

# 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)*



## April 2010 Archive



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**The QBC Daily Nugget**  
**April 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)

**2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10** – So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THOSE HEAVY BURDENS.** Burdens. Are we carrying any today? You might be thinking, “Are you human, Jim? I carry tons of them.” I know we carry burdens. All kinds. We carry heavy loads on our hearts for unsaved loved ones, for our children growing up in a godless world, for the increasing uncertainty in our world, for the moral decay in our nation, for keeping our marriages alive and healthy, for parenting that matters for eternity, for our churches holding fast to the truth . . . the list continues with each of us and will be diverse based on a lot of factors such as the season of life we are in and our temperaments. But there is one burden we carry that is common. Sin. Remaining sin. Throw out all the differences we may have with each other when it comes to this burden. It is shared. The true Christian knows just how much of a burden this disease is and to refresh us, let the Apostle Paul describe the experience of this burden, “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me” (**ROMANS 7:14-20**). This burden we long to get rid of and find ourselves moaning under its heavy weight will someday be gone forever - “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin” (**ROMANS 7:25**)

There is another burden we have and though it is painful, it is necessary. It is also one that we will learn to embrace and actually not desire for its removal. I am not implying we are jumping all around singing, “Oh, what a wonderful burden I carry. Oh, what a happy load on my heart. Oh what a great gift from my Father that makes me weak and frail.” I don’t see Paul doing that in today’s reference . . . initially. I see him crying out for deliverance, “Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me” and it didn’t come but an attitude change did – “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses”.

God gives us burdens to humble us by showing us our weaknesses. His “gifts” of burdens are to reveal our total inability to be what we are to be or to accomplish what we are to accomplish for Him. He must give these loads to our hearts to produce humility that drives us to see without Him, we simply are clay in need of shaping. Some burdens we long to be rid of and rightly so. Others we are to carry, not seek deliverance from, for they will take us closer in our fellowship with Jesus Christ.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, teach me that some burdens need to stay in my life for my good.”

**QUOTE:** “We need to be aware of our weaknesses in order to know where our strength lies.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**MATTHEW 17:19-21** – Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: IT MIGHT TAKE MORE.** Someone recently told me, “My prayer life seems to go to the roof and nowhere else. It just seems like the heavens are closed. Like a wall exists preventing me from really encountering the Lord in prayer.” Ever feel that your prayer life is like that? Ever sense your prayer life is either just a bunch of words or “boringly routine?” Anyone who seriously desires to know the Lord realizes the part prayer plays. We will not enjoy Him without a prayer life that knows fervency and consistency. W. E. Sangster said, “Many people pray for things that can only come by work and work for things that can only come by prayer.” When it comes to overcoming sinful tendencies that weigh us down or things in life that gobble up precious time and rob us of good prayer seasons, it might take more than just a quick burst of “Lord, help me”. It might take more. Like what we find in today’s reference.

The setting in today’s scripture is gripping. A distraught father brought his son, who was possessed with a demon, to Jesus for help. He cried out to the Lord, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly” (**MATTHEW 17:15**). What he says next says much about the ignorance of the disciples when it came to spiritual warfare. The father continued, “And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him” (**MATTHEW 17:16**). As the story unfolds, Jesus heals the son – “Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly” (**MATTHEW 17:18**). Now the key participants in this account are the disciples. They came to a private session with Jesus and asked, “Why could we not cast it out?” (**MATTHEW 17:19**). The Lord answers in these words, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting” (**MATTHEW 17:20-21**).

In our Lord’s response, He identifies the hindrance in the disciple’s lives and then reveals to them that some areas of spiritual warfare require more than just a random prayer or a passive submission to the will of God. Let’s take these three truths and apply them to us when it comes to our prayer lives and learning to fight successful spiritual warfare. First, the greatest hindrance we found deep in our hearts keeping us from effective and fervent prayer lives is unbelief. Unbelief manifests itself in many ways. Consider this area when it comes to prayer. Do we believe prayer is important? The way to see if what we say is true or if unbelief is really present would be to take an inventory, say of the past week, and see just how much of ourselves and our time made its way into our prayer closets. Our schedules expose more about our spiritual lives than we might want to admit. The next two truths from Jesus reveal that there is intense conflict in the spiritual realm that require times of fasting and extended prayer times. The range of this conflict will vary. We might find ourselves entering into a fast and concentrated prayer for a lost loved one, or a prodigal son or daughter to come back to the faith. It could be a stronghold in our lives, maybe even unbelief or worldliness, that needs that type of spiritual assault through the Word and prayer. Prayer is far more than what we may think and the maturing Christian will mature in prayer. This maturing will realize that not only is prayer indispensable in the Christian life, but there are times and situations when a normal approach to prayer isn’t enough. It might take more.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, show me that prayer is a lot more than asking for things.”

**QUOTE:** “Spiritual warfare fought without a fervency in prayer ensures a certain defeat.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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 21:3** – Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: JOIN THE CROWD.** Today's nugget is for an exclusive crowd. With all due respect, please don't continue on if you are a Christian who has never failed the Lord, has never chosen the pleasure of sin over the pain of holy denial, has never denied Jesus in word or action, has never experienced a cold heart that feels like stone, has never sung a hymn of consecration in church where you know your words don't completely match your heart and life . . . if you are a Christian who knows nothing about the agonizing pain of spiritual defeat, then this nugget is not for you. It is for a certain crowd that includes the guys in today's reference, yours truly, and anyone else out there who doesn't have it all together and knows spiritual failure upfront and personal. And that crowd expands. J. C. Ryle wrote, “Show me one single servant of the Lord in scripture who did not at some time err and stumble in his course, who did not by his inconsistency or sin give occasion to the Lord's enemies to blaspheme. Oh, even the best of men have given melancholy proof that so long as we are in the body we are liable to change. We venture to assert there is not one in the white-robed company of the redeemed who would tell you he had always held on his way without wavering, always fought an equally good fight. All could remember that at his best there were days of spiritual sloth and drowsiness, days of unholy, unChristlike tempers, days of vanity and self-conceit, days of self-indulgence and conformity to the world, days of coldness and want of love and each the cause of pain and sorrow and self-abasement.” And now enter into the opening of **JOHN 21** to meet some fellow strugglers along the path to glory.

**JOHN 21** is such a wonderful chapter about the pain of failure, the subsequent resignation to throw in the towel, and the overflowing mercy in our Lord Jesus tossing all that stuff over the side of the boat and raising the sail to keep on navigating through the sea of life in love and service for Him. As we join these fisherman, we need to remember what just recently happened. Peter's denial of the Lord in a public forum. He was a hurting soul. That is what spiritual failure does. It hurts the soul as we remember the love which was sinned against. And what did Peter want to do? Give up. Quit and go back to something he could do well - fish. And he wasn't alone. The other disciples joined him just as they joined him in denying the Lord. As you read the rest of the chapter, the Lord shows up on the shore, breakfast was served and so was the healing of Peter's soul through a great display of mercy.

As we go through life with Jesus, we will know more and more of His restoring grace and mercy. He comes again and again to pick us when we fall. It isn't “if” we fall, but when – “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand” (**PSALM 37:23-24**) and there is always mercy for the one wanting to get up. The problem we may face when we fall is to listen to the devil's whispers of no mercy, but let Micah be a good example of maintaining confidence in the midst of spiritual failure – “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication” (**MICAH 7:8-9**). He is one of us and listening to him will prove to be a great help as we continue to seek a life pleasing to the Lord.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, I praise You for a mercy undeserved and grace always abounding.”

**QUOTE:** “Failures may be bridges to greater worship if we remember and rest on restoring grace.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**PSALM 130:1** – Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **GOING DEEP.** Ever go into the depths of something? Maybe you are a scuba diver and have done deep sea diving. Probably not a lot of us out there. Perhaps some of you have been on a submarine and gone deep into the oceans of the world. Again, probably not a lot of submariners among us. How about taking a hike or tour into a deep cave or cavern? Some of us might fall into that category.

Whatever our physical experience or lack of in going into the depths of something, one thing is for certain for all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We will join the psalmist in **PSALM 130** at some point in our Christian life. We will be taken into the depths of our soul and what we see will cause us to cry out and the rest of **PSALM 130** will be real and quite personal – “O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy! If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities” (**PSALM 130:2-8**).

What are these depths the psalmist is crying out of to the Lord? It was the awakening of the soul to the depths of sin. John Gill describes these depths like this, “The depths the psalmist was now in were a deep sense of sin, under which he lay, and which brought him low; as every man is low in his own eyes, when he has a thorough sense of sin; then he sees himself unworthy of any favour from God, deserving of his wrath and displeasure; as a polluted guilty creature, loathsome and abominable; as wretched and undone in himself; as the chief of sinners, more brutish than any man, and as a beast before the Lord.” The 18<sup>th</sup> century theologian did a great job describing what we truly are before the Lord. Those descriptions are rightly called depths. It is often easy to merely see sin as something we do in our daily failings before the Lord. And that is true. Sin is something we do and that is why **1 JOHN 1:9** is so comforting and daily sought, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” But if we only understand sin as something we do instead of how David saw it – “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (**PSALM 51:5**) and today’s psalmist describes it, we will never see the glory of our Lord in His Gospel in all its richness and fullness. Going to the depths makes the pleas for mercy and need for grace so implanted in the soul that prayer and seeking of the Lord become an intense pursuit with unwavering regularity.

There is a word of caution as we are taken into the depths of our sinfulness. It can produce despair and hopelessness. That is not why the Lord takes us there. We go to the depths in order to go the heights of His mercy and forgiveness. We may read how this unfolds in the entire psalm. There is hope even in the depths. Once again from the pen of John Gill, “Though the psalmist was in the depths of distress for sin, yet not in the depths of despair; he cried to God, he hoped in him, and believed there was pardon with him.” Never lose sight that God isn’t reluctant to give mercy. The word says, “Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not keep His anger forever, because He delights in mercy” (**MICAH 7:18**). To really appreciate the height in this delight, one must go to the depths of knowing sin.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to be willing to go the depths of my soul with You.”

QUOTE: “God’s love is so deep and so is His work in the hearts of His children.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**PHILIPPIANS 4:4** – Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, Rejoice!

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: YES, IT IS TOO HARD.** I struggle with today’s reference. Maybe you don’t. I quote it a lot. I do attempt to obey it but I realize I fail to obey it too much. There are a couple of reasons why obeying this command is difficult and we will get to those shortly. But before we get there with a few specifics, we can identify what presents to us the real struggle in obeying this command by one simple word within it – always. Remove that word and we could manage this thing. First of all, when life is pretty rosy and easy, we can rejoice. Family life is good, the devil isn’t accusing us, our flesh seems to not be screaming too loud for attention, the deceitfulness of sin has taken a nap and the world seems to be going by without us. We can read that verse and pretty much rejoice always. Now throw in this messy situation – family life is tense with rebellion among the ranks or neglect in the relationships, job security doesn’t exist and the monthly income runs out before the bills run out. Oh, sin has also crept upon us and we are entangled with its pain. Toss in a spiritual life making us feel like an ice cube lying on a shelf in the freezer and in the midst of all that stuff, tell me about our obedience to the command – “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, Rejoice!”

There are a couple solid reasons why this command is attempted to be obeyed and we fail often in doing so. The first one is an act of forgetfulness when it comes to the power of obedience in the Christian life. If I were to ask us if we can earn our way to heaven, none of us would say “Sure, just obey the law of God.” No, we are Biblically schooled enough to know that by the works of the flesh no one is justified before God (**GALATIANS 3:11**). But if I were to ask us how we live the Christian life, what would we say? Here is where it gets tough. We know the answer. It is the power of the Lord Jesus through His Spirit – “Apart from me, you can do nothing” (**JOHN 15:5**), but knowing and relying are not always a married couple in the Christian experience. To prove this, ask yourself how many times you have inwardly resolved to “Rejoice in the Lord always” in a tough situation and failed to begin that act of obedience with a cry, “Lord, I cannot obey this unless You enable me to do so”. More than likely, the resolve fizzled because it was relied upon in the strength of self and not Christ.

In addition to forgetfulness to rely upon the power of Christ to obey this command, there is the misunderstanding of the act of faith in obeying this command. Faith is not a feeling or impulse. It is a gift grafting us into the Christ who enables us to obey all things. And it is a gift that acts. It doesn’t sit around waiting for an “inner” movement. It acknowledges the inability to act while acknowledging the responsibility to act. It takes us outside of ourselves but never leaves us to ourselves. Faith takes God’s promises, commands, and warnings and steps out on them in complete reliance upon Him to fulfill all. A.W. Pink said, “To rejoice in the Lord is an act of faith, and therefore it lies not within the power of the creature to put it forth whenever he is inclined to do so. Do not despair, then, fellow-saint, because you are not able to reach this sphere of joy as and when you please. We are entirely dependent upon the Holy Spirit, here as everywhere – none but He can draw us to Christ and enable us to rejoice in Him.” Striving to always remember our complete dependency on God to rejoice in Him and then acting out that remembrance by faith will allow us to experience more the obedience to this great and worthy command.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me see it isn’t for some things in life I need You, but for all things in life.”

**QUOTE:** “Obedience isn’t to get up and go for Christ. It is to get up, go and lean on Christ.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**DEUTERONOMY 8:1-2** – All the commandments which I command you this day shall you be careful to do, that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land which Jehovah swore to your fathers. And you shall remember all the way which Jehovah your God led you these forty years in the wilderness in order to humble you, to prove you, to know what is in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: LET’S GET ACQUAINTED.** What is God doing in your life right now? There are times in churches known as “testimony time” where God’s people are given the opportunity to share publicly truths of the Lord and perhaps what He is doing in their lives. At times, there is an awkward silence in the beginning as one waits to hear a bold soul “break the ice” with a testimony. It isn’t because God ceased to work in people. The silence isn’t because they have nothing to say. It could be just the opposite. God is doing so much in a person it is so difficult to articulate His working. That would be in line with these familiar words – “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (**ISAIAH 55:8-9**).

We won’t fully understand what Paul says is our daily charge – “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning” (**PHILIPPIANS 2:14-16**). What does it really look like in the day to day trenches of life to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” as God works in us for His good pleasure? Now before we get ready to jump on the statement, “God is making me in the image of His Son” as the answer to what God is doing, though it is the correct answer, let’s spend a little time in today’s reference. Here we see the starting point where that work of conformity to Jesus begins.

In order to be in submission to the work of God in conforming us to His Son, we need to be acquainted with two people. Yes, we need to be acquainted with the One we are being conformed to, but that isn’t where the acquaintance begins. We need to be acquainted with ourselves. We need to know ourselves. Look about halfway through the reference of the day. Why did God lead His people into the desert? Four reasons. First, to humble them, then to test them, followed by self-realization, and all for the purpose to see if obedience to Him was their true desire and delight. The only way to begin to be conformed to Jesus is to get to know ourselves and that will only come through testing. Our Lord is the “gentle and humble One” (**MATTHEW 11:28-30**) while we are generally the “impatient and proud ones”. Testing or trouble gets us really acquainted with ourselves and then, we are able to see our need and desire for conformity to Jesus. Thomas Case said, “A man by trouble comes to know his own heart which in prosperity he was a stranger to. He now sees the weakness of his grace, and the strength of his corruptions, and this lays him in the dust. The furnace discovers the dross that lay hidden before. I could not have believed the world had so much interest in my heart and Christ so little. I did not realize my faith so weak and my fears so strong. Woe is me, what a heart I have!” And from that position, grace comes with power to change and revive the soul, but it begins with getting acquainted with oneself. Maybe we should set aside time soon and tell ourselves, “Let’s get acquainted”.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, teach me to see the starting point for a life of holiness is to humbled.”

**QUOTE:** THOMAS CASE, “Pride is a disease that naturally runs in our veins.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**JOHN 11:35** – Jesus wept.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: TEARS OF MANY KINDS.** Robert Law wrote in his book, *The Emotions of Jesus*, these moving words describing Jesus’ sympathy, “No feature of our Lord’s earthly career is more conspicuous, or more likely to arrest every reader of His life, than the tenderness of His feeling for the woes and sufferings of men.” This type of compassion is to be one of the distinguishing characteristics in God’s people. The Apostle Paul commanded us to “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” We are to enter into those “crying times” with other believers.

When it comes to weeping, have we really thought how wide the spectrum is when it comes to the types of tears we shed as believers? I searched the greatest hymnbook ever written, the Psalms, and came up with nine occasions where tears were shed. Each reflects the experience of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let’s identify just a few of the types of tears we experience in our walk with the Lord. First, there is the sorrow and subsequent tears shed over sin and the chastisement coming from the Lord – “O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping” (**PSALM 6:1, 6**). These tears are also in **PSALM 39** – “Remove your stroke from me; I am spent by the hostility of your hand. When you discipline a man with rebukes for sin, you consume like a moth what is dear to him; surely all mankind is a mere breath! *Selah* “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears! For I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers” (**PSALM 39:10-12**). In both cases, David is smarting because of God’s loving chastisement and when God makes His children “hurt” over their sin, tears will be our lot. John Owen wrote, “Satan’s purpose is the dishonor of God and the ruin of souls. Have not your former temptations defiled your conscience, disquieted your peace, weakened your obedience, and clouded the face of God? Has not your soul been polluted, and grievously perplexed with it? Would you ever be willingly entangled again?” As we “see” David’s tears and Owen’s description of what God’s chastisement feels like, we know that David’s tears belong to us also. Another type of tears we encounter in the psalms is the tears of longing. It is like the tears of being homesick for loved ones. We find these in **PSALM 42** – “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?”” (**PSALM 42:1-3**). David hungers and thirsts for God. His intense desire for fellowship with God brought about tears. This is a good test of our hearts when it comes to longing for God. Shed any tears lately out of longing for God to be real and personal in a felt communion? A third type of tears shed in the believer’s life is caused by persecution. David said, “You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?” (**PSALM 56:8**). As one reads **PSALM 56**, we find David hounded by enemies, even to the point of feeling trampled by their brutality and force – “All day long an attacker oppresses me; my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly” (**PSALM 56:1b-2**). It doesn’t take physical enemies to make us cry a river. Our spiritual enemies are strong and many a believer knows the tears shed in times of prayer over the struggles and warfare against evil forces and a corrupt heart.

Tears abound in the scriptures and in our earthly journey. However, there is a place of no more tears – the new heaven and new earth – “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (**REVELATION 21:4**). Let’s learn to “cry together” as we look forward to the day of no more tears.

PRAYER: “Lord, forgive me when my heart lacks tenderness to all the hurt around me.”

QUOTE: “Only God creates a weeping heart over the hurting souls found in all of humanity.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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 46:1** – God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **GETTING HIS HELP.** Do you need a place to run and hide today from all the “monsters, beasts, and fiends” in the forms of life’s pressures, stresses, and fears? Do you need a source of strength to face all those challenges both outwardly and inwardly that seem like tall mountains too high to scale? Do you need a Savior that is real RIGHT NOW, a present help in trouble? Yes, yes, and yes to all three questions, right? Well, here is the good news that we know – “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (**HEBREWS 13:5**). Jesus promises His presence so it must be true. However is what we know, what we experience? That “yes” answer might not be as strong coming forth from us as the answers to our three questions.

It is true we always have the presence of God in our lives. It can be no other way. Remember these words of David, “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me” (**PSALM 139:7-10**). There is no escaping His presence and as believers in Him, we don’t want to escape. Just the opposite. We want to embrace. Yet, we identify with David at times when it comes to a lack of realization of God’s presence and sense of His help. We cry like him – “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?” (**PSALM 13:1-2**). We grow impatient when it comes to the Lord’s intervention with needed strength and help in our trouble. And sometimes our impatience comes because we want Him to do what only He can do while we fail to do what He commands us to do.

Further in today’s psalm, we are given a familiar command – “Be still, and know that I am God” (**PSALM 46:10**). If we are to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our refuge, the place to hide; our strength, the place to receive power to endure and His presence to aid us along the way, we must know Him. The command isn’t to “Be still and know that I am your refuge, strength, and help”, though, He does want us to know all those things about Him. The command is to know Him first and it requires a quiet and seeking heart. How did a tired and weary servant of the Lord named Elijah hear the voice of the Lord? It is revealed in **1 KINGS 19** - And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He said, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away” (**1 KINGS 19:11-14**).

Check out where the Lord’s voice wasn’t heard. It wasn’t in the busy and noisy rush of the wind, the drama of an earthquake, or the brilliance of a fire. It came in a low whisper that would require a stillness to hear. If we want to know Him, and not just His benefits, it will require stillness before Him. Let’s seek to put some brakes on life and learn the discipline of being still before Him.

PRAYER: “Lord Jesus, keep making me realize You alone are my refuge and strength.”

QUOTE: “To know Him as a refuge and strength requires the discipline of being still before Him.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**JOHN 12:24-26** – Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: SERVING ISN'T JUST DOING.** It is easy to be busy for the Lord. Look at a typical church calendar and see how much stuff one could get busy doing. In fact, in some cases, one could find yourself being busy just about every night of the week. That is not good. At all. Now before we try and get off the hook of justifying no service for the Lord in His body, we need to know and embrace our responsibility – “For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not have all the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (**ROMANS 12:4-5**). We exist for each other and when we are not functioning in our giftedness, all of us suffer. So, the exhortation “to avoid busyness” for the Lord is not an escape clause to be passive in the church of the Lord Jesus. The Head of the Church gives gifts to His people for use, not stowage – “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (**1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-7**).

However, serving isn't just doing and I think we get a little glimpse of this truth from the words of our Lord in today's reference. As we look at today's reference, we might see a process in which a servant is made. First, there is the death of self – “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit”. The criteria for fruit bearing is death to self. Let self determine the course of action in all of life, including our availability and usability for the Lord, and we cannot expect fruit. And never make light of the death to self. It is hard, continual, and painful. Self loves self so much it will go to no ends to seek comfort, ease, and a life of simply serving the Lord when convenient. Another truth about the making of a servant who realizes it is more than just doing is the mindset of actually loathing this life – “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” That doesn't mean we despise the life God has given us and sit around waiting for heaven. It includes a realization that this life is fleeting and we need to ensure everything goes through the filter of eternal value. Mary Winslow said, “May you be unceasingly led to see, that this world is not worthy of one anxious thought! It is all passing away, and we shall soon stand before the great white throne! Realize more and more your glorious inheritance, and do not covet the poor trifles of time and sense. Time is short! You have much to do for God in a little space.” And here is the third step in the process of becoming a servant – a servant knows that communing with the Lord is his or her number one priority, not the work of the Lord – “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also.” The Lord states two things implying a closeness in our relationship with Him. First, there is following Him. That requires staying close. The second thing is the promise of His presence. Without a close walk with Him, watching against the temptations toward busyness and activity, service will be joyless doing not joyful abiding. Let's learn what true service really is all about!

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me to see my service is inseparably linked to staying close to You.”

**QUOTE:** “True service for the Lord flows from abiding in the Lord.”

**The QBC Daily Nugget**  
**April 10, 2010**

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

**JOHN 17:1-3** – When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: NOT JUST LIVING FOREVER.** Sit back for a moment of reflection upon the words “eternal life.” What floods our mind? Probably the first line of thinking is living forever. As much as we have so little concept of what that means, our answer would be correct. It is a fact every human being will exist forever. We are immortal beings created in the image, though horribly flawed, of our immortal Creator. So, duration is one thought about eternal life, but not the only thought. And it isn’t even the primary thought to be considered when pondering eternal life.

In the greatest prayer ever offered, we find our Lord defining what eternal life truly is – “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (**JOHN 17:3**). Jesus doesn’t mention eternal life as duration of life but a relationship of life – the knowledge of God and of Himself. Charles Ross, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Scottish divine, wrote, “It is not, however, any or every kind of knowledge, of which Jesus speaks; it is not mere head or rational knowledge – the mere natural information of the mind, or the excitation of the feelings; but it is that living, personal, and experimental knowledge – that knowledge, which includes oneness in will with God, and partaking of His nature; it is the knowledge, love, and enjoyment of Him, who is infinite; it is that knowledge, which is the result of the work of the Spirit glorifying Jesus and with Him God in us.” That is a very penetrating comment on our Lord’s words and demands two questions be asked of our souls, “Is that our understanding of Christianity?” and “Are our lives so orchestrated to pursue this knowledge beyond comprehension?”

As we consider the seriousness of such a self-evaluation, there is something else in today’s reference that may get overlooked. It must not be left behind if we want to really know God and Jesus Christ as defined by Ross. It is the statement Jesus makes about His Father giving Him authority over all flesh. This is a statement of sovereign power and when we think of our Christian experience, what keeps us from the consistent pursuit of Christ, the enjoyment of Him, and the progressing life of holiness? Is it not the primary battle of the flesh? Paul tells us it is so – “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**). How do we overcome this constant battle and experience eternal life? Paul goes on in the same chapter of **GALATIANS 5** with these words, “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (**GALATIANS 5:24**). There is a faith principle to apply as we submit to the authoritative power of Christ over all flesh to include our fleshly passions and desires. There is a wonderful promise found in the book of Micah which should make its way into our regular times of prayer. It will help us as we seek to live out the eternal life Jesus promised – “Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He does not retain his anger forever, Because he delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (**MICAH 7:18-19**). God has promised to subdue or tread down our iniquities. As we seek to know Him and His Son, let’s learn to pray and lean upon Him, the One with authority over all flesh, to subdue our flesh in order to experience Him more fully.

**PRAYER:** “Lord Jesus, so subdue my fleshly nature that I might know true communion with You.”

**QUOTE:** “Eternal life isn’t a statement of duration but one of saving knowledge of God.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**MALACHI 3:13-14** – “Your words have been hard against me, says the Lord. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts?’

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A DESTRUCTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE WORK.** The purposes for which God gave us His Word come forth crystal clear in Paul’s instruction to a young pastor named Timothy – “All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (**2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17**). Four purposes are provided – teaching, reproof, correction and training. As we sit under the Word and study the Word individually, the first and last two purposes are not met with great hostility to our flesh. Oh, the flesh will always oppose the work of the Spirit through His Word (**GALATIANS 5:17**), but the flesh knows that we can receive teaching and training and it never changes us. Just consider how many Bible studies and sermons we have heard that actually have become life changing applications in our lives? If we are honest, probably a lot more of those exposures to the Word remained on the shelf of our head and never made it into the heart and feet in our lives. Or to be even further down the honest trail, we might even struggle to simply remember teaching and training of the Word we have recently received. Test that theory out. Recall the last sermon or Bible study and see if any of it became application in our lives. See what I mean? Receiving teaching and training is easy. Applying teaching and training is not.

The other two purposes of God giving us the scriptures are reproof and correction. Those two are not so easily received. The attack on our pride by reproofing and correcting are irritants that don’t like such exposing and painful actions from the Sword of the Spirit. Here is where I think we really see the Sword of the Spirit work. A sword cuts and when reproofing and correction cuts, it hurts. I don’t like to be told I am wrong. Nor am I quite pleased to be nudged by a discerning wife or another family member saying, “You think you were a little too impatient there” or “You should have been kinder to that person, don’t you think?” But if we really get down to it, the Christian life is really one of constant construction in our lives and most of it is corrective. And when I say “corrective”, I am pointing to “destruction” in order to do “construction”. It is always good, but always painful. God must “destroy” us from our prideful rebellion in order to “rebuild” us in humble submission. Just spend time in Hebrews 12 and we will get the picture.

One area of this great construction work is to kill a complaining spirit – “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning” (**PHILIPPIANS 2:12-14**). As this reproofing and correcting work unfolds, the first step is the awakening to see that our complaining about anything isn’t about a circumstance we are in, but it is directed against the God of that circumstance. In today’s reference, implied throughout the words of God’s people, is the spirit of complaining. Whether it was the spirit of “what is the use” of serving God to “what is in it for me”, those types of attitudes reveal a heart of murmuring about difficulties of walking with the Lord. Walking with Jesus is hard. He said it would be (**MATTHEW 7:13-14**) and when things are difficult, the ugly heart of complaining is ready to take charge of a situation. As we go through our days, let’s strive to see that God’s work of destruction, in order to do construction in us, might begin in the area of our complaining and remember, He will finish the work for His glory and our good!

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to receive Your correction with humble submission not prideful rebellion.”

QUOTE: “Complaining isn’t a talent we learn but a natural tendency always ready to be exercised.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**EPHESIANS 3:14-19** – For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **STRENGTHENED TO LOVE.** Paul’s prayer to the Ephesians contains the words “strengthened” and “strength” in the practice of faith and love. Concerning just love, does it strike us as a little strange to think one must be given strength to love? I believe such thought is foreign in our world today. Let’s consult two dictionaries to prove the point. The first dictionary we will call “The World Edition” and the second is “God’s Edition.” Take the first one and land on the word “love.” Here are three definitions – 1. A deep, tender, ineffable feeling of affection toward a person underlying oneness. 2. An intense emotional attachment, as for a pet or treasured object. 3. A strong enthusiasm. Each definition of love from the world’s standpoint is heavily weighed toward emotions. Let me ask a question. Are your emotions steady? Mine are not. Mine get tossed about like a ship in rough seas. Emotions do the same and often we don’t even know why. The people outside of Christ rely on emotions to define love because that’s all they got! Emotions are not enough. The Divine order says it is not enough.

Now, let’s take a look at God’s dictionary defining love – “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends (**I CORINTHIANS 13:4-8**). Though those definitions are heavy on action; they are not void of emotion. We are to have emotions for God, but this is where the world negatively influences us. Emotions are not the start and end points in relationships. What if we only loved when we felt like it? How did Jesus feel in the Garden of Gethsemane? Emotions are not enough to practice true love. We need Divine strength.

Back to the words “strengthened and strength” Paul used in today’s reference, how do they apply to love? Before we answer, think about the expression of emotions. They don’t need strength to express themselves. Here are two to illustrate. How much strength does it take to let loose anger? Or how much effort is expended to allow irritation to show forth to a disobedient child, insensitive spouse, or difficult co-worker? None in both cases. Just let emotions out of the cages of our hearts and they will run rampant. Actually, what it takes is strength to CONTROL emotions; to keep them in check. Contrast this when it comes to God’s definition of love. Read **I CORINTHIANS 13:4-8** again. How far do you think we will get attempting to practice those characteristics on our own? Not far. Not one step. We need strength, His strength, to put into practice God’s definition of true love. Start praying the **EPHESIANS 3** prayer. Every day. Not as a mere routine or vain repetition. Jesus warns us to void such tendency (**MATTHEW 6:7**). Include it as a top shelf petition on your prayer list and watch how God makes it come alive. It must. It is His will. And by the way, we are strengthened by love to love – love God and love others. If **EPHESIANS 3:14-19** isn’t the enabling force for us to love, we only have one other option – resorting to the World Dictionary defining love and that is not enough. Our love does not live by emotion, but by faith provided and strengthened by God’s Spirit.

PRAYER: “Lord, please help us to define love as You define it not as our world defines it.”

QUOTE: A.W. TOZER, “To adore God means to love Him with all the powers within us.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**HEBREWS 4:11, 16** - Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. 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.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: GO GET SOME GRACE.** The question didn't really surprise me. It was one I asked myself more than once. Actually, I think that question found its way into my thinking a lot more than once. It was simple. It was direct. It was honest – “Why does life have to be so hard?” I didn't respond with the standard answers we Christians give like “Because of sin” and “It is supposed to be hard. Jesus said it would be hard” (**MATTHEW 7:14**). Those standard answers are right answers. However, when someone approaches us with that question or we ask it of ourselves late into the night when a ton of soul searching occurs, it isn't when the sun is shining bright in our lives. It normally occurs when things are a little on the bleak side or even when everything seems to be as dark as Egyptian darkness in our hearts and circumstances.

Hard times in life are inevitable for all us. It doesn't matter whether one is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ or an unbeliever. It rains on the just and the unjust when it comes to problems and pain. Somewhere I read that life consists of either coming out of a trial, preparing to enter into a trial, or in the midst of a trial. What makes the difference when circumstances cause us to ask the question “Why does life have to be so hard?” is where do we go to get help. I didn't say “where do we go to get answers”, but “where do we go to get help”. Our God owes us nothing and that includes the answer to our question as to why we go through hard times. Yet, God has chosen to give us what we don't deserve to get us through those hard times. And that everything is called grace and grace that will always prove to be sufficient no matter the situation – “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (**2 CORINTHIANS 12:9**).

As we consider God's amazing and sufficient grace, it is important to heed the instructions in today's reference. Grace is a gift of God but it is a gift to be sought and exercised. We receive grace that is sufficient not to simply lay around waiting for it to work. It is a gift to be used and especially during hard times and trials. There are two words in today's references revealing our responsibilities when it comes to seeing grace work in the midst of tough times. First, we are to strive to rest in grace. That includes preaching the gospel to ourselves during hard times. When life is challenging, unrest of the soul is common. The only rest we have is the rest in the peace of the gospel of the Lord Jesus. He promised rest and it is given to those who strive for it – “Come unto me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest” (**MATTHEW 11:28**). Notice that to get the rest Jesus promises in His gracious invitation, a person must come. No coming equals no rest. Grace must be strived for if it is to be appropriated. Another instruction from today's reference informs us that grace is to sought – “Find grace to help in time of need”. To find grace doesn't mean it is hidden. God isn't playing “hide and seek” with His grace, but He does want us to seek it with earnest desire. The true awareness of our need for grace will be revealed by how diligently we seek to find it. If we are in hard times and know the only way to get through is grace, it will show. It will show in our search of the scriptures and the transformation in our prayer lives. So, as hard times come, let's go get some grace!

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me see that grace is a gift to be received and sought.”

**QUOTE:** “Grace is to be sought with diligence not expected in the spirit of laziness.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**LUKE 5:18-20** - And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.”

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: SEEN ANY FAITH LATELY?** Lessons abound from this miracle performed by our Lord Jesus. Quickly we grasp the persistent compassion of the man’s friends. A large crowd keeping them from Jesus? No problem. We’ll go through the roof. Our friend needs the Master and we are going to get him there! Another lesson centers on restoring grace. The paralyzed man came to Jesus looking for physical healing. He left with far more. New legs, a bed to carry, and a new heart. A third lesson reveals the selfish spirit in some people. I wonder about the watching crowd’s reaction as the man passed them on a bed. Did they just turn the other cheek (not in a good way) to his suffering? Why not clear a path for him out of compassion instead of forcing his friends to the extreme measure of tearing up a roof? There is something else in the story easily glossed over. Jesus, busy with people, hears a noise above His head, and looks up. He sees four guys lowering a man on a bed toward Him. Luke describes this gaze by Jesus, “And when He saw their faith” (**LUKE 5:20a**). Luke did not say, “And when Jesus heard their profession of faith.”

What does it actually mean to “see faith?” Take a moment and read **HEBREWS 11**. Notice just a few examples – “by faith Abel offered (verse 4), by faith Noah construed (verse 7), by faith Abraham obeyed (verse 8), by faith Moses refused (verse 24), and by faith the people crossed” (verse 29). The accounts of true faith involve viewable action. Look at the verbs in the five examples. They are actions. Do not get ruffled and delete me. I am not advocating a “works” salvation. Faith is a gift of God given by sovereign grace – “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (**EPHESIANS 2:8-9**). Yet, true belief includes action. Augustus Toplady said, “If God gives you St. Paul’s faith, you will soon have St. James’s works” (**JAMES 2:18-19**). The four friends of the paralytic did not rely on their effort to get their friend healed. They relied upon the Lord Jesus, but their effort made faith seen and real.

Paul told the Ephesians to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (**EPHESIANS 4:1**). When someone takes a walk, it is observable. People walk in my neighborhood and I see them. So, seen any faith lately? Or rather, has OUR faith been seen lately? If these four guys stayed at home and merely talked about faith in the ability of Jesus to heal their friend, he would still be in bed. Faith without works is dead (**JAMES 2:17**). Remember we are saved not by good works, but to good works – “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (**EPHESIANS 2:10**).

**PRAYER:** “Lord, make our faith be both real and seen. Let us be a trusting AND an acting people giving the world the evidence of the true and living God!”

**QUOTE: THOMAS MANTON,** “Faith is not an idle grace.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**LUKE 5:18-20** – There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, through the skies in His majesty

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: DO YOU SEE HIM IN YOUR SUFFERING?** Two things happened to me today before nine o'clock. First was a phone call by a discouraged brother who wanted prayer. He is a godly man and being godly and discouraged are not enemies. He was suffering. The second thing was a visitor who wanted to see me. He, too, is a godly man, and I wish my walk with the Lord Jesus was as close as his. As he shared his heart, like the first individual, there was suffering. And like the first individual, his suffering was not incompatible with being in fellowship with the Lord. In fact, if we find our Christian lives lived where discouragement is never experienced and emotional and spiritual pain is denied, and dismissed as “contrary to Biblical Christianity”, I suggest we rethink this line of thinking fast. D. A. Carson said, “There is a certain kind of maturity that can be attained only through the discipline of suffering.”

The keys to handling the inevitable paths of suffering we are called to as followers of Jesus Christ may be summarized in three directions. First, we must look to Jesus as the suffering servant and realize that so goes the Master, so goes His servant. F. W. Krummacher, in his series of devotional meditations titled *The Suffering Savior*, wrote, “The history of our Savior’s passion is about to display before us its bleeding mysteries and its awful vicarious scenes.” Take a moment and meditate on the words “bleeding mysteries” and “vicarious scenes”. Allow God’s Spirit to drive home to us the suffering our Savior endured through His “bleeding mysteries” and “vicarious scenes” throughout His life. If we are to rightly submit to suffering, it must begin by looking to Jesus (**HEBREWS 12:1-3**) and not to our suffering.

A second direction we must guide our hearts and minds toward when it comes to suffering is that suffering is God’s choice tool of making us like our suffering Savior. I cannot explain it, but the reality of our maturity in Christ comes out of pain, not ease – “Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered” (**HEBREWS 5:8**). The “He” in that verse is our Lord Jesus Christ. David knew what it took to get to a level of consistent obedience in his life – “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word” (**PSALM 119:67**). Suffering produces obedience. Unless we first, look to Jesus, then willfully accept suffering as God’s choice and primary tool for maturing us, we will be “complaining sheep”, making very little progress in our closeness to the Good Shepherd.

A final direction to help us see Jesus in our suffering, and enjoy the help in today’s reference, is to grasp God’s purposes in our suffering. There are at least four. First, God uses suffering to humble His children (**DEUTERONOMY 8:1-3**). Next, God uses suffering to draw us to Himself (**JOB 42:1-6**). Do we think Job knew God better in the beginning of his book or at the end? A third purpose for which God uses suffering is to display His grace – “Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you’” (**2 CORINTHIANS 12:8-9a**). Only the needy get to know God’s grace. The fourth purpose of suffering God uses to mature His children is to perfect His power. The rest of the Corinthian passage just quoted reads, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (**2 CORINTHIANS 12:9**). God’s power is only for the powerless. And for us to be purged from self-sufficiency, we need suffering. For some, it might not take much. For others, it might take more based on the level of our pride. Regardless, the steadfast love of the Lord is committed to making us know our weakness so that we might know Him better and that requires suffering!

**PRAYER:** “Lord, open my eyes to see You love me so much that You will not keep me from suffering.”

**QUOTE: THOMAS CASE,** “God increases our grace through affliction.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**JOB 42:1-6** – Then Job answered the Lord and said, “I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.’ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; <sup>6</sup> therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A SELF-SEEING PRAYER LIFE.** What did your first prayer of the day sound like? Attempt to recall the words of your prayer to the Lord. Did it go heavy on the petition side for help and assistance? If so, that is okay. We are commanded to ask – “Ask, and it will be given to you” (**MATTHEW 7:7a**). However, be careful when it comes to a heavy dose of petitions for just our needs for the day. They might be too weighted on ourselves. Remember, even prayer, even getting answers to prayer, isn’t primarily about us. Don’t lose sight of the Shorter Catechism’s question about the chief end of us – “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever”. That extends to prayer. Compare our Lord’s words in **MATTHEW 7:7** with the Apostle James’ statement about asking, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions” (**JAMES 4:3**).

I want us to consider the words in today’s reference, along with a quote from the beloved commentator Matthew Henry (1662-1714), when it comes to one of the real purposes behind true prayer. Let’s begin with Matthew Henry. Many of us know him from his massive and excellent commentary on the Bible, but few of us likely know about his profound book on prayer. Its full title was “A Method for Prayer with Scripture Expressions proper to be used under each head.” I know that is rather lengthy and today’s reprint is titled “A Method of Prayer.” I strongly recommend getting this book for personal and family use. I do not believe there is a finer book on prayer to be found. However, I will offer this caution. Just to begin reading it makes one think they have never prayed before. Allow Mr. Henry to prove my point, “The scripture describes prayer to be our drawing near to God, lifting up our souls to Him, pouring our hearts before Him. This is the life and soul of prayer; but this soul in the present state must have a body, and that body must be such as becomes the soul, and is suited and adapted to it. Some words there must be of the mind at least, in which as in the smoke, this incense must ascend; not that God may understand us, for our thoughts afar off are known to Him, but that we may the better understand ourselves.” A couple of things to consider from Matthew Henry on prayer. He acknowledges the use of words, but what he says about their use in prayer might just “blow away” some of our concepts of praying. It did mine. First, the life and soul of prayer is to get God, not get things from God, but get God. The second thing about prayer is that we get God so we will really get to know ourselves. Do this quick analysis – are we seeing ourselves, both in our growth in grace and in our realization of our sinfulness through communion with God in prayer? Our prayer lives should reveal a deepening awareness of both. If so, we will find a growing humility and gratitude in living out the Christian life.

Now go to Job’s comments in today’s reference. Sounds like Job got a pretty good picture of Job and if we take the time to read his book, we are going to see a lot of prayer. It is the kind of praying defined by Matthew Henry as “Our drawing near to God, lifting up our souls to Him, pouring our hearts before Him” and the results are Job rightly saw God and really saw himself. As we evaluate our prayer lives, let’s consider what we are seeing. It goes beyond just getting things from God. It takes us to rightly seeing God and ourselves.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, as Your disciple, I need to pray like Your disciples – ‘Lord, teach us to pray.’”

**QUOTE: HENRY,** “A golden thread of heart-prayer must run through the web of the whole Christian life.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**EPHESIANS 2:14-15** – For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **DON'T FORGET OUR UNION.** Define for me the process of living out the Christian life. If you want to reveal the depth of your theology, you may use the word “sanctification” as you detail the process of Christian growth. As you go through all the “details” and “mechanics”, how far down on the list of “things to do” in living the Christian life did you find yourself mentioning our union in Christ? Did you start out with listing all the things we are to do such as read our Bibles, pray, fellowship with other believers, go to church, share the gospel, strive for holiness, and other “activities” in the process of spiritual growth? Those are all good and necessary components as means of grace to mature in Christ Jesus. However, if you (and I) started there with the list, we got off on the wrong foot. We missed the number one fundamental truth that must be the beginning, continuing, and ending points when it comes to not only understanding the Christian life, but living it. Miss this truth and I venture to say we are probably struggling with spiritual consistency, ebbing and flowing with peace and joy in our hearts, and more discouraged than encouraged in our Christian experience. And what is that fundamental truth? Union with Christ.

As we read these words of Jesus, pay attention to the oneness between Himself and His people. I have bolded them to draw our attention to this awareness - “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **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.** I am the vine; you are the branches. **Whoever abides in me and I in him,** he it is that bears much fruit, for **apart from me you can do nothing.** If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. **If you abide in me,** and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. **Abide in my love” (JOHN 15:1-9).**

Further on in John's gospel, our Lord returns to this oneness we are to know, enjoy, and rely upon – “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me” (**JOHN 17:20-23**). If we don't emphasize this oneness to ourselves constantly when it comes to growing up and living out Christianity, we will stumble and bumble along the path of sanctification. A. Benjamin R. Clark wrote, “The doctrine of sanctification is that we are made holy, not by force of conscience or moral motives, nor by acts of discipline, but by being united to Christ.”

So, when asked to describe the process of living out our Christian lives, let's strive to make sure we don't just start with a list. It isn't a list first but a union first.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me to see that as my day unfolds, I will never walk alone.”

**QUOTE:** “Our oneness in Christ is a motive to love and a deterrent to sin.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**EPHESIANS 1:3-14** – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: TROPHIES ON THE MANTLE.** Today’s reference is lengthy. It has to be. In the original, it was one continual sentence. One gets the impression that the author, the Apostle Paul, was so thrilled with God’s amazing grace, he just couldn’t stop his sentence! Excitement does that and especially when we are talking about God coming to our rescue in our sin. Go over the reference a few times and discover a recurring theme – “to the praise of his glorious grace”, “to the praise of his glory”, and “to the praise of his glory” repeated again. It is easy to see God “boasting” of those on whom He bestows saving grace. I get the picture of eternity being us on the “mantle of God’s trophy case” as displays of what grace accomplished.

The author of the hymn *Amazing Grace*, John Newton, got that message about grace. Two or three years before the death of John Newton, when his sight was so dim that he was no longer able to read, a friend and brother in the ministry called to have breakfast with him. Their custom was to read the Word of God following mealtime, after which Newton would make a few short remarks on the Biblical passage, and then appropriate prayer would be offered. That day, however, there was silence after the words of Scripture “by the grace of God I am what I am” were read. Finally, after several minutes, Newton spoke, “I am not what I ought to be! How imperfect and deficient I am! I am not what I wish to be, although I abhor that which is evil and would cleave to what is good! I am not what I hope to be, but soon I shall be out of mortality, and with it all sin and imperfection. Though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor yet what I hope to be, I can truly say I am not what I once was: a slave to sin and Satan. I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge that by the grace of God I am what I am!” Then, after a pause, he said. “Now let us pray!”

When grace grips the soul, as it did with Newton, there is a whole range of experiences. First, the awareness of how far short we fall of God’s glory. Newton said, “I am not what I ought to be.” Then, grace produces in us a hatred for our sin. Again, Newton’s experience, “I abhor that which is evil.” And that isn’t just what we see in our world, but what we see inside ourselves. Finally, grace produces a longing for deliverance. As Newton put it, “Soon I shall be out of mortality, and with it all sin and imperfection.” How is the grip of grace on our souls today? Grace works and it works to make us see ourselves as “trophies on God’s mantle”, not because of our efforts, but by resting on Christ’s merits.

**PRAYER:** “Father, help me to see I am a trophy of sovereign grace.”

**QUOTE: THOMAS WATSON,** “The saints who are invested with grace are God’s jewels.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

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

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: OVERWHELMED BY GRACE.** I like quotes. I think most people like a good quote or two. Some quotes are pretty good while some quotes are better than others. There are some quotes that require a little “fishing terminology” with that terminology being “That’s a keeper!” I have been on a few fishing trips where a pretty good size fish was landed and heard the words, “That’s a keeper!” almost shake the boat with their volume. Here is one that falls into that category – John Owen, “We are never nearer Christ than when we find ourselves lost in a holy amazement of his unspeakable love.”

As that “keeper” settles into our hearts and minds, it makes us go to the source of such unspeakable love – the grace of God. Grace has been rightly defined as “God’s unmerited favor.” There is even an expanded definition of grace using each letter of the word. It goes like this; Grace is “God’s riches at Christ’s experience.” Take each letter of that sentence and what do you get? GRACE. We are a people of grace. Take away grace and we remain nothing but rebels and enemies of God. Grace manifests itself in so many ways. One is in mercy – “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved” (**EPHESIANS 2:1-5**). Have we taken time recently to ponder how great grace is? The Scottish Divine John Brown helps us to see grace’s greatness in these words, “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 outgate (outcome); for as long as grace predomineth (and that will be until glory take the empire) all will run in the channel of grace; and though now sense (which is oft 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, as ordering, tempering, timing, shortening, or continuing, of all the sad and dismal days and seasons that have passed over their own head, 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 with.”

We are to look at life, all of life, through the lenses of grace. Not just grace to live but grace to see ourselves as God sees us. The Apostle Paul in his familiar words of God’s sufficient grace knew that it wasn’t just grace to live. It was grace to be AND live – “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” (**1 CORINTHIANS 15:10**). May the Lord help us to be lost in amazement of not only His unspeakable love, but of His overwhelming grace.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me to see You as the God of all grace, all the time.”

**QUOTE: JOHN BROWN,** “O what a fool have I been, in quarrelling at, and in not being fully satisfied with all that grace was doing with me.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**PSALM 42:7-8** - Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and you waves have gone over me. By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: SMOOTHING THE ROUGH EDGES.** On occasions, my wife and I pull away from everything, head to the ocean for a time of watching the water and sharing our hearts. On a quick promotional note for you guys out there who, like me, get way too busy with stuff, self and forget this passage, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (**EPHESIANS 5:25**), let me encourage you to start dropping some stuff that might seem big time important and pull away for an hour or so for undivided time with your wife. And make it time for "heart to heart" dialogue. And make it a regular habit. I would say even weekly. Some "indispensable" things can be shelved for something like this that is really "indispensable." As you do so, talk about life, talk about individual spiritual struggles and achievements, read the Word together, pray from the heart not a routine . . . make it a time to get closer to the Lord Jesus Christ together and one another. For you guys already there, keep it up and help us who want to get there, get there! Enough on "guys only" promotional.

The scene was both beautiful and instructive. Wave after wave came crashing to the shore. Their beautiful snow white appearance gripped the eye but their beauty did not hide their power. Whitecap after whitecap came ashore exploding on the rock shoreline with force and reaching heights far more than when they had slowly rolled in from the ocean. These tranquil waves, seen from afar as they made their approach to shore, quickly revealed not tranquility but power. The "victims" were the rocks receiving direct blows from their force. Wave after wave, blow after blow, these rocks had been and were being shaped by the force upon them. It was easy to see the contrast between the rocks right on the shoreline getting the full force of the waves and those just outside of reach. The ones being "worked on" by these breakers appeared smooth to the touch, not jagged or sharp. They also had a "clean appearance" whereas those ones back from the shoreline were jagged, sharp, dirty, and unappealing.

Think about us for a moment and David in today's reference. Picture us as a bunch of rocks. Does an observing world see us as "away from the shore line" and not being shaped by the waves or breakers of God's Spirit chastising and forming us? Does an observing world, in our homes and outside, see a progressing image in us not marked by "jagged edges of impatience and anger", or "sharp points of an unkind tongue" or "a dirty heart tainted by worldly priorities and desires"? Or do they see us being "worn down and weaned away" (**PSALM 131:2**) from such fleshly traits by the loving and consistent work of God's "breakers" upon our hearts? David said, "All your breakers and your waves have come gone over me" and it was done in steadfast love. God wants to "wear down" the rough areas of our life in order to produce the "smooth areas" that are attractive. Like the character of His Son (**MATTHEW 11:28-30**). Like in the Fruit of His Spirit (**GALATIANS 5:22-23**). And to do that, He sends His breakers. If you want to see a living illustration, take a little time, go to a place where the ocean meets a rock shoreline, take a seat, even close enough to feel the mist, and observe the works of the waves. After all, they are God's, as are the rocks. Remember all the lessons Jesus taught from nature? See the Sermon on the Mount (**MATTHEW 6:25-34**). As you sit there and observe the wearing down of those literal rocks by God's breakers, ask Him to show you where His breakers need to do a work on you. He will show you and He will love you enough to keep sending wave after wave into your life to smooth out all those rough edges.

**PRAYER:** "Lord, help me to submit to 'your breakers' as they smooth out the 'rough edges' in my life."

**QUOTE:** "Christ's beauty shines only from the believer who has the rough edges of self smoothed out."

**The QBC Daily Nugget**  
**April 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)

**PROVERBS 24:16a** - For the righteous falls seven times and rises again.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: KEEP GETTING UP.** Ask any honest, fighting the good fight of faith Christian what they can do, in and of themselves, when it comes to obeying any of God's commands and especially this one, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (**MATTHEW 22:37**), and the answer will be, “Nothing. I can do absolutely nothing.” That might be a sign of true humility as we remember the words of our Lord, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (**JOHN 15:5**). Or the words, “Nothing. I can do absolutely nothing” might come forth from a discouraged saint struggling with areas of sin that just seem to cling to them like smoke from a campfire on a jacket or shirt. Their cry of “Nothing. I can do absolutely nothing” might really be a false humility and simply a raising of the white flag of surrender in the daily and excruciating spiritual conflict we are called to engage. It might just be a spirit of resignation of not wanting to fight anymore. We do admit the Christian life isn't for the faint of heart. At times, we just feel so beaten down in the spiritual war, we just want to quit. However, it cannot be. A believer recently talked to me and said, “I just want to give up. I feel so defeated. God seems so distant, but “something” inside of me just won't let me.” Well, that “something” is really a “Someone” and has to do with the glorious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. The true believer, though often beaten and battered by sin, the world and the devil, cannot give up. The Spirit of God won't allow such a complete apostasy.

In today's reference, we get much encouragement to get up when we get knocked down. It is a sure thing we are going to fall when it comes to our walk with the Lord. That isn't a license to go out and sin that grace may abound. Paul makes that quite clear – “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (**ROMANS 6:1-2**). If sinning is easy, not hated, and an habitual and tolerated lifestyle, I urge you to read **1 JOHN**, the entire epistle, over and over, asking God to show you the incompatibility of such a lifestyle with being His child. However, failure is reality in the Christian life and it is one of the mysterious ways God uses to wean us from sin and move us into more vigorous pursuits of holiness. And be very careful that we don't build our theology of God out of our failures instead of out of His character. I know the ease of looking at me first, which is never good and often discouraging, instead of looking at God first, which is always good and encouraging. Jerry Bridges said, “Deep down in our souls we must get hold of the wonderful truth that our spiritual failures do not affect God's love for us one tenth – that His love for us does not fluctuate according to our experience.” The evidence we are getting that wonderful truth is how quickly we get up after falling.

There is a great Biblical example of a man who practiced today's reference. His name is Micah. He is becoming a dear friend of mine and you go through the ups and downs of your obedience, let him become your friend and example also - “But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication.” (**MICAH 7:7-9**).

**PRAYER:** “Lord, help me believe in my head AND heart that everything really does work for my good.”

**QUOTE:** “One clear mark of being a true disciple of Christ is we don't stay down when we fall.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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 PETER 1:6-7** – In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it be tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **WHEN TRIALS COME.** I love the music in our church. God has given us great worship leadership and provided dear brothers and sisters in the body who sing and play for His glory and our edification. I think one of the most significant things we have done is to incorporate many modern hymns from the gifted writers Stuart Townend and Keith Getty. They are impacting good churches across the land with excellent music. The hymns written are both theologically sound and singable. Anyway, I have exhausted my vast knowledge of music so time to move on . . . but I need to tie it into our nugget for the day. One song written by Keith Getty which we have sung is entitled, “When Trials Come” and a verse goes like this, “When I am weary with the cost, I see the triumph of the cross, so in it’s shadow I shall run, till He completes the work begun, till He completes the work begun.”

Ever grow weary with the cost of following Jesus? Ever feel like the Galatians which prompted Paul to write, “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” (**GALATIANS 6:9**)? Why did he say “not grow weary” unless some of them and some of us, felt or feel the weariness of daily taking up our cross (**MATTHEW 16:24**)? Reality challenges our commitment to Christ. Weariness happens and happens often due to what Peter says are “various trials” (**I PETER 1:6**). Now no reason to pry into the specific trials we face. Peter doesn’t. He says non-specifically “various” and for each of us, we know those areas prone to temptations, prone to testing, prone to make us grow weary as we fight with the flesh, the devil, and the world (**EPHESIANS 6:12**). Scriptures teach us we share a common foe and do have common temptations (**I CORINTHIANS 10:13**). I am glad we share these commonalities for then we enter battle together, but also in the secret recesses of our own hearts each of us have those “tough spots” only known by the Lord and ourselves. Nobody allowed in there.

From today’s references, Peter guides us on how to view trials when they come. Let’s take away some truths to direct our spiritual eyesight. First, view trials as we view the changing seasons – only temporary (for a little while – **I PETER 1:6a**). There is great comfort in knowing our trials last only as long as deemed necessary by our loving Father. They have a purpose. They have a start time and an end time. Another viewpoint to adopt when trials come – see the need for them (if necessary – **I PETER 1: 6b**). Yes, they are necessary. I like what John Blanchard said, “the trials of life are meant to make us better not bitter.” Without some Divine “rubbing with the polish of grace”, we lack shine. Also, view trials to validate our faith – “so that the genuineness of your faith, be tested by fire” (**I PETER 1:7a**). I read somewhere that an untried faith is an untrue faith. That’s worthy of chewing for a moment or two! A final direction for our spiritual eyes to focus upon in trials – keep gazing toward the goal – “result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (**I PETER 1:7b**). Trials are about Him not us. If we could look into the spiritual realm, we would see a battle of mammoth proportion between Satan and God. See **JOB 1 and 2**. As we respond properly to trials and grow from them, our foe stands defeated and silenced. The Lord’s sustaining grace stares down the enemy of our souls and brings forth glorious victory for His sake! What a joy to know that as we pass grievous trials through enabling grace, we stand as God’s trophies, on display, not because of our goodness or perseverance, but because of the Captain of our Salvation (**HEBREWS 2:10**)!

PRAYER: “Lord, help me in my trials to not only endure, but to flourish to the praise of Your grace.”

QUOTE: ROBERT LEIGHTON, “Adversity is the diamond dust heaven polishes its jewels with.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**HEBREWS 6:18-19** - So that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE ANCHOR HOLDS.** The nautical theme sets the stage for a brief sea story from my other life. During a Mediterranean deployment while anchored in the very busy port of Alexandria, Egypt, my ship experienced a scary time when our anchor DID NOT hold. “Dropping the hook” which is slang for letting go the anchor is supposed to set a ship on solid ground to become stable and unmovable. Most of the time, this is true. Not this time. She (my ship) and yes, Navy ships are called “she”, drifted and came dangerously close to hitting another anchored vessel. Not good for foreign relations or upkeep on the ship. The point from this drawn out little story is simply this – the anchor didn’t hold because it was at the mercy of a disagreeable harbor bottom. Our anchor, though heavy, was really powerless. It relied on something outside of itself.

Our spiritual anchor mentioned in **HEBREWS 6:18-19** does not depend on the type of bottom it sets itself – “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain” (**HEBREWS 6:19a**). This anchor has staying power all its own regardless of the “bottom” it lands upon. And really, if we think about it, all of us must “bottom out”, over our sin before we seek the anchor, Christ Jesus. It doesn’t matter what the “bottom” of our heart looks like when we do “bottom out” which actually means to come to the end of ourselves and our inability to reconcile with God. It could be the “bottom” of a very debauched life lived in gross sin. It could be the “bottom” of a religious life, even external conformity to Christian ethics, yet still in need of the spiritual anchor. Or it could be the “bottom” of a morally upright life shielded from the base sins of our culture, but like the first two “bottoms”, the spiritual anchor still must be cast into the heart of the moral bottom too. It has been said, “the ground is equal at the foot of the cross” and that is so true! No matter what “bottom” we are, the anchor of Christ Jesus is the only answer to stabilize us in the treacherous oceans of this life and secure us for the next life. And this anchor holds no matter the type of bottom! The writer gives us two characteristics of our spiritual anchor. Take a look at verse 19. He calls it “sure and steadfast” and with the use of the word “this” he takes us back into verse 18 to what the anchor truly is – “the hope set before us” (**HEBREWS 6:18c**). For the person who has “bottomed out” with a consciousness of being without hope (**EPHESIANS 2:11-12**) and sees this anchor of hope, Christ Jesus, there is a fleeing and holding fast to Him (**HEBREWS 6:18b**). But just consider for a moment the double staying power making our spiritual anchor hold. It’s described as being “sure and steadfast”, but we must look beyond the description of the anchor to the ability of the anchor. I firmly believed our anchor on my ship would hold in the harbor of Alexandria, Egypt. I thought it was “sure and steadfast.” My faith was not warranted for the anchor had no staying power in and of itself. Not so with our soul anchor. Go back to the beginning of verse 18 and there we discover one source of the staying power of the anchor – it is impossible for God to lie (**HEBREWS 6:19**). Go ahead and shout amen! Not only do we have the anchor of hope, the Lord Jesus who never wavers (**HEBREWS 13:8**) which is the second source of this anchor’s staying power, we also have our heavenly Father who gave us the anchor and is incapable of lying to us! Again, go ahead and shout amen! Maybe pause and sing a song of praise to the Father who cannot lie and promised this sure anchor of our soul. And no matter what type of “bottom” we are, His anchor, the Lord Jesus, will hold for those who have taken refuge in Him!

**PRAYER:** “Father, I praise You for my sure and steady anchor found in Your Son and my Savior.”

**QUOTE:** A. BONAR, “If the Father has the kingdom ready for us, He will take care of us on the way.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**JOHN 16:13a** – When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: NO SCHOOL VACATION.** The weather points to it. Final exams surely point to it. The excitement of young people absolutely confirms it. School vacation is within the grasp of students and their valiant, but exhausted educators. But there exists at least one school I know where classes never cease. No school vacation for this school. It is called the Christian life. Paul gives us a feel about the Christian life being a school in his letter to the Ephesians, “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” (**EPHESIANS 4:20-21**). We know, too, Jesus was called teacher on quite a few occasions. Here is one – “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me” (**MATTHEW 11:29a**).

In both Jesus’ and Paul’s words we see educational terms. The Christian life may be portrayed as a schoolhouse experience as we follow the Great Teacher and learn at His feet (**LUKE 10:38-42**). Let’s assume we receive a task to create the curriculum of the school known as the Christian life. Where to start? Salvation in Christ without question. One must be in the school to take the classes. Then likely we would identify the spiritual disciplines of prayer, worship, fellowship, and church attendance. Good stuff. We would continue to add more things to the curriculum, but let’s take a break and a visit. Go back about 356 years. A godly pastor named Thomas Brooks knows about the Christian life. He has done battle with the evil one. A tested saint who in true pastoral care for his people wrote a book entitled, “Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices”. It details the tactics of the devil and how to fight them scripturally (**EPHESIANS 6:10-18**). Pastor Brooks wrote, “Christ, the Scripture, your own hearts, and Satan’s devices, are the four prime things that should be first and most studied and searched.”

Now put that beside the curriculum we generated for the school known as The Christian Life. There is a good possibility our curriculum might differ. We may deal more with what we DO in the Christian life instead of the first and most important thing which is what we KNOW in the Christian life. Consider again the specific curriculum Mr. Brooks outlined. The call to class is to four subjects, not four activities; our Lord Jesus, the Bible, our hearts, and the ways of Satan. When I read Brooks’ book, frankly I felt I was in foreign territory. Why? Much of the Christian life for me focused on activities or doing stuff. Some of you may be in my camp. Knowing the Lord Jesus, our Bible, our hearts, and the ways of Satan are knowledge-based subjects not activity-based efforts. Such spiritual knowledge only gets obtained through the Spirit teaching us by the discipline of reading, study, and listening to sound preaching. We must fight with great vigor not to measure our spirituality by the width of our “spiritual” activities or even faithfulness to them. Our spirituality will show forth in three directions. First inwardly through acquired knowledge of the four subjects Brooks writes of, then upwardly in Biblically-formed prayer from such knowledge, and finally outwardly in Christian living based on the knowledge of Christ, the scriptures, the deceitfulness of our hearts, and the many tactics of Satan. We may be in the school (in Christ in a saving way), but not signed up for all the necessary classes He would have us to take. Take a look at your class schedule as I do mine. I wonder if my chair is missing in the following four classes; a deeper knowledge of the Lord Jesus, a thorough knowledge of the Bible to include those books like Hosea, Amos, and even Leviticus, a greater knowledge of seeing how the heart cannot be relied upon for one second, and a discerning knowledge of our foe, the devil who prowls around like a roaring lion. As we check our class schedules, remember, no school vacation. Grace keeps the schoolhouse open all year around.

PRAYER: “Father, teach me to depend upon Your Spirit to teach me the Christ-centered life.”

QUOTE: MYRON AUGSBURGER, “You are only as spiritual as you are scriptural.”

**The QBC Daily Nugget**  
**April 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)

**ISAIAH 50:10** – Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THOSE FOGGY DAYS.** When fog forms on Narragansett Bay, the old saying, “thick as pea soup” holds very true. During my Navy days stationed on a Newport-based ship, we encountered fog with visibility so low one measured it in feet not miles. Such fog takes away the security of sight. Losing the comfort of sight on a ship traveling through fog puts that familiar “pit” in one’s stomach. We know the “pit.” We need to call it what it is – worry. It starts churning in the stomach when circumstances are out of our control. By the way, we are never in control of our circumstances anyway. God’s sovereignty ensures that truth! Another “by the way”, worry is not the cause of the “pit.” It is the fruit. The cause or tree producing the fruit is doubt. Spiritual fog exists too. Our spiritual eyes just cannot seem to focus very far. Whether an intense time of trial to develop lives of faith or God’s mysterious providence unfolding with lessons to be revealed later, every believer will sail through times of spiritual fog.

Today’s verse was a favorite of Puritan pastors helping their people navigate through testing times of spiritual fog when the fruit of worry hung heavy from the tree of doubt in their hearts. Before the application, we must get a couple things straight. When the fog settles into the soul, do not immediately think sin. However, do not neglect to search your heart. Both are essentials in spiritual fog, but to default assuming something is out of sync in your spiritual life produces more fog. The Puritan Thomas Goodwin states, “The highest acts of grace and purest fruits of it, would never see the light if it were not for this darkness.” Spiritual fog often reveals the Fruit of the Spirit like no other time (**GALATIANS 5:22-23**). Like patience and self-control waiting on the Lifter of the Fog? Now the aids to navigate through spiritual fog. Help number one - maintain a healthy fear of the Lord – who among you fears the Lord (**ISAIAH 50:10a**). Right fear respects and with respect comes submission. Foggy times may become questioning times and if persisted in, questioning circumstances will lead to questioning character. Nothing grieves our God more than to question His character. Healthy fear, even in “pea soup” spiritual fog prevents faithless questioning. A second help in spiritual fog is total abandonment to God - Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God (**ISAIAH 50:10b**). It is trust AND rely. Both focus on WHO God is not HOW He works. I am not saying separate the two, yet if we look to His ways first, fog will deepen before it clears. Why? Read **ISAIAH 55:8-9** and then come back. You will know what I mean. God does not command us to determine His ways, but to trust His ways. Spiritual fog lifts when we learn to “see” God through His Word. It is a seeing not consumed with figuring out what is going on, but submitting with trust and reliance on the God who already figured out what is going on! Navigate safely today using His aids. No fog is thick enough to render them ineffective.

**PRAYER:** “Father, we praise You for Your unchanging character. May we learn to abandon ourselves to You when the sailing is both clear AND foggy.”

**QUOTE:** JOHN STOTT, “The Christian’s chief occupational hazards are depression and discouragement.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**EPHESIANS 1:3-4** – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **GOAL SETTING.** It appears writing on goals is quite a market. My internet search for books on goals provided pages of resources. Like many pages. Like many, many, pages. I stopped at page two with over a dozen or so books on the subject. It was overwhelming to see the proliferation of worldly efforts to get a grip and direction on life by seeking temporal-based goals. I am not dismissing goals. They are good. Paul thought so, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (**PHILIPPIANS 3:14**). I am certain; however, Paul would not be running out buying the hottest book on goal-setting to hit the market. As believers, we seek foremost to establish goals which glorify God (**1 CORINTHIANS 10:31**). As relevant as the last paragraph may be, it is easy to limit our pursuit of God-glorifying goals to the tangible world. Think about it. What direction do goals normally take? Seen things. It's fair to consider most goals, even with the right desire to glorify God, seem to drift toward the seen world. Things like finances, education, family, time management are just a few. We don't discard these for we will give an account of our stewardship (**2 CORINTHIANS 5:10**), but what about goals in the unseen world, the spiritual realm? I am not referring toward the goals of more prayer, consistency in the Word, or involvement in fellowship. Those have vital places in our spiritual development. Yet in spiritual goal setting, we start not with us and our goals, but with the One who has already established goals for His children.

In today's scripture, Paul's opening remarks to the Ephesians reveal three goals God established for us. Their target is our hearts. God's goals are internal pointed toward heart transformation, which ALWAYS leads to life transformation. Let us identify them. Goal number one – “that we should be holy” (**EPHESIANS 1:4**). In simplest terms to be holy is to be separated to and for God. Does our daily living reflect a life distinctively and observably different from the masses around us? Holiness produces contrast. Goal number two – “and without blame” (**EPHESIANS 1:4**). Being without blame does not mean perfect or mistake-free. Good thing for us. It means faultless. In the course of our day, would the unbelieving world be able to see our conduct and hear our speech then walk away with a credible complaint of us being with fault or blame? Tough goal. To live among unbelievers in such a manner where they may find no fault in us requires a grace-filled, grace-dependent life. Constantly. Goal three - before Him in love (**EPHESIANS 1:4**). The goal of salvation and ultimately glorification is to enjoy God and glorify Him forever in the bonds of eternal love. Since that is what will be our experience through eternity, what is the preparation now for such an eternal existence? Pursuing His established goals in this life. Start today, right now, seeking His goals not our own; a life of purity, a life above reproach, and a life in love. No need to search for a book on writing or establishing goals. We already have it and **EPHESIANS 1:4** is a great goal-revealing passage in which to direct our lives.

PRAYER: “Father, grant us grace to see Your established goals for us and to pursue them in the strength of Your grace.”

QUOTE: CHARLES HUMMEL, “The challenge is to manage ourselves under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, from whom we get our goals and values.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**MATTHEW 14:25-27** - And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **GETTING JESUS RIGHT.** Have you ever been, say at a shopping mall or maybe an airport observing a person at some distance and thought, “That looks like . . . .” or waiting on someone and at a distance see a person and say, “I see . . . .” and proceed to assume a correct identity only to be wrong? The characteristics we observe of someone at a distance do not guarantee the proper identity. It takes upfront personal disclosure.

In today’s nugget, the disciples suffered from a mistaken identity. In the dark of night, battling heavy seas and strong winds, a Figure approaches their boat. Asleep and dreaming is one thing. Admittedly, dreams may be bizarre. The disciples were doing neither. Wide-awake, toiling with all their might against elements beyond control, they look over choppy seas and see Someone. I am with the disciples – they were terrified, they cried out in fear (**MATTHEW 14:26**). Fighting to keep from being tossed into the raging seas, they see Someone above the raging seas! And not only above, but coming to them! Did you notice their quick assessment of identify of this fast approaching Figure? Collectively they cried out, “It is a ghost” (**MATTHEW 14:26**). The disciples really got it wrong about Who approached their boat. That is obvious, but a few things to take away from their traumatic experience are worth taking note of and applying.

First was their awareness of the spiritual realm. How “in tune” are we in the day-to-day to the spiritual world? We read our Bibles and pray, but are we keenly aware of what is happening in the unseen world? Read **EPHESIANS 6:10-12**. Are we aware of the close-in combat with foes of a spiritual nature on a constant and personal level? The disciples, though missing the identity of Jesus, responded with spiritual awareness. We must not compartmentalize life. We are spiritual beings in spiritual conflict. A second thing we may see from the disciples actually comes from Jesus – only His self-disclosure shows His true identity, “But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I” (**MATTHEW 14:27**). There exists a significant and eternal consequence between knowing ABOUT Jesus and knowing Jesus. The Puritan John Flavel wrote, “Many there be that content themselves with an unpractical, ineffectual, and merely notional knowledge of Him.” Paul’s own testimony cries out with passionate force, “that I might know Him” (**PHILIPPIANS 3:10a**) not about Him. And to get there begins with knowing we cannot get there. As it took Jesus to give His true identity to the disciples calming their fears and correcting their mistake on that stormy night, we need help too. The Spirit of God must give us Jesus’ true identity. Our pursuit of knowing His true identity begins with prayer, “Lord, allow me the privilege to know You as You really are and not what my own flawed understanding may think You are!” When God’s Spirit shows the humble and hungry heart the unseen Christ, there will be no mistaken identity. Instead we will hear, “It is I, do not be afraid.”

PRAYER: “Lord Jesus, may You be pleased to grant us a greater awareness of who You truly are and not who we make think You are.”

QUOTE: PAUL TOUMIER, “Our task is to live our personal communion with Christ with such intensity as to make it contagious.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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 26:34-35, 75** – Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” And all the disciples said the same. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A VERY GOOD TEACHER.** John Bunyan’s book *PILGRIM’S PROGRESS* depicts the life which Bunyan lived and, at the same time, the life in which all Christians see themselves. Charles Spurgeon read it a hundred times and though few of us own the rare capacities for reading and retaining as the prince of preachers, Bunyan’s book ought to be read by every Christian. Do not let the “old” language scare you away. Modern editions of the book are available. Whether read individually or as a great tool for family reading, *PILGRIM’S PROGRESS*, apart from the Bible, offers unparalleled insight to the Christian life. Throughout the book, Christian encounters numerous “bumps in the road” in his journey to heaven. One particular time of great trial was his descending into the Valley of Humiliation. Let me “modernize” the language after we quote directly from Bunyan, “for it is a hard matter for a man to go down into the Valley of Humiliation, as thou art now, and to catch no slip by the Way. So he began to go down, but very warily; yet he caught a slip or two.” Now the loose Jim paraphrase, “the path toward humility in the Christian must include ‘a slip or two’ or failures.” We shun from it, but the truth of the matter affirms it. Failure is a surgical strike on our pride and though painful, proves a very effective teacher of the Christian life.

We are familiar with Peter’s failure when he denied the Lord. Familiarity does not mean we ignore. In fact, familiar accounts of scripture should receive more detailed study to avoid hanging in the unused closet of “We already know that” type of thinking. In Peter’s failure, we see ourselves. First is the setting ourselves up for failure. The Lord of all time TOLD Peter in advance he would fail and the blindness of pride boldly and arrogantly says, “No, Lord. I do not think You really understand me. I am committed to You and nothing will ever make me waver.” Ripe for failure occurs when words like “I would never” or when flesh makes a spiritual commitment. Get ready, if our heart goes there the teacher failure is about to enter the room of our lives. Another truth from Peter is the lesson failure teaches us is not vague. Look at the beginning of **MATTHEW 26:75** – “And Peter remembered.” When pride causes us to fail, and it always will, the Spirit of God does not convict vaguely. The lesson of failure is specific. It is designed to build us up in Christ not leave us in a daze of remorse for failing. Peter remembered EXACTLY where he failed and when the lesson took hold, he was never the same. A final lesson taught from the teacher failure is this - failure lets us see ourselves and the need for God’s grace like never before. Pride and self sufficiency are poor eyeglasses. They interpret things our way instead of God’s way. Failure removes those glasses enabling us to wear the unbiased and impartial glasses of grace. How do we get those glasses? By entering the Valley of Humiliation through humbling failure. And what did Peter say about being humble? “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (**I PETER 5:5**). Do you find it interesting that the man who met the teacher called failure in the Valley of Humiliation penned those very words?

**PRAYER:** “Lord, Peter needed the teacher failure to see his dependency on grace. Help us to learn as he did when this teacher enters into our lives.”

**QUOTE:** D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “It is very difficult to be humble if you are always successful, so God chastises us with failure at times in order to humble us, to keep us in a state of humility.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 29, 2010

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**QUOTE:** D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “It is very difficult to be humble if you are always successful, so God chastises us with failure at times in order to humble us, to keep us in a state of humility.”

## The QBC Daily Nugget April 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)

**MATTHEW 27:11-14** – Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.” But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?” But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **SILENCE IS GOLDEN.** Verbal restraint. Ever find it hard? Just chomping at the bits to say something? Knee deep in a “lively” discussion giving the “appearance” of listening, yet really waiting for the other party to stop for air so we may jump in with our opinion? No tension among the parties, we just have to get some “word time” in the dialogue. It may appear easy to control the tongue in the cozy confines of friendliness, but not really. James says, “No human being can tame the tongue” (**JAMES 3:8**). Did you catch what James did not say? A “when” element is missing implying at no time can a human tame the tongue. Admittedly, it may seem we have more control in comfortable settings, but the operative words are “it may seem.” According to James, we do not.

We need three “grace empowerments” for controlling the tongue whether in tame or threatening environments - know what to say, know when to say it, and know when silence is golden. Solomon warns of the ugly exposure when verbal restraint is ignored - “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise” (**PROVERBS 10:19**). The need for verbal restraint would not exist under two conditions. First, the population of the planet is one. Hard to “argue” or say too much when the audience is self. A second condition is being free from people conflict. Do not bank on that condition happening! When in conflict, verbal defense wants to ride in like the cavalry to save the day. Our feathers may get a little ruffled and we feel the need to respond defensively when we are being verbally abused.

Jesus teaches us an important lesson today about the power of silence. The deliverance of our Lord to Pontius Pilate continues the true-life drama of unjust and humiliating treatment of Him by sinful beings. Before we move into the scene, two questions. How would we feel if treated like our Lord? No need for me to write an answer for us. We know. The second question is based on the first - how do we want to respond to such verbal insensitivity? I know both my feeling and response when the unbridled tongue of another comes my way. I confess. My response may not always model what the Lord Jesus did before Pontius Pilate. If time permits, take five minutes and just read repeatedly **MATTHEW 27:12**. Allow the response of Jesus to hurtful words take ownership of our souls – “He gave no answer.” No defense. No volley of hurtful accusations back. Not a word. Do we think the One standing before the very people He created in His image did not feel the sting in hurtful and untruthful words? Divine love covers a multitude of sins (**1 PETER 4:8**) and that includes sins of the tongue. Twice we read Jesus’ response, “He gave no answer”. It is inevitable. We will both give and receive painful words. A sinful world means sinful words. Our response must be with grace empowerments - “knowing what to say”, “knowing when to say it,” and probably most important, knowing the old adage, “silence is golden.”

PRAYER: “Father, help us to reflect Jesus both in gracious speech and verbal restraint.”

QUOTE: JOHN CALVIN, “There is nothing more slippery or loose than the tongue.”