

THE QBC DAILY NUGGET

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



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The QBC Daily Nugget July 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)

LUKE 7:7b – But say the Word and let my servant be healed.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **GETTING CENTURION LIKE.** Why do we experience tribulations? Why must we travel this painful road Paul told the disciples of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch is the only way to heaven – “When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (**ACTS 14:21-22**)? It isn't too difficult to come up with a good list of reasons. Here are my inputs to our list.

First, tribulations make us long for heaven – “And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (**ROMANS 8:23**). Why are we groaning? Tribulations. And they produce the longing found in these words of Jonathan Edwards, “God has appointed this whole life to be all as a race or a battle; the state of rest, wherein we shall be so out of danger as to have no need of watching and fighting, is for another world.” Another purpose of tribulations is to wean us from the world. Believers still feel the strong pull of corruption and sensual pleasures of an alluring world. The Apostle John wrote these words for those very reasons – “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him” (**1 JOHN 2:15**). We may know if we are being weaned from the world if we are finding our comfort and contentment solely in Jesus Christ and not creature comforts. David knew the necessity of being weaned from self and the world – “But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me” (**PSALM 131:2**). A third purpose of tribulations is found in today's reference. They are to get us to be centurion-like when it comes to faith in God's Word. Please take time and read his account in its entirety (**LUKE 7:1-9**), but allow me to provide the highlight which makes him extremely relevant and an example for us.

Here was a military man of great authority. When he gave orders, they were trusted and obeyed, not questioned and debated. Finding his beloved servant beyond the help of any human physician, he sent some of his friends to the Great Physician to do what only He could do – heal His servant. What makes this man stand out is that he did not demand a sign from Jesus to validate His ability to heal. He also didn't require an appeasement of his senses like a touch or feeling. His confidence that Jesus could and would heal his servant rested solely on the authority of Christ's person making His Word credible. Are we centurion-like when it comes to our faith in the Lord Jesus? The centurion did not rest primarily on what Christ could do. He rested primarily on the power and authority of who Christ was. Elisabeth Elliot said, “You will never understand why God does what He does, but if you believe Him, that is all that is necessary. Let us learn to trust Him for who He is.” Our doubts and unbelief come to full bloom when we attempt to exercise faith in the fulfillment of a promise without keeping the One who promised in the forefront. Faith rests on who God is followed immediately by what God says. His Person AND His promises form the very core elements of our faith. If we don't know His trustworthy, authoritative and powerful Person, we will never consistently rely upon His Word.

So when the devil and conscience seeks to inject doubt about the Word of God, run to the God of the Word. As we learn to lean on His Person AND His promises, we will become centurion-like receiving the same commendation from our Lord as he did – “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.”

PRAYER: “Father, teach me to submit to Your work in my life that makes me trust Your Word.”

QUOTE: “God tries His people to develop a deepening trust in His Word.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 2, 2010

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

MATTHEW 8:1-2 – When He came down from the mountain, great crowds followed Him. And behold, a leper came to Him and worshipped Him, saying, “Lord, if you will, You can make me clean.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **JUST BECAUSE HE IS.** I need to rethink worship. Not worship in our church. Worship in and from me. I think the leper in today’s reference got it right when it comes to worship of the Lord Jesus.

Worship challenges us and for many reasons. Think with me on just two. First, we are created to worship God. That is obvious from the logical conclusion God is our creator and we are His creations. To view worship as not our rightful duty, obligation, and privilege as God’s creatures is simply foolishness. Jesus combated the devil in His temptation with these words, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve’” (**MATTHEW 4:10**). There is only One object of worship. The challenge of worship as our created purpose is that our first parents, and we, destroyed the desire and ability for us to fulfill this high and noble honor. Oh, we still do worship. The problem is that the object is wrong. Self-worship dominates the unbeliever and self-worship still screams to be exalted and honored in the believer.

Another reason worship challenges us is that we are so easily prone to offer worship to God for primarily what He does than who He is. This isn’t wrong worship. Just incomplete worship and if we continue long with this imbalance, we will drift away from true worship back into self-worship. We are to worship God for what He does. The Psalms are full of instances where God’s people offer rightful praise and worship for His marvelous deeds and especially of salvation – “Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, bless His name; tell of His salvation from day to day” (**PSALM 96:1-2**). However, if worship remains only in what God does, what happens when things get a little tough in life and one doesn’t feel like singing a new song? Here is where the rubber meets the road for us. Are we worshippers of God in the wholeness of worship, His deeds and His being, or are we more in the worship mode when life is pretty smooth, not too many problems nipping at our heels, and God feels near? I must confess, it’s easy to worship and sing a nice sacred tune when my circumstances are good, my trials minimal, and the raging battle of sin within me appears to have taken a break. But how is my worship and singing when circumstances are Mt. Everest high in my life, trials are making me want to run away, and my inward corruption is stopping me in my tracks like traffic out of Providence at 5:00 p.m. during the work week? Should I find myself with worship that is up and down like a seesaw, I am probably worshipping God more for the “good” things He is doing in my life instead of for the simple fact God is good – all the time.

Take another quick read of today’s reference. Notice when the leper worshipped Jesus. It wasn’t after he was healed by Jesus. It was before. He worshipped Jesus for who He was, not what He would or would not do for Him. I think this insightful leper would still have revered Jesus without the healing just because Jesus was who He was. Think about it as we go about our day. Worship must include both the deeds of our God and our God of deeds. To become like the leper is to become a complete worshipper.

PRAYER: “Lord, forgive me when my praise rests mostly on what You do for me instead of who You are for me.”

QUOTE: “The maturing Christian worships the Lord Jesus for both His deeds and His Person.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 5, 2010

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

JOSHUA 2:14 -And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **UNWAVERING CONFIDENCE**. I admit it will be difficult understanding today's nugget unless we are familiar with or brush up on the exciting drama of **JOSHUA 2**. To jump right into today's reference would leave one saying, "Huh? I don't get it" so, if possible, read **JOSHUA 2**, then come back and join us. If that isn't possible, here's a quick bird's eye view – Joshua sends out two spies to check out the land the Lord has promised to give His people. This was a sure thing, though it would appear very daunting to the people of God because of the ominous looking enemies blocking the way of land ownership. On a side note, that is the way a work of God unfolds for us, no matter what we do for Him. Faith pleases Him and faith won't work on what is seen or reasoned. God would get no glory or credit if we get things all sorted out in advance. No, faith says, "God promised. Yes, I don't see it happening. I don't have the ability or time, but God promised. I will go with the sure unseen instead of the uncertain seen." Back to the story. Rahab, the unlikely agent of God's protection for His reconnaissance team, risks her neck to shelter the spies. The only condition she places on them is protection for herself and family when God's promise unfolds for His people in taking over the promised land. And now today's reference comes into play with the response of the spies, "And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you" (**JOSHUA 2:14**). They would keep their word to her for the kindness she rendered to them.

The lesson for us? Kindness? Sure, but not today's lesson. Keeping our word? Sure, but not today's lesson. Pay particular attention to the confidence of these spies in what God promised. No wavering, no questioning, no wrestling with doubt . . . they exercised unwavering confidence. They said with a matter of fact mindset, "Then when the Lord gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you." There was no "if the Lord gives us the land", but "when the Lord gives the land". Let's think about this level of confidence as it translates into our prayer lives. The Apostle James tells us the number one criteria for a prayer life that is intimate and effectual is a lack of doubt or believing prayer – "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (**JAMES 1:5-8**).

Prayer normally takes on a hit and miss approach with us because of doubt. If we truly believe God desires to answer our prayers, but more importantly, desires to commune with us in prayer, doesn't it make sense that prayer would become such a staple in our lives that we just could not live without seeing it become a daily fiber in our lives with fervency and frequency? John Bunyan defined prayer as "A sincere, sensible affectionate pouring out of the soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Spirit, for such things as God has promised." Let's take a lesson from the Israelite spies on confidence in God's promises and transfer that confidence into our prayer lives.

PRAYER: "Lord, teach me to prayer with confidence knowing You are worthy of my unwavering trust."

QUOTE: "Faithful prayer warriors are those who are confident God answers prayer and meets with them in prayer."

The QBC Daily Nugget July 6, 2010

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

ISAIAH 62:4 - You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: DO WE BELIEVE IT? They occupy significant spots on my desk. Unavoidable would describe their location. Unavoidable in the sense I am unable to avoid reading them throughout the day. They are two sayings I want near to my heart and renewing my mind. The first one reads, “The devil wants me to mistrust God and doubt His love.” The second one is more of a personal rebuke with the same theme. It reads, “You have absolutely no right to doubt or disbelieve God’s Word. He is trustworthy. He loves you. To doubt both is the greatest offense you may ever give Him!”

Perhaps you are a Christian who never struggles with the love of God. That is not me. Oh, I believe He loves me. His Word tells me so, but the flesh and devil don’t remain silent when it comes to denying that truth and especially when I am aware of my many failings and bouts of rebellion against my loving God. I just finished a book titled, “The Difficult Doctrine of God’s Love” and the title speaks for itself. When it comes to doubting God’s love, this is not a new tactic by the devil. If we go back to the Garden of Eden, would it not be right to come to the conclusion that is exactly what Satan got Eve to do? God gave our first parents commands and warnings out of His love for them and for their own good. As Eve opened the door to reason with the devil (never do that by the way, he is far more articulate and far more the theologian than we will ever be in this life), she questioned God’s Word which is His Word of love. The results we painfully and personally know.

In the daily battle of the Christian life, we might whittle it down to the issue of love or being controlled by love. The competing forces are self-love and Christ’s love and the paradox is simply this . . . to lose being controlled by self-love, we must get lost in the magnitude of Christ’s love for us. We don’t change by determining to be loving. We change by submitting to being loved by God.

Our effectiveness for the Lord will not be measured by how much we do for Him. It will be measured by the depth of our love for Him and that doesn’t begin by looking inward, but upward and backward. Upward to the Lord Jesus on the throne of grace, loving us so much that He constantly prays for us and then, looking backward to the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary, loving us so much that He would die for us.

The Apostle John wrote, “We love because He first loved us” (**1 JOHN 4:19**). Doubt of God’s love is really a form of selfish pride because it focuses inward. When I doubt God’s love, it is because I am looking too much at myself. Any honest Christian who looks at the absolute beauty and holiness of the Lord Jesus and then looks inward at themselves, will see every reason to doubt how such a God could love such a wretched person. It is good to look inward to see our need of grace, but then get out of that pit and look upward and backward at the love of God. It provides the proper perspective. As we fight the good fight of faith, let me encourage us to take today’s reference and use it as a prayer point. Ask God to reveal to us His great delight in us. Seeing and experiencing such love is the only way to become controlled by that very love in all our relationships.

PRAYER: “Lord, draw me to see Your love for me that not only informs my head but enflames my heart.”

QUOTE: R. BAXTER, “It is but right that our hearts should be on God, when the heart of God is so much on us.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 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)

LUKE 10:26 - He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"

FOOD FOR THOUGHT. **HOW DO WE READ?** It wasn't a question to a seeker. This divine arrow went straight to a skeptic. It may not appear so in the beginning. The lawyer quizzed Jesus with an air of sincerity and respect, "And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'" (**LUKE 10:25**). At least give the lawyer a little credit. He did come to Jesus. He did recognize His credentials. Yet, it was self-serving and not really sincere. We discover this later on with these words, "But he (the lawyer), desiring to justify himself" (**LUKE 10:29**). This man did something in which every human being excels – self-justification. This is so rooted in our sinful nature. Go all the way back to Adam and it stands out loud and clear, "And he said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate'" (**GENESIS 3:10-12**). Yes, Adam confessed his own sin. Why wouldn't he? It would have been the height of self-deception and folly to shift blame when the world's population was two, but that is exactly where he started. Men and women since then always "bend the rules" of personal accountability by attempting to be a victim and justifying themselves.

Want to know one area we Christians may find ourselves tempted to the sinful work of self-justification? Reading the Word. Ever find ourselves saying either outwardly or inwardly, "I don't have time for Bible study" or "I am just so busy I cannot find time to read my Bible." Charles Hummel, in his book *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*, quoted what a factory manager once said to him, "Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important ones." But let's assume we don't struggle with making time in the Word our highest daily priority. Let's take the question Jesus gave the lawyer and apply it to the time we do take in the Word – "How do you read it?"

We may approach our time in the Word as we would food. First, it can be a snack. We grab a quick section, gobble it down without meditation or thought and hit the day running. We will be famished very soon if we are "Bible snackers". We might be the "light meal" type of Bible people. We have a set portion we take in at each sitting. Nothing too heavy, nothing too light. It fulfills, but does it sustain? We are commanded to read AND study the Word of God – "Study earnestly to present yourself approved to God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (**2 TIMOTHY 2:15**). Study takes on many forms and may God give us each a tailored approach, but whatever approach it takes, study goes beyond devotional reading. It requires work. To best understand what that work is and the diligence required in studying the Word, meditate on **PROVERBS 2:1-5**. The third type of Bible "eaters" are the ones with a healthy balance. They know the importance of a proper diet and will not compromise for their spiritual health is at stake. How does one avoid being a "snacker" or "light eater" and get to the point of being a mature spiritual dieter of the Word? The Dutch Reformed pastor of the 17th century, Wilhelmus A. Brakel gives us the proper perspective to get there. He said, "The Word must be viewed as if God were continually narrating it to us with an audible voice from heaven." A personal Bible meets a personal God and when we taste the goodness of the Lord, we won't be satisfied with being "snackers" or "light eaters" when it comes to the food of our souls.

PRAYER: "Lord, help me to always be in awe of Your Word every time I read or hear it."

QUOTE: "Our love and devotion to the Scriptures validates our love and devotion to Christ."

The QBC Daily Nugget July 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)

1 PETER 1:13 - Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT. **SERIOUS BUSINESS.** The Christian life is serious business. It has to be. It is about eternity and there are no “retakes” either. What we were yesterday is gone. Spiritual success or spiritual failure is in the books. Yesterday is history, recorded in eternity for the Great Day of Judgment, but it is still history. Tomorrow is not promised. The founder of Puritanism, William Perkins, once said, “Fools are always futuring.” I used to read that quote and get angry, thinking the godly Perkins was harsh by calling me a “fool” for looking ahead. That isn’t what he is saying and after reading some of his writings, he is great physician of the soul. What Perkins is implying is that the one who knows time is short, with eternity and judgment looming, is a fool who puts off serving the Lord today for a more convenient time in the not promised future.

I often ponder about wasted opportunities because, in my estimation and discernment, the time for serving wasn’t right. What is more revealing is I wonder how much prayer and counsel did I seek to determine if such discernment was of the Lord. Or did I do what I am forbidden to do – “lean on my own understanding” (**PROVERBS 3:5**) without waiting on the Lord in prayer and seeking the scriptures. I am not too comfortable with my answers to either question, but maybe I am learning from the wise counsel of Mr. Perkins – don’t plan to serve the Lord tomorrow when the opportunities from the Lord and commands of the Lord are loud and clear today. The seriousness of the Christian life demands not living in the past, not planning for a more convenient day in the future, but maximizing this day that the Lord has made (**PSALM 118:24**). I think, and I speak from personal experience, one of the greatest ploys and tactics of the devil against the Christian is procrastination and that sin is a master of justifying anything. Yes, the Christian life is serious and is to be approached as such. D. M. Lloyd-Jones said of the Christian, “The Christian is sorrowful, but not morose; serious, but not solemn; sober-minded, but not solemn; grave, but never cold or prohibitive; his joy is a holy joy; his happiness a serious happiness.”

In today’s reference, the Apostle Peter helps us to live a Christian life characterized by what I call “serious joy”. He offers us at least two directions to develop this life. First, get our minds in the proper frame. He said, “prepare your minds for action” and the implication is clear. We are engaged in a war for the mind. The objective of our foes, the flesh, devil, and world, is to get our thinking earthly, not heavenly. If we get wrapped up in all the pressures and problems of this life, spiritual defeat is certain. Gone will be our strength, the joy of the Lord (**NEHEMIAH 8:10**). Gone will be our stability, the peace of the Lord (**JOHN 16:33**) and gone will be our delight in life, communion with the Lord (**1 JOHN 1:1-4**). Next, Peter tells us to concentrate on Christ’s second coming – “Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (**1 PETER 1:13b**). When the mind starts to get all worldly, consumed with the many responsibilities and challenges of living in this fading world, take a spiritual breather. Stop, look upward, and sigh a nice prayer, “Soon, Lord. Soon.” In fact, a good mindset to develop toward the seriousness of the Christian life is found in the last chapter of our Bibles – “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (**REVELATION 22:13**). Everything else pales in significance to this event of all events!

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to live today with an eye to Your certain return.”

QUOTE: “Self-examination is a vital and indispensable element in the Christian life.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 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)

HEBREWS 13:5 – I will never leave you nor forsake you.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A TWO WAY STREET. In the course of living out the Christian life, we often take our tired hearts to today’s reference. The promise Jesus makes provides a comfort and strength to fight on another day. Yet, this verse has a trap in it. Not a trap of uncertainty. The promise is sure because the Promiser is faithful. The trap is not from above. It is from within. It is the trap of allowing our hearts to take this precious promise for granted either through lack of remembrance or presumption. We may so easily fall into this trap when we don’t respond to His promise of closeness with our perseverance to stay close to Him (**2 PETER 1:3-11**). This is a promise prompting a grateful response to get as close to Jesus Christ in this life as we possibly can. This is about communion with God which is the grand design of salvation. Salvation isn’t a rescue mission to miss hell. Salvation is a reconciliation mission to regain the ability to love God. And when today’s reference warms the heart, our pursuit of Jesus intensifies. First love may very well be maintained in my heart if I keep **HEBREWS 13:5** close to my heart. Speaking of closeness, here is an illustration of what I am attempting for us to understand from a frequent guest in our daily nuggets – my dog Jake.

As one thinks on the ways our Lord Jesus taught, He masterfully seized opportunities presented as He went about His day. Whether birds or flowers, He took observations from His environment and taught powerful lessons about Himself, His Father, and our lives. Just one example is on how to deal with anxiety – “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life” (**MATTHEW 6:26-27**)? Using the Lord’s method, I started looking around at spiritual lessons in my environment. Enter Jake, the masterful teacher. Without injecting any levity, Jake recently illustrated **HEBREWS 13:5** to me – I will never leave you nor forsake you. This little guy clung to me like Velcro. I was laying on the couch, with a book ready to enjoy, and he came, with ball in mouth, putting his head on my arm. “No, Jake. Not now.” That fell on deaf dog eyes. So, I got up and went to a chair. He followed. Remember Velcro. Now the head, with ball in mouth, rested on my leg. Jake started speaking with his eyes, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” I thought, “This animal is persistent.” Again, “No, Jake. Not now” and off to the bedroom I went to be alone to read. Fat chance. Velcro dog was in tow. He persevered and I succumbed to play with Him.

Yes, I could have shut the door and left Jake to his own, but I could not ignore his persistence. He wanted me. He wanted my undivided time and attention. When we make the spiritual application, don’t you think the words of Jesus, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” include His heart’s desire for us to never leave or forsake Him? Communion with God, or any healthy relationship, is two way. How many times have I shut the door on the Lord because I was too tired, too taxed for time spent on temporal things, and though He never has left me or forsaken me, I sure have Him by presumption, neglect, and misplaced priorities. It is a glorious promise that our Lord gives of never leaving or forsaking us. Let’s not fall into the trap of thinking the application is only one way. He longs for us to reciprocate with, “Lord, I will never leave You nor forsake You as You enable me with the power of divine grace and love.”

PRAYER: “Lord Jesus may Your promise to stay close to me cause me to stay close to You.”

QUOTE: “Closer and closer to the heart of Jesus should be the prayer and pursuit of His people each day.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 12, 2010

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

2 TIMOTHY 4:7 – I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **STAY THE COURSE.** The Apostle Paul's last letter he wrote contained both loving instruction and a challenging example to follow. Though a personal correspondence to a man named Timothy, it is preserved for all of us to receive the instruction and the challenge.

In the opening chapter, the instruction directed the timid young pastor to stay the course for God had not given him a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind (**2 TIMOTHY 1:7**). This instruction belongs in the hearts, minds, and lives of all of God's children when fear grips us no matter its flavor. In the closing chapter, the challenge appears in today's reference. Paul stayed the course. He won the prize. He ran the race to completion. This challenge belongs in the hearts, minds, and lives of all of God's children when the weariness of the race fatigues us and the fight against sin finds us receiving a spiritual black eye or two. As one reads Paul's finale and successful crossing of the spiritual finish line, we need to remember what got him there is what will get us there. Yes, he was a “one of a kind” choice vessel for God's mission, but he knew the perils, pitfalls, and pressures along the way – “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies” (**2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-10**). He knew weariness in the Christian life. It makes no sense to exhort believers “not to grow weary in well doing” (**GALATIANS 6:9**) if the high potential of growing weary did not exist.

Another group of individuals knew of weariness. Let's call them “Gideon's Boys” and they appear in the Old Testament book of Judges – “And Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over, he and the 300 men who were with him, exhausted yet pursuing” (**JUDGES 8:4**). Tired from battle and short on strength, these brave soldiers teetered on exhaustion, but they stayed the course. They kept pursuing. James Smith applies this to all of the Lord's people, “All this is true of the Lord's people now. Though the Lord's beloved ones, though the soldiers of the cross, from the burdens they have to bear, from the trials they have to endure, from the conflicts they are engaged in, and from the want of sufficiently feeding on spiritual provisions, they often feel very faint, dejected, and dispirited.”

Have we not experienced such spiritual exhaustion in the good fight of faith? It must be so. We only know the strength in the Lord when we feel the weakness in ourselves. As the Apostle Paul describes the armor of God, he begins, not with the pieces of armor, but the strength of our relationship in the Lord – “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (**EPHESIANS 6:10**). This is where the strength to stay the course is found - in following and staying close to the Captain of our salvation. For Gideon's tired boys? Notice they stayed close to their captain – “he and the 300 men who were with him”. Again, James Smith on the faith of these brave men, “They did not give up, nor give way to carnal reason. They pursued their vanquished foes, in obedience to God's commands, and as encouraged by God's promise.” Though weary, they kept going and prove an excellent model for us. Do we feel faint in prayer? Stay the course. Do we feel faint in service. Stay the course even though we feel weak for He has said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (**2 CORINTHIANS 12:9**).

PRAYER: “Lord, help me in my weariness to see my weakness, leading me to see and live Your sufficiency.”

QUOTE: “We never know the sufficiency in the Lord Jesus until we know the insufficiency in ourselves.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 13, 2010

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

JEREMIAH 2:22 - Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me, declares the Lord GOD.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: ONE CURE. It just wouldn't come off. I scrubbed with soap. I scrubbed with heavy duty hand soap. I scrubbed with detergent. Oh, some of it came off, but not all of it. The stain remained. Its source was a pine tree we called “the big tree” and it sure could put out some sticky pine sap. “The big tree” was great fun for climbing and jumping from its branches into huge piles of its needles, but there was a price to pay. Two hours in the tree left its mark for all to see. The big tree's pine sap left a stain simply refusing to be removed.

Sin and the guilt of it leaves a stain too! And it will not go away with a little elbow grease of religiosity, the scrubbing of moral reformation, or the scraping away by ignoring it. There is only one cure and it cannot be negotiated with our God. Someone in the Old Testament tried to do so. His name was Naaman, a well-respected commander in the Syrian army. The scriptures describe his prestige and his problem – “He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper” (**2 KINGS 5:1**). We may be familiar with the story found in **2 KINGS 5**. Naaman receives wise counsel from the Lord through a little servant girl. He would be healed if he went to the Jordan River and washed seven times in it (**2 KINGS 5:10**). Enter into negotiations with God. Naaman, knowing the filthy nature of the Jordan, and the attack on his pride to so lower himself, responded, “Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage” (**2 KINGS 5:11-12**).

When it comes to healing, whether leprosy in Naaman's case, or sin in our cases, God does not, cannot, and will not negotiate means. He marvelously orchestrated the mystery of the Gospel to provide us with the only means to achieve forgiveness of sin and removal of guilt. There is One name and one means to be free from the bondage of sin and guilt – “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (**ACTS 4:12**). The means is the shed blood of that Name above all names – “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (**1 JOHN 1:7, 9**). Francis Schaeffer tells us of the glorious truth of this one cure for sin and guilt – “Whatever may be the mark of sin in me at any point, whenever I find these marks upon me in any situation, I am not at a dead end, because the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse me from all true guilt, not just once, but as many times as I need. There is always the possibility of a truly new start within a totally rational framework. Thank God that there is always this possibility, upon the basis of the infinite value of the blood of Jesus Christ shed on Calvary's cross.”

There is one cure and it is sufficient. Let's not try to scrub away our sinful actions and attitudes with self-effort. Instead, let's continually learn to exercise faith by bringing them to the One who has already provided the perfect “cleansing agent” for us!

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to lean only on Your finished work of the cross when my sin and guilt seem to overwhelm me.”

QUOTE: “The blood of Christ cleanses from all guilt and sin and that isn't just a historical fact but a present reality.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 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 16:21-23 – From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: LIVING IN THE UNSEEN. We love Peter’s passion and affection for the Lord Jesus. I know many times I have whispered in prayer, “Oh, to be as zealous, bold, and in love with Jesus as this burly fisherman.” Nothing stops that answer to my prayer but me. God wants passion and affection in His people for Him and His causes. Passion and affection are essential in our walk with Jesus Christ. To lack passion for Jesus Christ makes the Christian life a “yawning routine.” To lack affection for Jesus Christ makes us lukewarm and backslidden – “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth” (**REVELATION 3:15-16**). Those are chilling words from our Lord, but also loving words of warning to help us keep the fires of passion and affection burning every day for Him. However, passion and affection, without a mind anchored in heaven and eternal perspective will always lead the Christian astray. Knowledge of God’s will, obtained by steady intake of the Word of God and output of the Word of God by daily practice, makes passion and affection for Jesus what I call “Biblical passion and affection” where the boundaries are set, preventing “wild stallion” emotionalism. True Biblical passion and affection doesn’t begin with what we feel. It begins on where our thoughts are oriented. The Christian life begins in the mind. A Biblically renewed mind knows that we are to be living in the unseen.

In today’s reference, Peter had good intention, great passion and affection for Jesus, and a boldness to defend Him worthy of us following. However, he was wrong. He wasn’t living in the unseen. His mind was on what he heard, saw, and felt from a purely horizontal or earthly plane. And Jesus would not allow it. Peter makes his bold statement of passion, affection, and defense and our Lord quickly cuts him off with serious words, “But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man’” (**MATTHEW 16:21-23**). Jesus went straight to the thinking of Peter. He did not question his loyalty and affection. Read **JOHN 21** and see how Jesus restored Peter, knowing this disciple was committed to Him. Peter needed to think, and thus live, in the unseen world – the spiritual realm to where what we see is hardly ever reality. Paul tells us “As we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (**2 CORINTHIANS 4:18**).

The Christian life is lived from a heavenly perspective. We are instructed to “set our minds on things above, not on things that are on earth” (**COLOSSIANS 3:2**). Peter’s heart flowed with passion and affection for Jesus Christ. The problem was his thinking. All our passions and affections are to go through the filter of a renewed mind. How we think governs the proper expression of our passions and affections. Medical professionals claim that over 10,000 thoughts go through the human mind in one day. As I think of this staggering number, I wonder how many of them are oriented in heaven? The call of us as thinking Christians is to bring every thought captive to obey Christ (**2 CORINTHIANS 10:5**). There, not our passions or affections, is where living in the unseen begins.

PRAYER: “Lord, forgive me when I don’t take my thoughts captive in obedience to You.”

QUOTE: “Thoughts are picture windows into the state of our souls.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 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)

JOHN 17:20-23 – I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. The glory that You have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and You in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE PURPOSE OF ONENESS. I want us to go to a sacred place together. We won't get too close. Just close enough to hear. It almost makes one reluctant to get even that close because of what we are about to experience, but we are invited to do so. We will be taking our shoes off. This will be Moses-like. As I have said before of this passage of scripture, I liken it to “the burning bush” of the New Testament. Remember what Moses was instructed to do – “Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.”² And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.³ And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.”⁴ When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”⁵ Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground” (**EXODUS 3:1-5**). This is holy ground. We are about to hear the God-man, the Son of God, our Great Redeemer and Creator pray and oh what unfolds from His heart! I hope we will carve out about an hour this week, go to this holy ground and meditate. We won't leave our knees the same.

In the portion of our Lord's prayer in today's reference, there are three recurring themes which stand out. The predominant one is our union with the Godhead. Jesus emphasizes our oneness with our God. If we occasionally struggle with assurance, and not a true believer alive hasn't gone through periods of darkness when it comes to assurance, the emphasis Jesus makes on our inseparable union is the greatest antidote to overcome a lack of assurance. It makes the promise “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (**HEBREWS 13:5**) more precious and powerful when coupled with His prayer. The second theme is that this oneness serves a purpose. Our oneness with God isn't for private enjoyment and containment. It serves a purpose beyond us. Every blessing we enjoy from the Lord Jesus has two components to it. First, to nurture our hearts and then find an outlet to nurture others. Spiritual blessings are not hoarded but shared. The third theme in this prayer is the purpose specifically stated – “that the world would believe Jesus came from God and He loved them.”

When we think of unity, does this purpose grip our heart? Does our desire for truth as it is in Jesus find itself consumed with the desires of the Lord found in His prayer? He longs for our oneness to affirm His identity and God's love to those who see it. What a great purpose statement to pursue oneness and truth among believers, even those who might be a little “different” than us. This is indeed sacred ground to hear our Master pray. May the hearing leave us transformed in our lives to pray and pursue the very things we just heard!

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to live out my oneness in You with a desire for Your name and love to be known.”

QUOTE: “We enjoy fellowship with God in private so that we may be influential for Him in public.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 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)

LUKE 8:38-39 – The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **WE MUST GO AND TELL.** This guy had it rough. He couldn't even say his own name. His reputation? The townspeople probably called him “that old crazy man who lives in the rocks”. No family, no friends, and no hope. I gave him a name. Mr. Miserable. The evil one gave him a name too – Legion. The account of this demon-possessed man is found in **LUKE 8:26-39** and he was so far gone, under the control of Satan, that when our Lord asked for his name, the demons replied, not the man – “Jesus then asked him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Legion’, for many demons had entered him” (**LUKE 8:30**).

As the account unfolds, it reveals where the real battle exists. The man seems to have taken a back seat as the dialogue is between Jesus and the demons. We must keep this truth before us. Remember where the real battle arena of spiritual warfare is fought. It isn't in difficult circumstances or trying relationships or the pressures of responsibilities. The Apostle Paul tells us where the action really is located – “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (**EPHESIANS 6:12**). Let's ensure we rightly define the where of spiritual warfare. My schedule being upset isn't spiritual warfare nor is an inconvenience causing me irritation spiritual warfare. My reactions, which too often are not Christlike, are fleshly issues, not evil forces issues. Remember, we have three foes – the world, the devil, and the flesh. We are to grow in understanding the tactics of the devil (**2 CORINTHIANS 2:11**) and part of that growth will be not giving the devil credit for “attacking me” when my flesh is the predominant cause of my spiritual failures. Now back to the riveting account of true spiritual warfare and deliverance.

The climax of the battle comes when the Lord casts out the demons and Mr. Miserable or “the old crazy man” is delivered – “Then people went out to see what happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid” (**LUKE 8:35**). What transcribes next with this healed man is so important to us if we want two things. If we want to be used of the Lord in our sphere of daily influence, we must do what the Lord tells the man to do. And next, if we want to maintain a life of vibrant Christianity where the joy of the Lord, His love and peace, are daily realities, we must understand what time with Jesus is really all about. Lesson number one: the man was told to go and tell - “Jesus sent him away, saying, ‘Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you’” (**LUKE 8:39**). There is no such thing as a “secret service” Christian. We are changed by the Lord to become His agents of change in others. To maintain an exclusive circle of influence which is all Christian keeps the church silent to a world screaming for answers and it makes us disobedient. Lesson number two: the man could not stay with Jesus – “But Jesus sent him away” (**LUKE 8:38b**). We don't spend solitary times with the Lord to remain solitary with the Lord. He won't allow us to remain in the comfort zone. Fellowship times with Him are equipping times with Him. The healed man couldn't stay at the feet of Jesus. He had to go and tell. We, too, cannot stay at Jesus' feet. We learn at His feet so we walk on our feet into a world needing to know Him.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to see my knowing You is not to remain a secret.”

QUOTE: CHARLES SPURGEON, “You do not love the Lord at all unless you love the souls of others.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 19, 2010

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

ROMANS 7:15-18 – 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.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT. **QUITE A MYSTERY.** Let's say we go out for a lunch. In the course of enjoying our meal, I ask these two questions – “How is your spiritual life?” and after we discuss the mutual struggles we have, I follow up with this, “How would you describe your understanding of yourself as a Christian?” Those are not the same questions. The first question we would likely reduce our answers to the mechanics of the spiritual life which is not the spiritual life. We would talk of struggles in prayer, Bible time, sacrificial service in the church . . . good things, but not the main thing. When it comes to question two, would we be able to answer like the Apostle Paul in today's reference? We should. That is the Christian life. Here is the way a man named J.C. Philpot describes the true Christian experience. I hope we find it encouraging as we walk this mysterious pilgrim way.

A MYSTERY TO YOURSELF

“The child of God, therefore, taught by the Spirit, finds there is an inward mystery in himself—the mystery, I mean, of the two natures, of “the flesh lusting against the spirit,” and the “spirit lusting against the flesh.” **Are you not often a mystery to yourself?** Warm one moment, cold the next; abasing yourself one half-hour, exalting yourself the following; loving the world, full of it, steeped up to your lips in it today; crying, groaning, and sighing for a sweet manifestation of the love of God tomorrow; brought down to nothingness, covered with shame and confusion, on your knees before you leave your room; filled with pride and self-importance before you have got downstairs; despising the world, and willing to give it all up for one taste of the love of Jesus when in solitude; trying to grasp it with both hands when in business. What a mystery are you! Touched by love, and stung with enmity; possessing a little wisdom, and a great deal of folly; earthly-minded, and yet having the affections in heaven; pressing forward, and lagging behind; full of sloth, and yet taking the kingdom with violence. And thus the Spirit, by a process which we may feel but cannot adequately describe, leads us into the mystery of the two natures, that “company of two armies,” perpetually struggling and striving against each other in the same bosom. So that one man cannot more differ from another than the same man differs from himself. But do not nature, sense, and reason contradict this? Do not the wise and prudent deny this? “There must be a progressive advance,” they say, “in holiness; there must be a gradual amendment of our nature until at length all sin is rooted out, and we become as perfect as Christ.” But the mystery of the kingdom of heaven is this, that our carnal mind undergoes no alteration, but maintains a perpetual war with grace—and thus, the deeper we sink in self-abasement under a sense of our vileness, the higher we rise in a knowledge of Christ; and the blacker we are in our own view, the more lovely does Jesus appear.”

PRAYER: “Lord, I thank You that Your grace doesn't require me to know the ‘how to's’ of Your work in my life.”

QUOTE: “A Christian is often times a mystery unto themselves.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 20, 2010

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

MATTHEW 11:28-30 – “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **LEARNING TO LEAN**. Are we familiar with the hymn *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*? In the refrain, it reads, “Leaning on Jesus, leaning on Jesus.” The theme of the hymn is taken from **DEUTERONOMY 33:27** – The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Quick question for us – been living out this hymn much lately?

The Matthew references in today’s nugget are great “leaning places” when it comes to living out the hymn. We often find ourselves racing to the promise of soul rest as the pressures of life, the onslaughts of the devil, and the always nagging flesh seek to rob us of soul rest. But have we ever raced to this precious command and promise of Jesus and find ourselves not coming away from it at rest in our souls? I have and it isn’t the fault of the promise or the One who promised. As we look at the promise in verse 28, we cannot sever it from what is attached to it in verses 29 and 30. Too often I plead the promise of rest, but fail to understand my role in seeing the promise come to fruition in my life. Yes, we know those times when the Lord speaks to the storms in our lives like He did the literal storms on the Sea of Galilee, “Peace, be still” and immediately experience His calming presence. Other times, though, the rest appears delayed. The comfort seems to not come. Why? There are a couple of reasons in verses 29 and 30, but I want us to consider just one - the command to “learn of me” in the beginning of verse 29.

How much in our Christian walk have we progressed in knowing our Lord Jesus Christ beyond Savior? Allow me to put forth three roles Jesus performs to His children and ask if we are familiar with and experiencing them. These are roles, if lived out by faith, that are the answer to the promise of soul rest in both today’s references and the hymn, *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*.

First, when our souls are in turmoil due to the accusations from the devil about our sins (**REVELATION 12:10**), do we know Jesus as our Advocate (**1 JOHN 2:1**), pleading our case before the throne? We will know if we do should we find ourselves immediately meeting such condemnation with a leaning on Jesus’ advocacy for us. Another role is the bread of life (**JOHN 6:35**). As our flesh seeks to produce the spirit of discontent and dissatisfaction, whether in relationships or materially, do we run to the Word for extended time to find Jesus, the bread of life, who alone stifles all discontent of the soul? If so, we know Him beyond Savior. He is also our Sustainer. A third role is that of divine Friend. Jesus told His disciples, “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (**JOHN 15:15**). We will know this relationship with Jesus by our prayer lives. When is the last time we simply put aside an extended time, maybe thirty minutes to an hour, not to ask Him for things, but to just be with Him in silent meditation, reading His Word to Him, singing praises . . . things that are relational with a relational God? We are promised soul rest from our Lord and part of the fulfillment of that promise will be our diligence in learning all the things Jesus is to us. As we do, we cannot help but to learn to lean on His everlasting arms.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to lean on Your many roles You are to me.”

QUOTE: “Our resting in Christ will only become reality as we are learning from Christ.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 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)

MARK 6:34 - When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: DEALING WITH PEOPLE. Partial to people. Is it a challenge we face in our lives? The Apostle James gives us a pretty good warning about this – My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? (**JAMES 2:1-4**). James informs us that if we practice partiality, we harbor evil thoughts. And this sin is not hard to commit.

Let's consider first with other Christians. Take a glance back over the past month of Sundays. Did we gravitate to the same people Lord's Day after Lord's Day? Did we go out of our comfort zone or routine to venture into uncharted waters to meet someone we did not know? I've heard it many times . . . "the church is full of cliques. Too much favoritism shown. It's always the same people with the same people." Maybe there is truth to those things. Maybe not, but if we are prone to be like magnets and just get attracted to the same people, week in and week out, we might not think we are partial, but the perception by those "outside our fold" exists that we are indeed partial. Could be a spiritual stumbling rock roaming around our sanctuaries. Let's do something. Make it a point, each week in church, to greet and attempt to talk to someone we do not know.

Okay, we dealt with Christians on Christians. Now what about people we don't know are in the faith. Neighbors, work associates, social contacts in civil or fitness organizations and others that would fall into the ones Jesus saw in today's reference – "a great crowd." How do we react to them? We easily may dismiss this by saying, "I am not partial to them. I don't get involved. I don't interact. We don't really cross paths." If that be so, how unlike the Lord Jesus we truly are! We are partial by the avoidance. Notice the reaction Jesus gave forth when confronted with people – "And He had compassion on them" (**MARK 6:34**). The second greatest command is "to love our neighbor as ourselves" (**MATTHEW 22:39**) and the Lord makes no distinction, or displays partiality to who those neighbors are in our lives. Francis Schaeffer said of the second greatest command, "At this point there is to be no distinction between Christian and non-Christian. I am to love my neighbor, every man, as myself. It is most significant that the last of the Ten Commandments uses the same word; it says we are not to covet anything of our neighbor. Every man is my neighbor and is to be treated in a proper human, man-to-man relationship. Every time we act in a machinelike way towards another man we deny the central teaching of the Word of God – that there is a personal God who has created man in His own image." Want to avoid the sin of partiality among all people? We heed the sound advice of Francis Schaeffer. We learn to view all people, even those difficult ones, as image bearers of God. They are created in the image of God. Such truth demands loving them without partiality for the believer in the Lord Jesus who loves them and gave Himself a ransom for all (**1 TIMOTHY 2:6**).

PRAYER: "Lord, teach me to see all people exactly as You see all people."

QUOTE: "To view all people as image bearers of God is essential to loving all people."

The QBC Daily Nugget July 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)

JOHN 20:1-8 – Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed..

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: DIFFERENT IS QUITE OKAY. The anticipated excitement of the resurrection of our Lord rightly overshadows all the details in today's reference. As we read through these verses, looking ahead to the appearance of the two angels and Mary being privileged to encounter Jesus, it is easy to miss a very important lesson about people found in the first eight verses.

There are three characters on the scene – Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter and John. There are also three different reactions to their attitudes about the empty tomb. First, Mary Magdalene. She came to the tomb, didn't see much for it was dark, but saw the stone was removed and then ran to tell someone. She didn't enter it. Next we see Simon Peter and John. They were in a race to the tomb, neck and neck, but soon John outran Peter and got there first and stopped. John was a lot like Mary. Of John, he simply went to the tomb and "stooping down to look in, he saw the linen cloths there, but he did not go in" (**JOHN 20:5**). Later he would enter, but as a follower of Simon Peter, not a leader. John appeared easily convinced and that isn't bad. He would prove later the reality of a childlike faith and deep love for Jesus. What about our third character on the scene, Simon Peter? He took it a little further – "Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb" (**JOHN 20:6**). Bold and inquisitive, Simon Peter had to get up close and personal. He went into the tomb.

What may we learn from this? Here is how J.C. Ryle wonderfully details the lesson for us, "Let us learn from the case before us to make allowances for wide varieties in the inward character of believers. To do so will save us much trouble in the journey of life and prevent many an uncharitable thought. Let us not judge brethren harshly and set them down in a low place because they do not see or feel things exactly as we see and feel and because things do not affect or strike them just as they affect and strike us. The flowers in the Lord's garden are not all of one color and one scent, though they are all planted by one Spirit. The subjects of His kingdom are not all exactly of one tone and temperament, though they all love the same Savior and are written in the same book of life. The church of Christ has some in its ranks who are like Peter and some who are like John and a place for all and a work for all to do. Let us love all who love Christ in sincerity and thank God that they love Him at all. The great thing is to love Jesus." You know, different is quite okay. Let's ensure our differences with other believers don't become unkind wedges where unity and love are pulled apart bringing discredit to the church of the Lord Jesus.

PRAYER: "Lord, forgive me if I am unloving to people who don't see things my way."

QUOTE: "Our differences are not to be points of contention but allow for the practice of compassion."

The QBC Daily Nugget July 23, 2010

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

1 THESSALONIANS 3:7-13 – Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **MAKE ME.** I would like to think as a young boy growing up in a loving family, I was the perfect son. As I get older, I tend to think that is true, but the Apostle James warns me about self-deception and the command not to bear false witness is still alive and well, so I come back down to reality in my thinking. In my home I knew I was loved. I also knew the zero tolerance rule for disrespect. It was a home where loving discipline was consistent. Failure to “toe the line” was met with the appropriate consequences. And when it came to church, more often than not, I had no interest. I recall one act of disrespect (see above for appropriate consequences) concerning church. It was a simple one-liner . . . “You can make me go but you cannot make me listen.” That type of “make me” crossed the line of parental disrespect (see above for appropriate consequences which were indeed administered that day). However, there are some Biblical examples of “make me” that serve us well when it comes to knowing, loving, and walking with God.

The Psalms overflow with “make me” petitions. Do a study of the “make me” passages sometime. It will challenge our prayer lives, but for today, let’s take a look at three which would be great prayer points to put into our daily times of communion with God. To see these answered would have such a tremendous impact in our fellowship with the Lord. This command “make me” to the Lord is not in the spirit of presumption. It is a command of dependency and urgency. I think we will see this as they unfold. Make me number one – “Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths” (**PSALM 25:4**). Here is the “make me” of understanding how to walk with the Lord. We don’t need a quick read of a contemporary book on the Christian life. We start with the prayer of “make me understand” the Christian life.

Make me number two – “Make your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love” (**PSALM 31:6**). From understanding the ways of the Lord, we find the “make me” of intimacy. The Psalmist longs for the glory of the Lord to radiate its beauty and power upon him. What a great command which surely pleases the Lord when we pray with heartfelt sincerity for fellowship with God.

Then there is make me number three – “O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am” (**PSALM 39:4**). This make me prayer point provides the necessary balance in the Christian life. We must be constantly reminded by the Lord of the quickness of life. What is done for Jesus is done in the now. Time waits for no one as they say and to pray, “Make me know how frail and fleeting life is” will go a long way in helping us live with eternal perspective.

As the words “make me” become part of our prayer lives, we will grow more and more in our dependency upon the Lord. There are times when such commands are appropriate and such times are those when we long for the Lord to do what only He can do – make us like Himself in love and holiness.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to see it isn’t presumption to plead Your commands and promises.”

QUOTE: “The prayer ‘make me, Lord’ reveals a heart knowing its own insufficiency along with the Lord’s sufficiency.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 26, 2010

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

JOHN 15:5 – I am the vine; you are the branches, whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **EGYPTIAN FLIES**. Is our Savior right? We heartily answer, “Why, of course, we cannot do anything without Him.” Each of us knows the spiritual barrenness of attempting to serve the Lord, and even fellowship in prayer and the Word with Him, when not conscientiously submitting to and seeking to abide in Him. Those times of not abiding and thus not being fruitful are easily discernable when under the preaching of the Word or attending a prayer meeting. Our minds go everywhere and the heart follows. We are there, but not there. It is one of the challenges with our remaining sin. Distractions. Physical discomfort distracts us. Emotional upheaval distracts. Spiritual foes distract us. All three pull to take our eyes off Jesus and abiding in Him, resulting in the above mentioned barrenness. The Puritan Richard Steele, in his book *A Remedy for Wandering Thoughts in Worship*, called distractions for God’s people taking them off the things of God “Egyptian flies”. Recall the last time a fly was buzzing around our heads. Did it distract us? Steele is right. We seem to have a lot of “Egyptian flies” buzzing around us seeking to prevent us from a consistent abiding in Jesus. The result is what Jesus said it would be, “apart from me you can do nothing.”

We might not remember the details of all the plagues God brought up against the Egyptians as the plan unfolded to deliver His people. The fourth plague was flies. It wasn’t just a few of those pesky insects. The description reads, “I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants and your people, and into your houses. And the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand” (**EXODUS 8:21**). This wasn’t an outdoor picnic with a few flying distractions being swatted away. These flies occupied every space and everyone. And they left their mark – “There came great swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh and into his servants’ houses. Throughout all the land of Egypt the land was ruined by the swarm of flies” (**EXODUS 8:24**). The results in our spiritual life may be quite as devastating if we don’t do a couple of things.

First, identify the “Egyptian flies” which swarm around distracting us from the things of God. Ask ourselves “fly revealing questions” like what prevents us from faithfulness to the body of Christ? What distracts us from consistently experiencing the Lord in the Word and prayer? What keeps me from serving in the local church? By the way, if we should find ourselves discovering we are not serving in the local body, this is a very big fly. The health of our churches is found in every member serving one another. Read **1 CORINTHIANS 12** and see what a big deal it is to be serving one another – “For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (**1 CORINTHIANS 12:14, 26**). One way we suffer is if some “Egyptian fly” is keeping us from ministering to others. We need each other and if church gets reduced down in our thinking to “what can we get from it” instead of “what can we give to it”, there are some “Egyptian flies” swarming around in our lives causing distractions.

A second thing to do is get rid of these flies. Learn to abide in Jesus. Learn to pray for today’s reference to become more and more a reality. God doesn’t want us distracted from His Son. He is more willing than we are to remove our “Egyptian flies” and learn the joy and privilege of attending to the Lord without distractions. Let’s start swatting away these pesky distractions.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to identify and remove distractions which keep me from abiding in You.”

QUOTE: “Sin is so deceptive that we easily forget its ability to distract us when it comes to seeking God.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 27, 2010

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

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **WHY DO WE WANT IT?** Do a little math with me. Go back and read today's reference again. This time count the number of times the words “comfort, comforts, and comforted” appear. A lot, doesn't it? Comfort is a big deal. God even identifies Himself with the word – “God of all comfort”. Not just that He gives comfort. He is comfort. Pardon the over use, but isn't that a comforting thought? He not only gives us comfort. He is comfort (**2 CORINTHIANS 1:3**).

Okay, let's get out of math class and notice something else about this comfort. What is the purpose of the God of all comfort giving each of us tailor-made comfort? The Apostle Paul immediately gives the answer to the why God's people are comforted – “who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction” (**2 CORINTHIANS 1:4**). It isn't about us or to make it more personal, it isn't about me. One of the greatest lessons we need to learn in the Christian life comes from the wake-up call that what we receive from God needs to be channeled to others. I discover that in my desire for God's comfort, no matter what the situation, if it is simply just about my comfort, I rarely get it. Paul does not tell us comfort given is to be comfort kept. He tells us the God of all comfort gives comfort so that we can give comfort.

James Smith wrote, “The Lord's people often get into a very uncomfortable state, and sometimes they continue in that state for a long season. But there is always some cause for it, and we should seek to know what that cause is, that it may be removed. It is not easy to give an answer to the enquiry, for it must depend on the character of the enquirer. To one the Lord may say, ‘When you humble yourself before me.’ To another, ‘When you frankly confess your sin, seek pardon through the blood of Christ, and engage to walk according to my Word.’ To another, ‘When you come out of the world, and separate yourself unto me.’ To another, ‘When you leave off seeking comfort from selfish motives, and aim at and promote my glory.’ To another, ‘When you leave the bed of sloth, stir up yourself to take hold of me, and seek to make others happy.’ To another, ‘When you enter upon that self-denying duty, mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts.’ In a word, God will comfort you as soon as comfort will secure His glory and your good.”

Consider the list of reasons which Smith gave for God not comforting us when we want it. We don't get from God to keep. We get from God to give and that includes His comfort. For me? I need to constantly seek the “why do I want His comfort?” in my life. In my discovery, if it isn't so I am better equipped to comfort others, I might find myself where Smith said many of the Lord's people are – in a very uncomfortable state. That isn't God's plan for us. And it isn't God's plan for us to keep His comfort to ourselves.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to see the comfort I get from You is not to hoard but to share.”

QUOTE: “Spiritual blessings are not exclusively for private use.”

The QBC Daily Nugget July 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)

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-9 - So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **THOSE NECESSARY THORNS.** It's real. We feel it every day in some fashion or other. It could be fear of talking to someone about the Lord Jesus Christ. Maybe it's the acquiring of material things. Could be a reluctance to step out of our comfort zone and interact with people who may not be quite like us. Might even manifest itself in a reluctance to serve the Lord in a behind the scenes area of service where public recognition isn't going to happen. There is a possibility it rises up inside of us with a critical spirit when we see other people not going about life the way we think it should be or even doing it like us. This thing also pops up among believers in the spirit of judgment toward those "pew sitters" who are seen on Sunday morning and maybe an occasional Sunday night and that is about it, while they, themselves, make the Lord's Day a full day and prayer meeting a "must do" in the weekly schedule of things. Have we figured out what this thing is? Pride. Sinful pride. From fear to materialism to critical and judgmental spirits, this ugly thing always stands ready to stand up and take charge of our lives. And it is crafty. Like the devil – "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord had made" (**GENESIS 3:1**). It deceives us and even may masquerade as humility. For instance, pride may manifest itself when we have an opportunity to share Christ and we dismiss it with whispers, "I don't know how to start the conversation. It just wasn't the right setting." In essence, this is fear crippling us and all fear is the shirt pride wears.

God makes it clear what He thinks of pride, no matter the size, shape, or color it takes. Solomon wrote this, "These six things Jehovah hates; yea, seven are hateful to his soul; a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that plots evil plans, feet hurrying to run to mischief, a false witness who breathes lies, and he who causes strife among brothers" (**PROVERBS 6:16-19**). This is a pretty serious list of things to avoid. Take a look at what tops the list – a proud look. Pride leads the pack of things God doesn't just have a little dislike for, but despises or hates. The reason why He hates it so is because of the devastation it causes us. Trace all our problems from strained relationships to unforgiving spirits to rebellion against the will of God and all paths lead to this – pride. And God loves us so much, He will remove it. He will give us painful thorns, like He did the Apostle Paul, to suppress this ugly thing. What might those thorns be? We cannot say specifically since each of us are walking with the Lord as individuals. One thing for sure, though, as pride gets noticed in our lives, the Lord will bring "thorns" to keep it in check and it might be a thorn that lasts for a long time, maybe our lifetime like the Apostle Paul. Whatever it may be, let's strive to bear it under the strength of grace. Those necessary thorns are doing a necessary work – causing us to decrease so the Lord Jesus will increase.

PRAYER: "Lord, help me see that Your love is committed to destroying pride in my life even at great personal pain."

QUOTE: "Humility never becomes reality without a thorn or two to keep us close to the One who loves humility."

The QBC Daily Nugget July 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)

JUDGES 7:9-11 – That same night the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand. But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant. And you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outposts of the armed men who were in the camp.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS.** Among the Dutch people who cultivate roses is a procedure to ensure the highest qualities of flowers. They plant an inferior rose near one of superior qualities. The inferior one is carefully watched and its anthers removed so as to avoid self-pollenization; the goal being that it should be pollenized by the superior rose. Gradually the rose thus treated takes upon itself the characteristics of the superior life of its companion rose.

Someone recently asked me, "Do you have anyone in your life in which you share your spiritual life? A person who gets to hear of your highs and lows, sins and successes in the Christian life? A person who is committed to you in true Christian fellowship that keeps Christ central in the relationship?" Instead of answering those questions and making this nugget all about me, I send them to all of us, making this nugget about us. How would we answer it? Is there a Paul in our life who provides spiritual mentoring as he did young Timothy? Is there a Barnabas in our life who encourages us often? Are we a Paul to someone in a mentoring role? Are we a Barnabas to someone, encouraging them along the perilous journey to heaven? When we consider how Jesus taught His disciples, the "with them" method stands out with clarity. He spent time, lots of time, with the twelve modeling, instructing, and conversing about things that matter most. If such relationships are foreign to us, we will find ourselves stymied in our Christian growth. We need those special relationships, outside of our wives and husbands, but to include our wives and husbands, to share and grow in our Lord Jesus Christ. To go alone, without a spiritual companion or two, is to invite a spirit of individualism and isolationism. Both are contrary to not only the method Jesus used to develop His disciples, but the concept and functioning of the church – "So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (**ROMANS 12:4-5**).

In today's reference, we see the strength of having a close companion. God commanded Gideon to go to war, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand" (**JUDGES 7:9**). And then we see the great compassion of God in dealing with human weakness – "But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant" (**JUDGES 7:10**). Gideon felt the fear factor of "going alone" so God provides for him a companion. There is strength and protection in numbers. Solomon wrote, in **ECCLESIASTES 4:9-11**, "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! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?" Ironically, one reason we shy away from developing such intimate spiritual companions is the very reason Gideon needed a close companion – fear. We hesitate to get into one on one relationship because we are afraid to "take our shoes off" and let someone really know us. Even more ironic is that if we venture into the developing of close spiritual companions we will soon discover we experience the same highs and lows. Our fear of being "real" will flee finding not discouragement, but encouragement, in the relationship. Do we have spiritual companions? We need them. We were not saved to go alone on the journey to heaven.

PRAYER: "Lord, protect me from self-deception in thinking I can live the Christian life alone."

QUOTE: "To live the Christian life without Christian fellowship is to entertain spiritual disaster."

The QBC Daily Nugget July 30, 2010

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

MATTHEW 15:22-28 – And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: IT ISN'T ALWAYS AS IT APPEARS. Sometimes things just don't appear as they really are. The life of sense, whether seeing, feeling, or hearing, collides with the life of faith. If not careful, the well-meaning Christian may be guilty of misinterpreting the mysterious ways God deals with them during times of severe testing. Read the book of Job paying close attention to the counsel of Job's friends. They boldly diagnosed Job's spiritual problem. He was a hypocrite. They proclaimed to know how God was dealing with him. Severe chastisement. And at the end of the book? The Lord rebukes Job's friends with these words, "After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has" (JOB 42:7). These guys wanted to help their hurting friend, but they got it all wrong. They thought they had the Lord all figured out. It turned out they had nothing figured out. Things are not always as they appear to be.

In today's reference, this same principle applies. Enter the scene. A woman, in deep agony over her daughter's spiritual condition, comes to Jesus for help. And she came begging. Knowing the Jesus we know, we are ready to praise Him for yet another example of His compassion in helping someone who sincerely came to Him for what only He could do. But . . . the begging woman doesn't get the immediate help she sought. In fact, she appeared to not even get Jesus' attention - "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word" (**MATTHEW 15:22-23**). And it got worse. Not only the appearance of indifference by our Lord, but He calls her a "dog" – "But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (**MATTHEW 15:25-26**).

How would we react if we went to someone for help and got that type of treatment? Anger? Lash out with unkind retaliation? We would walk away with a pretty sour taste in our mouth about such cruelty. With us sinful humans, it would be cruel. With the perfect, always kind and loving Jesus, it wasn't cruel. It was a test of faith. How did the hurting Canaanite woman respond? She acknowledged her unworthiness to receive anything from Him. Read how Albert Barnes described her response, "So let me be regarded as a dog, a pagan, as unworthy of everything. Yet grant one exertion of that almighty power displayed so signally among the Jews, and heal the despised daughter of a despised heathen mother." That is what faith does. It doesn't pay attention to what may appear to be true. It clings to what is true. Appearance often deceives. Faith in who God is, as revealed by His Word, never deceives. As we go through daily trials, learn from this woman. It isn't always as it appears and especially so as God mysteriously tests us in order to grow us.

PRAYER: "Lord, teach me to see You through the eyes of faith in Your Word, not my sinful perceptions."

QUOTE: "A mature Christian is slow to brag of knowing God's ways but is quick to submit to His ways."