

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)



June 2010 Archive



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The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

PROVERBS 23:7 – For as he thinks in his heart, so is he; Eat and drink, he says to you, but his heart is not with you.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: HOW ARE WE THINKING? Stop right now. What are you thinking about? Are you a “single focus” type of thinker where one thing just clings to you like bark on a tree? Perhaps you are a “multi-task” type of thinker who can juggle many things at once in your mind. All of us fluctuate between the two types, but regardless, God made our mind with amazing capacities. Imagine the intellectual power Adam had – “And out of the ground Jehovah God formed every animal of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. And Adam gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field. But there was not found a suitable helper for Adam” (**GENESIS 2:19-20a**). Picture the scene. Here comes this four-footed beast walking by Adam with black and white stripes. Adam ponders for a split second and says, “You are a zebra.” The next thing that comes hopping up to the feet of Adam gets labeled “rabbit”. And what about the hippo? Or alligator? Various types of birds? That would have been quite a scene to see Adam’s magnificent mind at work. But something happened to the mind. It went from perfectly magnificent to totally debased. Read **GENESIS 3** and when we do, don’t reduce sin to just something that Adam and Eve did. Yes, it was an act but think through the ramifications. Let them sink deep into our thinking. Everything about our first parents and us became totally depraved. Nothing good existed in God’s prize creation. No good actions, “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one” (**ROMANS 3:10-12**) and no good thoughts, “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (**GENESIS 6:5**). If we are ever tempted to think we aren’t that bad because our actions may not be in the gross sin category, just evaluate our thinking patterns. That will convince us of the exceeding sinfulness of sin (**ROMANS 7:13**).

The battle in the Christian life doesn’t begin with what we do or don’t do. It begins in how we think and what we think upon. And there is no neutrality in this battle. The Bible says a lot about our thinking. Right after the gospels and book of Acts, the very first letter points us to mind renewal. As the Apostle Paul builds to application in his theological mountain called the epistle to the Romans, he starts in chapter twelve, not with a “to do list” but with the mind, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (**ROMANS 12:1-2**). Think right, then live right. Get the thoughts right and the life will follow and one of our biggest challenges and deficiencies in our modern Christian culture is the development and maintenance of a Biblical mind.

A godly pastor of the 19th century named James Smith wrote this concerning our thoughts, “Do we pay sufficient attention to our thoughts? Every thought has a character, it is either good or bad; every thought produces an effect, it either sanctifies or depraves. Sin begins in thought; holiness begins in thought; misery begins in thought; happiness begins in thought.” This is good counsel to heed as we seek to use the wonderful mind God has given us for His glory and purposes.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to renew my mind so that I might practice the mind of Christ.”

QUOTE: JAMES SMITH, “Let’s get our minds well stored with God’s thoughts.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

1 JOHN 1:1-3 – That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE CONTROLLING FACTOR. We know the little chorus – “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so; little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.” And it isn’t just for Sunday school children. Even as adults we probably find ourselves, on occasion, humming or singing it to ourselves when times are rough and dark clouds of trying circumstances form on the horizon of our lives. The whole message of the Bible is contained in this wonderful little song – God is love (**1 JOHN 4:8**) and it is this truth which continues to change hearts and fixes lives all around the world.

C. H. Spurgeon was talking to a farmer who had on his barn a weather vane on the arrow of which was inscribed, “God is love.” He said to the farmer: “What do you mean by that? Do you think God’s love is changeable – that it veers about as the arrow turns in the wind?” The farmer answered, “Oh, no! I mean that whichever way the wind blows, God is still love.” As Bible-believing Christians, we quickly acknowledge the words of the farmer affirming the words of the Apostle John – “God is love.” However, we need to be very careful when the word “quickly” creeps into our Christian experience. It easily causes us to “gloss over” without much thought or meditation a staggering truth. And there is no place we are more prone to “quickly pass over” than the truth that God is love. How do we know if that is the case? I don’t think it is difficult to reveal the ease we take for granted, presume upon, or fail to ponder deeply the love of God in our lives. We can really see the depth of our hearts’ understanding of His love when it comes to one area in our lives – what controls us? Are we controlled by circumstances, schedules, emotions, responsibilities, fleshly passions, worldly ease or maybe something else I haven’t listed?

The greatest Christian who ever lived, the Apostle Paul, revealed to the Corinthian church what controlled his life. It wasn’t his giftedness or strength of personality. Look how he described himself – “And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (**1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5**). Nor was he controlled by tough circumstances – “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (**2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-9**). The only thing that sustained him and will sustain us in the daily demands and enjoyment of the Christian life is the love of Christ – “For the love of Christ controls us” (**2 CORINTHIANS 5:14a**). His love provides the motive to serve, the deterrent to sin, and the strength to persevere. And the only way to be controlled by Christ’s love is to know Christ’s love. This is only obtained by obeying today’s reference – seeking an unhurried fellowship with Him who is love and has promised to reveal His love to the hungry soul (**JOHN 14:21**).

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to believe and rest in Your love that I might be controlled by Your love.”

QUOTE: JOEL BEEKE, “He forsook the unforsakable to love the unlovable.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

REVELATION 12:10 – And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: LIVING IN TWO WORLDS. How much of our Christian life is lived in conflict? To be more specific, how much of YOUR Christian life is lived in conflict? No, not the conflict with other believers who might differ a little in some points in areas like worship or other non-essentials of the faith. Nor the conflict with say a difficult co-worker, neighbor, or associate. And I am not talking about the conflict that might exist in families where a slightly rebellious child wants to spread those wings of independence and challenge the boundaries we have established. The conflict I am referring to is the conflict the genuine believer faces by living in two worlds. Two worlds? Yes. Two worlds. We live in two worlds and if we fail to understand this, we ensure spiritual defeat as a way of life.

In Paul’s letter to the Colossians, he reveals one of these worlds in which the believer lives - “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (**COLOSSIANS 3:1-4**). There is clearly an invisible world, grasped by faith, where the Christian mind and life is to be primarily occupied.

However, that doesn’t mean we sit in a field gazing at the clouds above because we do live in another world – this world, this natural world. A. W. Pink wrote, “We must remember that the Christian belongs to the spiritual realm as well as the natural.” For the Christian in this natural world, it is one of conflict, not comfort. In the letter to the church located in Laodicea, we remember the Lord’s condemnation of them. They were lukewarm. That sends shivers in the heart of the healthy Christian knowing just how easy it is for us to go from fervent first love (**EPHESIANS 6:24**) to a Christianity where everything is right on the outside but sick on the inside (**REVELATION 2:1-7**). But something else occurs in the Lord’s assessment and condemnation of the Laodicean church. They thought they were alright – “For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” (**REVELATION 3:17**). The danger of self-deception is always present for us (**JAMES 1:22**). One form of self-deception spiritually is to forget we live in two worlds where the existence in this world is one wrought with constant spiritual conflict. Again from the pen of A. W. Pink concerning the terribleness of the conflict before us, “It is no imaginary one, and no ordinary foes we have to meet; but spiritual, superhuman, invisible ones. Those enemies seek to destroy faith and produce doubt. They seek to destroy hope and produce despair. They seek to destroy humility and produce pride. They seek to destroy peace and produce bitterness and malice. They seek to prevent our enjoyment of heavenly things. Their attack is not upon the body, but upon the soul.”

Living in two worlds is the mindset of the believer in Jesus Christ. Without understanding our position in the other world, the heavenly realm, we will never grasp the proper way to live in the natural world. The other world is the place of perfect rest. This world is one of constant conflict. Let’s arm ourselves for the fight placed before us by the Captain of our salvation.

PRAYER: “Lord, forgive me when I forget I live in two realms and the most important is the invisible one.”

QUOTE: “The intensity of our conflict now will make the tranquility of heaven’s rest much sweeter.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

ISAIAH 49:16a – Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: HIS HANDS. Look at your hands. Consider how we use them. As we think on our hands, remember these words of David, “I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well” (**PSALM 139:14**). There is another set of hands we need to ponder - “Eight days later, His disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then He said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.’” As we consider those precious hands of Jesus, bearing the marks of His death for us, read today’s reference, see what is in those nail-pierced hands and marvel.

When I think about hands, three things come to mind – affection, assistance, and restraint. Let’s make some personal application of these three functions found in hands as they apply to our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. I recently observed an elderly couple walking on a wooded path holding hands. Their holding of hands sent a loud message of affection. There was a look of mutual submission as they led each other down the path they were walking. God’s hands of affection lead us too! No, we don’t feel a big hand reaching down from heaven, but He gives us “affectionate hands” in the form of other believers who come alongside in times of need and sorrow when we need an affectionate hand. It was so for the Israelites. God sent the “affectionate hands” of Moses and Aaron to guide and care for them as His flock – “You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (**PSALM 77:20**).

A second function found in hands is assistance. Assisting hands come around when we are into some task or work and need help. It could be something as simple as holding a door open or carrying a mountain of laundry up from the laundry room. They also should appear in the lives of our brothers and sisters when we are going through periods of dark providence and spiritual valleys – “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up” (**ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10**). The helping hand of a fellow believer in time of great need is like a cool drink on a hot summer day. It refreshes.

A third function we observe in hands is that of restraint. Ever hold back your child from something dangerous? A tight grip? For sure. What is the most dangerous thing to us as human beings? Sin. And that is not just for unbelievers. Believers sin and sadly, at times, sin willfully, but have we considered that even in our fight and sometimes losing fight against sin, the Lord’s hand upholds us to keep us from utter ruin? He maintains a tight grip of restraint. I think one of the marvels in heaven will be to review how often the Lord prevented us from sinning against Him (**GENESIS 20:6**). Allow this truth from David to encourage our souls if we have blown it again when it comes to the fight against sin – “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**). The Lord’s hand of restraint prevents us from being totally undone in our rebellion. What grace!

As we go through the day periodically think about Jesus’ nail-pierced hands. They are hands of affection, assistance, and restraint. Someday, like Thomas, we will see them unto the praise of His glorious grace.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to walk hand in hand with You each moment of the day.”

QUOTE: “Always trust in the affectionate, assisting and restraining hands of Him who is our all in all.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

JEREMIAH 31:3 – I have loved you with an everlasting love.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE**. If I were to ask you this question, how would you respond – “Is anything impossible for God to do?” There would be some things we might discuss in the answers to that question. It is impossible for God to have evil dwell in His presence or for Him to look upon wrong – “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon wrong” (**HABAKKUK 1:13a**). This impossibility of God reveals His holiness and forces us to see the necessity of our redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ. Another thing we would agree upon that is impossible for God to do is to deny Himself. Paul makes this crystal clear in a letter to his spiritual son Timothy – “For faithful is the Word, for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we do not believe Him, yet He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself” (**2 TIMOTHY 2:11-13**). This truth so encourages the heart when we are honest with ourselves and see our daily failings and faithlessness. To know our faithlessness does not void God’s faithfulness keeps us keeping on in the fight of faith. Still yet another reassuring truth about God and the things He cannot do is found in the letter to Titus – “Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God’s elect, in the acknowledging of the truth which is according to godliness on hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the eternal times, but revealed His Word in its own times in a proclamation, with which I was entrusted by the command of God our Savior” (**TITUS 1:1-3**). Aren’t we so grateful that God cannot lie? His promises, unlike ours, are unalterable. He will be true, always, to His Word.

As good as those truths are, they get challenged by us when life gets a little tough. When circumstances seem overwhelming, trials paralyzing, and temptations raging, we might find ourselves questioning whether we are being dealt with in love. There are trials of faith that must occur where our sense of God’s love must be removed so we rest exclusively on His unchangeable nature of love. How we respond in those times says much about our growth in grace, but we must never lose sight that even in hard trials, it is impossible for God to alter His dealings with us outside of His nature which is light and love. An unknown author wrote these encouraging words under the title, “What Omnipotence Cannot Do”. He wrote, “Omnipotence may build a thousand worlds and fill them with bounties. Omnipotence may powder mountains into dust and burn the sea and consume the sky. But omnipotence cannot do an unloving thing toward a believer. Oh, rest quite sure, Christian, a hard thing, an unloving thing from God toward one of His own people is quite impossible. He is as kind to you when He casts you into prison as when He takes you into a palace. He is as good when He sends famine into your house as when He fills your barns with plenty. The only question is, ‘Are you His child?’ If so, He has rebuked you in affection, and there is love in His chastisement.”

The path to heaven is not paved on a highway of spiritual ease and clarity. It is traveled on a winding road filled with sharp curves beyond our understanding, but it is traveled under the guidance of the omnipotent God who deals with us always in love. He cannot do otherwise. It is an absolute impossibility. Rest in this truth when what we see tempts us to believe to the contrary.

PRAYER: “Lord, allow me to rest in the impossibility of You ever changing in Your love for me.”

QUOTE: “Our changeableness never alters God’s unchangeableness in His loving dealings with us.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

HEBREWS 2:1-3 - Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and if every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those who heard Him?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED. I must confess I fight the tendency to take things for granted. I don't boast in that fact, but the stark reality is that it is really easy to take things for granted. Things like the freedoms of where I live, a good family, daily provisions and protection, people who love and care for me . . . a lot of things. And it even comes into the realm of spiritual blessings – the Bible, prayer, a good church, and yes, even God's salvation. Is my struggle one in which I might wear a mask, ride a horse and be called, “The Lone Ranger”? I don't think so. I think our sinful nature, always bent toward selfishness and self-love, thrive and pull toward getting us to take things for granted. The struggle we each fight is really a fight to maintain a humble spirit of thanksgiving for everything which cures the disease of taking things for granted. And it is a huge struggle. If that were not so, why are we given the command to give thanks in everything and for everything – “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (**1 THESSALONIANS 5:18**)? Commands demand attention and the command to be thankful is a direct attention getter to remind us not to take things for granted.

Another important thing for us to consider when it comes to taking things for granted is the impact it has in our spiritual lives. Did we ever consider that being controlled by irritability, stress, and anxiety, which are the direct opposites of being controlled by God's peace, could actually come from taking spiritual blessings for granted? Bear with me as we unfold this truth. Remember the cure for taking things for granted? Thanksgiving. If the cure is not applied, then we are indeed taking God's blessings for granted and the spiritual results will be seen, heard, and felt with great volume and intensity. Allow the Apostle Paul to develop my thought along these lines. Notice what he implies will happen if we lack thanksgiving and thus are taking the things of God for granted – “Let your moderation be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (**PHILIPPIANS 4:5-7**). What happens when prayer, and our lives since we are to be a people of never ceasing prayer, lacks thanksgiving? No peace of God and that means irritability, stress, and anxiety fill up that void. We are either being controlled by God or ourselves. If God, then peace reigns within our hearts. If we are being controlled by ourselves, then the big three “fruits” of irritability, stress, and anxiety will take their places in our hearts. And it can be simply traced back to just how easily we have taken our God and His blessings for granted.

One way to start a life of not taking God's blessings for granted is found in today's reference. The writer warns us to listen carefully to what we have heard and not to neglect (take for granted) so great a salvation given to us by God. Spend time meditating over the wisdom and love of God in manifesting such a great salvation in His Son to us and it won't be long until our taking it for granted will be changed to a time of worship. And from that perspective, a life will be formed that is always guarding against taking God's blessings for granted.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to pursue the depths of the Gospel to see the beauty of its fullness.”

QUOTE: “The greatness of our salvation should drive us to strive to know the greatness of our salvation”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

ROMANS 7:15-20 - 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.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THAT ANNOYING BARK. I like my dog Jake – most of the time. He is a good looking dog with neat little freckles on his nose and legs. He is playful, energetic, affectionate, and somewhat obedient. He is a delight to be around when he is quiet, sitting in a window looking outside, obeying his masters' voices or in a playful mood absent of that annoying bark. When it comes to Jake's annoying bark it stops one in its tracks. It is loud, obnoxious, and distracting. Oh, we are working on controlling it, but in reality, that isn't an easy task. I have tried to sit in a chair, buried in a book, and ignore Jake's annoying bark. As he sits at my feet, barking away, it is impossible not to be distracted. This isn't "normal" Jake. When he goes into "bark mode", he wants something or it appears like something has taken over my dog. As I covered my ears over another episode of that annoying bark, I realized that it isn't just Jake that has an annoying bark. I do too and so does every other true Christian. It is the annoying bark of the old nature seeking my attention.

In today's reference, the Apostle Paul painfully realized there was a competing force, an "annoying bark" that resided within him and, like my dog Jake, it was distracting and brought one's desirable actions to a screeching halt. He said, "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" (**ROMANS 7:18-19**). Our remaining sin acts like an "annoying bark" wanting attention and it is not easily denied. A.W. Pink captures this well with these words very familiar to every believer's experience, "He who is really honest with himself and has had his eyes opened in some degree to see the awful sinfulness of self, and who is becoming more and more acquainted with that sin of iniquity, that mass of corruption which still indwells him, often feels that sin more completely rules him now than ever it did before. When he longs to trust God with all his heart, unbelief seems to paralyze him. When he wishes to be completely surrendered to God's blessed will, murmurings and rebellion argue within him. When he would spend an hour in meditation on the things of God, evil imaginations harass him. When he desires to be more humble, pride seeks to fill him. When he would pray, his mind wanders. The more he fights against these sins, the farther off victory seems to be. To him it appears that sin is very much the master of him, and Satan tells him that his profession is vain." That is the power of remaining sin within each believer. It truly is an "annoying bark" that seeks to drown out and distract the believer's cries for holiness, for likeness to the Lord Jesus, and freedom from sin's presence. Thankfully, our Lord has destroyed the power of the evil one who wants nothing more than to feed our "annoying bark" (**1 JOHN 3:8**). Under the control of God's Spirit, we can learn to keep that "annoying bark" from making regular appearances in our lives. Jake is learning and so will we as we pursue Him who loved us and washed us from our sins (**REVELATION 1:5**).

PRAYER: "Lord, help me to see that my war against sin is primarily about my old nature not my actions."

QUOTE: CHRYSOSTOM, "Humility is the root, mother, nurse, foundation and bond of all virtue."

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

GENESIS 32:6-12 - And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him." Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps, thinking, "If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape." And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,' I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. But you said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'" .

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: STRESS MANAGEMENT. The chapter of today's reference is a gold mine of instruction on prayer. We find in Jacob a great example of necessary elements in prayer as well as the perseverance necessary for effective prayer. As good as these instructions are on how to pray, there is something else revealed about prayer that shows us the Biblical way to handle something each one of us know on a pretty regular basis – stress.

Let's do a little honesty check. When anxiety, stress, worry, fear, and all those other faithless emotions flood our hearts in our daily fast and furious lives, how do we handle them? What are the first means of defense and relief we seek? From personal experience, here are some of my tactics. First, try to change the circumstances. That rarely works and only intensifies the stress since normally stress comes from circumstances I cannot control. Another tactic is to stay awake at night either fretting in the prone position or getting up and taking the fretting to a chair or pacing around a room. That, too, produces zero help. A third way may be to seek counsel from another. This is surely better than options one and two, but if it is only horizontal help on a human level, it isn't infallible or of certain help. We are to carry one another's burdens (**GALATIANS 6:2**), but unless that includes taking those mutual burdens to the Lord Jesus (**MATTHEW 11:28-30**), this form of stress management will be short lived. A final option might be to just attempt to ignore the stress. I don't know how one would even begin to accomplish this mode of thinking and coping. It seems the more we try to ignore something, the more it intensifies in our hearts and minds.

In today's reference, we find in Jacob the answer we need when it comes to true stress management. Jacob was severely stressed – “Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed” (**GENESIS 32:7**). In his eyes, the reasoning for such stress found justification. The last time he saw Esau wasn't on good terms (**GENESIS 27:41-42**). He had deceived their father in getting the blessing reserved for Esau. In Esau's fury, he promised to kill him. How did Jacob react to this stressful situation? Instead of exercising the four options I mentioned, we find him doing two things. He made a plan and then he prayed. It is important to learn he didn't rely upon his own plan to relieve his distressed heart. We too often make our own plans without submitting our plans to the sovereign care of our God. It is no wonder we remain stressed out in many areas of our lives. We forget to immediately place before the Lord what Jacob placed before Him – his dilemma, his plans, and his helplessness. This is the way to handle stress and all issues of life – plan and pray leaving the matter in the hands of our God who does all things well and for our good.

PRAYER: “Lord, when I feel overwhelmed in life, help me not delay in seeking Your presence.”

QUOTE: E.M. BOUNDS, “To give prayer the secondary place is to make God secondary in life's affairs.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

MATTHEW 20:29-34 - And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him. And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" And stopping, Jesus called them and said, "What do you want me to do for you?" They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened." And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him..

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **HOW STRONG IS OUR DESIRE?** Quick Bible quiz. Only two questions. Question one – what is the longest chapter in the Bible? Question two – what chapter in the Bible is the most comprehensive and magnificent in its glorious description of the Word of God? I tried this quiz out on a young person and was told “trick questions” because she got it wrong. The answer to both is **PSALM 119**. Yes, I know each Psalm stands alone, but in order to make my quiz work for me, I had to include the Psalms as an entire book with each Psalm a chapter. Regardless of the validity of my quiz, **PSALM 119** is unparalleled when it comes to describing the worth of the Bible. It also is unparalleled when it comes to revealing what a healthy Christian looks like in his or her hunger and desire for the Word of God and the God of the Word. Five times in **PSALM 119**, the writer declares his heart’s approach toward knowing God and keeping God’s Word. Here are two exposures of his heart’s desire - “With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!” (**PSALM 119:10**) and “Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart” (**PSALM 119:34**).

In both references, the first – the desire to know God – and the second – the desire to obey God, are predicated on a heart wholly committed to the pursuit. The Psalmist knew there would be no obtaining of the sweetness of fellowship with God and the joy of following God in obedience if this was not sought with a wholehearted desire and diligent effort. I recently talked to another believer and proposed this question, “Do we really want to know God and enjoy Him?” The immediate answer was “of course” and my equally immediate response was, “Really? I find it so easy to say that and even pray, ‘Lord, I want to know You, the power of Your resurrection, and the fellowship of Your sufferings’ (**PHILIPPIANS 3:10**), but then I am confronted with the reality of whether my desire matches my diligence in seeking the fulfillment of my desire.” Please don’t think I am advocating a “works based sanctification”, though works are part of the process. No, what I want us to consider is whether our desire matches our pursuit. It did in the writer of **PSALM 119**. It sure did in the two blind men found in today’s reference.

As we read this riveting account of Jesus’ healing these two blind men, pay attention to their desire for Jesus. We might conclude their desire was self-serving and that would be partially right. They wanted His healing touch and that is not wrong. So do we. We want His healing touch to save us and then His ongoing healing touch as we are defiled by sin in our daily walk. But the intensity of their desire is what should challenge us. They would not be denied. Twice they cried out, “Lord, have mercy on us” and I venture to say, they would have cried out a lot more times in order to get Jesus’ attention. How are we doing in our cries for the Lord’s fellowship and touch? Do we refuse to be denied? Are we letting things in life crowd out our desire for God and His Word? A whole-hearted desire for the Lord will be matched with a whole-hearted seeking of the Lord and the reward will be Himself. Anything less than a whole heart desire and search will be left wanting when it comes to the abundant life Jesus came to give (**JOHN 10:10**).

PRAYER: “Father, give me a desire for Your presence that is validated by my pursuit of Your presence.”

QUOTE: “Our hunger for fellowship with God is not based on verbal desire but on active pursuit.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

MATTHEW 6:6-13 - But you, when you pray, enter into your room. And shutting your door, pray to your Father in secret; and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly. But when you pray, do not babble vain words, as the nations. For they think that in their much speaking they shall be heard. Therefore do not be like them, for your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him. Therefore pray in this way: Our Father, who is in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **JUST THIS DAY.** Today’s reference is familiar to us. We call it the “Lord’s Prayer”, though actually the “Lord’s Prayer” is literally found in John’s gospel, chapter seventeen. The prayer here in Matthew’s gospel may rightly be called the “model prayer” for it reveals what the disciples asked our Lord – how to pray. As the model unfolds, the first petition directed to us is “Give us this day our daily bread” and is obvious in its implication and application – our dependence upon God for daily provision.

But let’s take another angle on this petition. Do we remember what the Lord said was “His food” while upon the earth? It was the will of God - “But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work” (**JOHN 4:32-34**).

Our Lord knew contentment in life and the sustaining force for life was found in doing the will of God. And how did He accomplish this goal? One day at a time. Life was lived in the moment. He worked the day that was before Him, seizing each day to its fullest extent in doing His Father’s will. His example may make us a little uncomfortable because we may find ourselves occasionally losing the battle against the sin of putting things off when it comes to doing the will of God. It has been rightly said, “There is never a convenient time to serve God” and our flesh, along with a persuasive devil, will always seek to put off till tomorrow what should be done today. Whether it is that visit to a shut-in, a card of encouragement to a brother or sister, attendance at a prayer meeting, or a Bible study to be involved with, there will always be other things seeking to divert us away from doing the various aspects of the will of God. Theodore Culyer, a 19th century Presbyterian minister who served in Brooklyn, New York, said, “Some of us, at the beginning of a year’s work, are tempted to overload ourselves with the anticipation of how much we have to do; we need not worry if we will only remember that during the whole year there will be only one working day, and that is today. Sufficient to each day is the labor thereof.” Those are good words to live by, not at the beginning of a new year, but at the beginning of a new day. We do fight the tendency to overload our days with things. As I look at busy days, I must stop and ask first, “Lord, what would You have me to do” instead of rushing to my planner and determining what I think I must do. It would revolutionize our lives if we prayed not only “Lord, give us this day our daily bread”, but also, “Lord, give me this day clear guidance of Your will and may I be swift to do it.”

PRAYER: “Father, help me to see my life is lived not yesterday or tomorrow, but in the now of today.”

QUOTE: T. CUYLER, “During the whole year there will be only one working day, and that day is today.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

MATTHEW 26:17-25 – Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, “Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?” And He said, “Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, ‘The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples.’” And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover. Now when the evening was come, He sat down with the twelve and as they did eat, He said, “Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.” And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and began everyone of them to say unto Him, “Lord, is it I?” And He answered and said, “He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good of that man if he had not been born.” Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, “Master, is it I?” He said unto him, “Thou hast said.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: HEALTHY MISTRUST. As we read through the Gospel accounts, some events thrill us. Like the feeding of the thousands. Others make us swell up with thanksgiving over the compassion of Jesus as He deals with sinners. Like the woman caught in adultery or the woman at the well. Other portions of the Gospels cause us to stop in silence and may even produce a little uneasiness within our hearts. Like this one – “Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness' (**MATTHEW 7:21-23**). Every sensitive and honest Christian has at one time or another, either from their own sense of sinfulness or the fiery darts of the devil (**EPHESIANS 6:16**) feared this warning of Jesus described them.

Another portion of scripture which may produce such uneasy silence is today's reference. The disciples were very uneasy as Jesus made the prophecy one of them would betray Him – “And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and begin everyone of them to say unto Him, ‘Lord, is it I?’” Though it was an uncomfortable setting, this revelation of self-mistrust is spiritually healthy. We need to be like them – not trusting our own hearts. This isn't unhealthy doubt but healthy realization of the potential in all of us to betray Christ at any given time. I like the honest self realization that was in the disciples of Jesus. They knew a little about the sinfulness of their heart and the always present danger of drifting away from the Master. Yes, they would soon forget this intimate supper with their Lord and in the heat of spiritual warfare fall back into self-reliance (**MATTHEW 26:35**), but they would learn. Their mistrust of self and reliance upon self would resemble the ocean tides – ebbing and flowing – until the lessons learned to never trust self was cemented in their hearts and minds. And we will be like them, ebbing and flowing, as grace teaches us not to trust our ever changing selves but to rely upon the unchangeable Christ. Progressing toward a life of healthy mistrust relies upon the comprehension of these two truths. First, we are saved entirely by God's sovereign grace and we mature in the Christian life by that same sovereign grace. This will lead to a good and healthy mistrust, saying, like the disciples, “Is it I, Lord?”

PRAYER: “Father, thank you for giving me Your Spirit to teach me not to trust my own heart.”

QUOTE: “One sign of growing spiritual maturity is a growing mistrust of self.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

MATTHEW 4:1 - Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THERE ARE SEASONS. One, if not the best books ever written on spiritual warfare is an “oldy” but “goody”. It was first published between 1662 and 1665. It was reprinted in 1864, 1964, 1974, 1979, 1983, 1987, and 1989. The title is “The Christian in Complete Armour” written by William Gurnall. John Newton said if he might read only one book beside the Bible, he would choose “The Christian in Complete Armour” and J.C. Ryle added, “You will often find in a line and a half some great truth, put so concisely, and yet so fully, that you really marvel how so much thought could go into so few words.” Before I close my strong encouragement to us to get the book and plow through it, I must add a warning. It is a challenge consisting of 1187 pages. Don’t let that scare us away. Consider it like a very exquisite meal in a fine restaurant. Savor it. Take our time and work through it over a year. The benefits to our souls will be immeasurable when it comes to fighting against sin, the devil and the world.

In the book, Gurnall writes of seasons in which the devil tempts the believer. He is not talking about winter, spring, summer and fall. Solomon wrote, “To every thing there is a season (**ECCLESIASTES 3:1**) and this applies in our daily warfare with Satan and the forces of evil (**EPHESIANS 6:11-12**). Gurnall lists six such seasons, but I want us to consider just three. Before we identify these seasons, it is vital we understand what is behind every tactic of the devil. He has two objectives toward the Christian. First, he desires to draw the Christian into sin. Then, if successful, to overwhelm the Christian with a troubled spirit of accusation and condemnation. And he promotes these objectives in seasons of opportunity.

The first season of heightened temptation is right after conversion. An awakened new believer is flooded with joy and soon afterwards, begins to realize the tremendous conflict within the soul. Old habits don’t die easily and confusion often reigns, leading to discouragement. Perhaps even a period of backsliding may occur because the feelings of joy, without the grounding of the truth, will not sustain the new or even older believer when this season of tempting comes. A second season the devil seeks to exploit is when great fellowship and communion with God has occurred. Gurnall writes, “After great manifestation of God’s love, then the tempter comes.” When did Peter fall in his denying of the Lord? Right after the sweet and precious time of the last Passover with the Lord. We must be careful right after special times with the Lord. It might lead to hasty commitments soon to be tried and, unless fought off correctly, will lead to remorseful spiritual failure. A third season of tempting is what we find in today’s reference. What occurred prior to Jesus being led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil? We have His baptism and the descending of the Spirit upon Him as He reaches final preparation for His ministry. What a glorious scene this would have been! We hear the words “mountain top experience” in our spiritual journeys. This surely would have been one of them and what immediately follows? A severe trial by the devil. Another good warning for us to be on guard. Whether it be a great book, a powerful sermon, a wonderful refreshing retreat . . . every special blessing or work by the Spirit will likely be soon followed by a severe trial by the evil one. Mountain top experiences are rare and necessary, but they are not the place where the Christian life is lived. We go to the mountain to come back to live in the valley.

Yes, there are seasons we experience – seasons in life, seasons in nature, and seasons of trials. As we travel through them, let’s arm ourselves with the awareness of the evil one exploiting certain spiritual seasons so that, like Paul, we may say, “We are not ignorant of his devices” (**2 CORINTHIANS 2:11**).

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to be aware of the enemy who knows the best season to seek my destruction.”

QUOTE: “The devil knows no time off in his desire to tempt and lead us into sin.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

EXODUS 1:11-12 - Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER.** How do you pray? Do you have “sacred times” of daily prayer that under no circumstance, barring emergencies, will you miss your time alone with God? Is prayer a delight and a work? Those are not contradictory terms. D. M. Lloyd-Jones wrote, “If you have never had difficulty in prayer, it is absolutely certain that you have never prayed. The person I am worried about is the one who has no difficulty about prayer, there is certainly something wrong about him.” Prayer is to be both, a delight to cherish and pursue, and a work to engage and pursue.

In the Psalms, Asaph knew these truths about prayer – the delight and work, “I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me. In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted. When I remember God, I moan; when I meditate, my spirit faints. *Selah* You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak” (**PSALM 77:1-4**). This godly man was praying and he wasn’t praying. He starts out praying, “I cry aloud to God, and he will hear me” and then, we find him speechless, “You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak”. That doesn’t mean his heart wasn’t praying. There are times when the real praying we do isn’t verbalized – “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (**ROMANS 8:26**). The context in which we find the Apostle Paul encouraging us about prayer is that of inward groaning and suffering. We learn what prayer really is about and even how to pray, not in the routine of words uttered in a prayer meeting (hopefully our prayer meetings aren’t that way, but it is easy to get there both privately and publicly), but in the fiery furnace of suffering and that primarily soul suffering, like we see in **PSALM 77**. Suffering in the battle against sin, the devil, and the world, has a mysterious way of developing us into prayer warriors. We grow in grace and the grace of prayer primarily in the area of suffering.

Look at today’s reference for a spiritual application of growth from a literal setting. God’s people were oppressed by hard taskmasters. They were, “afflicted with heavy burdens”, and what was the result? It seems the more heat put on them, the more God’s people grew. Into our spiritual experience, when the hard taskmaster, Satan, oppresses us, we are to “multiply and spread abroad” or grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus (**2 PETER 3:18**) and that certainly includes praying like the Master.

Recall the two times in the Gospels we get a detailed look into the praying heart of our Lord. What was happening in His life surrounding these revelations of what real prayer looks like? Suffering. Extreme suffering. First, the Garden of Gethsemane (**LUKE 22:39-46**). Don’t miss the intense war that is occurring in the garden. This is an onslaught from the evil one, a last grasp so to speak, to get to the Son of God. Tremendous suffering in the garden reveals to us tremendous instruction on true praying. The second exposure we see our Lord praying in detail is **JOHN 17**. What had just occurred and was about to happen? Tremendous suffering. Betrayed by a so called “friend” in Judas, soon to be denied by His very own disciples, and then to die the most humiliating death in history, undeserved. When it comes to learning how to pray, the best school is the school of suffering. Yes, read good books to learn about prayer, but when suffering comes, let it be the greatest teacher in the school of prayer.

PRAYER: “Lord, as You submitted to suffering, help me to respond like You when I am called to suffer.”

QUOTE: HAROLD A. BOSLEY, “In suffering one learns to pray best of all.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

MARK 10:15 – Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: FIGHTING TO BE CHILDLIKE. The words of our Lord about having childlike faith don't escape us. We know the prerequisite He places upon us to become His child – trust like a child. We also know what that looks like in practical ways. Whether raised in a trusting home environment or as parents experiencing the trust our own children placed in us, it isn't difficult to get Jesus' meaning. I remember as a young boy going hunting with my father. We entered some pretty scary woods, but as long as dad was close by, no fear. I had childlike faith in his protection and the built in GPS in his head to keep us safe. Also, as a parent, I have smiled at the childlike trust given to me by my children. From big things to even the little things, like “Daddy, throw me in the air again” knowing I would catch them every time revealed a faith that produced vivid illustrations and application of Jesus' words. But this childlike faith isn't just about entrance into the kingdom. It is also about living in the kingdom.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians, “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (**COLOSSIANS 2:6**). Allow me to offer an expanded paraphrase, “Therefore, as a little child, who in simple non-questioning trust believed on Christ Jesus the Lord, now exercise that same childlike trust, not questioning, not reasoning, not doubting, and not fearing, in your walk with Him.”

To know a lot about Christianity doesn't mean we know Christianity. To have all the theological issues figured out doesn't mean that same theology has enflamed our hearts with love for Christ and the people around us. I am quite aware that Jesus makes it clear that unless I become like a child, a simple trust in Him, a place in His kingdom is not for me, but am I equally aware that I am to remain in that same childlike approach to Him AFTER I am in His kingdom? Paul tells the Colossians that the walk of childlike faith in Christ Jesus is not only the entry point of the Christian life, but is also the continuing point in living the Christian life. I sometimes scratch my head, not literally, but in my mental process, when I evaluate the worries and cares in my life. Here goes the self-talk, “Jim, if you claim to trust Jesus Christ for your eternal welfare, why in the world are you struggling to trust Him in the day to day challenges of life?” Doesn't make much sense, right? We may boldly claim confidence in Christ for our eternal state and then find ourselves getting all full of anxiety, stress, and frustration over things in life that are quickly passing away. Perhaps sometimes, we act like a child when it comes to salvation; yet, struggle to remain as a child when it comes to trusting the Lord moment by moment in every situation and relationship. The evidence of our trust in Him will be just how much control of our actions, attitudes, and words are under His Spirit and thus His love or how much of those three things are being controlled by ourselves.

It is a fight to be childlike when it comes to exercising moment by moment faith, yet, that is the call – “as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (**COLOSSIANS 2:6**). How do we fight the tendency to drift away from the simplicity of a child when it comes to trusting the Lord? The most important tactic is prayer. Not grace over a meal, good practice by the way, and not public prayer in a prayer meeting, another good practice by the way, it is prayer that is practiced throughout the day that requires no words, just heart to heart with our Savior. It is prayer that is brutally honest with Him admitting we are “growing up” and leaving our “childlike faith”. It cries out, “Lord, help me to trust like I did when I entered Your Kingdom for in trusting You I am able to see You work and You getting all the glory.”

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to keep things childlike in my life – like trusting Your Word without question.”

QUOTE: “We are called to reason with the Lord but not to reason against the Lord.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 21, 2010

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

EXODUS 14:13 – And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: WHICH CROWD ARE WE IN? Today’s reference is smack in the middle of the riveting account of the Red Sea crossing. Think of the three crowds which existed among the Israelites as they stood before the Red Sea. Crowd one was the one looking over Moses’ shoulders at the fast approaching Egyptians – “When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly” (**EXODUS 14:10b**). Their faith in the unseen God and His promises struggled against the seen enemies and the threatening situation. They heard Moses, but didn’t listen to Moses. We might find ourselves in crowd one at times. Perhaps we get fearful to venture out in service for the Lord or to share Christ on a consistent basis. We may also be in crowd one when our circumstances appear to be so deep that our faith in the sovereignty of God is either forgotten or drowning in the sea of sense. Crowd one people are paralyzed. They do nothing except fret. Crowd two might be the ones seeing the imminent arrival of the dreaded Egyptians, looking out over the only way of escape, the Red Sea crossing, and wondered, “Is it possible? Might we really get out of this? Maybe, but no, it doesn’t make sense.” Oh, the faith of crowd two might be small because sense would make no sense, but at least they might hope against hope. The Puritan John Trapp said, “It is the nature of faith to believe God upon His bare word. It will not be, saith sense; it cannot be, saith reason; it both can and will be, saith faith, for I have a promise.” Like crowd one, we will find ourselves in crowd two during our walk with the Lord. Trials come and we see no way out. Situations overwhelm us and we fight with the Sword of the Spirit to get a faithful grip not succumb to a faithless groan. We exercise faith for a moment, then, reason our way into unbelief in the next moment. Don’t be discouraged, though, being in crowd two is a great place for maturing in the faith. In fact, it is the place to mature in the faith. And then there was crowd three. They would be of the same spirit of Caleb - “But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, ‘Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are able to overcome it’” (**NUMBERS 13:30**). We know the story. Caleb and Joshua came back from the spy mission with a great report and eagerness to go get and occupy the land. The people, crowd one people, allow fear and unbelief to rule them, but Caleb rises up with great confidence in his God to be true to His promises. That is the spirit of crowd three people standing on the shore of the Red Sea. They trusted Moses, but more importantly they trusted what they could not see – the God who controlled both the Egyptians and the Red Sea. Crowd three people look at what God can and is willing to do. This faith is manifested by their commitment to wait upon Him to provide and equip them to do what is humanly impossible.

What instruction did Moses give to the entire crowd? It is in today’s reference – don’t go crazy trying to figure a way out of this situation and don’t let fear and feelings quench faith or cause spiritually paralysis. They were to be still and watch the Lord work. That doesn’t mean they just sat around. No, the real work would have been heart work, like us, to get faith, not fear or feelings, to rule. Our battle is not external, but internal and the way to wage it successfully isn’t to get busy, but to get quiet. Be still before the Lord. Take a quick inventory – when is the last time we gave the Lord an uninterrupted hour of our time? Not to ask for things or seek things but to be still before Him. It is hard work. Our “Egyptians” constantly threaten to steal away precious time with the Lord and when it comes to determining which crowd we would be in at the Red Sea crossing, our commitment to stillness before the Lord is a quick way to know.

PRAYER: “Lord, I confess being still before You isn’t easy. Help me to see its importance more.”

QUOTE: “Without periods of stillness before the Lord, there will be no stillness in the soul.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

MARK 8:22-25 - And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?” And he looked up and said, “I see men, but they look like trees, walking.” Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **LEAVE THE RESULTS TO JESUS.** Reading this story of the blind man’s healing may become “old hat” as we go through the gospels and see various miracles by our Lord. They shouldn’t become “old hat” or routine, yet, our sinful flesh loves to take us into formality and familiarity when it comes to the scriptures. But that topic is for another day.

As we read this account of healing, take time to meditate, not on the blind man, but consider his friends. I see them as real friends. I can even see a little of the Apostle John’s statement about the marks of true love in them – “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth” (1 JOHN 3:18). They didn’t sit around with the blind man giving him sympathy about his situation and seeking to console him. There is a time and place for both. There is also a time and place for love in action beyond presence and words. The time came. His friends brought him to Jesus and pay close attention to what they asked of the Master – they begged Him to touch him. Don’t we find it a little interesting what they requested of Jesus? There was no cry of “heal him” or a plea for casting out a demon. The request reveals a real spirit of humility. I may be stretching this a little, but maybe a thought or two went through their minds, “He is Jesus. He heals on the spot. He is special. He might heal immediately. He might not. Let’s be respectful here and simply turn it over to Jesus and let Him do what He will do. Let’s just ask for a touch and leave the results in His hands.”

When it comes to faith, true faith, two elements seem to come forth in the examples we find identified by our Lord in His gospels – desperation and humility. Remember the woman with the blood disease? Feel the desperation and humility in her case - And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.” Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well” (MATTHEW 9:20-22). In order to really see her desperation and humility, which drove her to Jesus, we must add in a verse from Luke’s account of her – “And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone” (LUKE 8:43). She was at the end of her rope. No more self-help books and no more self-resources. Desperation arrived which humbled her to seek Jesus and she requested “a touch” to heal her.

The friends of the blind man didn’t know what Jesus would do. Didn’t matter. They knew what He could do and they simply left the results to Jesus. This lesson deserves our greatest attention in every aspect of our walk with Jesus. We work hard and then trust hard to leave the results with Jesus. We pray hard and then trust hard to leave the answers to Jesus. This is where we find freedom and liberty in our Christian experience knowing that the results of our labor and answers to our prayers will come according to God’s timing and in God’s loving ways. Let’s just seek a touch and let Him determine the rest.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to remember You don’t call me to produce results but to faithfulness.”

QUOTE: “We only trust fully when we arrive at the complete end of ourselves.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

EXODUS 15:1-2, 22-24 - Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, “I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him. Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: IT DOESN’T TAKE LONG. This isn’t the first time we find God’s people complaining about an uncomfortable circumstance. Move over to the book of Numbers and get another look into their selfish hearts, “Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt” (**NUMBERS 14:1-3**)? Now before we want to get all over these people with a critical judgment for their complaining hearts, take a quick look over the past day, maybe two or three in our lives, and see if we find any complaining. Doesn’t matter the magnitude of the situation – complaining is complaining. What about those few open check-out lines at the grocery store or department store with about five people deep in each one? Did we complain “just a little” at the sure certainty of about fifteen minutes of waiting? Or how about that red light or traffic stop that held us up when we are already late? Maybe a little murmuring under our breath? Ever complain “some” over a disobedient child in our homes? One more try . . . how about the busyness of life that is causing a feeling of neglect in some family members prompting a little complaining spirit for more attention?

The Puritan Thomas Brooks called complaining or murmuring “the mother-sin” that breeds many other sins, that is disobedience, contempt, ingratitude, impatience, distrust, rebellion, cursing, and carnality.” As we read through the Old Testament history of the Israelites, we find Brooks’ words to be ever so true! As we read through our lives and find complaining to be a besetting sin, we will see it is also true in us. Complaining is bad enough, but when we take a hard look at who the complaining is really directed toward, we should be feeling a little shaky inside. Look what the Lord said about His people’s complaining toward Moses – “And the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, “How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me” (**NUMBERS 14:26-37**). The people thought they directed their complaining toward Moses and circumstances. The Lord thought otherwise. They complained of and against Him.

Any complaining may rightly be summarized as rebellion and unbelief against the wise, good, and loving sovereignty of God. That is how God sees it and too often, I don’t. Again from Thomas Brooks, “Murmuring, muttering under the hand of God argues much sin, yes, a heart full of sin; it reveals a heart of self-love.” Basically, my complaining, our complaining, is one of the highest forms of selfishness. It puts us in the serious situation of arguing God’s ways are not the best ways. And this sin must always be guarded against. As we read the entire chapter of today’s reference, take a hard look at how quickly God’s people went from praise to pouting. It doesn’t take long for a complaining spirit to whisper in our hearts, “I’ll take it from here. My turn to express itself.”

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me not to let situations cause me to complain and impact my fellowship with You.”

QUOTE: “Never understate the power of our sinful nature to both forget God and complain of God.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

DEUTERONOMY 27:9-10 -Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, "Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day you have become the people of the LORD your God. You shall therefore obey the voice of the LORD your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes, which I command you today."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: MOTIVES FOR OBEDIENCE. What prompts our obedience to God? Numerous and noble motives exist. First, we obey God because Jesus said this is the only way to really prove we love Him – “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (**JOHN 14:15**). Our Lord creates no interpretive challenges for us when it comes to giving us the way to show our love for Him. It certainly doesn’t mean perfect obedience. If so, I am done and so are all of us who claim to be followers of Christ, but it does mean progressive obedience. I should be able to look back on my Christian life and see, not perfect obedience, but progressive obedience. Another noble motive for obedience is simply duty. Please don’t think I am advocating some form of legalistic bondage to an external conformity to a Biblical standard. This motive of duty toward obeying God isn’t like dragging ourselves to do something or go someplace we would rather avoid like the plague. Like maybe the dentist? I never jump for joy and swell up with enthusiastic anticipation knowing I am going to a place and will feel metal tools poking all around my mouth, but I go because it is right and good for me. Just like obedience to God’s commands. There is the simple truth that we obey God because we are created to obey God. It is our duty as His creation. The huge difference is the new birth. Outside of a heart change by the Spirit of God, all obedience is “dentist-like” and a burden, but this duty for the true believer is not a burden – “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (**1 JOHN 5:2-3**). That doesn’t mean obedience is easy. It does mean that obedience is a soul delight, despite the difficulties and competing sinful emotions pulling us in a different direction.

There is another noble motive for obedience. It is found in today’s reference. It is all about ownership. As we mentioned above, all creatures are bound to obey God’s commands. The problem, though, is sin. We cannot obey Him outside of Christ. Yes, we are God’s by creation but that only puts us in extreme danger for we are under the eternal penalty of a law we have broken and cannot keep. But there is a different type of ownership. Moses and the priests said to the people, “You have become the people of the LORD your God”. As we parallel this truth with the new covenant, we too, have become God’s people – “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (**1 PETER 2:10**). Have we recently been gripped by the truth that God the Father gave us to His Son, the Lord Jesus, as trophies of His grace and that such possession is one of the highest motives toward loving obedience? In order to fully grasp what Peter is saying about us being God’s people, we need to back up to verse nine and see why we are God’s people – “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (**1 PETER 2:9**). How does one proclaim the excellency of God? Simple and sincere childlike acts of moment by moment obedience.

Many motives exist for us to obey God and none may be dismissed or downplayed. One that might go a little unnoticed is the simple truth that God so loved us that He chose to own us, make us His people and the natural outcome of such a wonderful work of grace is a life of progressive, not perfect obedience.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me keep Your Word as a light unto my path throughout each day.”

QUOTE: JOHN STOTT, “Christ’s lovers prove their love by their obedience.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

EPHESIANS 2:18 – For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE PRIVILEGE OF ACCESS. What we are about to read I label as a “who’s who” in the “Hall of Fame” of prayer warriors. These examples stagger the soul with thoughts of “wow” or maybe even a little unhealthy introspection of “I could never pray like that.” Don’t let either of those emotions take root. We are not reading them so we may be mirror images of them. We want to read them through the lens of today’s reference – “For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father” (**EPHESIANS 2:18**).

Here comes the “who’s who” and though we may not be familiar with some of their names, the common theme of confident praying will become quite familiar - James Duncan, preaching with great unction and power, was asked what was the secret of such powerful preaching. "The secret," he said, was "thirteen hours of consecutive prayer." When asked the secret of his spiritual power, Charles Spurgeon said: "Knee work! Knee work!" Livingston of Shotts, on two different occasions, preached with such power that in each service 500 were converted. Both sermons were preceded by a night of prayer. Of John Vassar, his pastor said: "He absolutely prayed day and night—prayed about everything, prayed for almost everything, prayed with almost everybody he met. "He prayed when he went out and when he came in. He prayed before every religious service, and then prayed all the way through it. I have occupied the same room with him night after night and rarely went to sleep without hearing him in prayer, or awoke without finding him in prayer."

What would make such prayer warriors? What prompted such confidence in prayer that led to a fervency and refusal to give up when prayer, and it will, became hard and laborious? They knew who they were praying to. They knew the God who heard and answered prayer. No doubt they believed and exercised **HEBREWS 11:6** – “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” They exuded confidence in God. They believed He existed and He rewarded those who seek Him. One such reward is answered prayer and a lot of times answered prayer comes after fervent, persevering prayer over a period of time. Go back and read the “who’s who” again and notice the incidents of persevering prayer. Our God delights in the persistency of His people seeking Him in prayer. In fact, Jesus defines persevering prayer as a work of faith – “And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (**LUKE 18:1-8**). As we read these accounts and of the persistent widow, we see them exercising today’s reference – the privilege of access to God. When it comes to defining prayer, that is a pretty good place to start – the privilege of access to God which leads to persevering and confident praying.

PRAYER: “Father, forgive me for not exercising my privilege of access to You more often.”

QUOTE: “A confident prayer life rests on confidence in a God who hears and answers prayer.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

HEBREWS 13:8 – Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: HE CAME FOR BAD PEOPLE. The story occurred in the late 19th century. A young man grew up in a godly home but refused to follow the path of his family. The person telling the story used the name “John Thompson” for the young man, though that wasn’t his real name. It seems John was very bad. He attended boarding school and school yard bully fit him quite well. So godless was John that he would not allow any boys in his dormitory to kneel and pray. If any one dared to do so, John bullied and battered him. Not a boy dared to kneel, for fear of this big bully.

One Sunday while the other boys attended church, John studied school work. Upon returning from the service, the boys commented on how well the preacher spoke. This perked John’s interest and he determined to attend the evening service to hear the preacher. As he sat in the pew, listening to the man of God, he nudged his friend and whispered, “There’s not much good in that fellow” and soon fell asleep. Then he was awakened by the reading of the sermon text, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (**HEBREWS 13:8**). Now wide awake, John heard the preacher give his outline. The preacher said that he would show three things. First, that when Jesus Christ was on earth, He loved bad people in spite of their badness, and did them good; and that He is the same now. Second, that when Jesus Christ was on the earth, He spoke the truth, and never told a lie, and always did what He promised; and that He is the same now. Third, that when Jesus Christ was on earth, He never cast away any one, however bad, who came to Him; and that He is the same now.

As the preacher unfolded his points, John Thompson said to himself, “If Jesus Christ is like that, He is very different from what I ever thought.” As he left the church, he told his companion his opinion of the preacher changed, “There is something in that fellow after all.” That evening, for about two hours, he walked around the playground. God was answering the prayers of his mother and grandfather. When prayer came, instead of bullying his dormitory mates, he joined them. They began to cry out, “John Thompson’s converted, John Thompson’s converted!” One shouted above the rest, “And a hard job the Lord had of it.” John Thompson looks back on that night as the night he was converted. And how was he converted? By seeing the great grace of the Lord Jesus to bad people; by seeing that Jesus when on the earth, loved bad people, and did them good; that He always spoke the truth, and never told a lie; and that He never cast away any one, however bad, who came to Him; and that He is just the same now.

Aren’t we also glad that our Lord Jesus Christ came for bad people? Oh, we might think some people are worse off than others, and that appears true, but at the tribunal of God, what is the verdict? Paul tells us, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (**ROMANS 3:23**). And if we think we may be graded on a curve when it comes to the law of God, we need to think again – “For whoever shall keep all the Law, but stumbles in one, he has become guilty of all” (**JAMES 2:10**). We are responsible, by creation and the rightful demands of a holy and perfect God to keep all His commands, all the time and that puts us in a very bad way. Knowing we cannot even begin to do so, makes all of us, like John Thompson, bad, but not without hope because Jesus came for bad people – all bad people, and like John Thompson, we may come to Him who is the same yesterday, today, and forever to find forgiveness and reconciliation with our God. Let’s praise our Heavenly Father for sending His good and perfect Son for us bad and imperfect people.

PRAYER: “Lord, I praise You for Your unchanging character making You trustworthy in all things.”

QUOTE: “Rest not in your changing feelings but in the unchangeable Christ.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 29, 2010

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

MATTHEW 24:35 – Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: BE CAREFUL WITH INWARD IMPRESSIONS. I don't like conflict or controversy. I am not sure I know many people who do. I know no one who wakes up and goes about their day chomping at the bit longing to generate a little conflict or controversy with people. So, let me throw out something that might generate the very thing I don't like!

When I hear the words, “The Lord told me . . .” or “I feel the Lord wants me to . . .”, I get a little uneasy inside. It is not an uneasiness of questioning the person's heart or motive. Charles Spurgeon once said something like this, “God has reserved the right to see inside each human heart for Himself only.” That is something good to remember. I strive not to read people's hearts or motives. If **JEREMIAH 17:9** is true and it is, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”, I don't even know my own heart, let alone try and get into someone else's heart!

I admit I use the language, “The Lord told me” or “I feel the Lord wants me to” and I am quite convinced in what I am saying. Just like those folks who also use that language. As we do, we need to be careful and use wise discernment and caution. Inward impressions alone cannot be relied upon. J. I. Packer said, “Confidence that one's impressions are God-given is no guarantee that this is really so, even when they persist and grow stronger through long seasons of prayer. Bible-based wisdom must judge them.” Listen to the wise counsel John Newton wrote in a letter to a friend about inward impressions. Newton wrote to a friend on the danger of leaning on such impressions, even Biblical impressions. He penned these words, “Texts of Scripture brought powerfully to the heart are very desirable and pleasant, if their tendency is to humble us, to give us a more feelings sense of the preciousness of Christ, or of the doctrines of grace; if they make sin more hateful, enliven our regard to the means of grace, that is prayer, reading the Word, etc., or increase our confidence in the power and faithfulness of God. But if they are understood as intimating our path of duty in particular circumstances, or confirming us in purposes we may have already formed, not otherwise clearly warranted by the general strain of the Word, or by the leadings of Providence, they are for the most part ensnaring, and always to be suspected.” Allow me to paraphrase what Newton wrote in modern language. He is telling us, “Scripture coming to our minds is good as long as they humble us, make Jesus precious, show us more of our sin, give us a greater hunger for the Word and prayer, and fall in line with unfolding circumstances in our life. However, if inward impressions are simply strong sensations to do something or are confirming a course of action we have already determined to take, be very careful and suspect.”

The lesson to learn is don't rely on “impulses” that are not confirmable by the Word of God. For instance, we may get a strong impression to share the Gospel with someone and the opportunity is right before us. We know that is in line with the scope of Scripture so we act upon the impression, trusting the Spirit is prompting by His Word. What we must be on guard against is allowing inward impressions to be the final say in our daily living without scripture direction or principle. One important truth is that unless we find our lives consistently soaking up the Word of God by reading and meditating and thus putting it into our hearts, inward impressions will largely be of our own making and should be looked at suspiciously. The Spirit “impresses” by the Word. We are to put His Word into our hearts so Biblical impressions come forth loud and clear. The Lord does lead us. Let's ensure it is by His Word, not just an inward impression.

PRAYER: “Lord, thank You for Your Word that reveals the source of sure direction for my life.”

QUOTE: “Let the Bible not only inform the mind but direct the will and enflame the affections.”

The QBC Daily Nugget June 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)

PROVERBS 23:26 - My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: I WONDER. I remember attending an evangelistic meeting a long time ago in a little church in West Virginia. I don't recall what the preacher preached, but I do recall that he sure could sing. A line from a song he sang went like this, “I wonder have I done my best for Jesus when He has done so much for me.” That line comes back to my memory when I go through those inevitable down spiritual times when I wonder if I am being fruitful for the Lord, if I really am making my daily life count for Jesus, and if my seeking Him is really with my whole heart. Normally, I answer those in the negative leading to the always dangerous and ill-advised changes in my life where I just get busy and add more commitments for the Lord.

I am not a songwriter, however, I recently altered the words the evangelist sang to these, “I wonder have I given my best to Jesus when He has given His best to me.” It changes everything. It makes my Christian life get away from the busyness of doing to the business of being. It goes from a flurry of seeking activity for Jesus to the fervency of seeking to abide in Jesus. And when we ponder the statement, “When He has given His best to me”, where does this lead us? It takes us to realize that Jesus gave Himself to us. Yes, He served. Yes, He sacrificed. Yes, He modeled. But above all He gave Himself – “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me” (**GALATIANS 2:20**). This takes the spiritually healthy soul to self-examination – “Am I giving my best, myself, to Jesus?”

The Apostle Paul makes a bold statement in his personal testimony to the Philippians, “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ” (**PHILIPPIANS 3:7-8**). There was no question that the highest priority of Paul's life was to know Christ, to win Christ, to fellowship with Christ. Yes, Paul served tirelessly. Yes, Paul modeled exemplarily. But above all, Paul knew what was best – to give himself in the pursuit of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord (**PHILIPPIANS 3:10**).

Does Jesus get our best when it comes to the pursuit of knowing Him? There are two groups of Christians when it comes to this question. One group says, “I want to know Him, but I just don't seem to have the time for the daily discipline of prayer and the Word necessary to get to know Him well.” I know this group well. I find myself too often falling in line with them. What it reveals is not easy to say or comfortable to write. It tells me I have a divided heart. If I only fit Jesus into my daily schedule, instead of making Him the highest priority in my daily schedule, He gets my “leftover time” when everything else is done. By then, I am tired and drained. Any attempt at diligent reading and prayer normally lasts a few minutes at best. This speaks volumes of my heart's desire to really know Him. The second group of Christians are those who are “little Pauls” in their pursuit of knowing Jesus. It is their passion and this passion ensures Jesus gets the best of them, particularly when it comes to time. They know when they are most alert and instead of using that toward temporal responsibilities, this energy is given toward eternal privileges – knowing God and His Son (**JOHN 17:1-3**). Maybe we should each sing the song as a heart examination, “I wonder have I given my best for Jesus” and let the focus be on the use of our best time and most energy.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to see You want my heart more than my service.”

QUOTE: “Our Lord desires our availability far more than our ability.”