can become distorted into pursuing revenge.

Our only path forward is a love that not only "hates what is evil" (Romans 12:9) but also longs for the transformation and good of our "neighbor" (13:10).

Through the power of Christ's Spirit, we can learn what it means to have a future of overcoming evil with good (12:21)

PRAYER:

Father, when the pain and injustice around me breaks my heart, help me to still believe in Your love and power to transform and heal. Help me to point with my life to Your justice, mercy, and love. Amen!

Tuesday, Feb. 16: Wait on Your Blessing

For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. Habakkuk 2:3

A popular restaurant in Bangkok serves soup from a broth that has been cooking for forty-five years and is replenished a bit each day. The practice, called “perpetual stew,” dates back to medieval times. Just as some “leftovers” taste better a few days later, the extended cooking time blends and creates unique flavors. The restaurant has won multiple awards for the most delicious broth in Thailand.

Good things often take time, but our human nature struggles with patience. The question “How long?” occurs throughout the Bible. One poignant example is from the prophet Habakkuk, who begins his book by asking, “*How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?*” (Habakkuk 1:2). Habakkuk (whose name means “grappler”) prophesied God’s judgment on his country (Judah) through the invasion of the ruthless Babylonian Empire, and he wrestled with how God could allow corrupt people to prosper as they exploited others. But God promised hope and restoration in His own time: “*For the revelation [of God’s help] awaits an appointed time Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay*” (2:3).

The Babylonian captivity lasted seventy years. By human reckoning that’s a long time, but God is always faithful and true to His Word.

Some of God’s best blessings may be long in coming. Though they linger, keep looking to Him! He prepares every blessing with perfect wisdom and care—and He’s always worth waiting for.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your kindness and faithfulness in every season and blessing of life. Help me to look forward to You most of all. Amen!

Wednesday, Feb. 17: Built on The Rock

Everyone who [practices] these words of mine . . . is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Matthew

7:24

As many as 34,000 homes in one US state are at risk of collapsing due to faulty foundations. Without realizing it, a concrete company pulled stone from a quarry laced with a mineral that, over time, causes concrete to crack and disintegrate. The foundations of nearly six hundred homes have already crumbled, and that number will likely skyrocket over time.

Jesus used the image of building a home atop a faulty foundation to explain the far riskier danger of building our lives on unsteady ground. He explained how some of us construct our life on sturdy rock, ensuring that we hold solid when we face fierce storms. Others of us, however, erect our lives on sand; and when the tempests rage, our lives tumble “with a great crash” (Matthew 7:27). The one distinction between building on an unshakable foundation and a crumbling one is whether or not we put Christ’s words “into practice” (v. 26). The question isn’t whether or not we hear His words, but whether we practice them as He enables us.

There’s much wisdom offered to us in this world—plus lots of advice and help—and much of it is good and beneficial. If we base our life on any foundation other than humble obedience to God’s truth, however, we invite trouble. In His strength, doing what God says is the only way to have a house, a life, built on rock.

Whose wisdom, insights, or opinions do you listen to the most? How can you better build your life’s foundation by putting Jesus’ words into practice?

PRAYER:

Father, so much of what I experience feels unsteady and temporary, a life built on sand. I want to live a solid life. Help me to obey You. Amen!

Thursday, Feb. 18: Freedom

If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

John 8:36

Twenty long years passed before British journalist John McCarthy—a five-year hostage during Lebanon’s grueling civil war—met the man who negotiated his release. When McCarthy finally met U.N. envoy Giandomenico Picco, McCarthy simply said, “Thank you for my freedom!” His heartfelt words carried great weight because Picco had risked his own life during dangerous negotiations to secure freedom for McCarthy and others.

We as believers can relate to such hard-won freedom. Jesus gave up His life—enduring death on a Roman cross—to secure spiritual freedom for all people, including each of us. Now as His children, we know “it is for freedom that Christ has set us free,” the apostle Paul boldly declared (Galatians 5:1).

The gospel of John also teaches of freedom in Christ, noting, “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

FREE, HOW?? In Jesus, we experience freedom not only from sin and its hold on us but also from guilt, shame, worry, Satan’s lies, superstitions, false teaching, and eternal death. No longer hostages, we have freedom to show love to enemies, walk in kindness, live with hope, and love our neighbors. As we follow the Holy Spirit’s leading, we can forgive as we’ve been forgiven.

For all of this, let’s thank God today. Then let’s love so others will know the power of His freedom too.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for my freedom. Thank you Father for setting me free from spiritual death and releasing me to love. May each day prove to be a new opportunity to Love like you Love and serve others the way Jesus would. Amen!

Friday, Feb. 19: Letting Go

Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Matthew 19:21

Over several years, a British couple living in West Africa developed a strong friendship with a man in their town and many times shared the love of Jesus and the story of salvation with him. Their friend, however, was reluctant to relinquish the lifetime of allegiance he had to another religion, even though he came to recognize that faith in Christ was "the greater truth." His concern was partly financial, since he was a leader in his faith and depended on the compensation he received. He also feared losing his reputation among the people in his community.

With sadness, he explained, "I'm like a man fishing with my hands in a stream. I have caught a small fish in one, but a bigger fish is swimming by. To catch the bigger fish, I have to let go of the smaller one!"

The rich young ruler Matthew wrote about in Matthew 19 had a similar problem. When he approached Jesus, he asked, "*What good thing must I do to get eternal life?*" (v. 16). He seemed sincere, but he didn't want to fully surrender his life to Jesus. He was rich, not only in money, but also in his pride of being a rule-follower. Although he desired eternal life, he loved something else more and rejected Christ's words.

When we humbly surrender our life to Jesus and accept His free gift of salvation, He invites us, "***Come, follow me***" (v. 21).

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for offering Your Son as payment for my debt of sin. I desire to get to the place I can surrender wholly to You. Getting to a place in You that I have no desire to ever leave. In the Name of Jesus I refuse to go back! Amen.

Saturday, Feb. 20: A Time to Remember

“I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember Your miracles of long ago.” Psalm 77:11

“Memory keeps gratitude fresh and gratitude keeps faith fruitful.”

I’m certain there are things in your personal life you’re believing God for, and I want to encourage you that just as God was faithful to His Word to fulfill the promise of a Savior, He will be faithful to do for you what He said He would do!

What has God done for you? Today? This week? A decade ago? God said He would always be with us — that He would never leave us (Hebrews 13:5). He is the Friend who sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24). In fact, we are joined to the Lord. We are one spirit with Him (see 1 Corinthians 6:17). He truly is as close as the mention of His Name! Thoughts from the enemy come to try to make us unsure and cause us to lose our footing. However, although thoughts may bombard us at times, those thoughts do not and cannot change the truth of God’s Word! They don’t change His will, His plan, or His faithfulness.

We all have stories of His faithfulness in our lives. When we choose to remember them, we are blessed by them again and again. Best of all, remembering helps us in tough times. We remember that times have been tough before and that God helped us through them, and we know in our hearts He will do it again.

Therefore, when things are tough, it is important to remember God’s faithfulness and blessings.

Please let us know how we can pray for you. We are excited to stand in faith with you because we know God is faithful, and He will be faithful to you!

PRAYER:

Father, life is hard right now, but I know that You are good. Remind me of Your faithfulness and renew my heart with Your joy. Lord, You have always been faithful. I thank You that even in my present situation; You are going to be faithful again. Please help me recall all the times in the past when You delivered and rescued me from other situations that also looked hopeless. Thank You for helping me keep those awesome experiences alive and fresh in my mind and heart. Thank You for always being faithful to me! In Jesus’ Name, I pray, Amen!

Sunday, Feb. 21: What Love Looks Like

No one has ever seen God, but if we love each other, God lives in us, and His love is made perfect in us.

1 John 4:12

He who is filled with love is filled with God Himself.

Want to know what love looks like? Look at God. Consider His sacrifice, His patience, His comfort, His faithfulness, His generosity. God's creativity in expressing love is so great that it's almost incomprehensible.

Consider how your love stands up next to His. Don't get discouraged. You're not God. At times, your love still falters and fails. But God's love is at work in your life. He's helping you love others in the same wonderful way He so deeply loves you.

Let God's creative compassion inspire you to love others well. Ask for His help in knowing the best way to express your love so that it meets needs, builds relationships, and warms hearts. Then, take a moment to sit back and enjoy His love for you.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your amazing love that teaches me how to love other people. I want to love others the way that You love them. Help me find ways to reach out to them and express my love in the way that people need it the most. Father, as I evaluate my own heart, I realize that I have allowed distractions and the cares of life to dull my passion for You. Somewhere along the way, I became more focused on working for You than walking with You. I repent and turn away from the prayerlessness and hardness of heart that led me to this state. Renew a steadfast spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation; lift me up from the place where I've fallen; and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Teach me afresh to reverence You and to truly love You by being a doer of Your Word and not merely a hearer only. In Jesus' Name, I pray, Amen!