

THE QBC DAILY NUGGET

The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold (Psalm 19:9b-10a)



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Quidnessett Baptist Church
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The QBC Daily Nugget January 1, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

MATTHEW 26:20-22 - When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, he said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: IS IT I, LORD? If we chose to enter the scene where this question, “Is it I, Lord?” was spoken, we would become eerily silent. There would be no frivolous dinner time discussions occurring. Humble silence would reign after each simple utterance of the question until it came around the table for our turn to utter those words. The question pierces deep. It searches like an inescapable floodlight shining on the soul.

It is the Passover. A lot was about to unfold for our Lord and His disciples. The Garden of Gethsemane and the spiritual battle Jesus would fight loomed. His deep humiliation on the cross was just over the horizon. The disciples were about to experience failure. Both Jesus and His chosen twelve were headed down the path of the Father’s will. It was a path of indescribable pain. For Jesus, it was for our redemption. For His disciples, it was for their self-awareness and future effectiveness. Going back to the Passover scene, Jesus looks around and says, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” Hugh Martin, in his book *Simon Peter*, captures the emotions coming forth from Jesus’ statement. He writes, “They (the disciples) were taken by surprise. They were grieved and exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say to Him, ‘Lord, is it I?’ They began to doubt their own integrity; each one to dread himself. Every one of them began to say, ‘Lord, is it I?’ Peter especially felt it most keenly, most painfully, most acutely. Could it be possible he was after all nothing but a miserable hypocrite? Could it be, that after all the happy conversations he had had with Jesus, and all the holy glowing emotions of affection, gratitude, and admiration which so often he had felt replenishing his heart, he was to awake to the woeful discovery that still there was with him no root of true integrity at all?”

The question asked, “Is it I, Lord?” was answered with liberating force to the terrified disciples by the revealing of the true traitor, Judas (**MATTHEW 26:25**). They were not the betrayers. They were not callous betrayers of the Lord Jesus, but they would soon become fearful deniers of Jesus – “then all the disciples left Him” (**MATTHEW 26:47-56**). And who among us could not look back at times in our walk with Jesus and recall falling short of the Lord like those guys did? The words in the question “Is it I, Lord?” get rearranged to, “It is I, Lord.” When this type of self-awareness is graciously given to us by our Lord, we have two options. First, we simply roll over in defeat. I think we dishonor the Lord more when we don’t get up after a failure than the failure itself – “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me” (**MICAH 6:8**). The disciples, and especially Peter, got up. Our second option is to learn and I mean really learn, never to rely upon ourselves for strength and understanding. For me, this lesson needs to be repeated because I don’t get it very easily. Let our hearts take charge of our lives for one second and we are primed for a fall – “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (**PROVERBS 3:5-6**). It might be a good thing to start praying this verse – “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (**JEREMIAH 17:9**) – and praying it like this, “Lord, I believe my heart is sick and not trustworthy. Help me really believe it to where I refuse to listen to its unwise counsel and direction in my daily life.” We might even ask ourselves the question, “Is it I, Lord?” when it comes to trusting our own hearts.

PRAYER: “Lord, prevent me from the always present danger of trusting myself.”

QUOTE: R. M. M’CHEYNE, “It is a mark of a hypocrite to be a Christian everywhere except at home.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 2, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

MALACHI 3:16 - Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: WHOSE COMPANY DO WE DESIRE? I think my children are learning something each of us learned as we got older. Parents seem to get smarter as their kids get older. That doesn't mean I am a smarter parent by any means. I would argue with supporting data I am not. What is revealed in this revelation by the maturing of the younger generation is wisdom starting to take root. I must confess there were times in my independent teen years I probably whispered, respectfully of course, that my parents just didn't understand, were too “old fashioned”, were not in tune, just didn't get it, and then, “wham”, one day I woke up and realized they were pretty wise and smart after all!

It occurs also in the spiritual realm. No place is such maturing revealed than in our attitudes toward fellowship with other believers. When it comes to fellowship in the body of Christ, what criteria do we have? We each have standards on the type of folks we may safely fellowship with and not compromise our understanding of the truth. I wonder as we work through our criteria, if it might be a little too narrow. Speaking only for me, my road to fellowship has long been traveled on the highway which has a sign “One Way Only”. Maybe it needs to become more accessible. Maybe a “one way street” is not the proper criteria for traveling the road to fellowship with other believers. Maybe even adopting the criteria found in today's reference – “Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another”. It seems the criteria for fellowship and the presence of the Lord was those who feared the Lord. Perhaps some of what I consider “essential criteria” for fellowship might turn out to be actually “non-essential” criteria for fellowship. That is not to compromise truth and become a watered down believer where everything goes and unity is based on getting along instead of unwavering Biblical truth. No, the fear of the Lord is anything but passive unity. It ensures the purity of unity. What would it look like if the fear of the Lord was the criteria for fellowship? For starters, it would include, as its supreme element, love for the Lord Jesus and then these other two things - the highest respect for His Word and the Fruit of the Spirit which is willing to humbly admit, “I don't have the truth all figured out” (**ISAIAH 66:1-2**).

Someone from the 18th century who was greatly used by God, still speaking today through his sermons and journals, knew the true criteria for fellowship. Here is an account of George Whitefield's position with other believers – “Whitefield, a Church of England priest, welcomed as co-laborers Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers, Lutherans, Congregationalists, Dutch Reformed, and anyone else who preached individual conversion. As he crossed the Atlantic, he wrote to a clergyman friend in England: “The partition wall has for some time been broken down out of my heart, and I can truly say whoever loves the Lord Jesus, ‘the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.’” Another account of George Whitefield's criteria for fellowship is found in Iain Murray's book *Heroes* under the chapter *George Whitefield and Christian Unity*. Whitefield said, “When we confine the Spirit of God to this or that particular church; and are not willing to converse with any but those of the same communion; this is to be righteous over-much witness. The Spirit of God is the centre of unity; and whenever I see the image of my Master, I never enquire of them their opinions; I ask them not what they are, so they love Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, but embrace Him as my brother, my sister, and my spouse: and this is the spirit of Christianity”. Sounds like good criteria to use to determine the company we keep. Maybe I should rethink my criteria!

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to deepen my commitment to Your people out of love and sense of privilege.”

QUOTE: “A child of God loves the company of others in His family.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 3, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

MICAH 4:4 - but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **WHEN I AM AFRAID**. Been afraid of anything lately? Be honest. Don't put up the shield of denial. Of course, we have been afraid. Fear is very real in our world. There is a lot to be afraid of out there. We also have an adversary in the devil that uses fear as a great weapon.

The man after God's own heart knew about being afraid – “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you” (**PSALM 56:3**). Isn't it encouraging to read David say, “When I am afraid” instead of “If I am afraid”? He isn't on some spiritual mountain we cannot scale. He is with us, not above us. He knew fear. We know fear and fear shows no partiality. It includes believers and unbelievers. To show just how real fear is outside of us who claim to know Christ, it is reported that a syndicated newspaper counselor receives an average of 10,000 letters each month and nearly all of them from people burdened with problems. She was asked if there was any one of them which predominates throughout the letters she receives, and her reply was the one problem above all others seems to be fear. We certainly aren't advocating newspaper counselors but the illustration reveals that fear is universal and will continue to be so until the new heaven and new earth become reality (**REVELATION 21:1-5**).

In the helpful study and workbook, The Fear Factor, Wayne and Joshua Mack said two things that show us, as believers, the tremendous power of fear in our lives if not Biblically combated. First, “Fear will prevent you from doing things you normally would do, and cause you to do things you normally wouldn't do.” And then they said, “The Bible makes it clear that fear can paralyze even great men”.

I want us to consider ways to fight being afraid from two sources – today's reference and the words of David in **PSALM 56:3**. In learning to win out over unhealthy fear, we begin with the realization we cannot overcome it on our own. In **MICAH 4:4**, the Lord takes full responsibility for relieving His people from unwanted and unhealthy fear – “And no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken”. We must always start with our inadequacy. Any thought of self-sufficiency will only accelerate the power of fear when we fail to defeat it in the strength of self. A second way to overcome fear is to go to the next realization that it is God's Word that destroys it – “for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken” and the Word of the Lord which conquers our fears is “God is love” (**1 JOHN 4:16**). This becomes clear further in chapter four of John's first epistle, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love” (**1 JOHN 4:18**). Our only offensive weapon is God's Word (**EPHESIANS 6:17**) and when it is combined with the shield of faith (**EPHESIANS 6:16**) by believing its power and sufficiency, we will grow in the perfect love that is the only answer to defeating fear. The final step in learning to overcome fear is found in David's words – “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you” (**PSALM 56:3**). It is taking a decisive stand to trust in God despite what appears on both the outside (circumstances) and on the inside (emotions). David confessed his condition of being afraid but he countered it with a deliberate placing of his trust in the God who is love and casts out fear.

Our battles with being afraid will be often in our fallen world and spiritual condition of remaining sin. We can overcome. God has made a way as we seek to implement that way in our lives.

PRAYER: “Lord, fear is very real and felt in my life. Help me to trust You to chase it away.”

QUOTE: WILLIAM GURNALL, “The chains of love are stronger than the chains of fear.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 4, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

GENESIS 3:1-4 - Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE TWO DEADLY “D’s” OF SATAN. The Puritan Thomas Brooks identified four chief objects of study for the Christian – Christ, the Scriptures, our hearts, and Satan’s tactics. It isn’t difficult to see these as the chief objects to occupy a Christian’s life and devotion. Christ is the chief goal; the scriptures are the chief means to the goal, and our hearts and Satan the chief objects hindering us to the goal. In today’s nugget, we want to consider our chief foe warring against our souls – Satan.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul penned two statements about the workings of our adversary, the devil. First, he called them “designs” – “So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs” (**2 CORINTHIANS 2:11**). The word “designs” means “a mental perception or thought, an evil purpose” and reveals the intelligence the devil has in planning his attacks upon us. The second statement Paul makes about the devil’s workings is found in the letter to the Ephesians – “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil” (**EPHESIANS 6:11**). The word he used is “schemes” and means “cunning arts, deceit, trickery” and reveals to us the ability of the devil to be very crafty in attacking us.

As we think on Paul’s exhortation to not be ignorant of the designs of the devil, we need to go back to the Garden of Eden and the dialogue between the serpent and Eve. It is there we may learn two of the most effective workings of our enemy. I call them “the two deadly D’s of Satan”. Learning these two tactics of the devil will help us in our own daily battles. Solomon is right. There is nothing new under the sun to include the evil workings of the evil one (**ECCLESIASTES 1:9**). The first “deadly D of Satan” is doubting of God’s word – “He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say?’” Our faith is founded upon, stands upon, and continues upon God’s Word (**2 TIMOTHY 3:16**). Begin listening to whispers about the truthfulness and sufficiency of the Scripture and our faith is headed for a shipwreck. Many people begin their spiritual slide by doubting God’s Word. William S. Plumer said, “Satan loves to fish in muddy water.” The waters of our minds and hearts get murky fast when we begin to doubt the Bible. Don’t think it cannot happen. It is easy to say, “I trust and believe the Bible” when our spiritual skies and lives are unclouded and bright. Try to say that with deep conviction when storm clouds start rolling into our lives. It won’t be as easy and Satan is ready to fish with the bait of doubt. The second “deadly D of Satan” is denial – “But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die’”. When doubt of God’s Word gets a foothold, denial of God’s Word soon follows. And like doubt, don’t think this cannot happen. What about when an indescribable pain comes into our lives like a loss of a loved one or some other traumatic event threatens to shatter our lives? I have heard it face to face from a believer’s – “God doesn’t love me. If He did, this wouldn’t be happening.” That is the second “deadly D of Satan” in full force and will send a person spiraling downward quickly.

We have a crafty foe. Learning his tactics will help us wear God’s armor and walk more valiantly in the daily struggles we fight on the way to heaven. And it begins with learning “the two deadly D’s of Satan”.

PRAYER: “Lord, protect me from the craftiness of the devil.”

QUOTE: “One of the most serious mistakes the Christian makes is to forget there is a personal devil.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 5, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

PSALM 4:3 - But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: HE CARES FOR HIS OWN. There is a legend told of an ancient kingdom whose sovereign had just died, and whose ambassadors were sent to choose a successor from twin infants. They found the little fellows fast asleep, and looking at them carefully, agreed that it was difficult to decide, until they happened to notice one curious small difference between them. As they lay, one infant had his tiny fists closed tight; the other slept with his little hands wide open. Instantly they made their selection of the latter. The legend very properly concludes with the record that, as he grew up in his station, he came to be known as the King with the Open Hand. His subjects realized the benevolent nature of their king. He cared for his own.

In today's reference, David proclaims another King, the King of Kings, with an open hand and He cares for His own. And His care is beyond description – “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (**EPHESIANS 3:20-21**).

As we consider our great God and His care, there are three things from **PSALM 4** to help keep our minds in a praiseful state because of His care for us. First, God takes responsibility to care for us – “But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for Himself”. How cruel and out of character for God to take ownership of us only to let us fend for ourselves. No, our Master is too kind and too gracious. The Lord Jesus said, “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (**MATTHEW 6:26-33**).

The second and third truths from **PSALM 4** are how God shows His care to us. They are pointed to where our real need exists – our hearts. Yes, we have temporal needs but if we are fretting about them, go back to the previous paragraph and let our Lord put those frets to bed. The primary need we have in this world is a settled heart or a heart free from distress, stress, and lack of peace. In verses 1 and 7 of **PSALM 4**, David sets forth two things which God does for his heart. God gives relief to the stressed heart – “Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress” (**PSALM 4:1**). Then, God puts the only source of relief in the heart that is overwhelmed – “You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound” (**PSALM 4:7**). In both actions, we see the King with the open hand. He gives us relief when needing relief and puts that relief in the form of His joy in the very depths of our being. And why does He do such wonderful acts of grace? Because He cares for His own!

PRAYER: “Lord, I praise You for Your willingness to own me and care for me.”

QUOTE: “We may not only trust the Lord for our eternal cares but also for temporal ones.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 6, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

GENESIS 11:1-8 - Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **THE FINAL WORD.** It doesn't take long into the first book of the Bible to see humanity's bent toward disobeying God. Just like it doesn't take long to see the innocence of a newborn infant give way to a disobedient child. What appeared to be a little bundle of joy clothed in innocence is actually a little sinner estranged from his or her creator. Unless the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ invades that heart, he or she will remain a rebel and enemy to the Creator. But the revelation of humanity's bent toward disobedience of God isn't just in reading of the initial act of Adam and Eve in **GENESIS 3**. As the fall of our first parents set the stage for all of us to be in a state of sinful separation from God, there is another account in Genesis showing this bent toward disobedience.

Moving from the fall of man in **GENESIS 3**, we see the escalation of evil coming to a head in **GENESIS 6** – “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, ‘I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold I will destroy them with the earth’” (**GENESIS 6:5-6, 11-13**). We know what happened next. God got the final word. He said He would destroy the earth. He did by the universal flood (**GENESIS 7**), but that didn't stop the disobedience.

After the flood, it was like humanity got a second chance – “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth’” (**GENESIS 9:1**). However, a change of scenery did not mean a change of the sinful heart. Compare two things. **GENESIS 9:1** and the command “fill the earth” with **GENESIS 11:4** and man's desire to avoid filling the earth “let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth”. Collision course – God says, “fill the earth” and man says, “I won't fill the earth”.

This collision course continues in our world today. We still disobey. We still go contrary to God's will. Even as believers but read on in today's reference and notice who always gets the final word. Man's will is always overridden by God's will. That is comforting and discomfoting. For the rebellious, it is uncomfortable. For the submissive, it is comforting. The application for us? Let's make sure we are not on a collision course with God, remembering He always gets the final word.

PRAYER: “Lord, I have a heart prone to wander. Help me keep on course with You, not against You.”

QUOTE: “The sovereignty of God is a soothing comfort to the obedient and a painful thorn to the disobedient.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 7, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

ACTS 2:24 - God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: IT'S ABOUT RESURRECTION. Try this sometime in the near future. Get alone with your Bible, read the first four chapters of the book of Acts, mark or write down every time our Lord's resurrection is either specifically stated or clearly implied, then, close your Bible, go to your knees, and ask yourself and God how much resurrection thinking and living you do. I won't reveal the number of occurrences of our Lord's resurrection that appear in today's assignment. This requires a personal investment. What I will reveal to you is that when I did the assignment, and it came “knee time”, there had to be some confession of neglect. I simply don't think or live the resurrection of our Lord as I should. Failure to do so reduces our Christianity to mere morality lived in the strength of self, not a Christianity of power lived in the strength of the resurrected Christ.

The Apostle Paul's personal testimony was a cry for the reality of Christ's resurrection in his life – “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith-- that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (**PHILIPPIANS 3:8-10**). He knew the Christian life was a life of resurrection power not just moral conduct. As we see the predominant place the resurrection of Christ played in early church life and the apostolic preaching, it is imperative we evaluate the place the resurrection holds in our daily thinking and conduct. Without this emphasis, we will lose both the proper perspective for the Christian life and the proper orientation in the Christian life. Let's take each of those from a positive standpoint.

First, the resurrection gives us the proper perspective for the Christian life because it points us to life after death. Jesus conquered death by His resurrection. His resurrection guarantees this life isn't all there is, but, sadly, even Christians often fall into the trap of living each day like this life is all there is. If we don't think so, do this quick check-up with these two diagnostic questions- “How much thinking on heaven have we done recently? How many things in this life have stressed us out so we have forgotten the always present, resurrected Christ is at our side to keep us in perfect peace?” The resurrection gives us the perspective that heaven is our home and that nothing in this life is to steal my peace given to me by my resurrected Savior. The resurrection of Jesus Christ also gives us the proper orientation in the Christian life. Paul wrote, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (**COLOSSIANS 3:1-3**). If life is oriented earthbound in our thinking, it will always result in pain and confusion. Seeing the world horizontally, not vertically, never produces clarity in suffering or peace of soul when in affliction. The resurrection allows us to orient our worldview vertically – from heaven to earth. When we see the resurrected Christ on the throne of grace and mercy (**HEBREWS 4:16**) and get our worldview from there, the puzzle of life gets put together. Believers in Christ are united in Him in His death and resurrection (**ROMANS 6:1-13**). It is the basis in which we live the Christian life and without such a union, we cannot live the Christian life. It is all about the resurrection. How dominant a place does it have in our thinking and living?

PRAYER: “Lord, make Your resurrection a daily reality in my life.”

QUOTE: JAMES S. STEWART, “Christianity is essentially a religion of resurrection.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 8, 2010

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The QBC Daily Nugget January 9, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

PROVERBS 4:18 - But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: IS THE LIGHT TURNED ON? Has the light turned on in our spiritual lives where we realize just how little we know when it comes to living out the Christian life? If it hasn't, it will. It must. It is one of the road marks to pass on the destination to the noblest of all Christian virtues – humility. I began to shake my head as I surveyed my Christian life, realizing how much I talked about the Christian life only to realize the wide gulf between knowing and talking the Christian life and experiencing and sharing the Christian life. The hard truth is that we have to get pride out of the way before the light goes on. Pride doesn't go easily. It fights us tooth and nail. It puts up a huge fight when God begins the process of getting it out of our life through suffering (**HEBREWS 12:3-11**).

Do we realize that resisting suffering is a form of pride? It is. It sends the message, “Not Your will be done, but mine.” To dismiss suffering in the Christian life is to remove the primary tool God uses to conform us to His Son – “Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered” (**HEBREWS 5:8**). Pride will manifest itself in so many ways but when “spiritual affliction” comes our way by the loving hand of our Heavenly Father, pride is no match for the Divine Surgeon. I like the way Octavius Winslow stated it, “Could we draw aside, for a moment, the thin veil that separates us from the glorified saints, and inquire the path along which they were conducted by a covenant God to their present enjoyments, how few exceptions, if any, should we find to that declaration of Jehovah – “I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction”” (**ISAIAH 48:10**).

As the coat of pride gets hung up in the closet of our hearts and humility begins to be our daily garment, we will find ourselves living out this verse in James – “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (**JAMES 1:19**). When the light bulb goes on in our spiritual lives, we will find the balance of powers, so to speak, shift. We will be far more eager to listen to others. We will be slow to speak. We will see patience taking deep root in our lives and anger lessening when dealing and judging others. Here is a personal illustration which isn't pleasant. While serving onboard a Navy warship, I was a believer who didn't lack zeal. I led Bible studies, worship, devotionals. All that external stuff. I approached a young believer with this request – “Hey, brother, why don't we make a difference for the Lord on this ship? Let's start getting together daily for Bible study and prayer.” The conversation went further than just an invitation. I talked. A lot. He listened as I shared tons of knowledge about the Christian life. He didn't respond. And I gave him time to think about it. A day or two went by and I followed up. With gentleness and far more humility than I had, he said, “I cannot meet with you like you asked. It is too intimidating. I cannot meet your expectations.” Then, he walked away. My initial inner response was pride – “Why can't he make a commitment? What is wrong with him?” It took time for me to work that out and the relationship needed some serious repair. And the problem wasn't my friend. It was me. The light had not turned on in my life. A lot of talk, but not a lot of listening and understanding characterized me. I hadn't learned some Christians are lambs needing some extra special handling. Some are sheep able to be handled differently. We won't see those differences until the light gets turned on. Where are you today? Is today's “light bulb” verse true with you? Are you understanding more that we really don't know everything and you find yourself more eager to listen, than speak? You will know when it does.

PRAYER: “Lord, open my spiritual eyes more and more with each passing day.”

QUOTE: “The Christian is either growing in humility or stuck in the dirty soil of pride.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 10, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

JOHN 8:44 – You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE BAD THEOLOGIAN. The story goes this way. A number of just common folks, no scholars or theologians among the crowd, were talking about temptation and the part which Satan takes in the believer’s temptation came into the discussion. Many good things were shared and helpful. A quaint old saint was appealed to for his wise counsel. The old man rose and said, “Well, my friends, you ask me what I think to be the way to deal with Satan. I’ll tell you. Now, if you’ll take an old pilgrim’s advice, you’ll never talk with him. He ain’t wise; for if he had been, he’d have stopped in heaven. But he’s artful, and he’s had a pretty long spell these six thousand years or so in studying the weak points of human nature. And so sure as you begin to listen and converse with him, he’ll outwit you and throw you down. I’ll tell you what I have done with him these many years; I never speak to him at all, but just as soon as he comes to me, I always introduce him to my betters.” As for the old man’s language, it isn’t difficult to define who his “betters” is – his High Priest, the Lord Jesus.

I recently heard a wonderful song titled “Jesus, My Only Hope” and the second verse goes, “I will not fear Your judgment. For me, no wrath I dread. For it was spent on Jesus, poured out upon His head. When Satan’s accusations make my poor heart afraid, I hear my King declaring, ‘Father, that debt is paid.’” What a great truth of justification by faith in song! However . . . humming a song does not keep the roaring lion away (**1 PETER 5:8**) and when it comes to theology, he is far better than us.

In the wilderness temptation of our Lord (**MATTHEW 4:1-11**), we see an intense battle between Him, who is the truth, and the devil, who knows the truth. As this battle unfolds, we see the Lord Jesus in each temptation taking the Sword of the Spirit (**EPHESIANS 6:17**) and repelling the attack of the devil. Three times Jesus countered with “It is written” as He employed the Sword of the Spirit. The application for us is easy to see. We are not able to fight off the devil with anything but scripture. No personal resolve to do better in life or attempt to isolate ourselves from the world will do. Our strength is no match and the battle is internal so there is no place to hide. He laughs when we battle him in the strength of ourselves. Unless the Sword of the Spirit is sharp in our hearts and minds, we will be a casualty to the devil. Ignorance of the Word and failure to use the Word slays many Christians on the battleground.

The devil changes his tactic with Jesus in the second temptation. He becomes a theologian. He quotes a portion of **PSALM 91** out of context. And here is where we must be very careful as we battle against the evil one. He knows scripture. He talked scripture with Jesus and he has the ability to use scripture against us. How? Here is one area. Sinned recently in action, inaction, or thought? The sensitive Christian may hear this roar from the devil, “No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him” (**1 JOHN 3:6**). That is enough to lead to great despair! The only way to counter this is to be so steeped in scripture we know the whole truth about our position in Christ. The only answer to bad theology of the devil is a good theology taught by the Spirit and that only comes when we “study to show ourselves approved unto God” (**2 TIMOTHY 2:15**). Consistent, by that I mean daily, intake of the Word of God is the only way to avoid listening to the lies of the worst theologian who ever existed and the one who desires more than anything, our spiritual destruction.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to distinguish truth from error as well as the sources of error.”

QUOTE: A. W. TOZER, “The devil is a better theologian than any of us and is a devil still.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 11, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18 - And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: OUR GREATEST PRIVILEGE. Let's start out with a quick mental exercise. Rattle off in our minds all the privileges we have as believers. Take a little time before we continue reading. There are quite a few. Okay, now whittle that list down. In fact, whittle it down to the greatest privilege enjoyed by believers. When I say “enjoyed” I do mean in the present, but only in part. You will know what I mean after we decide on the greatest privilege. So, what did we come up with by way of privileges? Prayer? Good one. Our Bibles? Of course. The church? No doubt. Forgiveness of sin? Absolutely. Heaven? Without question. All those, and others, are great privileges given to us as God's children, but all of those really point to the greatest privilege. Here is how a godly man of the 18th century defined the believer's greatest privilege. His name was Thomas Halyburton. He said, “The great privilege of believers is that the Lord manifests Himself to them as He does not to the world. When He manifests His authority in the command, it is then powerful. When He manifests His goodness and truth in the promise, it is full of sweetness. When He manifests His wrath in threatening, it awes the soul. When He manifests His glory in the face of Christ, it is ravishing, reforming, attracting.”

Our greatest privilege is the manifestation of God to our soul and particularly, His glory in the face of His Son – “For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (**2 CORINTHIANS 4:6**). And this is not something easily attained because there are obstacles. I mentioned earlier that we are to enjoy this greatest privilege now, but only in part. By stating “only in part”, we recognize our inability to fully see the glory of God in Christ due to our remaining sin, the battles against the world, and the devil. We simply are not capable of handling His full disclosure. Yet, the very essence of Biblical Christianity is fellowship with God and we do, spiritually speaking, see and enjoy His presence – “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (**1 CORINTHIANS 1:9**).

It is important to realize as we grow in desire to exercise and enjoy our greatest privilege, the obstacles I mentioned will present to us quite a struggle in the pursuit. Timothy Rogers, a Puritan pastor in the mid-seventeenth century, provides wise understanding to those seeking to enjoy God's fellowship – “In the quest for this, you will meet with manifold trials and great opposition; your carnal nature and your old sins will present motives to your sense and draw you back. Satan will perplex you with a thousand doubts and troubles. You may be sure that this lion will roar when he is likely to lose his prey. But none of this must be allowed to discourage you. The favor of God is so great a mercy that you may be justly importunate and restless until you get it, notwithstanding all the dangers that you meet with. No great things are obtained without difficulty. You will see hereafter that it was worth the trouble to take pains in a matter so great a consequence.”

Did we get what Pastor Rogers said toward the end? “No great things are obtained without difficulty”. And when it comes to enjoying our greatest privilege, the Lord manifesting Himself to us, isn't His worthiness worth our greatest effort?

PRAYER: “Lord, create in me a hunger to see You more clearly each day in Your Word.”

QUOTE: “Our intimacy with Christ is directly related to the discipline we practice seeking Christ.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 12, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

ACTS 9:31 - So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE PERFECT CHURCH. Do you attend the topic of today's nugget? If so, I respectfully request you don't invite me because your church will lose the title "The Perfect Church" with my attendance. We know there is no perfect church – practically, but there is the perfect church – positionally. As the bride of our Lord Jesus, she is perfect in His eyes and someday, she will be perfect in our eyes. Though our churches aren't perfect, they can be healthy and powerful. A dialogue unfolded between a member of a church and someone inquiring about the church. "It is a strong congregation?" inquired the seeker. "Yes" was the reply. "Well, how many people go to your church?" "About thirty." "Thirty? And you say it is strong? Are they wealthy?" said the seeker. "No, many of the people are poor." "How, then, can you say it is a strong church?" The member smiled and spoke these words, "Because they are earnest, devoted, at peace, loving each other, following the Word of God in all things, instant in prayer, and striving together to do the Lord's work. Such a place is strong, whether composed of thirty or three hundred members."

It isn't about numbers exclusively. Iain Murray said, "The church is most evangelistic when she is least concerned about impressing the world or with adding to her numbers." Murray is right. So was a church in the New Testament. She wasn't perfect, but she was powerful. It was the church in Thessalonica.

There are two letters in our New Testament addressed to this wonderful group of believers. In chapter one of the first letter, we get a great description of a great church – "We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come" (**1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-10**).

Just a quick reading of chapter one reveals many elements in place and practiced which ensure a healthy church. Let me encourage you to spend time in this portion of scripture to see them. For now, here's one of those elements – "our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (**1 THESSALONIANS 1:5**). The church is sick and dying or healthy and thriving based on the absence or presence of the Word in power. A church may have the Word of God and not be healthy. It takes power in the Word of God to make the church healthy and the Thessalonians had it. What about our churches? Sensed any power lately in the Word? It isn't the perfect church that attracts. It is the powerful church that attracts. Let's pray our churches will be empowered with God's Word regularly producing people who are holy, loving, and sacrificial.

PRAYER: "Lord, help me to make Your church a blessing to others by my love and service."

QUOTE: WILLIAM GURNALL, "The church is nothing but Christ displayed."

The QBC Daily Nugget January 13, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

PSALM 138:2 - I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: TOP PRIORITIES. Priorities. We each have them. Making and keeping priorities provide direction in life. They also serve us well when it comes to ensuring what really matters in life stays in the what really matters in life category. When it comes to priorities, we really don't need to share them with each other in a conversation or exchange lists. One may remain completely silent, and if we had access to each other's lives on a continual basis, our priorities would be quickly revealed. And the one area which sounds the horn of revelation that reveals our priorities in life is the area that gets the most and best of our discretionary time.

Dr. C. C. Albertson sketched out an average life in the following divisions. There are obvious variations for each of us. For instance, he allocates eight hours of sleep a night. I know people that, at times, eight hours are the amount in two days, not one. So, as we look at his division, we will notice personal variations. However, the one area he hits on is worth considering for all of us. Our discretionary time. In Dr. Albertson's words, “It might be wise for us to take a little inventory of our resources as to time and review our habits of using it. There are 168 hours in each week. Fifty-six of these we spend in sleep. Of the remaining 112 hours, we devote 48 to labor. This leaves sixty-four hours, of which let us assign twelve hours for our daily meals. (This allows thirty minutes for each meal, and one-and- one-half hours extra to promote good digestion.) We have left fifty-two hours, net, of conscious active life to devote to any purpose to which we are inclined. Is it too much to say that God requires a tithe of this free time? One tenth of fifty-two hours is 5.2 hours. How much of this tithe of time do we devote to strictly religious uses?”

If we adhere to a principle of ten percent tithing of resources, Dr. Albertson extends it to not just our money, but our time. Whether we are “ten percenters” or not, the question about the use of discretionary time remains. And if we are “ten percenters”, why should a tithe just be of our monetary resources since our greatest resource is our time? Perhaps tithing of our time is a good way to live, but this nugget isn't about giving. It is about priorities and what our priorities are will reveal the use of our discretionary time.

In today's nugget, there are two things the Psalmist refers to which are of the highest esteem or priorities of our God – His name and His Word. As we think through this from the vantage point of our Lord, a couple of things emerge. First, the priority of God's name ensures the predominant focus is on His character. How does God choose to reveal Himself? Primarily through His names. His names tell us so much about Himself. When the angel appeared to Joseph foretelling that Mary would give birth to a son, where was the emphasis? Jesus' name – “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (**MATTHEW 1:21**). The second priority with God is His Word. He does everything by His Word. From creation (**GENESIS 1**) to new creation (**1 PETER 1:23**), God exalts His Word supremely and valued it so much that He gave it to us as life's greatest treasure demanding its place as our greatest priority in life. Now, let's make some application. In our discretionary time, how much of it is given over to God's priorities? How much time is given priority to know and learn His character through His names? How much time is given priority in His Word to know how to live for Him? God has given each of us equal time. Our priorities determine the use of that time and that reveals what our hearts value most.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to keep Your name and Your Word as the highest priorities in my life.”

QUOTE: “Reverence for God's name and His Word is the foundation for all of the Christian life.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 14, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

1 CORINTHIANS 9:27 - But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: JUST NOT UP TO IT. Every one of us knows about daily routines. Each of us wake up with some pretty staple things we do each day. When I served in the Navy, we had shipboard routines. As one serves onboard a ship, a sailor learns the routines ships execute whether at sea or inport. We had something which was published every day called “The Plan of the Day” and it described the ship’s routine. There were specific jobs to do, drills to run, watches to stand, training to attend, etc.. When ships go to sea, “The Plan of the Day” continues. However, when ships go to sea and they encounter some pretty rough seas, routines get altered. Depending on the sea state, they may get quite altered. I recall one extremely rough time at sea where the only routine on the ship was standing watch. No work, no meals, no recreation . . . everything stopped except the essential manning of watches to ensure safe operation of the ship. Not only was the normal routine of the ship disrupted, but something was also – the wellness of many crewmembers. Rough seas make for some rough stomachs and if not that extreme, rough seas make one very fatigued with all the tossing and turning of the ship. However, those ill feelings didn’t allow for us to “take a break” from running the ship. I saw many a “sick” sailor gutting out a four hour watch with valiant, howbeit, quite exhausting looking diligence. Sailors just didn’t have the luxury to say, “I’m just not up to it” when it came to taking the duty.

We have routines in the Christian life also. Church, prayer, Bible study, witnessing, serving, and a host of other God-given privileges which become an important part of our Christian lives. And these routines will encounter “rough seas” causing some “ill feelings” along the way. Now what happens when “rough seas” come into our lives as Christians and we “just don’t feel up to it” when it comes to living out the routines of our Christian lives? We have a couple of options, but before I give them, here is a little confession. I want you to know that I am aware of where you are coming from when you are “just not up to it” when it comes to things in the Christian life, like church on some Sundays, weekly prayer meetings, or signing up for that next Bible study. Here’s my confession. Right now, at this writing, it is late Saturday afternoon. Church is tomorrow. Two sermons to preach. Ready for this? Right now, I just “don’t feel up to it” and wouldn’t mind a big snow storm to roll in and cancel church!

When feelings start to nudge us about things necessary in our spiritual lives with “Hey, I’m just not up to it”, we have two choices. By the way, feelings cannot drive our spiritual lives. If so, we will find those times of “just not up to it” very frequent and we won’t grow in grace. So, here are the choices. Number one, give in and let feelings dictate what we do. Avoid this one. Feeling always betray because our heart is never to be trusted (**JEREMIAH 17:9**) and feelings will justify inaction. I wonder if there were times in the past I simply missed church or a good prayer meeting because I didn’t feel well, but if it were my vocation or some other binding commitment outside my control, I would have been there. Maybe more than I want to admit. The second option is we obey today’s reference – “I discipline my body”. There are times in our Christian lives we simply must tell our feelings, “No, you are not getting your way.” That is not a call to martyrdom and refuse to care for our health. It is a call to Spirit-led discipline which allows us to control our feelings instead of being controlled by them. Rough seas are inevitable when going to sea in a ship. “Rough seas” are also inevitable when it comes to our Christian lives. How we react to them tells us much about whether we are living a life of faith or more a life of faith mixed with feelings.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to be ruled by my feelings but allow my faith to rule my feelings.”

QUOTE: “To live the Christian life based on emotion is to be like a ship tossed at sea.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 16, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

PSALM 13:1-6 - How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,” lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. ⁶ I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: SELF TALK. I might be incorrect with the assessment I am about to make. It might not be a “shoe that fits you.” I do know that my assessment fits me perfectly. Not all the time, but some of the time and maybe more than some of the time. Here is my assessment. I think believers battle with impatience as a subtle, but dominant sin. Am I right? It doesn't matter the depth of impatience. We cannot say, “Oh, it is a little sin”. We also cannot say, “That is just the way I am.” Sin, any sin, is a huge big deal. It crucified our Lord Jesus. And to default to accept impatience as a temperament thing is to fail to see sin in its right light. Sin is not primarily what I do – acts of impatience – it is what I am – a totally depraved individual. Back to impatience. It could be manifested in little things like irritability at a red light, a check-out line, or when a family member is causing us to be late to someplace we need to be. Just because little things cause impatience doesn't mean impatience is a little thing.

In today's reference, David displays impatience. He is praying impatiently. Four times he cries out to the Lord, “How Long?” and it reveals a heart struggling with the loss of a sense of God's presence. Let's look at these four occurrences of the words “How long?” in two pairs. The first pair are cries of impatience that God is holding back a sense of His wonderful and quieting presence in David's life. This is a very good prayer and reveals the sensitive child of God who knows that God's presence in life is the most important experience possible. In another Psalm, David tells us of the importance of God's felt presence in life – “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (**PSALM 16:11**). Our spiritual warning bells should be going off if we can go day after day without a hunger for God's presence and not be moved to the prayer of impatience for His return by crying out, “How long, O Lord, will You hide Your face from me?” The first two “How longs?” are good. The next two are not.

When God chooses to withhold a sense of His presence for our spiritual development, if we don't see it for what it is, either a dealing with sin or developing of the Fruit of the Spirit, we will resort to a destructive form of self talk like David in the second two “How longs?” Notice where David's focus shifts from the first two “How longs?”. He is looking inside of himself, talking to himself – “How long must I take counsel in my soul?” instead of looking to God. The results are not good. First, by talking to himself, or better yet, counseling himself, it produced sorrow of heart. And it always will. The answers to life are not found within. They are found without – God's Word giving us God's presence. Self-counseling is good if it is Biblical. It is disastrous if left to self-reasoning. Another result of self talk, fueled by our impatience over God's delay and lack of His presence, is spiritual defeat – “How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?”. We are no match for our spiritual enemies when we resort to self resources and impatience opens the door to the use of self resources leading to sure spiritual defeat. Self talk is good when it centers on God. David gets to the good form of self talk in verse five. When impatience seeks to control us, we are to ensure our self-talk follows his example, both as a warning and encouragement.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me not to allow Your delays in my life to become fuel for firing up unbelief.”

QUOTE: “Waiting on God demands a refusal to listen to the voice of self reasoning.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 16, 2010

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PRAYER: “Lord, teach me not to allow Your delays in my life to become fuel for firing up unbelief.”

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The QBC Daily Nugget January 17, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

LUKE 1:1-4 – Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught..

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: IT'S A SURE THING. William Perkins is known by many as the “father of Puritanism” who lived from 1558 to 1602. He was quite popular as a minister, theologian, and writer. In fact, during his lifetime, sales of his writings eventually exceeded those of John Calvin. Though scholarly, he was pastoral and provided great care as a physician of souls. His writings to hurting souls suffering from fear, discouragement, and doubts of salvation in Christ reveal a wise spiritual counselor. Concerning doubt of salvation, he wrote to aid troubled souls, “But you must know this one thing, that he which never doubted of his salvation, never believed, and that he which believes in truth feels many doubtings and waverings. Even as the sound man feels many grudgings of diseases, which if he has not health, he could not feel.”

The topic of today's nugget is not Puritanism or doubts of salvation. Both are topics worthy of investment of our time in conversation and study. However, the introduction of William Perkins and his counsel to those doubting of salvation is to point us to the certainty, not only of our salvation, but the certainty of the faith we hold concerning the scriptures. Perkins revealed the problem of doubt, but directed the hurting soul to the solution – the scriptures. Doubt attacks us in many areas beyond salvation when it comes to the faith and when we cut back the layers on doubt, the core issue will always come back to the scriptures. We are a people of the Book, the Bible. So goes our reliance, confidence, and adherence to God's book, so goes our joy, peace, and reality with the Lord Jesus Christ. Should doubts of the sufficiency, inerrancy, and infallibility of the scripture begin to whisper in our ears, we will find ourselves tossed about in our Christian experience (**EPHESIANS 4:14**). To get a picture of what that looks like, take a bottle, write on a 3 x 5 card the words “My Christian Life”, put it in the bottle and seal it. Then, take a trip to the ocean, say, Beavertail in Jamestown or Brenton Reef in Newport. Walk out on some rocks where the ocean waves are crashing and toss your bottle into them, then, sit back and watch it. That is what our Christian life is like if our Bibles are neglected or doubted – tossed about like a bottle in a big ocean. (Oh, just picture the above scene – please don't litter our coastline).

In today's reference, Luke is writing to someone he thinks highly of – “most excellent Theophilus”. We know nothing of this man, but Luke esteems him so much that his two letters, the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, are written to him. At the end of his introduction, Luke reveals why this letter was penned – “that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” Luke writes for assurance. He writes to bring confidence to the faith which Theophilus, and us, hold to. As I mentioned earlier, we are a people of the book – the Bible. It determines who we are, what we do, who we serve, and where we are going. It also is the only antidote to doubts of any kind when it comes to the faith.

As William Perkins alluded to the inevitability of bouts of doubt in our Christian experience, the ability to keep them from being regular visitors in our hearts is found in what we do with our Bibles. Doubts cannot thrive in a soil where the seed of the Word of God is flourishing (**MATTHEW 13:1-9**).

PRAYER: “Lord, forgive me when I allow worry to suppress the comforting truth of Your Word.”

QUOTE: “The battle for belief is not for the truthfulness of God's Word but for belief in its sufficiency.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 18, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

GENESIS 32:9-12 - And Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,’ I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. But you said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: PRAYING AS WE REALLY ARE. Prayer has different forms. We know there are prayers of praise, confession, petitions, and even prayers of waiting in silence. Matthew Henry eloquently defined prayer as “the solemn and religious offering up of devout acknowledgments and desires to God, or a sincere representation of holy affections, with a design to give unto God the glory due unto His name thereby, and to obtain from Him promised favors, and both through the Mediator.” I admit it is a lengthy statement by Henry. The Puritans masterfully penned long sentences, but I suggest we work through his definition and allow it to evaluate our own prayer lives. There are at least attitudes one may quickly glean from the definition Henry penned. First, there is the seriousness of prayer. It isn’t something to take lightly or with little thought. Want to know how easy it is to fall into a lack of serious reflection on prayer? Ever pray over a meal as simply routine or rattle a few obligatory words of thanksgiving without really thinking about who we are addressing? I have. Another attitude is love. Henry calls it “holy affections” and it is pointed to the Holy One. A third attitude is reliance upon the Lord Jesus as our only mediator between God and man (**1 TIMOTHY 2:5**). Jesus is not just a “tag on” at the end of our praying with the words “In Jesus’ name, amen.” He is the only way to be able to enter prayer, stay in prayer, and end prayer. A fourth attitude in prayer offered by Matthew Henry is transparency or being devout, without deceit or hypocrisy. I like to label this as “praying as we really are” and in today’s reference we find a child of God who does just that – Jacob.

The scene needs some history. Jacob and Esau were brothers and the last time they saw each other, it wasn’t on the best of terms. Their departure was strained to say the least. Esau has already sold his birthright to Jacob (**GENESIS 25:29-34**) and then, Jacob, under the strong persuasion of his mother, deceived his father and stole the blessing reserved for the firstborn (Esau). How did Esau react? Here it is - Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob” (**GENESIS 27:41**). I had some fights with my younger brother growing up, but this is off the scale!

In today’s reference, a reunion of the brothers is about to happen. When situations in life are really tough, it is there we will know a lot about our prayer lives. Being in a nice safe environment with a group of believers at a mid-week prayer meeting is easy. How about when you are about to meet a close relative who had murder on his mind? This prompted a very honest prayer life with Jacob – “Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him”. He was afraid and let his God know it and then, Jacob pleaded on the promises of God to do him good. Adversity breeds a real prayer life. One that is honest and abandons oneself to the promises of God. There were no routine words or phrases coming forth from this man of God. He was honest and serious. Sounds like Jacob knew a little about prayer just like Matthew Henry. Those are two pretty good guys to learn some lessons on prayer.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to pray not only regularly but honestly.”

QUOTE: JOHN MASON, “Prayer does not consist in gifted expressions but in a brokenness of heart.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 18, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

PSALM 13:5-6 - But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **FAITH FIRST**. Today's reference is the ending verses of a Psalm of contrasting emotions. In the first four verses, David experiences the lows of the Christian life. He is in sorrow of soul and it isn't fleeting or intermittent – “How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?” Every sensitive believer knows what David is talking about. It will vary with each of us, but each pilgrim on the way to heaven will know sorrow. Our Lord walked as a man of sorrows – “He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (**ISAIAH 53:3**). John Calvin was right when he said these words, “All whom the Lord has chosen and received into the society of His saints ought to prepare themselves for a life that is hard, difficult, laborious and full of countless griefs.” That isn't to make the Christian life a morbid existence of constant frowns and discouragement. One of the truest paradoxes of the Christian life is that great suffering and testing may also be times of greatest joy. Meditate for a moment on the scene where we find the first martyr, Stephen – “Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God’” (**ACTS 7:54-56**). Tie in Stephen's experience with what David tells us – “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (**PSALM 16:11**). Nothing, not stones or an angry mob, would take Stephen's joy away. He saw Him who is joy and it was full.

Returning to today's reference, we see the second emotion experienced by David. This one is contrary to the first. Here there is rejoicing, and an enjoyment of the steadfast love of the Lord. What made the difference between the two? It is found in the beginning of the transition verse – “But I have trusted” (**PSALM 13:5**). Faith. David exercised the only way to please the Lord – faith (**HEBREWS 11:6**). In the first four verses, it was all about feelings. In the last two it was all about faith which led to feelings. Someone recently told me, with a heavy heart, even a sorrowful heart like David in the beginning of **PSALM 13**, “I just want to feel God. I want to feel His love.” Good desire but the desire alone isn't the answer. God honors faith. The sense of His presence is for Him to reveal as He sovereignly chooses, but it will always be based on faith.

Edward Payson was a pastor in Maine in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. He knew the struggles with emotions and faith. He wrote this, “There is nothing in which young converts are more prone to err, than in laying too much stress upon their feelings. If they have a comfortable half-hour in the morning, it atones for a multitude of sins in the course of the day. Christ says, ‘If you love me, keep my commandments’. It would be well for us to pay more attention to our conduct and prove the depth of our feeling by our obedience.” If one were to define faith in the daily life of a believer, a simple one might go, “Daily faith for the Christian is the Word of God in action” (**JAMES 2:14-26**).

For David, he had to go from feelings to faith back to feelings. Faith first was the example given by him to us. It will always be that way. Faith or obedience to God's Word is our priority calling in life. Work on that and feelings will come like they did for David in **PSALM 13**.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to see You are only pleased by my exercise of faith.”

QUOTE: “A rejoicing heart is the result of a trusting heart.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 20, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

HEBREWS 3:12-13 - Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: DANGER – THIN ICE. There is a pond very near to my backyard. I stare at it often. In the spring and summer, it blossoms with life from ducks to otters to those in small boats attempting to catch fish which call the pond their home. In the fall, brilliant colors explode in the trees along its banks painting a nice picture of what we expect to see in the beautiful fall foliage of New England. As winter rolls in, there are times the pond is transformed into a white blanket. Ice forms and snow covers it, even to the point where ice skating and hockey games among neighborhood kids may be observed. However, it takes a pretty good cold spell to make the ice safe enough to participate in such events. Today, the blanket is thrown across the pond. It is white with snow on top of a layer of ice. A thin layer of ice. It might appear safe, but if anyone ventured out to ice skate, they'd better be prepared for an underwater sport. Those ice skates better be accompanied with snorkel or scuba gear. It isn't safe. It looks safe, but it isn't safe, danger exists. It is thin ice.

In the Christian life, one of the clear dangers is the deceitfulness of sin. It is like thin ice on a pond. As we walk through life, unless there is a vigilant watch on the heart (**PROVERBS 4:23**), our hearts will deceive us to the dangers of sin. We will venture out on this “pond of thin ice” and find ourselves falling into its cruel and cold waters. It could be an unlawful desire allowed to be pondered leading to the violation of the tenth commandment – “You shall not covet” (**EXODUS 20:17**). It could be a “stretching of the truth” when someone asks us how we are doing and we hide the hurt with a plastic smile and a short, “Oh, I am fine” leading to the violation of the ninth commandment – “You shall not bear false witness” (**EXODUS 20:16**). Or maybe we have not guarded our hearts, impatience has risen, and we have walked on the thin ice of anger, falling through and giving way to hurtful outbursts toward another person. And remember, Jesus equates anger to murder (**MATTHEW 6:21-22**) and thus violation of commandment number six – “You shall not murder” (**EXODUS 20:13**).

It isn't difficult to see how easily we may be deceived when it comes to sin. Today's reference not only reveals the power of sin's deceitfulness, but encourages us with a way to help us avoid walking on the dangerous thin ice of sin. The help is found in mutual exhortation of believers. It is a call to help protect each other from the hardening effect sin has on the heart. And what this means is getting involved in the lives of other believers. Has this been a regular occurrence in our lives? The writer of Hebrews went as far to say we need to be doing this daily. As believers in Jesus, it is imperative we see just how much we need each other (**ROMANS 1:11-12**) and translate that need into life on life involvement. Something is wrong in my heart if I don't see that truth. Something isn't right in my heart if two things are present. First, a lack of fervent longing to be among Christians for mutual edification. The second indication of heart sickness is when I don't grasp, leading to action, my privilege and responsibility to be investing in the lives of other believers. If these two things frequent my heart, I am walking on thin ice. It will only be a matter of time before I fall into the brutally cold and dangerous waters of sin. Yes, it is winter time in New England and ponds have a thin layer of ice on them. In the Christian life, we are always exposed to the thin layer of ice called sin. Let's help each other avoid its deceptive appearance of safety.

PRAYER: “Lord, protect me from both the dangers of the devil and the deceitfulness of my heart.”

QUOTE: “It is the sins of forgetfulness and neglect which are the primary causes of spiritual indifference.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 21, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

REVELATION 22:20 - He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **MAYBE TODAY**. He never had a radio or television ministry. A personal or church website? Mention that word to him and he would have said, “Yes. I saw a very beautiful spider web yesterday out in the work shed. It was quite a ‘web sight’. A great expositor of the Word? Most people would say he wasn’t a great preacher, good, but not great. A huge church? If numbers would be our measurement of success, this unassuming country preacher would have been a failure. Was he loved by his flock? No doubt. Was he faithful to his calling? He would hear one day, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (**MATTHEW 25:21**). And one thing this faithful servant of the Lord did which would ensure such commendation from his Lord was his daily “one sentence prayer” offered at the start of each morning. He would look upward toward heaven and whisper, “Maybe today, Lord, maybe today.” He prayed and lived the certainty of the second coming of his Lord Jesus Christ.

Do we live and pray the words, “Maybe today, Lord, maybe today?” It might seem like a paradox, but the Christian whose mind and life is set on heaven more than the world will be most effective in the world. The Apostle Paul lived “Maybe today, Lord, maybe today” and, apart from the Lord Jesus, would arguably be the one man in history who had the greatest impact and influence in the world. We could sum up his life with one verse from his letter to the Philippians – “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain” (**PHILIPPIANS 1:21**). That is a pretty good definition of “Maybe today, Lord, maybe today.” I wonder if the old country preacher had Philippians 1:21 as his life verse.

When it comes to living out life with a second coming mentality, it requires the greatest of efforts. The battle of flesh and sense are strong. We are a people of sight and emotions. God made us that way and we are thankful for the wonders of life which include both. As much as those are blessings, they are also hindrances to a life of faith. We may easily think that when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sin entered into our world, the depravity only destroyed our will and ability to choose God and righteousness. No, the depravity as a result of the fall was total to include our emotions. Every part of us died and when we are born again, our senses and emotions are not perfected. They will fight hard against the life of faith. Sense and emotions align with Thomas, “Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe” (**JOHN 20:24-25**). We want evidence for faith in the forms of sight and sense. Second coming thinking doesn’t include either. It cannot because it rests in faith alone. In the letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul provides the only path to second coming thinking – “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (**COLOSSIANS 3:1-4**). He directs us to having a disciplined mind that works hard to “seek” heavenly realities. He also points us to the work of refusing to let earthly thinking deaden our second coming thinking by “setting” our minds on the other world. The word “set” means to “direct one’s mind” and points us to taking control of our thinking with earnest effort. If we learn to do this, we might find ourselves offering up a one sentence prayer each morning, “Maybe today, Lord, maybe today.”

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to look daily for Your return.”

QUOTE: “Second coming thinking produces second coming living.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 22, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

PHILIPPIANS 2:4-5 - Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE BOOK OF REMINDERS. This story is told by a lady who lived in a small town. It goes like this, “There was a quiet, little man, who traveled the streets of our town selling fruits and vegetables, who passes my door every day. One day I picked up a small notebook near the spot where his wagon had stood. On the first page I was much surprised to find these words: ‘For His body’s sake, which is the Church.’ Throughout the book were scriptural quotations and many notations like these: ‘The following were absent from Bible School last Sunday, be sure to visit them.’ ‘Ask about the sick baby.’ ‘Leave fruit for the blind lady.’ ‘Speak a word of cheer to the old crippled man.’ ‘Invite the new family to church services.’ The next day I handed the book to the humble fruit peddler, with the query, ‘I wonder if you dropped this yesterday?’ ‘Yes, indeed,’ was the answer. ‘It is my book of reminders, as I call it. I thank you.’ I told him I had glanced at the contents and expressed my surprise at their unusual character. ‘Well,’ he answered, pointing to the first page text, ‘this is my motive, my reason, for doing things, ‘For His Body’s sake, which is the Church.’”

Probably all of us have “books of reminders.” They are likely to be in the form of planners detailing personal schedules, appointments, and things to do. It could be a sheet of paper held by a magnet on a refrigerator. It could be an elaborate desk calendar. It might be a pocket planner we carry. If we are “techy”, it might be a calendar program on our computers. These are good tools to help organize our lives and I know some folks who call their planners their “brains.”

The peddler had a book of reminders, but his might differ somewhat from ours. Hopefully not, but it could. At any rate, his book of reminders is a good one to compare with our book of reminders for either affirmation or perhaps correction. When one reads through the peddler’s book of reminders, we would see one similarity with ours. It contains a list of “things to do”, but then we may find our book of reminders parts ways with his. The peddler’s book of reminders contains a list of things to do for others. These were acts of service for others and as we read it, we notice a couple of things which serve us well as examples. First, he was actively observant of the needs of others – “Absent church members, sick baby, new family”. He sought to know the needs of others. A second thing we may learn from his book of reminders is he took specific steps to meet those needs – “visit absentees from church, ask about the sick baby, and invite new family to church.” The apostle Paul tells us the kingdom of God is not in talk, but in power – “For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power” (**I CORINTHIANS 4:20**). I may talk about observing needs and even talk about meeting needs. I do, but talk without the power of action is simply self-deception and has the shade of hypocrisy – “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (**JAMES 1:22**). Jesus gives us a strong warning about this in His Sermon on the Mount – “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (**MATTHEW 7:21**). He differentiates between SAYING and DOING. It was a difference revealed not only in the humble peddler’s book of reminders but in the humble peddler’s life. I would like to continue this nugget, but I need to go check my book of reminders. There is a peddler who is helping me to see what really should dominate my planning. Aren’t we glad we are given grace that if we are in need to make corrections in our book of reminders, we have the power to do so?

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to live for others and simply let You take care of me.”

QUOTE: **JOHN. W. STOTT**, “Love is service rather than sentiment.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 23, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

PSALM 119:38 - Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. How do we live the Christian life? Go ahead and answer the question for a moment. I will weigh in first. We pray. We read the Bible. We study the Bible. We go to church. We serve one another. We share the Gospel. We fellowship. We attend small group studies. We strive to obey God’s Word. There might be more things we could add to the list detailing the mechanics of living the Christian life. And if that is the way we initially define living out the Christian life, we might want to go back and start over with the two essential elements needing to be in place before we list those mechanics. Please don’t misinterpret me here. That list and other things are very much the disciplines lived out in the Christian life, but left alone, they will become a list of things we do that give the appearance of the Christian life without the vitality of the Christian life. Think through the list for a moment. Have we ever read our Bible, put it down, and minutes later completely forgot what we just read and thus made no application in our lives? What about prayer? Ever attempt to pray, get distracted and instead of fighting it off, just give up and say, “I will pray later when it is more quiet and convenient?” Or how about church? Any recent times when Sunday morning rolled around and instead of sensing anticipation and expectation about meeting God in the corporate setting, we went because we had to and to avoid what would people think if we weren’t there?

There are two essential elements that are foundations for living the Christian life. First, we must believe that any discipline of the Christian life is to be performed through the gift of faith – “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (**HEBREWS 11:6**). This isn’t to be taken for granted. To exercise faith is to enter every discipline, whether prayer, Bible time, or church, with an acknowledged dependency upon God to make the discipline fruitful. It is easy to “go through the motions” and actually be faithless in the performance of the disciplines of the faith. Faith is a conscious act of dependence.

The second foundational element to be in place before we commit to the disciplines of the faith is reliance upon the object of our faith for the performance of those disciplines – God’s promises. Don’t lose me here. Faith is never alone. It must rely and act upon a trustworthy object and God has ordained the Christian life is lived out by faith in His promises - “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire” (**2 PETER 1:3-4**).

As we live the Christian life, we are to evaluate our conduct to see if faith in God’s promises is the starting point, not the performance of disciplines. A good illustration of this principle in action is prayer. If you can, grab your Bible and turn to Paul’s prayer in **EPHESIANS 1:16-18**. Paul’s prayer reveals the practice of faith, he relies upon God, and the linking of such reliance to a promise of God. He pleads the promises so to speak. We live the Christian life by faith exercised in promises revealed. So before we rush off to church, open our Bibles, or seek to pray, let’s slow down, take time and ask ourselves if we are performing these spiritual duties out of faithless habit or out of faith in the promises of God to bless those disciplines for His glory and our spiritual good.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to see Your delight when I rely upon Your promises to live my Christian life.”

QUOTE: “The promises of God are to be both cherished in our hearts and lived in our lives.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 24, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

MARK 1:40-42 - And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. .

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **I WILL.** I could have been worried. It is my personality. It was an unfamiliar place I had never been to before that night. I also could have imagined all the worse cases situations. That is my personality too! I was flying from Virginia to Boston and my Navy buddy was picking me up for a long night time drive to Maine and back to our ship. I knew nothing about the airport in Boston except it was big. I also knew nothing about the road to our ship berthed in Maine, let alone I would have no vehicle if my buddy was a “no show”. My friend said, “I will pick you up” and if he failed me, I had no alternative plan. Yet, against everything that I am, I was calm, read a nice book on the flight and simply knew my friend was trustworthy. His “I will” had been tested before in other situations and I rested on who he was to me.

The leper needed an “I will” in a far bigger way than I needed a ride to Maine. Capture his sense of desperation and the three approaches he gave to the only One who could give him the necessary “I will”. First, the leper came to Jesus. He did what he could and only what he could. He came to Jesus. Numerous times in the Gospel accounts Jesus gives commands in the forms of invitations to come to Him. One of the more familiar ones is found in Matthew’s Gospel – “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (**MATTHEW 11:28**). The leper won’t receive what he wants until he exercises the faith to come to Jesus. For us? Same applies. In the midst of living the Christian life, we are to come to Jesus and keep coming. He will do what only He can do, but He expects us to do what we can do – come. Not only from personal experience, but in talking to other believers, we often want the Lord to calm our storming souls, quiet stressful hearts, and give us clear direction without a diligent search of the Scriptures or fervent seasons of prayer. God gives us means to come and failure to use the means will prevent the “I will” of the Lord Jesus.

Next, the leper wouldn’t be denied the “I will” he longed for – “imploring Him”. The word “imploring” or “beseeching” literally means to beg. My dog Jake models this quite well. When I make a trip to the kitchen for a snack, this little fellow comes. He sits patiently and imploringly. I see the message in his eyes. He is hoping and begging for an “I will” from me – the “I will give you a snack, Jake” from me. He rarely leaves unsatisfied. I believe the Lord loves for us to come to Him with a persistent prayer life of “begging” and not because He is reluctant, but to test the intensity of our desire.

Finally, the leper displayed “worshipful respect” for Jesus with his posture – “and kneeling”. This revealed a trust in the ability of the One who would give him his desire. The leper doesn’t implore Jesus with an “If you can” which would be unbelief. He didn’t question His ability. He inquired about His willingness. Mixing the three together, the leper’s willingness to come, his begging prayer, and his worshipful respect, we have a man of resolved faith in the Lord Jesus. He is a man who submits his need to the Lord Jesus and leaves the results of his request in the hands of the Sovereign Lord who acts upon two words – “I will.” We know the rest of the story. Jesus “I willed” the leper’s desire for cleansing. And as we live the Christian life, this man provides a solid example of trusting the One who wills for our good and His glory.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me not to listen to the lies telling me of Your unwillingness to help me.”

QUOTE: “The ‘I wills’ of the Lord Jesus are certainties to rest upon.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 25, 2010

"The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold" (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

LUKE 8:26-39 - Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me." For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A TIME TO LEAVE JESUS. I included the entire reference in today's scripture, but the entire text is not included for space considerations. I would encourage us to read it in its entirety. This is the story about the demon possessed man living in the country of the Gerasenes. Obviously an outcast, shunned by all, he was hurting and out of control until the Healer and the One in control touched his life. The description of the man who was out of his mind is graphic and the description of the change in him by Jesus is dramatic.

Those of us who have experienced the change in our lives brought about the saving work of the Lord Jesus know a little about being a "Gerasenes person." We might not have been living in a rock tomb, but we were living in a sinful tomb and yes, like him, we were not of a right mind (**EPHESIANS 2:1-4**). But, then . . . Jesus came and all became new (**2 CORINTHIANS 5:17**). The Bible came alive as we read it. Prayer was a new found delight and time with Jesus, well, we couldn't get enough. We just didn't want to leave His presence as we enjoyed Him. Just like the healed Gerasenes man, "The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him" (**LUKE 8:38a**). Sounds good, doesn't it? I mean Jesus desires our company, right? Of course, but there is a time to leave Jesus. Notice the rest of verse thirty-eight – "but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." The healed man could not remain a closet or closed community Christian. He had a mission with a message. Just like us.

To be a closet Christian is simply to develop a Christian life of privatization. We remain solitary. No real fellowship with other Christians (and just an hour or two on Sunday isn't enough), no deepening relationships with a special brother or sister, and no commitment to a ministry of mutual encouragement is occurring. It is simply "Jesus and me" and that will always produce "stale bread" Christianity. The other type of Christian we are to avoid becoming is the "closed community Christian" where our only relationships, not associates, but relationships are Christians. The "safe" ground of Christian community keeps us from doing exactly the opposite of the charge Jesus gave the healed Gerasenes man. Do we have friendships with unbelievers? I am not talking about targets we hit with a Gospel presentation and then we are gone. I mean relationships that are growing, not compromising the truth, but growing to where they hear and see Christ in action. Yes, there is a time to leave Jesus. The world will never learn of His love and Person unless we do!

PRAYER: "Lord, help me understand the work You are doing in me is not to remain private."

QUOTE: "Alone time with Jesus is not for self-satisfaction but to equip us for self-sacrifice."

The QBC Daily Nugget January 26, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

PHILEMON 4-7 - I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **SELF ON A SHELF**. He sat across from me in his living room, looked at me and said, “I just want to quit.” He was weary in living out the Christian life. He didn’t say it, but I knew. I saw this as an opportunity to go fishing. I said, “Oh, really? You want to take a trip?” He looked puzzled and I knew he had taken the bait. Hooked and reeling him in, I said, “Yes, a trip. Like David.” And then I quoted a couple of verses from **PSALM 55** – “And I say, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; yes, I would wander far away; I would lodge in the wilderness” (**PSALM 55:6-7**). Then, I reminded him with these words, “You cannot quit. The Christian life is not EXTERNAL but INTERNAL and a trip wouldn’t do the trick. A change of scenery still brings the heart along. When Christ captures a heart, He doesn’t give it back. Paul knew this, “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (**PHILIPPIANS 3:12**). There is no quitting or turning back as a true believer in Christ. That doesn’t mean easy sailing. Times of testing do come when we may feel like quitting (**GALATIANS 6:9**), but we won’t. However, there is a way to help us when those times come along. Actually, it is the way to live the Christian life. But this reminder needs to have the volume turned up in our lives when we feel the urge like my friend who has grown weary in running his race. The way out of the pit is to put self on a shelf.

A minister from the 19th century named Robert Vaughn offers sound advice about dealing with self. He wrote, “It is well to know ourselves, but such knowledge too exclusively is not good. If any would meditate more on himself, let him meditate more on Christ, or the sight of the plagues of his own heart will rob him of all hope and consolation. So I have found it, to my sorrow.” I admit it. I am selfish. I have a bosom companion named “selfishness” who resides within. He is not a welcomed friend, but someone who seeks to come and sit for awhile in my heart without an invitation. He seems to come along when I am tired and simply want “me time”, but in today’s reference we have help to put self on a shelf. It comes from a man named Philemon. He offers us two practices which will keep self on a shelf.

First, practice a life of faith and love for Jesus and others. Remember it is faith AND love. This partnership will ensure a selfless life because the object of both is away from self. One cannot walk in faith and love and be absorbed with self. A second practice by Philemon is work to be a source of encouragement to others. Paul experienced refreshment to his soul, not a draining of his soul, from Philemon. A life of self on the shelf brings encouragement to others. They get lifted up. A life of self in the front brings discouragement to others. They get to sit on the couch beside our bosom companion selfishness and that conversation is not encouraging.

I told my friend to start a ministry of encouragement, to start putting self on a shelf. I will check up on him, but I am sure, he won’t be talking about quitting or taking a trip. He will experience the freedom of putting self on a shelf for the sake of others.

PRAYER: “Lord, make me to see I am more like You when I think of others first.”

QUOTE: “My spiritual health is directly related to either my self-absorption or self-denial.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 27, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

I CORINTHIANS 4:20 - For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A CONVINCING LIFE. Four ministers were in conversation about Bible translations. One liked the King James Version best because of its beautiful English. Another like the Revised Version best because it is more literal. Still yet another made comment about his liking of the Moffat translation because of its up-to-date vocabulary and readability. The fourth minister was silent. Finally he was asked for his input. He smiled and said, “Well, I like my mother’s translation best. She translated it into life and it was the most convincing translation I ever saw.”

What made the mother of the fourth minister’s life so impactful? To answer, “It was her obedience to the Word of God” would be quite correct, but I think we should probably dig a little deeper here. There is something beyond the surface of mere external conformity to commands when it comes to understanding obedience. As we think on the mother’s testimony, one word that stands out in her son’s comment on his mother’s life is the word “convincing”. And notice the power of her convincing life was SEEN not just HEARD. I am sure she taught her son Biblical truth but Biblical truth in our home, churches, and workplaces must be taught by instruction and caught by observation. There is nothing convincing about mere talk of Christianity. What Christian has not lived out the “letter of the law” when it comes to an external conformity to clear commands of Scripture, but lacked a “convincing” power of the Word on display for others to observe.

The Apostle Paul gives a nice formula for living a life of convincing power. In writing to the Philippian church, he gave them an instruction which encompasses four ways to prepare us to live out Biblical truth – “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me--practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (**PHILIPPIANS 4:9**). First, we learn truth (our mind grasps truth). Next, we receive truth (our hearts embrace truth). A third preparation for a life of convincing power, we hear truth (our wills are convinced of truth). Finally, we see truth (our eyes observe truth in others). Once these are in place, what does Paul say? “Practice these things” – just like the mother of the minister.

As we think through the process – learn, receive, hear, and observe – we must guard against viewing this as simply an exercise in Bible study. It is an exercise to see Jesus. Look at the similarities to Paul’s instruction and John’s testimony – “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-- the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us” (**1 JOHN 1:1-2**). The most convincing life is a life that sees Jesus in private and then takes that experience into public. Effective quiet times with the Lord translate into effective lives in the world. And we don’t need to fret about our influence. Take care of learning, receiving, hearing, and observing Jesus, and He will ensure the sphere of our influence. I have found it to be a very real experience – be full of self and we won’t be full of Jesus. The cup of our lives cannot be half-filled with ourselves and then topped off with Jesus. It is either His fullness or mine and that becomes the daily pursuit of the Christian – “For, let this mind be in you that is also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal to God, but did empty himself, the form of a servant having taken, in the likeness of men having been made” (**PHILIPPIANS 2:5-7**). This pursuit produces the best translation of the Bible – a convincing life living out the Bible.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to see it isn’t just my talk of You that matters but my walk with You also.”

QUOTE: “To be full of Jesus Christ means I must be emptied of myself.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 28, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

GENESIS 50:15-21 - When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died, 'Say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **IMAGINARY FEARS**. I chuckle at this verse found in Solomon's book of wisdom, "The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!" (**PROVERBS 22:13**). Commentators rightly expound this verse as a lazy person who imagines dangers which cause inaction. Albert Barnes writes, "The point of the satire is the ingenuity with which the slothful man devises the most improbable alarms. He hears that "there is a lion without," i. e., in the broad open country; he is afraid of being slain in the very streets of the city." A lion roams in the jungle and a zoo, but not outside one's door in the street! This is simply an imaginary fear. Yes, I chuckle at this verse until I find myself gripped in imaginary fears, but I don't think I am alone. We each have them . . . fear of what people would think of us if they really knew us, fear of what people say of us outside of our hearing, fear of people's response when we seek to witness for Jesus . . . the fears we have are personal, however, they are not in isolation. We cannot say, "No one goes through what I do when it comes to fear", though, we may think and feel that way. God encourages us by saying no believer lives as an individual on a deserted island when it comes to temptation, including imaginary fears, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (**1 CORINTHIANS 10:13**).

In today's reference, here are a group of brothers who felt they had a pretty good reason to fear. It turned out to be only imaginary. Yes, they sold their brother Joseph in an act of cruel jealousy and to find out they were now at his mercy, would make one shake a little. They feared he would lash out in revenge. It is true that our remaining sin does want to do so when we are treated poorly. Humanly speaking, we could see the justification for their fear, but that is where we get in trouble with imaginary fears. Imaginary fears originate in human reasoning that assumes worst case. These fearful brothers failed to surrender to the sovereignty of the God of all mercy. That is what imaginary fears will do in our lives – make worst case assumptions about people and situations. When we get into "assumption mode", we become self-ascribed prophets predicting our future and that is simply attempting to exercise our sovereignty and ignoring God's sovereignty. For the brothers? Their imaginary fear was dissolved by the love of Joseph. He saw behind the scenes of their cruel act to the God who works all things out for good (**ROMANS 8:28**).

Lions roam in the wild and zoos, not in our streets. Let's strive to keep imaginary fears where they belong– in the hands of the God whose perfect love casts out fear (**1 JOHN 4:18**).

PRAYER: "Lord, help me to be guided by Your fear and not the imaginary fears of the devil or myself."

QUOTE: "Imaginary fears lead to false assumptions and may lead to irrational actions."

The QBC Daily Nugget January 29, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

JOHN 1:14-16 - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: STORMS OF CHANGE. A group was on a guided tour of a prestigious furniture factory. Coming upon a supply of wood, the guide pointed out the superb grain and highest quality of the oak which made their furniture. He said, "I wish you to observe the beauty of this oak. It is the finest selected timber of its kind, and the secret of the intricate and beautiful graining is just this; that the trees from which it was taken grew in a spot where they were exposed to almost constant conflict with storms." It was said by the unknown author of this story, "So with the human life beset by sorrows, tests, and trials. If it stands the storm, how the wind of God strengthens and beautifies it. We need life's stress. Character cannot be developed into its strongest and most beautiful forms without it."

As we live out the life of Christ, storms must come. Jesus used literal storms to teach the disciples of His power and their need of faith – "And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?" (**MATTHEW 8:23-27**). He also used "spiritual storms" to drive His servants away from their own strength to rest only in His – "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead" (**2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-9**). Storms show us ourselves and the need of humility. Storms put God's supremacy and sufficiency on display. Recall the last time we watched a fierce thunderstorm or blowing blizzard. For the spiritually sensitive, we humbly observed the display of God's majestic power.

When storms come into our lives, two things are to be kept in our minds. First, unlike literal storms which impact all of us, God's spiritual storms in our lives are individual. Some of God's servants don't require significant storms to humble them. These gentle sheep are nudged by the soft breezes of God's correction. Other believers, including yours truly, need hurricane force winds to uproot the pride so deeply entrenched. We cannot look at the experiences of others and judge either them or compare ourselves. Another thing to keep in mind about God's storms is that they are designed to take us to the sufficiency of Christ for not only weathering the storm, but to learn from the storm. Storms in life are not to be viewed as something to endure and once they pass, resort back to living life in our own understanding and resources. Storms are God's "weather tools" to take us where we need to be and not to remain where we were before the storm came. They are to drive us to learn that our lives are to be lived out of the fullness of His Son who said, "Without me, you can do nothing" (**JOHN 15:5**). Literal storms change the landscape. Land masses never fully recover when devastating storms pass over them. For the Christian, as God sends storms, we are to be changed also, but this change is not devastating. It is liberating.

PRAYER: "Lord, help me to live out my belief that Your fullness is sufficient for me."

QUOTE: "The believer living life out of Christ's fullness will never meet an empty supply."

The QBC Daily Nugget January 30, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

PSALM 22:22-23 - I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE WORK OF WORSHIP. Do we ever struggle during worship? Maybe some of you don't have any challenge when it comes to corporate worship. If you are able to come to church on a Sunday morning and don't struggle with a single distraction during the entire service, I am envious. If you are able to prevent your mind from taking a trip over the events of the past week, I am envious. If you are able to say, “Mind, you are not allowed to start planning next week's schedule during church”, then I am envious. If you are able to corner your thoughts and say, “Mind, you will not be critical of the songs being sung or ‘check out’ during the sermon because it is boring or irrelevant”, then I am envious.

There was a Puritan named Richard Steele who would have been envious of you also. He wrote a book addressing the topic of distractions in worship. I have yet to see a contemporary book about his topic. It is titled “A Remedy for Wandering Thoughts in Worship” based on **1 CORINTHIANS 7:35** - “And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction”. Another translation translates “without distraction” with the words “undivided attention.” Same idea, same struggle. When it comes to worship, we must not restrict our understanding to primarily an experience, though, true worship is an experience. Our God is a living God who delights in revealing Himself to us. When He does so, it is an indescribable experience. Yet, if we come to worship just for the experience, as if we are passive in the process, waiting for God to “do something”, or make us “feel something”, we will leave disappointed and disillusioned. True worship takes work – a work of the mind, a work of the heart, and a work of the will. We fight distractions from ourselves and the devil in all three areas when seeking to worship our God

In today's reference, the Psalmist reveals three “works of worship” we are responsible for in order to know and experience true worship. First, there is the work of praise – “praise Him.” This is not dependent on if we “feel” God. It is a command. I don't know about you, but sometimes I don't “feel” like praising and that doesn't mean I am in sin. Commands to obey are not dependent on motivational feelings. Praise is a glorious command focusing on who God is more than what He does. Next, there is the work of glorifying Him – “glorify Him”. What does it mean to glorify God? That could be a lengthy conversation, but sufficient for now is the truth that God is glorified when we lovingly obey Him. Just like we delight in seeing our children walk in God-honoring obedience to us as parents, our Father in heaven delights in our obedience, even in its imperfect practice. Finally, there is the work of reverence – “stand in awe of Him.” This requires the discipline of what I call a “silent heart caught up in the beauty of God.” There are times in worship we are to silently, “be still and know I am God” (**PSALM 46:10**). Without quiet waiting upon God, our worship will be incomplete. And waiting is work. Distractions strive to make our waiting times non-existent because our enemy knows that in waiting on the Lord we will learn both worship and our source of strength – “For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength” (**ISAIAH 30:15**). Worship does take work, not of joyless labor, but of Spirit-aided effort. It will prove to be worth the effort as we learn to worship God in spirit and truth.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me that worship in spirit and truth requires effort on my part.”

QUOTE: GEOFFREY KING, “Worship is the highest function of the human soul.”

The QBC Daily Nugget January 31, 2010

"The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold" (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

JEREMIAH 31:33-34 - But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **IS THE WRITING LEGIBLE?** I think I type fairly well. It might not be blazing speed and perfect accuracy, but it's not slow and riddled with the need for retypes. I know I don't write well. My penmanship lacks clarity most of the time. It isn't because I am simply a sloppy writer. I don't take the time to write legibly. The evidence is in our family checkbook. It wasn't too long ago I started to put an entry into it when my wife interrupted in words and action, "That's okay. I'll do it. I want to be able to read it."

God writes quite well. I know that is an understatement. Actually, God writes perfectly with no problems of legibility. First, His Word is clear – "The law of the Lord is perfect reviving the soul" (**PSALM 19:7**). And another area of perfect legibility is His writing of His law upon the hearts of His people – "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts" (**JEREMIAH 31:33**). As we consider the ramifications of this great work of grace done by God in His people, think of the law as defined by Jesus in His dialogue with a lawyer - "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" (**MATTHEW 22:36-40**).

Is God writing His law of love upon our hearts? Paul tells us two things about God's love when it comes to the life of a Christian. First, we don't have to seek it. It is already given to us – "And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (**ROMANS 5:5**). I recall countless pleas for love from God when perhaps I should be pleading with Him to teach me to use the love He has already given me! That leads to the second truth from the Apostle Paul about the laws of love written on our hearts – "Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another" (**1 THESSALONIANS 4:9**). We are taught by God to love. Ever struggle with loving someone? The problem isn't lack of love. We already took that away with the truth God sheds His love in our hearts at conversion. The problem isn't the difficult person. The problem is we are difficult students. God has promised to teach us to love. As He does, it will invariably take us out of our comfort zones with actions into the lives of others that are, well, uncomfortable. That is what faith does and especially faith in action in demonstrating love. True love, the love written on our hearts by God, always involves self-denial and self-sacrifice. Just walk the last week of our Lord's life as He traveled from the Garden of Gethsemane to Golgotha's hill to see the actions of love written upon His heart.

Our handwriting might be difficult for others to read, but there is a writing about us that should be legible for all to see – the writing of the laws of love, love for God and love for others, upon our hearts and making its impression upon those around us.

PRAYER: "Lord, let those around me see Your law written on my heart."

QUOTE: "The love of God will not lack expression and impression in a Christian's life."