

# 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)*



## March 2010 Archive



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## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**1 PETER 4:1** - Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: RESPONDING TO SUFFERING.** Today's topic is an “un” topic. It is an unpleasant, an undesirable, and an unavoidable thing in life. Now you may opt to stop reading any further which means you have avoided reading about the topic, but you will not be able to avoid living out the topic. Suffering. It knows no partiality in the human race. It does not care where we live or our economic status. Suffering is the given lot to all born into this world. Job got it right with these words, “Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble” (**JOB 14:1**).

When it comes to being a Christian, suffering doesn't just “happen” to us. Suffering is given to us. Actually, it is considered a gift from God to us. Yes, I know that is a hard pill to swallow that suffering is a gift from God. Salvation a gift from God? Great! We embrace that for sure. The blessings of His care for us? Our arms are all around those with grateful hearts, but what about the gift of suffering? Paul wrote to the Philippians these words, “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (**PHILIPPIANS 1:29**). The word “granted” means to “freely give, to graciously grant, to bestow.” So we would rewrite **PHILIPPIANS 1:29** like this, “For it has been freely given, graciously granted, and richly bestowed to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake.” That might shake up some theology out there which wants to avoid or dismiss from the Christian life any thoughts of suffering. The gift of believing in Christ is something very desirous. The gift of suffering for Christ might not be as desirous. Paul goes even further. He wants this gift of suffering – “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (**PHILIPPIANS 3:10**). He knew that to truly experience the fullness of fellowship with the Lord Jesus, suffering was part of the package. There is no glorious crown of reward in the next life without the painful cross of suffering in this life. It isn't just the Apostle Paul who understood the proper role suffering plays in Christian thinking and living. Allow the Apostle Peter to drive it home also, “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps” (**1 PETER 2:21**). God not only gives us the gift of suffering but calls us to it in order to identify with His Son.

Suffering is non-optional in the Christian life. Responses to suffering, though, does offer us options. Consider three. First, we may rebel against suffering. This is a very serious and wrong response. It makes us unlike our Lord who willingly embraced suffering to do the Father's will (**MATTHEW 26:39**). The second option is to grudgingly submit to the suffering given by God. This, too, is a very serious and wrong response. It makes us “Christianized Pharisees” simply submitting to the externals of Christianity while our hearts act out a “spiritual temper tantrum” against the suffering God has designed for our good. The final response, and only correct response, is to see suffering as a tool of the Lord to increase our holiness and then learn to praise Him with thanksgiving for the suffering. This isn't easy to do and only the Christian knowing the power and intimacy of the Holy Spirit will get to that point in the heart. David got there when he wrote this proper understanding and approach toward suffering – “I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me” (**PSALM 119:75**). And earlier in **PSALM 119**, he knew the value of his suffering – “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes” (**PSALM 119:71**). Let's respond to suffering like Paul, Peter and David!

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me to enter into Your sufferings as an evidence of my adoption.”

**QUOTE:** “Suffering refused or rebelled against is an act of disobedience toward God.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**JOB 16:1-2** - Then Job answered and said: "I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are you all.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **MERCIFUL OR MISERABLE.** Humans, even Christians, are a “wishy washy” lot. Whether dealing with ourselves or others, we have our high days and not so high days. There are those high days where we are heavenly-minded living out the strength of the Lord’s joy. Our walk with the Lord is vibrant. Our compassion and commitment to others are evident with real sacrifice of time and energy in His name. Then we get those “refrigerator type” days. Life seems cold or at least chilly. Spiritual disciplines, instead of warm encounters with God, are either missed or just cold mechanics not making much difference in our lives. And compassion and commitment to others? They seem to have gone into a deep freeze somewhere. Wishy-washy is a good description of us. Job had friends like that.

In the beginning of Job’s severe testing, his friends proved their worth to him with their compassion and mercy. They were merciful comforters. I am sure Job welcomed their company in his misery – “Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great” (**JOB 2:11-13**).

Notice three things a good friend and comforter does as modeled by Job’s friends. First, they made time for their hurting friend – “they made an appointment together to come and show him sympathy and comfort him.” We will never be good comforters for one another unless we do it on purpose. A passing, “I will pray for you” on a Sunday morning is fine, good, and convenient. Upsetting our personal schedules for a hurting brother or sister is fine, good, and inconvenient. The difference between our ministry and ministry in Christ’s name will be how available we make ourselves for others. If our ministry to one another only happens as it fits into our schedules, we might want to re-think and re-define our definition of ministry. It isn’t what we see in the life of our Lord. Another thing Job’s friends did, making them merciful comforters, is that they were willing to pay the cost for their friend – “And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights”. That isn’t to say we need to move in with a hurting brother or sister for a week, but we must be willing to pay the cost of time investment. Hurting souls won’t always be healed instantaneously. They may need us for more than an hour over coffee some evening. Finally, Job’s friends didn’t rattle off a bunch of advice – “and no spoke a word to him”. Sometimes a hurting soul just needs to talk and it will often be rambling. The good comforter doesn’t get impatient, and then interrupt with a ton of advice. That approach often proves more hurtful than helpful. Job’s friends started well. It didn’t last. Read today’s reference. Job’s friends go from merciful comforters to miserable comforters. How did this happen? Here’s one thought. They grew tired of Job’s “complaining” revealing their impatience. Job was hurting, talking, and it wore out his once patient friends. Patience in ministering to others isn’t a human quality. It is a Spirit-given virtue. Attempt to minister to others without a close walk with the Lord and our patience won’t last. Hurting people need a ton of patience and it is beyond our ability to have such. Fortunately, God comforts us with patience so we may comfort others with patience (**2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-5**). As we seek to comfort one another, what type of comforters are we?

PRAYER: “Lord, help my ministry to others to actually be Your ministry to others through me.”

QUOTE: “The quality of our comforting others relies upon the comfort we know from God.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**JOHN 15:9** - As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: WHERE IT ALL STARTS.** In today’s reference, our Lord gives us a great privilege and command – “Abide in His love.” Don’t be quick to get to the command and get busy living the Christian life. Allow ourselves to simmer on what comes before the command - “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you”. Allow that to warm the heart before we get busy seeking to understand and obey the command to abide.

In the Christian life, we know that obedience is the goal God has for us. That goal is for His glory and our good. It was that way before the fall in the Garden of Eden and it is the goal for those restored in relationship with God through the Lord Jesus. It is by obedience we “tell” the Lord we love Him – “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (**JOHN 14:15**). To love the Lord involves not only our lips but our actions (**JAMES 1:22**). But obedience must flow from a heart that has been apprehended by the love of God. I know too painfully how to perform the conduct of the Christian life without being controlled by what makes the Christian life – “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died” (**2 CORINTHIANS 5:14**). The starting and continuing points in every role we have - husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, employers, employees, educators, and everything else between and around them – must be the love of Christ controlling us. The Apostle Paul said without love, we are simply “a noisy gong or clanging cymbal” (**1 CORINTHIANS 13:1**).

What is a practical way to be warmed and thoroughly gripped by the words of Jesus, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you” so the result is a life abiding in and controlled by such love? There are many things we could discuss. The need for holiness, an effective prayer life, time in the Word, but one of the most important acts of faith, and necessary to know this experience, is a life of thanksgiving and gratitude. We may not “feel” this love right now. We often don’t, but that does not make it untrue. One of the highest expressions of faith is giving thanksgiving for something God has given us and we don’t sense or “feel” what He has given us. Like boldness to witness or feeling loved by God. Faith doesn’t wait for a warm feeling to act. It acts and then often the feeling follows. For instance, I am fearful to witness. So are you. We don’t wait for the “right opportunity” which is often an excuse to justify our fear. We simply seize the moment and whisper, “Father, thank you for giving me the spirit of power not of fear” and then act upon His Word and share Christ – “For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (**2 TIMOTHY 1:7**). Here is a story showing the proper attitude of thanksgiving for what God has given us.

One day a daughter of a printer, who worked where they were printing Martin Luther’s translation of the Bible, picked up a small scrap of paper from the floor on which was printed these words: “God so loved the world that He gave . . .” The rest of the sentence was torn off. The mother and girl had been taught God was cruel and just waiting to punish them. Her mother looked at her daughter and asked, “What did God give?” The girl replied, “I don’t know what He gave, but if He loved us well enough to give us anything, He is not angry with us and we don’t need to be afraid; we can start thanking and loving Him for whatever He gave us.” And though **JOHN 3:16** was incomplete in that little piece of paper, the message is not. God loves us, so loves us. It is from that position we love Him, leading to a loving of others, with hearts overflowing with thanksgiving for such love!

**PRAYER:** “Lord, I need to learn to rest in Your love today. Teach me how.”

**QUOTE:** “We are transformed by looking to Jesus and it is a look of love.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18** – Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: SOME THINGS SHOULDN'T CHANGE.** Ever been in a spiritual desert? Ever feel like your soul simply was parched, barren, and could break as easily as a dry twig or limb? A. W. Pink wrote an article in the March 1939 edition of *Studies in the Scriptures* titled “Spiritual Fluctuations”. In the article, he defined five “changes” experienced in a Christian in his or her walk with the Lord Jesus. These “changes” reflect the reality of the Christian life in all its seasons. Here is an overview of them.

First, there is a change in our conflict with sin. Pink wrote, “At conversion it often seems as though the believer is completely delivered from all his spiritual enemies. But how soon he discovers that the wilderness of sin lies between him and the promised land, and that though the Egyptians be dead, there are Amalekites to assail him” (**EXODUS 17:8**). Then, there is the change in our faith. Pink states, “On some occasions his heart goes out instinctively to God so that he can exclaim, ‘I will trust and not be afraid’ (**ISAIAH 12:2**); but at other times he is filled with doubts and fears, and is quite unable to lay hold of the Divine promises.” A third change experienced by Christians is in our prayer lives. Pink describes this change known all too well by us, “One day he is favored with real freedom and his devotions are delightful, but another day he is bound in the spirit and his attempts at supplication are wearisome.” The fourth change is the change in our enjoyment of the scriptures. Again from Pink’s pen, “Often he is able to feelingly exclaim, ‘More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb’ (**PSALM 19:10**). But alas, it is by no means always so. When fellowship with God is broken, our relish is lost for His Word, and it becomes more or less neglected. And when the Lord chastens His child because of his waywardness, so far from His Word affording comfort, it pricks, condemns, and terrifies.” The final change is what Pink called “our outward lot” and these are times of suffering and affliction. He wrote, “For a time, perhaps years, the smile of Providence is upon him, and then all is drastically altered. One trouble follows swiftly upon the heels of another, until the sorely tried soul is ready to say with Jacob, ‘All these things are against me’” (**GENESIS 42:36**). In the conclusion of the article, we see the wisdom of God’s servant and his God in these instructive words about all these changes we experience – “But such ‘changes’ or afflictions are helpful, for they deeply exercise an honest heart, humble him before the Lord, cause him to tread more softly, and deepen his fear of God.”

As we ponder what Pink wrote and the reality of our changing spiritual frames, there are some things in our daily walks which should not fluctuate. I confess they fluctuate with me but they are to remain constants in the exercise of my will apart from the fluctuations of my heart. They are found in today’s reference. Three constants are to be sought and maintained in the daily battle of a fluctuating heart. First, live in a spirit of worship – “rejoice always”. Worship takes our eyes off ourselves. With a focus on us, fluctuations flourish. With a focus on the Lord Jesus, fluctuations are restricted. The next constant is live in the spirit of communion with God – “pray without ceasing”. We are to learn to walk in the course of our day being aware of and communing with God. Don’t be discouraged if this isn’t happening throughout the day. Learn to practice the presence of God. The third constant is live with a thankful heart. This is hard and easy - hard because we are forgetful of God’s many blessings (**PSALM 103:2**), but easy, if we choose to engage the will and remember them. Spiritual fluctuations are inevitable, but we can learn to minimize their impact on us by seeking to live out the constants of worship, prayer, and thanksgiving.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, forgive me when I don’t live in the spirit of thanksgiving.”

**QUOTE:** “A thankful heart begins with an exercise of a thankful will.”

**The QBC Daily Nugget**  
**March 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)

**JOHN 13:1** – Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: HE STILL LOVES US.** There are times we read the scriptures and think we've got it down. We read a passage and assume a pretty good grasp of understanding is ours. Then, one day, a familiar passage just might be “exposed” by the Spirit in ways that make our spiritual eyes pop open and we may say, “I never saw it like that before!” Today's reference might be one of those moments. For instance, read it and when we come to the end of the verse where John writes, “He loved them to the end”, what comes to mind by way of defining “to the end.” My initial interpretation was, “Jesus loved them to the end of His life on earth. The cross and the display of love must be the meaning of “to the end.” That would be true but not complete. The proper interpretation is that “He loved His own to the fullest possible extent.” Allow the 18<sup>th</sup> century preacher/theologian, John Gill, wonderfully expound this truth – “Having done all this, “He loved them to the end” and which He showed by dying for them; and continues to show by interceding for them in heaven, by supplying them with all grace, and by preserving them from a final and total falling away; and He will at last introduce them into His kingdom and glory, when they shall be forever with Him; and so that love to them continues not only to the end of His own life, nor barely to the end of theirs, but to the end of the world, and forever.” How beautiful is that? And especially when we know how little we love Him in return and how often, as sheep, we find ourselves wandering away from Good Shepherd?

I came across a brief paragraph by an unknown author which really drives home the truth of the depth of Jesus' love for us. The paragraph was titled, “I am a Wayward Foolish Child” and flows from the title like this, “But God loves me! I have disobeyed and grieved Him ten thousand times. But He loves me! All this time, while I was caring for nobody but myself and fancying He must almost hate me, He was loving and pitying me. I knelt down to pray, and all my wasted, childish wicked life came and stared me in the face. I looked at it and said with tears of joy, ‘But He loves me!’ Never in my life did I feel so rested, so quieted, so sorrowful and yet so satisfied.”

There is a pretty good portion of scripture which goes hand in hand with the above paragraph. It's found in the conclusion of the eighth chapter of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (**ROMANS 8:37-39**). Spend a little time meditating and then making a list of all the things that will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The meditation time should be long and take some time. The list of what separates us from our Lord's love takes no time to think about or construct – nothing, absolutely nothing, not even ourselves, can cause His love to cease or leave us. Samuel Rutherford once said, “Acquaint yourself with Christ's love, and ye shall not miss to find new gold mines and treasures in Christ.”

Jesus, as our unchanging God – “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (**HEBREWS 13:8**), can be trusted to continue an unchangable love for us despite the ebbs and flows of our walk with Him. And when those ebbs come, and they will come, cling to the truth, that, yes, He still does love us.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me to see more and more of Your unchanging love in my life.”

**QUOTE:** SAMUEL RUTHERFORD, “His love hath neither brim nor bottom.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**ROMANS 12:1** – I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A LIVING SACRIFICE.** Let’s take a quick spiritual check-up of how our day started this morning. As we awoke to the new day God gave us, what was the direction of our first prayer? What words and petitions made up our utterances heavenward? It could have been audible or simply our hearts pointed toward communion with God. The spiritual check-up is pointed toward where our focus was once we began our day. Here some possibilities, actually, realities. We probably prayed for strength for all we need to accomplish. Not bad, but we might have wanted to thank Him for the strength He has already given us instead of asking for it – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (**PHILIPPIANS 4:13**). Notice the tense of the verb – present – His strengthening of us is already happening. Another thing we may have prayed for was protection for our loved ones as they go to work, school, or whatever activities are scheduled. Good prayer. Intercession is a vital part and healthy part of our prayer lives – “Ephaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God” (**COLOSSIANS 4:12**). We might even have prayed, “Lord, protect me from my enemies today. I am prone to fall by either my own wayward tendencies, the wiles of the devil, or the attractiveness of the world. That, too, is a great way to start the day. Our Lord showed us that He prays for our spiritual protection also, “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one” (**JOHN 17:15**).

There is another type of praying which may have happened as we entered into our day. If it didn’t make it into our prayer closet, let’s start tomorrow with it being part of our preparation for the day. It is found in today’s reference and the portion which reads, “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice.” To form that into prayer, it might go something like this, “Lord, I present my body to You for Your purposes today; my hands to work hard for you – “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men” (**COLOSSIANS 3:23**), my eyes to look at wholesome things – “Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you” (**PROVERBS 4:25**), my mind centered on serving others – “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” (**PROVERBS 2:4-5**), and my feet to walk as You walked with compassion and sacrifice for those hurting souls around me – “By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” (**1 JOHN 2:5-6**).

What happens when we start our days with a single desire to be a living sacrifice for our God as I described in the last paragraph? I think we begin to understand a little what Jesus meant when He said, “I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly” (**JOHN 10:10**). The prophet Isaiah describes the reward for those who live out being a living sacrifice – “If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail” (**ISAIAH 58:10-11**). Do we want to know the Lord deeper and enjoy Him more thoroughly? Then be a living sacrifice. The reward will be the Lord Himself and He is worthy of a living sacrifice by all of us.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me prove my being a living sacrifice to You by my sacrifice for others.”

**QUOTE:** SAMUEL RUTHERFORD, “Because I am His own, He may use my as He pleaseth.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**ROMANS 12:15** – Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: VESSELS OF MERCY.** Humans hurt. All of us. Are you a Christian? You have hurts and disappointments. Are you not a Christian? You have hurts and disappointments. Did Job ever get it right with these words – “Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble” (**JOB 14:1**)! Job wasn’t alone in his assessment of life in a world estranged from God. We could pull up a chair alongside Solomon and he would give his rendition of Job’s message like this, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.” Even our Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples, which includes us who know Him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament” (**JOHN 16:20a**). Humans hurt and for the believer in the Lord Jesus, that opens us up to become vessels of mercy to hurting souls.

When in the United States Navy, I served on various types of vessels. What determined the make-up of the vessel and all its associated equipment was the mission it was designed to perform. Get the mission down, then build the vessel. Now take that principle into our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and ask ourselves if we are on His mission and thus being equipped to be vessels to fulfill that mission. Let’s start out with the mission statement of our Lord revealed in Luke’s gospel. He is just about to launch His ministry and he proclaimed His mission – “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (**LUKE 4:16-19**).

As we seek to follow our Lord, there are four things necessary for us to own and live from His mission’s statement if we are to be His vessels of mercy to all the hurting people around us. First, seek to be a Spirit-filled person – “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”. Unless we know the Spirit’s enabling, our ministry to the hurting will not last. We will lose heart, lose energy, and lose compassion. Only the Spirit can sustain ministry to the hurting (**2 CORINTHIANS 3:4-6**). The second necessity is to be versed in the good news of Christ – “He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the the poor”. Gospel saturated Christians become Gospel sharing Christians and effective ministers of mercy. Take away the Gospel, we offer hurting people nothing for the true healing of a hurting heart. The third necessity to be a vessel of mercy is to go to hurting people – “He has sent me”. We are to pray for hurts, but never think prayer alone is the answer. Pray for hurting people, yes, then begin to seek a way to be an answer to your prayers for them by getting involved in their lives. Intercessory prayer will include ways of involvement in the lives of those we intercede for in their hurts and sorrows. A phone call to a hurting brother or sister saying, “I am praying for you” followed up with, “Would you like to get together and talk?” just might be part of the answer to your prayer for them. A fourth necessity to be a vessel of mercy is to realize there is no “quick fix” when it comes to ministering to hurting people – “to set at liberty those who are oppressed”. An oppressed or depressed soul needs a commitment to whatever it takes, and as long as it takes, by one wanting to be a vessel of mercy. True ministry, like Jesus, a vessel of mercy, is costly, but the world is full of hurting humans needing someone to pay the cost. Is that “someone” each of us?

**PRAYER:** “Lord, as You are my Potter, make me moldable clay, fit to be made into a vessel of mercy.”

**QUOTE:** “The beginning of becoming a vessel of mercy is to embrace the Master’s mission statement.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 8, 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 25:6-7** – Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: TELLING GOD WHAT TO REMEMBER.** I either hear or share reminders around our house. Things like, “Don’t forget to take out the recycling” or “Hey, remember Jake needs a walk.” All of our homes have “reminders” we share in order to get things done. We need them. David had some reminders he needed shared too! They were reminders he offered to his God in prayer. As one reads the Psalms, pay attention to just how close David was with God. Most of the Psalms are prayers. They are heart-wrenching, worshipful, depressing, exhilarating, and above all, reveal an intimacy with God. In today’s reference, David “tells” God, actually, petitions God, toward three areas he wants Him to exercise His remembrance. But before we go into those, we need to exercise our own mind in remembering this . . . God doesn’t forget anything. David isn’t questioning God in His ability to remember. He is petitioning God to deal with Him out of who He is. The petitions for God to remember are for David’s benefits. He needs to remember how God deals with him and he prays accordingly.

First, David pleads for God to remember (or treat him) out of mercy and steadfast love. When the sun is shining in our souls and the battle against sin and the devil seems to be not as intense, we are quick to praise God and remember His mercy and steadfast love. However, when darkness comes and the Lord chastens us to develop holiness in us (**HEBREWS 12:3-11**), we might be a little “forgetful” when it comes to His mercy and steadfast love. We might see Him in a harsh way. Samuel Rutherford wrote, “Let not the Lord’s dealings seem harsh, rough, or unfatherly, because it is unpleasant. When the Lord’s blessed will bloweth cross your desires, it is best in humility to strike sail to Him and to be willing to be laid any way our Lord pleaseth. Learn to believe Christ better than His strokes; Himself and His promises better than His glooms for we know all things work together for good to them that love God.”

The second direction David prays is for God to “not remember the sins of his youth or my transgressions”. Charles Spurgeon is worthy to quote on this petition of David, “The bones of our youthful feasting at Satan’s table will stick painfully in our throats when we are old men. He who presumes upon his youth is poisoning his old age. How large a tear may wet this page as some of us reflect upon the past! Sincere penitents cannot get through their confessions at a gallop; they are constrained to use many bemoanings, for their swarming sins smite them with so innumerable griefs. A painful sense of any one sin provokes the believer to repentance for the whole mass of his iniquities. Nothing but the fullest and clearest pardon will satisfy a thoroughly awakened conscience. David would have his sins not only forgiven, but forgotten.” This is a good petition for the sensitive soul who looks at the follies of the past and is humbled at both his or her actions and the gracious steadfast love and mercy of the God who forgives.

Finally, David returns to the anchor of his soul in his third petition of remembrance to his God – “according to your steadfast love remember me”. Aren’t those great bookends in which to put our youthful sins between? The steadfast love of God “squashes” the sins of youth. David’s transparency with God was because he knew His God. He could boldly, not presumingly, petition Him to treat him with steadfast love, mercy, a “forgetfulness of past sins” and for the sake of God’s goodness. It is a good goal for us, to be able to get to the point of “telling” God what to remember!

**PRAYER:** “Lord, allow me to develop a prayer life with the closeness and freedom David enjoyed.”

**QUOTE:** “Our intimacy in prayer will be measured by our interest in prayer.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**2 CORINTHIANS 7:5-6** - For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn--fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **RESCUE THE PERISHING.** Some of us may be humming along the hymn associated with the title of today's nugget. It reminds us of the task and privilege of sharing the Gospel or “rescuing lost sinners who will perish” without the Lord Jesus. It is a hymn calling us to the work Jesus left His disciples, all of them, including each of us - “And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (**MARK 16:15**).

Now think with me for a moment the application of rescuing the perishing when it comes to believers. I am not referring to their eternal perishing. I am referring to the tired warrior of the cross, the spiritually drained Christian who is downcast, the believer feeling the flood of remaining sin overwhelming them. Maybe like David felt – “There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness, I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all the day I go about mourning. For my sides are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart” (**PSALM 38:3-8**). Don't they, too, need a rescue mission sent their way?

Many years ago a disaster occurred on the Thames River. The vessel *Princess Alice* collided with another boat. The vessels were loaded with people and loss of human life great with about 600 perishing in the dark waters. It appears that when the crash happened, two ferrymen were mooring their boats. One heard the crash and cries of the perishing people and said, “I am tired and I am going home. No one will see me in the fog.” At the coroner's inquest, both ferrymen had to appear. The first was asked, “Did you hear the cries?” “Yes, sir.” “What did you do?” “Nothing, sir.” “Aren't you ashamed?” “Sir, the shame will never leave me till I die.” The second ferryman was also asked, “What did you do?” “I jumped into my boat and rowed to the wreck with all my might; I crammed my boat with women and children, and when it was too dangerous to take even one more, I rowed away with the cry, ‘O God, for a bigger boat!’”

In today's reference, the Apostle Paul needed a rescue mission. He was apprehensive about the Corinthians in their response to his letter. Would they alienate him? Would they respond to his call to discipline and put the church in order? He had fears and felt great uncertainty and apprehension. And God sent His servant a rescuer to offer comfort and encouragement in a dark time – “But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus” (**2 CORINTHIANS 7:6**). Titus was a messenger of hope to a brother who needed to be pulled out of a downcast spirit. As we seek to be proclaimers of the Gospel to perishing souls, are we seeking to be rescuers of believers who might be in need of a life preserver of encouragement or support? God's means of comfort for one another may vary, but one means, which is clear from today's reference, is He uses His people in the lives of His people. The number one thing which will limit us in our ability to be like Titus is simply this – restricted availability. Fill our lives with stuff that is all about us and we won't be able to be a Titus with great effectiveness. The opportunities to rescue the perishing are endless both for the unbeliever and believers. Which type of ferryman are we going to be? One who stays at home or prays for a bigger boat?

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to be a comforter today to a hurting member of Your family.”

QUOTE: “God's means of comfort include His people to His people.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**1 CORINTHIANS 13:12** – For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **JUST A GLIMPSE.** It was a beautiful morning. The sun would soon be making its entrance into the day. Knowing not a single cloud would impede its glow, I was reminded of some verses David penned about the sun, “In them He has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and like a strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat” (**PSALM 19:4-6**). I knew I was about to see quite a display of glory, however, I didn’t realize my position in our living room would hinder me. As the sun rose, the branches of a large oak tree in the backyard blocked some of my view. I only could get a partial look at the sunrise. What I saw was beautiful, just not full or complete.

It is the same way with our “glimpses” of Jesus and His glory in our fellowship with Him. As today’s reference reveals, we only see dimly. Full disclosure is for a future time. A saint from another age captured the heart’s cry for more of Jesus after enjoying those all too brief times of communion with Him in our earthly journey. He wrote, “But Ah! When these short visits end, though not quite alone, I miss the presence of my Friend. Like one whose comfort’s gone. I to my own sad place return, my wretched state to feel; I tire, and faint, and mope, and mourn, and am but barren still. More frequent let Thy visits be, or let them longer last; I can do nothing without Thee; make haste, O God, make haste.” Aren’t those beautiful words so easy to nod our heads in agreement as we know the experience deep in our own souls? What saint has not so enjoyed the Lord in His Word, relishing the sweetness of His joyful presence, raptured in His fear with the heart offering praise and worship only to find the grind of the day, the challenge of our circumstances, and the unceasingly subtle pull of sin, causing the “glow of the morning” to give way to the “dim of the day”?

As we ponder the experience of the believer, there are three words in today’s reference which should help us to continue to persevere, to fight against losing first love, and to avoid the snares of the devil. There are the words “face to face”. Have we thought much what that day will be like when we see Jesus? Imagine, eye to eye, as He shows us nail pierced hands and feet, and unveils the perfect love for us that we only knew in part in this life. I readily admit who can grasp such a scene, yet, by faith, to know of its certainty is a strong motivator to holy living. The Apostle John wrote of this motivation, “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure” (**1 JOHN 3:2-3**). I like the way J.C. Ryle put it about seeing the Lord face to face. He said, “Of all the things that will surprise us in the resurrection morning, this, I believe, will surprise us most: that we did not love Christ more before we died.”

We do only see as in a mirror dimly the glory of our Lord, but there is a day when full disclosure will occur. Are we longing for it? The way to long for full disclosure is to long and seek more frequent partial disclosures in the means of grace He has given us – the Word, prayer, and ordinances. Have we had any glimpses recently? Or are there “oak tree limbs of worldliness and lukewarmness” blocking the view?

PRAYER: “Lord, increase my hunger to see Your glory now and in the near future.”

QUOTE: “To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to hunger and thirst to know Jesus.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**ISAIAH 28:16** – Therefore thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: BE CAREFUL OF THE PACE.** Today is Thursday. The week is quickly rushing by us. How fast-paced has it been so far? Recall the Lord’s Day, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Did we feel at any time there wasn’t enough time in the day to get everything done we thought we needed to accomplish? How many late evenings did we fall into bed exhausted because of the pace of the day? How much space did anxiety and stress occupy our hearts as we ran from one thing to another to another and still felt way behind? How many “bursts of impatience” came out in speech or attitude to those dear to us because of the frenzied pace of our lives? And, most importantly, how much quality time with the Lord was sacrificed or hurried through because life was simply too fast? The last question should cause us to settle down for a moment and meditate on this command from the Apostle Paul, “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (**EPHESIANS 5:15-18**). As we read what Paul said, pay attention to a couple of things. First, he said, “making the best use of the time” not being busy all the time.” Another thing he said is a little discomfoting to us who might be busier with our time instead of making the best use with our time. Right after the words, “making the best use of the time, because the days are evil”, he states, “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is”. These are not separate or stand alone statements. They are linked. I will make this personal for me and if it fits your size, then by all means, join me. Here is the application – if I am not making the best use of the time, then I am foolish and don’t understand the will of the Lord. When it comes to having a prosperous soul, or spiritual life, the most damaging thing we allow to happen is to be controlled by busyness in life. Yes, we have things we must do, but we also have things we must not sacrifice because of busyness; things like the means of ensuring our spiritual health remains vibrant – private prayer, corporate prayer, private worship, corporate worship, and time in the Word.

Commenting on today’s reference, A. W. Pink wrote some serious words about being too busy or in haste. He wrote, “God has said in His Word, ‘He that believes shall not make haste’, and if ever there was a time when His children needed to give special heed to this admonition it is now. The children of God are infected with the spirit of the world. The mad rush which characterizes everything around us, the awful hustle and bustle of the ungodly as they rush headlong to eternal death, has affected the members of the household of faith; and few, if any of us, are free from it. One of our most urgent needs is to be delivered from this feverish spirit, for it is rapidly sapping the spiritual vitality of many of God’s people. The rate at which sacred songs are commonly sung; the unholy manner in which many rush into the presence of the Most High God, and alas, the same spirit possesses most of us when we read the Word of God. We earnestly ask our readers to make a prayerful study of the words, ‘stand’, ‘sit’, ‘wait’, ‘tarry’, as they are found in the Holy Whit.”

The wise counsel and warning of Pink is simply this . . . if we want to live shallow Christian lives, with leanness of soul, then let life take on a frenzied pace. Be careful of the pace in which we live for unless we control it, vibrant prayer lives, soul-satisfying times in the Word, and refreshing times with the Lord Jesus will be things known only in words and wishful desires, not experience.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me to slow down in my life so I may learn to be still and know You.”

**QUOTE:** “The abundant life Jesus promised cannot thrive in a life lived at a frenzied pace.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**PSALM 57:1-3** – *To the choirmaster: according to Do Not Destroy. A Miktam of David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.* Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. *Selah* God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **GETTING STIRRED UP.** When we woke up this morning, what was our greatest need? I know. Some of us may have immediately thought coffee. No, our greatest need is mercy. Why? For what lies ahead for each of us today are fears, trials, temptations, sins, successes, failures, and challenges, which all must be met with undeserved mercy from God. We need His mercy today to help us overcome, confess, be humbled, and keep on going through the spiritual battleground of our short journey on earth.

In today's reference, the title of the Psalm is very important for us. It sets the historical setting of why David wrote this great Psalm. Part of the title reads, “A Miktam of David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.” Do you think David was a little afraid? Challenged? Felt overwhelmed and confused? No one runs to a cave unless there are powerful emotions dragging the heart down into the pit of fear, both of circumstances and uncertainties. And no one cries out for mercy, not once, but twice, unless that person senses a very urgent need for such help from God. David begins his prayer with this petition, “Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me.” He didn't petition twice to get God's ear as if his God lacked compassion or attention to His servant. He pleaded out of real need. David was stirred up toward prayer.

The earnestness of our prayers reveals just how serious we are with God. Jesus tells us the importance of such earnestness in **LUKE 18:1-8** with *The Parable of the Persistent Widow* – “And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’” And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” Jesus actually reveals that true faith will be marked by persistent prayer. And what makes a person be so persistent in pleading for mercy and God's help? Confidence. Confidence that the God of all mercy is able and willing to give all mercy to those who persistently come to Him for such. William Gurnall, the Puritan who penned one of the greatest books of all times on spiritual warfare, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, wrote, “When the heart is drawn out with vehement desires for the grace it prays for, it prays with fervency. Fervency is to prayer what fire is to incense. If our hearts remain cold and formal in prayer they are not in a fit posture to receive His promises. When God intends a mercy for His people, He stirs up the spirit of prayer in them. Pray fervently or you do nothing. Cold praying is no more prayer than a painting of fire is fire.”

David needed mercy. He felt it. He pleaded for it and his earnestness was rewarded by the God of all mercy. David was stirred up to pray and it is the stirred up heart that truly prays.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me pray with belief and not succumb to the ever present unbelief in me.”

QUOTE: “Praying in faith must include praying in earnest or it becomes very close to presumption.”

**The QBC Daily Nugget**  
**March 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)

**1 CORINTHIANS 13:13** – So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE GREATEST OF THESE.** I want us to do two things in this nugget. First, read this statement by Francis Schaeffer slowly and meditatively. Slowly so as to understand it and meditatively so it will go beyond understanding and lodge in our hearts. Here is the statement, “What is the secret of power? Certainly, as we consider Christianity today – true, Bible-believing Christianity – we must be impressed by the fact that there is not the consistent power that there has been in certain periods of the past. The same thing is also true of the enjoyment of the Lord. In our day, life is such that, while Christians do many things to serve the Lord, it is obvious from our faces and our conversations that few enjoy Him.” The next thing to do is to read slowly and subjectively this portion of scripture found in **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?” As we read it, take the last four words, “Is it I, Lord?” and apply it to Schaeffer’s statement, particularly, in two directions. First, apply the question “Is it I, Lord?” when it comes to knowing His power in our lives. Next, “Is it I, Lord?” when it comes to enjoying Him.

Now before we go about the business of praying for these two things, Christ’s power and the enjoyment of Christ in our lives, and we should pray fervently for those two realities, we need to go to the real starting point – God’s love for us. John tells us in his first epistle, “We love because He first loved us” (**1 JOHN 4:19**). One must be convinced, intellectually and experientially, that God truly loves them before there is any hope of coming to know His power and the enjoyment of Him. And when does He love us? All the time. Even when we fall flat on our faces in sin and rebellion. Let the words of our Lord, through Jeremiah take a deep plunge into our hearts, “I have loved you, My people, with an everlasting love. With unfailling love I have drawn you to Myself” (**JEREMIAH 31:3**). Charles Spurgeon commented on this truth, “Since you have been in this world – He has loved you most patiently. You have often provoked Him; you have rebelled against Him times without number, yet He has never stayed the overflow of His heart toward you.” The following story reveals the power of this consciousness of being loved.

A most distinguished statesmen of the times of the American Revolution was once a hopeless drunkard. He had been engaged to a beautiful girl, but his dissipation had compelled her to break the engagement and sever herself from his influence, which was dragging her down. She had not ceased to love him, or to pray for him. One day she was passing along a road. She saw him lying intoxicated by the sidewalk, his face exposed to the broiling, blistering sun, and swollen with drink and exposure. Her tender heart was moved, and, as she passed by, she took her handkerchief and gently spread it over his sleeping face. An hour or two later he awoke and saw the handkerchief and her name upon the corner of it. He sprang to his feet, and a glad thrill of hope and courage, came to his heart. ‘She loves me still,’ he said, ‘all is not yet lost. For her sake I will redeem my life.’ And he did . . .” The story ended with this comment, “Oh how much power there is in the love of Christ to save lost men from despair, if they can only believe that He loves them!”

The greatest of these is love and we start with the greatest statement ever revealed to us, “For God so loved the world” (**JOHN 3:16a**).

**PRAYER:** “Lord, forgive me when my love for You grows cold and routine.”

**QUOTE:** MATTHEW HENRY, “Love is the leading affection of the soul.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**JOHN 1:14-17** – 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. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: WHO ARE WE LISTENING TO?** In his classic book, *Spiritual Depression*, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones stated this liberating truth about the Christian life, “The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself.” In the process of learning this valuable application in our Christian experiences, the real battle is waged in determining who we listen to. There are four “voices” which speak to us – the Lord, the devil, the world, and us. As we seek to listen to the right voice, we need to whittle this spiritual discipline down to what is really at stake. It is all about listening to lies or the truth. We know the identity of both. First, truth – “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth and the life’” (**JOHN 14:6**). Next, is the source of lies – “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” (**JOHN 8:44**). Now to know the source of truth and lies may just be an intellectual exercise requiring not much work or conflict. In the heat of battle, spiritual battle, knowing must include discerning and the ability to “beat down” lies with the truth. How does one do that? One way is to ensure we are armed with the right truth against the specific lies.

The Apostle Paul details for us the warfare every true Christian fights and also the necessary armor to fight it successfully – “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (**EPHESIANS 6:13-17**). He mentions “truth” explicitly with the belt and then “truth” is implicitly described as “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” They are not the same. For the belt, truth is the comprehensive revelation of God, the whole revealed truth of God from creation to our entire Bibles. The sword of the Spirit is the specifics of the scriptures. Jesus illustrated this for us in His wilderness temptation (**MATTHEW 4:1-11**). What did He use? The belt of truth or the sword of the Spirit? He used the sword of the Spirit. He repelled the lies and temptations of the devil with the specific truths taken from the book of Deuteronomy.

It applies to us also. We must learn to combat specific lies with specific truths. It has been said, “You must learn to think as God thinks.” I would extend that to this, “You must talk to yourself the way God talks to you.” How does He talk to us? By His Word. When lies come our way such as “God doesn’t love me”, or “I can’t forgive or love that person”, the only way to not listen to that voice, and succumb to believing it, is to listen to truth. However, a warning is due here. This isn’t easy and just rattling off a verse or two won’t always drive the lies of the devil away. James said, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (**JAMES 4:7b**). It is a continual resisting, but it begins with here – who are we listening to?

**PRAYER:** “Lord, teach me the discipline to discern truth from lies and listen to Your voice only.”

**QUOTE:** WILLIAM BACKUS, “If you tell yourself untruths or lies, you will believe untruths and lies.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 15, 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)

**JUDE 20-22** - But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **ARE WE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?** Is there a difference between an atheist and some Christians? The quick answer is “Why certainly!” But before we jump all over that obvious answer, read some thought-provoking statements which show there just might not be a whole lot of differences between the deniers of Christianity and professors of Christianity:

What Is the Difference . . .

- Between the atheist who would not dream of financially supporting the church and the Christian who will not financially support the Lord's church?
- Between the atheist who does not believe the Bible and the negligent Christian who never reads it?
- Between those who do not believe in Bible classes and those who choose never to attend a class?
- Between the atheist who does nothing to build up the Lord's church and the Christian who finds fault with others but does nothing himself?
- Between an unbeliever of the world and a Christian who lives like the unbeliever in the world?
- Between a denier of the faith who lives for self, and a person professing faith who lives for self?

These are tough questions for Christians who live in a tough world. The fact is that Christians make no difference until they are different. And what just must might be one of those differences? It is found at the end of today's reference – “And of some have compassion, making a difference.” The distinguishing mark of a true Christian is not primarily doctrinal knowledge, great spiritual giftedness, high levels of sacrificial service, or even consistent denial of self to avoid fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind (**COLOSSIANS 3:5**). Jude says the difference is “having compassion.” Immediately I thought of two places reinforcing this difference maker in our lives.

First, the Apostle Paul telling us what is most important in our Christian life – “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing” (**1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-3**). Notice two things he says about the one lacking genuine love. They are nothing and gain nothing. Love is supreme in the Christian life and drives everything else. The second place we go to reinforce the difference maker in love is from the words of our Lord - “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (**JOHN 13:34-35**). Jesus makes it clear people will know us primarily by our love. Sharing the Gospel is our privilege and responsibility but it is never divorced from love to the people receiving our sharing. The Gospel, shared as simply cold theological facts, is simply an exercise in partial truth. It lacks the other part of its truth. The power which motivated the giving of Him is the Gospel – love. The power of the Gospel, which makes a difference, is the power released from a heart enflamed with love (**ROMANS 5:5**). And that will make all us difference makers in the lives of those around us.

PRAYER: “Lord, may the difference You make in me enable me to be a difference maker in others.”

QUOTE: “God doesn't change us to simply keep it a personal secret between Him and us.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**2 CORINTHIANS 4:17-18** - For the lightness of our present affliction works out for us a far more excellent eternal weight of glory, we not considering the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are not lasting, but the things which are not seen are everlasting.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **TRUE REALITY**. One must appreciate the zeal of John the Baptist. When he came on to the scene with that thundering voice, “Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world” (**JOHN 1:29**), people took notice. There was no question of where he stood toward allegiance with Jesus. He unashamedly identified with Him in public forums regardless of the situation or composition of the crowd. One also has to admire the honest struggles of John the Baptist. Remember when he was in prison and the inquiry he made to Jesus? Matthew records it – “When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” (**MATTHEW 11:1-3**).

Some commentators and scholars debate as to what John really meant with the question, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” Regardless, there is a twinge of doubt embedded in the questions. John the Baptist, like us, was a sinner and sinners are not perfected in faith. There are periods of doubt for all of us, even one so loyal to Jesus like John the Baptist. Martin Luther once said, “The art of doubting is easy, for it is an ability born with us.” But to ensure we don’t get comfortable with this truth, listen to the words of the Scottish preacher Andrew Bonar, “Doubts and fears are not marks of God’s children. They are remnants of the old nature – specks upon the eye of faith. You should give them no quarter.” Bonar’s point is that doubts are not removed from the Christian due to the old nature, but they are not allowed to take root and spring forth the ugly fruit of suspicion of God’s goodness and faithfulness. John the Baptist wanted his doubt removed. The true Christian has doubts but hates them. The unbeliever allows doubts or even fosters them.

When it comes to combating doubts, it requires a diligence to live in the realm of where true reality lies. Go back up and read today’s reference. Reality is found in what will last forever not what is passing away. The Apostle Paul informs us what is seen is passing, or not true reality. Eternity, what is everlasting, that is where true reality finds its expression. And we struggle in the battle with living in the seen and unseen worlds which causes doubts. Francis Schaeffer, in his book True Spirituality, wrote with the honesty of John the Baptist about reality. He said to his wife Edith, “I feel really torn to pieces by the lack of reality, the lack of seeing the results the Bible talks about, which should be seen in the Lord’s people. I’m not talking only about people I’m working with in ‘The Movement’, but I’m not satisfied with myself. It seems the only honest thing to do is to rethink, reexamine the whole matter of Christianity. Is it true? I need to go back to my agnosticism and start at the beginning.” That is a bold statement and action Schaeffer took. He confronted the reality of what it means to be a believer in Jesus Christ. And that is not an unhealthy thing for each of us to do. I am not referring to entertaining doubts, but to ask the hard questions about our walk with the Lord. Questions like, “Am I experiencing the power of His resurrection in my battle against sin?” (**ROMANS 6:1-11**) or “Am I being controlled by the love of Christ in my daily interactions with people?” (**2 CORINTHIANS 5:14**). Doing such “reality checks” will help us to see if we are actually living in true reality.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me more to understand that what is unseen is where true reality lies.”

QUOTE: “We don’t see reality through eyes of sense but through eyes of faith.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**PSALM 37:3** – Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and feed on faithfulness.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: SATISFYING THE HUNGER.** An unknown Puritan once said, “It is a mark of spiritual barrenness when we come to worship out of a sense of duty instead of hunger.” I would extend that to all the means of grace. Here is a way I would like to expand his statement, “It is a mark of spiritual barrenness when we come to worship, pray, read our Bibles, or approach any spiritual discipline with a performance or “have to” attitude instead of a privilege and “get to” attitude.

In today’s reference, David provides four commands to the people of God and the last one is very instructive when it comes to learning to abide in our Lord Jesus Christ. He said, “feed on faithfulness.” Other translations read “cultivate faithfulness”, “befriend faithfulness”, “enjoy safe pasture”, and “be fed assuredly”. The translation I used is the New King James Version. It resembles the Geneva Bible where we find the words “be fed assuredly” and also it follows the thought of the NIV with “enjoy safe pasture”. These three translations point us to a sense of the need to fulfill a longing, a hunger in the soul. And what it also does is point us away from our faithfulness to the Lord’s faithfulness. Think about it for a moment. How far would we get if we relied upon our faithfulness to satisfy our souls? How lean would we be if the hunger in my soul was to be met based on our faithfulness? Perhaps some of you would be quite healthy. I would be starving and losing “spiritual weight” at a rapid pace.

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (**JOHN 6:35b; 51**). The Christian life may be brought down to two basic essentials. First, our union in Christ by which we are made alive by the hope of the Gospel – “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me” (**GALATIANS 2:20**). The second basic essential is our abiding in Christ by which we are made into the image of the Lord – “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me” (**JOHN 15:4**). How do both of these essentials happen? By the Word of God. First, our union with Christ. James tells us we are born again by the Word – “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures” (**JAMES 1:18**). Now the second essential in the Christian life, abiding in Christ, is also by the Word of God and that draws us back to today’s reference.

Our abiding is a personal responsibility for sure, but we only do so by God’s faithfulness. His faithfulness empowers us toward faithfulness and this mutual laboring is directly related to how much and how well we are feeding on His Word. God is faithful to His means of grace in growing us spiritually. The primary means of growth is His Word. Spiritually anemic Christians are the result of sporadic feeding on God’s Word. Our God stands ready to satisfy the hunger in our souls with Himself. The staggering promise Jesus gives to us is this – “I am the only food that will fulfill you. I am extending myself to you as the only bread able to fulfill your inward hunger. I am inviting you to ‘test my faithfulness’ by coming and eating of Me, the Bread of Life.” How are we satisfying our inward hunger today? Are we feeding on His faithfulness? If not, we are losing “spiritual weight” and it will show.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, forgive me when I lose the wonder of who You are as I live out my Christian life.”

**QUOTE: DAVID CLARKSON,** “Use all means to know His will. God loves a cheerful doer.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**DEUTERONOMY 8:1-3** – “The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers. And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **BE CAREFUL OF SELECTIVITY.** I don't go to the grocery store alone. Terrifies me. Too many choices for me. On the very rare occasions, maybe every couple of years, I am given a short list and asked to run to the store. It is never a good experience for a couple of reasons. First, I am not familiar with what is in each aisle so my short journey is hardly short. Another reason is that I am likely to miss what I was supposed to get. The list may read “bread” but the place where the bread is might as well be ketchup. Like in Heinz 57 type with about 57 kinds of bread staring at me screaming, “Pick me, pick me.” I won't get it right. It's all about selectivity and never easy. I have to make choices of what to pick and what to ignore. This carries over into our spiritual lives too and not in a good way.

The Apostle James offers us good instruction in the opening chapter of his epistle – “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing” (**JAMES 1:19-25**). When it comes to his instruction concerning our obedience, he isn't selective. He wrote, “Be doers of the word” leaving no room for our personal selectivity. We don't get to pick and choose which commands of God to obey.

If we notice in today's reference, this applies also. Moses, as God's spokesman, repeatedly told God's people about the comprehensive, not selective, nature of their obedience. He said, “The **WHOLE COMMANDMENT** that I command you today you shall be careful to do” and further on, he mentions God's testing to see if “you would keep his **COMMANDMENTS**” and that points to a complete obedience, not selective. To be honest, this is both comforting and unsettling. For instance, take this command, “Do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together” (**HEBREWS 10:25**). No problem. We love going to church and being with each other, but consider these, “Be kind and forgive one another” (**EPHESIANS 5:32**), “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (**2 TIMOTHY 2:15**), or “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (**MARK 16:15**). How selective is our obedience when it comes to forgiving those who hurt us, in diligently and consistently studying our Bibles, and diligently and compassionately witnessing for the Lord Jesus? It is easy to be selective to the commands of God that don't challenge our comfort zone or cause us to radically change our schedules, but not so for the “uncomfortable” commands. If we find ourselves a little on the “cold side” in our relationship with the Lord or things seem “stale”, we might begin with seeing how selective we are in obedience. Selectivity is okay in the grocery store. It is not in our Christian lives.

PRAYER: “Father, prevent me from the ever present danger of deceiving myself.”

QUOTE: **D. CLARKSON**, “Use all the means to know His will, and obey it immediately and cheerfully.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 19, 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 94:12** – Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE PURPOSES OF PAIN.** We need to start this topic out on a high note because when it comes to the discipline of the Lord, the experience doesn't produce a high degree of delight – “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (**HEBREWS 12:12**). Each of us know the pain when God is teaching His children by chastisement, but before we go there, let's hit that high note – “And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives’” (**HEBREWS 12:5-6**). Verse five, the part about forgetting, is so important when God is perfecting holiness in us through His discipline. If we forgot that the rod of correction is the rod of instruction in the hand of a loving Heavenly Father, the pain will be resisted instead of submitted to. We will fail to see its purposes. And what will happen is the chastisement will continue till we get it right. His love demands such “soul pressure” on His children.

As we go through this discipline of the Lord, what are some purposes of pain we are to embrace along the journey? The Puritan Thomas Case wrote a work titled, “A Treatise of Afflictions”. In the opening of the book, he said this on afflictions or pain, “We are as great strangers to the cross, when we come to suffer as if we had never heard of it; and thereby it cometh to pass that we do either despise the chastisement of the Lord, or else faint when we are rebuked of Him.” It is safe to say, like the other Puritans, Case writes from personal experience. We, too, know by personal experience, how we recoil away from what Jesus says is absolutely necessary to be His disciple – “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (**MATTHEW 16:24**). We need to be careful not to define the cross as just life's inconveniences or challenges to overcome. The cross is an instrument of death, painful death, and the Christian life is one of a progressive death to self. That doesn't mean the Christian life is one of frowning morbidity. Ironically, the greatest joy is experienced as we grow more dead to self through the process of chastisement. Back to Case's work. He lists twenty-one reasons for the pain we are granted by the Lord in chastisement. I just want to list two for our encouragement.

First, God teaches by His chastisements self-denial and obedient submission to the will of God (**PROVERBS 22:15**). Case said, “In prosperity we are full of our own will, and usually give God counsel when God looks for obedience.” This is easily seen in our prayer lives. When things in life seem pretty “problem free” or with just a few circumstances we can manage on our own, prayer seems formal. They consist more of telling God about Himself and our circumstances than seeking mercy, grace, and the discipline of waiting on Him. Get into the fire of affliction and notice how prayer lives change. That leads to another reason for pain – it teaches us to really pray. He said, “Truly Christians, the prayers you are content with in the days of your peace and prosperity will not serve your turn in the hour of temptation. When you call to mind your short, slight, cold, dead, sleepy, formal devotion, you will be ashamed of them, and stir up your hearts to take hold of God. For this very end God sends His people into captivity that He may draw out the spirit of prayer which they have allowed to lie dead within them.”

Pain has its purposes in God's dealing with His children. Self-denial, submission, and a resurgence of true prayer are just three. Let's seek to learn these lessons from the hand of our loving Lord.

PRAYER: “Father, help me to submit with a willing spirit to Your work of discipline in my life.”

QUOTE: **THOMAS CASE**, “The purest acts of faith are put forth in the dark!”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**ROMANS 12:1-2** - I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **HIS MERCIES**. Count them. One by one. Let me be more specific. Read the title of today's nugget and count them – His mercies to us. Jeremiah tells us just how abounding and fresh these are – “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (**LAMENTATIONS 3:22**). If you are like me, I get to living life way too fast to take time to count them – one by one. And what is even worse, I may find myself getting very busy trying to live the Christian life and miss where it all begins – His mercies. Being busy attempting to live the Christian life can be done very easily in the strength of self and even while sin remains unconfessed. Take this simple example, we may be faithful to church, faithful to a Bible study, faithful to a prayer meeting, but negligent in our own individual walks with the Lord. Just because we are faithful to public displays of faithfulness doesn't mean all is well on the home front of our own hearts. We can have all the appearance of faithfulness in public, but lack a daily, consistent, and real life walk with the Lord Jesus in private. Don't we groan when the seed of hypocrisy sprouts up, say, at a worship service when we may lip a song of consecration, like “All to Jesus I surrender” and know there are pockets of resistance still within? Or maybe attending a prayer meeting and instead of seeking the Lord, we are so mentally distracted that we might as well be home doing something else? Or worse yet, having no desire for the prayer meeting, yet, drag ourselves out because of obligation or the fear of what other believers may think of us because we are absent.

These are real battles we face as Christians and largely because we get ahead of ourselves with more emphasis on doing instead of starting with the very reason and energy for doing – His mercies. In today's reference, Paul mentions three acts of “doing” which define living out the Christian life. First, there is the presenting ourselves to the Lord as a living sacrifice, fit for His service and available for His use. Next, there is the call to non-conformity to the world to ensure we establish and maintain our status as living sacrifices. Finally, there is the work of mind renewal or transformation so we will be able to be wise and discerning as we walk through this life of toil and spiritual warfare. But it is important to understand where Paul starts. It isn't with the “get busy, get active, get going” in his instructions. In a task-oriented society and a get things done mentality, our Christian lives succumb to these influences which will make us very productive in ministry but very dry spiritually. Flurry of ministry activity does not mean a flourishing of spirituality in the heart. We must start where Paul starts if we want our desires and motives for doing to be acceptable before the Lord and the Apostle starts where? God's mercies – “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God.” By remembering and keep remembering that everything we are and everything we hope to accomplish is only possible by the mercies of God, we will breed a heart of gratitude, sincerity, thankfulness, and sense of privilege. Then, all the doing of Christianity has the characteristics of abundant life Jesus came to give (**JOHN 10:10**).

His mercies are new every morning and the way to start each morning is to remember that marvelous truth. It will transform everything we do and say.

PRAYER: “Lord, prevent me from measuring my affections for you entirely by my actions for You.”

QUOTE: “Service for the Lord begins with being gripped by the mercies of the Lord!”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**GALATIANS 5:1** – For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM.** In today’s reference, we find the Apostle Paul proclaiming to the Galatians the spiritual freedom Christ gave them. Through the Lord Jesus’ work of redemption, His Heavenly Father justified these believing Galatians by faith in that work. The book of Galatians was written for that purpose – to declare, defend, and encourage a holding fast to the glorious doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone. As Paul declares this freedom, he immediately reminded the Galatians, and us, of the need for personal diligence to maintain this position in our heart and minds. Lose this grip and much of the Christian life becomes a chore and we become easy prey for the roaring lion who seeks to devour us – “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (**1 PETER 5:8**). And one of the “teeth” in this lion’s mouth seeking to chop on us and devour us is guilt. He will seek to bring about the paralyzing experience of guilt to the sensitive soul and it will be guilt of sins long forgiven and not remembered by our God.

William Spurstowe (1605-1666) wrote a book titled “The Wiles of the Devil” and in it, he detailed twenty-two specific wiles or devices the devil uses to attack believers. This is what he said of device fifteen – “The fifteenth wile of Satan is to make false syllogisms, by which he works upon the guilt of conscience; and this consists in laying to our charge sins of omission or commission, in which the major or minor premise is false.” I know this might be difficult to comprehend. It was for me, but Spurstowe went on with an illustration to help us navigate his wise counsel. He illustrates with a dialogue from the devil to the child of God about hypocrisy. From the devil to the saint, “He in whom such a sin reigns as hypocrisy is not a child of God. But such a one are you; therefore you are not a child of God.” The sensitive Christian knows the seed of hypocrisy remains and, if listening to this wile of the devil, will conclude the premise from the devil is right. When we give into this reasoning, justification by faith has just departed the “runway in our hearts” and we are defenseless. Though it is true hypocrisy is present and fought against in the child of God, he or she is not a hypocrite. The way to combat this tactic of the devil is to remember the very reason for having Jesus as our advocate - to attack such evil and painful accusations of the evil one – “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (**1 JOHN 2:1**).

One of the key points Spurstowe makes is that the attacks of the devil will try to get us to measure our walk with the Lord by absolute perfection instead of imperfect progression. Here is another worthy example he makes, “Satan argues, ‘If you have faith, you would have joy and peace; but you have no joy, therefore you have no faith’. **1 PETER 1:8** says, ‘Believing you rejoice’”. To counter this, Spurstowe writes, “Now to answer this we are to know that faith is the root upon which all true joy grows; it is the flower whereof that is the stalk but it is not always to be found flourishing. Now the Gospel does not reveal that we shall have no sorrow or trouble, but that the covenant of peace shall not be removed” (**ISAIAH 54:10**). The fight for freedom is to fight from a justified position which is always perfect. As we walk this perilous journey to heaven, our adversary will do all he can to prevent us from enjoying the freedom we have in Christ by justification. Remember justification dealt with our objective guilt. Let’s not allow the evil one to tempt us to evaluate our lives primarily on the subjective side of our experience.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me to evaluate my spiritual experiences by Your Word, not my understanding.”

**QUOTE: WILLIAM SPURSTOWE,** “He (Satan) tempts others to idleness, but he himself is never idle.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**1 CORINTHIANS 15:10** - But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **THE WORKING OF GRACE.** I heard it quite a few times and even said it myself – “I just don’t see God working in my life.” The follow on conversations sound like this, “I just don’t see much spiritual progress. It just doesn’t seem like grace is working in me.” Those very admissions reveal a hungry soul where grace is actually working, though, the awareness of grace may be lacking.

In today’s reference, Paul acknowledged some good lessons about the God’s grace. First, the grace of God makes a person what he or she is, not the efforts by the individual. Divine transformation changes a person, not personal reformation – “But by the grace of God I am what I am.” A second lesson about grace is that it will always be fruitful. It will always bring a return – “and His grace toward me was not in vain.” The third lesson is that grace works – all the time – “I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.” Paul didn’t just “let go and let God” as the familiar and unbiblical saying goes. True Biblical submission isn’t passive. It is aggressive. It is the daily fight toward bringing our will into submission to God’s will. Every true believer knows this fight requires tremendous effort and knows no “cease fire” in this life. However, the Apostle Paul knew that the ability to fight is given by grace. It takes the working of grace to enable us to do the work of grace – conformity to the will of God and the character of His Son.

The Scottish Divine, John Brown, in his classic work, *Christ: The Way, The Truth, and The Life* writes of “the sure triumph of grace in the soul.” He mentions that the Christian needs times of spiritual “weather” described as “winter nights”, “stormy blasts”, “rain”, “hail”, “snow”, and “frost.” These seasons of adversity may make the tried believer lose the sense of grace working, but such a loss of sense doesn’t mean the loss of working. Grace works whether sensed or not. Brown writes, “If we considered, how grace had ordered all things for our best, and most for the glory and exaltation of grace, we would sit down and sing under the saddest of dispensations, and living by faith and hope, we would rejoice in the confident expectation of a gracious outcome; for as long as grace predominates (and that will be until glory take the empire) all will run in the channel of grace; and though now sense (which is often faith’s unfaithful friend) will be always suggesting false tales of God, and of His grace unto unbelief, and raising thereby discontents, doubts, fears, jealousies, and many distempers in the soul, to its prejudice and hurt, yet in the end, grace shall be seen to be grace; and the faithful shall get such a full sight of this manifold grace, that they shall see, that grace did order all, yea, every circumstance of all the various tossings, changes, ups and downs, that they did meet.”

Notice just one insight, in the midst of many insights, this man of God gives about grace. He said, “that grace did order all”. Now plug that into **ROMANS 8:28** – “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Let’s rewrite this encouraging verse like this, “And we know that for those who love God, His grace works all things out for us, in us, and through us according to His purpose and for our good”. And yes, that means He can and does use, even our sins, by grace, for our good. That isn’t a license to sin but a freedom to praise. The working of grace is constant. Rejoice.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to believe that grace works even when I don’t sense grace works.”

QUOTE: “Faith strives to see grace working even when we don’t see the workings of grace.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**1 CORINTHIANS 3:9-15** - For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw -- each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH.** A short man wanted to drive a nail in a wall to carry a big picture. He stood on a chair, but it was not high enough. His wife set out a small box and, balancing himself precariously, he began to give the nail hesitating taps with the hammer. His wife said, "Why don't you give a brave blow or two, and settle it?" He replied, "How can a man give a brave blow or two when he is standing on a foundation like this?" His uncertainty was based on an uncertain foundation.

In today's reference, the Apostle Paul tells us the only firm foundation to build upon on this life and the life to come is that of the Lord Jesus Christ. A couple things to note about this firm foundation. First, it isn't laid by us -- "For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This is not only good news, but great news for any foundation we would lay is sand and sure to be washed away at the slightest bit of trial -- "And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it" (**MATTHEW 7:26-27**). The Puritan Thomas Wilcox said, "Believing is the most wonderful thing in the world. Put anything of your own to it, and you spoil it. Christ will not so much as look at it for believing. When you believe and come to Christ, you must leave behind your own righteousness, and bring nothing but your sin; oh that is hard! Leave behind all your holiness, sanctification, duties, humblings, and so on; and bring nothing but your needs and miseries, or else Christ is not fit for you, nor you for Christ." That is the firm foundation wonderfully described.

Another thing about this foundation is that it is sure. Paul mentions the Day of Judgment on which all our works will be revealed. Should we build on this firm foundation of faith, Jesus Christ, it will stand the test -- "If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward." The foundation we build upon is also the foundation that will judge us. Build on Him and it is a sure building. To ensure we are doing so means to always look to this foundation as we live out our lives. Faith looks outward and upward to the firm foundation, Jesus Christ, who is seated at the right hand of the Father. And what do we find at His throne? The very things we need to build upon Him, the foundation of our faith -- "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (**HEBREWS 4:16**). Mercy gives us what we don't deserve and grace gives us the resources to earn what we don't deserve -- rewards as we build on the foundation of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**PRAYER:** "Lord, help me to build my life on the one sure foundation - You."

**QUOTE:** "The foundation of faith holds if built on the solid rock, Christ Jesus."

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**PSALM 38:15, 21-22** – But for you, O LORD, do I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. Do not forsake me, O LORD! O my God, be not far from me! Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **WHAT IS FOUND IN PRAYER?** Go ahead and answer the question. What is found in prayer? We quickly would say things like “Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication”. Some of us may use that “formula” in our praying – ACTS. It is good and provides a nice framework for prayer. If we were to ask David, the writer of today’s psalm, the question of what is found in prayer, there are some things just a little different. These would be more attitudes of the heart in prayer that actions from the mouth in prayer. These attitudes may contain some components of ACTS, but not entirely. We need to remember that prayer is more about the soul than about the words.

**PSALM 38** is a moving Psalm in which David exposes a lot of his emotions and longings of his heart. This is no quick prayer at meal time. This is one of those prayers we may find ourselves spending time with long after others have gone to bed or in the early morning hours when times of deep reflection of ourselves and God occurs. In today’s references, we may discover five important attitudes in prayer revealing our sincerity and genuineness in seeking God in prayer.

First, there is a patient resolve to wait on God – “But for you, O LORD, do I wait” (**PSALM 38:15a**). Do you have trouble waiting for things in life? I struggle sometimes at red lights! Now take that into prayer. There is a lot to be said about patient waiting on God in prayer. He deals with us according to His timing and often, more than often, waiting is something He puts upon us in prayer to develop a submissive and patient heart. The second attitude is confidence in God despite personal awareness of sinfulness – “O Lord my God, who will answer” (**PSALM 38:15b**). This is pretty significant in light of what we read earlier in the psalm – “There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness, I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all the day I go about mourning. For my sides are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart” (**PSALM 38:1-8**). Ever struggle with your sinfulness and be tempted to think God won’t hear you? A third attitude is a natural from the heart still battling remaining sin. It is the fear of not being heard – “Do not forsake me, O LORD” (**PSALM 38:21a**)! David has fear mixed with confidence in his praying. And that reveals the true battle we fight at times in praying. A fourth attitude is a desire for God’s presence – “O my God, be not far from me” (**PSALM 38:21b**)! David knew what he needed to cure his soul and it was God, Himself. He longed for the presence of God in prayer. That is the goal for us. Not to just pray up some things but to encounter God. The final attitude in prayer is the spirit of urgency for God to come to the rescue of His servant – “Make haste to help me, O LORD, my salvation” (**PSALM 38:22**). David begins with some patience in his praying and at the end we see a little impatience. That isn’t bad as it reveals a heart yearning for God. It becomes bad when impatience leads to a neglected prayer life.

Prayer is far more than we realize, and rightly so, since it is a gift from the infinite God to finite and sinful people. As we seek to pray and to understand prayer, we proceed from just the actions of prayer to the attitudes of prayer. It will help us as we seek to know God through prayer.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me that prayer is far more than just asking for things.”

QUOTE: “Prayer is not just a privilege and responsibility, but a battle.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**1 JOHN 2:26** – I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie – just as it has taught you, abide in Him.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: LEARNING ANYTHING LATELY?** Paul describes for the Ephesians that their old life was characterized by ignorance, spiritual blindness, hardness of heart, callousness, sensuality, and greedy practice of every kind of impurity (**EPHESIANS 4:18-20**). He then informed them that a whole new school of learning had occurred in them. They had become learners at the feet of Jesus – “But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (**EPHESIANS 4:20-24**). And what they had become is individual learners. Everyone must, if they are true followers of Jesus. He teaches in the teacher – student ration of 1:1. The question is, Are we (individually) learning anything lately?

In today's reference, the Apostle John tells us that, as believers in Jesus, we are each given the Spirit to teach us. That is what the anointing is that guides us into truth. Jesus promised this blessed privilege, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (**JOHN 14:15-17**). The question, again, “Are we (individually learning anything lately?” Before we either bow in sadness acknowledging we have been too busy and “missed a lot of classes” or ponder whether our attendance has been with attentiveness or just showing up, let's determine how we may learn lessons from God.

We know the Bible is our primary means of knowing the will of God and thus learning the lessons God would have for us. There are other ways in life to learn lessons. George Muller, that great man of God from another time who God used with great effectiveness in the gospel ministry and to orphans, gave this advice on ascertaining the will of God. He said, “I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people generally is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is. Having done this, I do not leave myself liable to great delusions. I seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit. I ask God in prayer to reveal His Will to me aright. Thus, through prayer to God, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge; and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. In trivial matters, and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective.” Combining the reference of the day and the wise counsel of Mr. Muller, we will be learners at the feet of Jesus, but to practice both means the priority of the day is sitting at the feet of Jesus.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me to see that my teacher to student ration with You is to be 1:1.”

**QUOTE:** “To learn at the feet of Jesus means sitting at the feet of Jesus.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**1 PETER 5:10** – And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: AN ORDERLY PROCESS.** Have you gotten to a point in your spiritual life where you simply long for instant maturity? Just to wake up one day and have “arrived” to where the Fruit of the Spirit – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (**GALATIANS 5:22-23**) – hang from the “trees of our life” in fullness and freshness. Or to be able to walk through each day letting off nothing but the sweet fragrance of the Lord Jesus’ gentleness in dealing with all people – “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory” (**MATTHEW 12:20**). Or still yet, how about this longing – “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better” (**PHILIPPIANS 1:21-23**). Do we not have those sighs of frustration when we realize how little we think of heaven and Christ compared with the consuming nature of the cares and anxieties of this life? Jesus warned us of this – “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (**MATTHEW 6:33-34**).

Spiritual growth is like the work of creation in **GENESIS 1**. God was methodical with an orderly process. The Apostle Paul informs us that God isn’t a God of confusion – “For God is not a God of confusion but of peace” (**1 CORINTHIANS 14:33**). And when we apply today’s reference to spiritual growth, it is easy to see that spiritual growth by God’s Spirit is an orderly process. We may look at it as a five step process.

First, there is the inevitability of suffering. We simply must accept it as part of the process – “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (**PHILIPPIANS 1:29**). Then we see God directly intervening in our lives from the suffering to accomplish growth. The second work in the process is restoration – “The God of all grace will restore you.” Why restoration immediately following suffering? Because we hurt. God must break us down in order to build us up. Restoration is the after work of destruction. Suffering destroys pride and God restores the now tender and bruised soul. Then we experience confirmation – “The God of all grace will confirm you.” The sweetness of being confirmed in fellowship with God is music to the restored soul. Our Bibles are alive, prayer is real and we hate sin more. A fourth work in the orderly process of spiritual growth is that “The God of all grace will strengthen you.” We will come to a point in our Christian life when we are emptied of self. It will be almost like, “Lord, if you don’t strengthen me for everything I must do today for You, I cannot even get out of bed.” Complete weakness leading to knowing His complete strength can only come through suffering that brings a person to the end of self. And the final step in the process, though the process is repeated throughout this life, is “The God of all grace will establish you.” This points to a stable and mature life. It is a life that is learning to consistently abide in Christ and lean upon Him. It is not the “disestablished” life of one day we are spiritually up and then next day spiritually bottomed out. It is an established spiritual life of consistency.

Our God is a God of order and that includes the way He grows His kids!

PRAYER: “Lord, help me not look for instant maturity as You work Your will and ways in my life.”

QUOTE: “God not only created the world orderly but He matures His saints in an orderly manner too.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**1 TIMOTHY 1:5** – The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: LIKE A WILD HORSE.** How would we define our hearts? For you medical types, please, no long definitions of the “pumping machine” inside our chest cavities. After we determine things like, “Our hearts contain the will, the affections, and is the seat of our understanding”, broaden that definition to include what characterizes our hearts. To avoid a lot of speculation, Jeremiah may sum it all up for all of us – “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (**JEREMIAH 17:9**). And if we choose to perhaps doubt that a little or even deny it, those two attitudes only prove the prophet right! Charles Spurgeon said, “There is nothing one half so worthy of abhorrence as the human heart. God spares from all eyes but His own that awful sight, a human heart; and could you and I but see our heart, we should be driven mad, so horrible would be the sight.” Take Jeremiah’s definition and tuck Spurgeon’s quote in your pocket and go out into a shopping plaza or a place where people gather, ask them what they think of the human heart, and then read them those two statements. The majority of folks we encounter will admit they are not “perfect”, but not too bad and they would dismiss Jeremiah and Spurgeon as morbid religious fanatics who need some deep counseling. However, for us who know Jesus Christ, we are not in that crowd.

Ever hear this hymn – “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”? If so, do we recall verse three? Here it is – “O to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be! Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love; here’s my heart, O take and seal it; seal it for Thy courts above.” I don’t know much, actually, almost nothing, about horses, but when I read that verse, I thought of wild horses wandering all over the prairie. Then I looked to my heart and saw an always-potential wild horse who does not want to stay in the barn of safety and keep itself from sin, Satan, and the world.

John Flavel wrote a book titled “Keeping the Heart” based on **PROVERBS 4:23** – “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” Keeping the heart is hard work and Flavel lists six things we are to do to keep the heart or our “wild horses” in check. I have paraphrased his instructions with a word or two for easier reading, but the direction all belongs to the Puritan. First, do frequent observation of the frame of the heart, turning in and examining how the case stands with it. Next, practice deep humiliation for heart-evils and disorders. A third act is earnest supplications and instant prayer for heart purifying and rectifying grace, where sin has defiled and disordered it. Fourth, impose strong engagements and bonds upon ourselves to walk more accurately with God, and to avoid the occasions whereby the heart may be induced to sin. The fifth act is the need to keep a constant holy jealousy over our own hearts in order to preserve us from sin. Finally, realize God’s presence with us and setting the Lord always before us.

We could make a practical summary like this – do consistent heart examination, seek humiliation over our sinfulness, pray fervently for cleansing and restoring grace, put serious boundaries on our eyes and minds on what we see and think, refuse even one enticing morsel of sin which the heart’s appetite cries for, and learn to realize our God is always present to comfort, assist, and observe. Such directions and disciplines will help us keep those “wild stallions” that reside inside of us where they need to be.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me to see that it is the inside of me that matters most.”

**QUOTE:** “Keeping the heart right requires an enabling of the Spirit or it will run wild.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**MATTHEW 5:4** – Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **WHAT ABOUT THE JOY?** “Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.” Now try this one out, “Rejoice always.” These are some pretty strong words from some pretty strong Christians. The first quotation is from the Apostle Peter (**1 PETER 1:8**). The second is from the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians (**1 THESSALONIANS 5:12**).

The sensitive Christian will bow his or her head when reading those two statements on Christian joy and likely head up to the reference of today and obey it. I am referring to obedience to the first part, the mourning part, as we come to grips with the reality that we are not always rejoicing and that the joy Peter talks of, the one “inexpressible and filled with glory” is too often inexpressible because it is absent. This isn’t a “beat down” of us. Just a wake up for ourselves. We do struggle with consistency when it comes to living out the joy Jesus promised us, “Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (**JOHN 16:24**). But He told us we would go through those “joyless times” – “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy” (**JOHN 16:20**).

David, the great psalm writer, knew about the illusive nature of joy. He wrote, “weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning” (**PSALM 30:5**). Horatius Bonar wrote a book titled *Night of Weeping, Morning of Joy*. The night of weeping portion deals with those times when God is purging, purifying, and bringing His children along the path of learning to abide in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And along that path is the need for discipline – “And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him” (**HEBREWS 12:5**). Bonar describes this “joyless” work of God in these words, “It is God’s way of pointing out what He sees to be amiss in us, of calling our attention to it as a thing which displeases Him, and, on account of which, if not put away, He must certainly deal with us in chastisement.”

I know it isn’t pleasant to talk about the “painful side” of Christianity. The part of God’s work of disciplining His children is uncomfortable especially when we are experiencing it. However, to ignore it is simply to take away the primary understanding of what sanctification is all about. He is changing us and change is hard for each of us. But that does not mean we must live a “joyless” time while heading to heaven under the guiding hand of a loving Heavenly Father and the correcting rod of a loving Good Shepherd. The key to maintaining joy is keeping the goal in view. Get the mind and heart off the painful process and direct them to the final product – “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. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (**PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14**). Centering our attention on how God works instead of what God is accomplishing is a sure fire way to live without joy. Samuel Rutherford said, “I wonder many times that ever a child of God should have a sad heart, considering what the Lord is preparing for him (her). Our little inch of time-suffering is not worthy of our first night’s welcome home to heaven.” That’s pretty good advice when we find ourselves asking, “What about the joy?”

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to wait on Your visits to me with anticipation and expectation.”

QUOTE: “God’s delays do not always mean they are God’s denial.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**1 JOHN 1:4** – And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **SEEKING HIS JOY.** “Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory” (**1 PETER 1:8**). No, this isn’t a repeat of yesterday’s nugget, even though it’s starting out the same. Yesterday was all about the question “Where is the joy?” and today is all about finding that joy.

Someone recently told me, “I really don’t like to read.” I can understand Christians struggling with reading. I share this fight with my friend. If we take a moment to talk about spiritual warfare, what is the primary area of attack to which our adversary, the devil, will hone in on? The Word of God. He did it in the Garden of Eden (**GENESIS 3**). He was successful in defeating our first parents who were perfect so imagine how much more effective he will be on us born in sin and prone to sin (**PSALM 51:5**). And how does he attack us when it comes to the Word of God? There are numerous ways. He tempts us to disobey it. He tempts us to misinterpret it and thus misapply it. He tempts us to question its sufficiency and he may tempt us to rush through it as we read it without a second of meditation. But let’s consider something else the devil may do in tempting us toward the Word of God and which he has a very willing partner, our flesh, to aid him. He may tempt us to ignore or neglect the Word of God because of the diligence required to know its principles and its Author, God Himself. Take a moment to recall Solomon’s instructions on the work it takes to get to the knowledge and fear of God – “My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God” (**PROVERBS 2:1-5**). It takes dedicated time and effort if one is to mine the riches of our Bible. It is hard work, but a good work and when it comes to committing oneself to reading our Bibles for profit, the flesh, joining hands with the devil, will go to no ends in seeking to keep us from this noble work. Paul told the Galatians about this intense struggle – “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do” (**GALATIANS 5:17**). Break this down when it comes to reading our Bibles. Who is the Author of our Bible? The Spirit. Who opposes us when it comes to spiritual growth? The flesh. So, we may see in **GALATIANS 5:17** that the flesh will fight “tooth and nail” to keep the believer from a consistent time in the Word of God.

Let’s further break this down by applying the war against reading with today’s reference. Joy is what we want to have and walk in daily. Nothing matches the joy of the Lord as our strength for each moment of the day (**NEHEMIAH 8:10**). Conversely, nothing is so painful for the Christian than to walk without joy. The Apostle John tells us that one of the purposes for writing his first epistle was that “our joy may be complete”. The very thing we want, joy, is found in the written pages of the Scripture and written pages are to become regularly read pages, if we want to know our Lord’s promise of joy. One of the biggest defeats we experience in our Christian life is that we fail to see that our “lack of desire to read” is really a spiritual issue to where the devil and our flesh have teamed up to keep us from the source of our life and joy – reading of God’s Word. We can overcome this when we see how our busyness, distractions, and lack of desire to read the Bible are forms of spiritual warfare to be met with spiritual weaponry. As we learn to recognize and fight this, we will begin to discover our Lord’s joy through the pages of His Word.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to see that the promise of joy includes my perseverance for joy.”

QUOTE: “God’s Book is written for our instruction and our joy.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**LUKE 17:3-6** – “Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him." The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: HE WILL ANSWER.** Each of us has “tailor made” areas of struggles in our Christian lives. The writer to the Hebrews tells us how to deal with them – “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (**HEBREWS 12:1-2**). We are to identify them and lay them aside through the exercise of our faith. However, they don't want to stay aside. They want to come back and hang out for awhile. They will challenge our faith. Yes, each of us have specific areas of weakness and perhaps even strongholds which hound us. For some, it might be a struggle with worry. For others, it could be anger. Or maybe the struggle experienced by the disciples in today's reference – forgiveness. Jesus gives the imperative that if someone comes with a broken and contrite spirit (**PSALM 51:17**) and seeks forgiveness; they have no option to withhold it. This is a tough faith issue for some of us both in the receiving forgiveness and as well as giving it.

Did we notice how the disciples responded to the instruction of Jesus? They didn't say, “Okay, we will forgive.” Nor did they say, “No way, that is too hard.” They responded in what is necessary to really practice forgiveness or, for that matter, anything in the Christian life. They prayed, “Lord, increase our faith.” The Bible makes it clear that God is honored by faith and He cannot be pleased without it – “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**). How does that fit with forgiveness and the disciples' request for an increase in faith? A couple of ways. First, when we are in relationships with people and the inevitable hurt comes along and forgiveness is needed, it is difficult because of the raging emotions of pain. Often we withhold forgiveness because of the emotional pain and forget forgiveness isn't a feeling, it is a command to obey. And the only way to obey is by faith. In and of ourselves, we cannot forgive in a God pleasing way without faith. Another application for the need of faith toward forgiveness is when we have blown it with God. We get saddened when we realize how we have sinned against a good and Holy God and may wonder, “How could He ever forgive me?” If we stay in that question long, we might begin to doubt His desire and willingness to forgive us. The way to get out of there is to do what the disciples did, pray, “Lord, increase our faith” not to only give forgiveness but receive it.

George Muller wrote, “God delights to increase the faith of His children. We ought, instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, to be willing to take them from God's hands as a means. Trials, obstacles, difficulties, and sometimes defeats, are the very food of faith.” God does desire to answer the prayer of His disciples, “Lord, increase our faith” and in order for us to get in that prayer posture, He needs to put us in situations where faith is the only way out. One of those areas might be the giving and receiving of forgiveness, but the prayer applies in all our struggles.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me to see for faith to grow I must go through ‘growth pains’.”

**QUOTE:** “We must experience impossible situations if we want to pray, ‘Lord, increase our faith.’”

## The QBC Daily Nugget March 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)

**2 THESSALONIANS 3:17** – I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **PRECIOUS LETTERS.** I think personal letter writing has fallen on hard times. They might be best remembered in a Norman Rockwell painting of a time gone by. I recall those early days in the Navy when on long deployments and what a big deal mail was to the crew. To hear the words “Mail Call” loudly ringing throughout the ship’s general announcing system put a buzz among the crew that was festive. And from personal experience, I know that many letters from home were read and read and read over and over again. Those precious letters from home had the same level of enthusiasm as the little Energizer bunny on the battery commercials. They just keep going and going and going when it came to encouraging the heart with love from far away. Today, with email and electronic cards, getting a personal handwritten letter is likely not a regular occurrence in most of our lives. Though modern means of communication are good, there is something special about getting a personal handwritten letter. It says so much, not only in contents, but in the willingness to invest the time to write and encourage someone.

God has blessed us by preserving letters from godly people throughout church history. Names like Thomas Chalmers, John Elias, Henry Venn and A.W. Pink just to name a few. Some or maybe all those names might not be familiar to some of us and that is okay. For most of us, those names are obscure. There are two other individuals whose letters are preserved. I recommend adding the books where those letters are contained to your personal library. The first is Samuel Rutherford. Here is what Charles Spurgeon said of Rutherford’s letters, “When we are dead and gone let the world know that Spurgeon held Rutherford’s letters to be the nearest thing to inspiration which can be found in all the writings of mere men.” Rutherford’s insights are practical and penetrating.

Another person, whose letters have been preserved is likely known by us because of his hymns. His name is John Newton. In one of his letters, he was responding to a friend on the question of whether the sins of believers shall be publicly declared at the great day. In the contents of explaining his understanding of this topic, he wrote, “None can suppose that the Lord will or can forget the sins of His people, or that they can be ever hid from His all-comprehending view. Neither can I think they themselves will forget them. Their song is founded upon a recollection of their sins and their circumstances in this life (**REVELATION 5:9**). Their love, and consequently their happiness, seems inseparably connected with the consciousness of what they were and what they had done (**LUKE 7:47**). And I think those are the sweetest moments in this life, when we have the clearest sense of our own sins, provided the sense of our acceptance in the Beloved is proportionately clear, and we feel the consolations of His love, notwithstanding all our transgressions. When we arrive in glory, unbelief and fear will cease forever; our nearness to God and communion with Him will be unspeakably beyond what we can now conceive. Therefore, the remembrance of our sins will be no abatement of our bliss, but rather the contrary.”

There is no doubt Newton’s friend read his letter with encouragement. And when we come to our Bibles, especially the New Testament, what are the majority of the books? Precious letters to be read and read and read. As we do, maybe our personal letter writing will make a comeback. We might find ourselves with paper and writing tools, like John Newton, and send out an encouraging letter to a brother or sister.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to be an encourager to someone today and it might mean writing something.”

QUOTE: “We only encourage one another if we take the initiative to do so.”