

THE QBC DAILY NUGGET

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



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Quidnessett Baptist Church
6356 Post Road
North Kingstown, RI 02852

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

2 CHRONICLES 32:31 – And so in the matter of the envoys of the princes of Babylon, who had been sent to him to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land, God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **THE FORSAKING LOVE OF GOD.** King Hezekiah proved to be a king who really loved God. His list of God-honoring accomplishments are impressive. He cleansed the temple of its filthiness (**2 CHRONICLES 29:3-19**). He also restored true temple worship (**2 CHRONICLES 29:20-30:27**). He provided strong leadership in the organization of the priests (**2 CHRONICLES 31:2**). A good summary verse of his reign and life would be this – “And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered” (**2 CHRONICLES 31:21**). But all his heart doesn’t mean with a perfect heart. Despite all the good, he had what each of us carries around in the baggage of our heart – pride – “In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death, and he prayed to the Lord, and He answered him and gave him a sign. But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud” (**2 CHRONICLES 32:24-25**).

Pride. In our fallen world’s dictionary, it is a virtue. In God’s design for us and by definition, it is a heinous sin. A great sin. An abomination. The mother sin giving birth to all other sins. Solomon wrote, “These six 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 wicked plans, feet hurrying to run to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and he who causes fighting among brothers” (**PROVERBS 6:16-19**). God lists pride in first place of things He hates. When it sticks its ugly head around the corner of our hearts and wants attention, God’s love for us will come with force to squash it. If one really wanted to whittle down the big theological word “sanctification”, which is the Christian life, we could say, “Sanctification is the daily process of pride being replaced by humility.” In the process, we will need to go through what I call “the forsaking love of God.”

Before we get to what that looks like, let’s define what it doesn’t mean. It doesn’t mean, “We’d better be good or God is going to forsake us.” No, we have the sure promises from our Lord Jesus that He will never leave us or forsake us (**MATTHEW 28:18-20, HEBREWS 13:5**). We are kept, not by our perseverance, but by the Lord’s preservation. We will never be out of His hands, however, in order to get a good look at ourselves and our pride, we will experience what Hezekiah had to experience in today’s reference – “God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart” (**2 CHRONICLES 32:31c**). The Puritan Thomas Brooks wrote in his book *The Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod* that God often appears to forsake His people for good reasons. One is to value His fellowship with greater intensity. Is it not true that we value something far more when it is taken away or we lose it? Do we ever take for granted the blessings of God? What about a sense of His loving presence in our lives? Yes, we do. Our sinful pride draws us to take our good God for granted. When that happens, His great love for us may appear like forsaking love as He shows us our ugly, prideful and independent heart by leaving us to ourselves. As we go through Hezekiah’s school of learning, let’s not grumble or complain. His “forsaking love” is not permanent and will produce the good fruit of righteousness.

PRAYER: “Lord, protect me from my greatest foe. The one I see in the mirror each day.”

QUOTE: “The love of God includes times of withholding a sense of such love in order to try our hearts.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

2 CHRONICLES 33:1-6 - Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down, and he erected altars to the Baals, and made Asherahs, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem shall my name be forever." And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **THE FAR REACH OF GRACE.** As we read Israel's history in the Old Testament, we run into opening statements of what characterized the reigns of their kings. Some read like what we read of Manasseh – “He did evil in the sight of Jehovah” (**2 CHRONICLES 33:1**). And did he ever commit evil! Read through again his evil against the Lord. False worship reinstated, practicing of fortune-telling (I am sure he read the daily horoscopes in the papers), boldly entertained avenues of Satanic influence, and even sacrificed his boys as offerings to false gods. He was bad, very bad, but don't be quick to pass harsh, critical, and eternal judgment upon him. The Apostle Paul said of himself, “I am what I am by the grace of God” (**1 CORINTHIANS 15:10**) and he could say that because he knew this – “I am the chief of sinners” (**1 TIMOTHY 1:15**). Manasseh was quite evil and so is every other human heart, including Paul's and ours. We do open our eyes wide at the depth of evil this king plunged, but none of us is incapable of the most heinous of sins. And when Jesus tells us that even our thoughts are counted as actions (**MATTHEW 5:27-28**) and anger is akin to murder (**MATTHEW 5:21-22**), we should go real slow on slicing up King Manasseh.

Though Manasseh went far into evil, he was not beyond the far reach of God's grace - “The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention. Therefore the LORD brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon. And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God” (**2 CHRONICLES 33:10-13**).

There are many people who struggle with forgiveness. They believe their sins of such an evil nature God will not forgive them. The conversations I've had and biographies read of such timid souls reveals a genuine humility wanting to know the pardon of God, but great distress over God's willingness to forgive them. I wonder if Manasseh felt that way. He experienced great distress and under such awareness of his sin, he might have put his head in his hands and cried out, “Oh, how evil I have been. Oh, God, can You forgive such a wretched man as me?” And what happened? The far reach of God's grace – “He prayed to Him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea” (**2 CHRONICLES 33:13**). Manasseh was not out of the reach of grace. Neither are any of us. Let's rejoice that His grace is greater and reaches farther than our sins!

PRAYER: “Lord, I praise You for being a God who doesn't give up on me in my many failings.”

QUOTE: O. WINSLOW, “Every drop of Christ's fullness of grace is yours! And you have not a sin grace cannot cancel.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

LUKE 12:35-40 – “Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **WHAT A PRIVILEGE!** The gift of hospitality. Some people love it. When invited to their homes, whether in a small group Bible study or just a few folks getting together for prayer or fellowship, it is a marvel to watch this gift of the Lord in action. It encourages all. Though some of us don't have the gift of hospitality, we thoroughly enjoy being the recipients of those who sacrificially practice it. When it comes to its practice, the number one thing topping the list and making it work so well is preparedness. Everything is right where it needs to be. Nothing is missing. It is quite clear that planning, time, and energy went into high gear prior to the event. And when it starts? Those with the gift get to the door fast and as guests arrive, they receive a welcome full of grace, love, and ready hearts to serve them.

As we read today's reference, a couple of things stick out. First, the need for the believer in Jesus Christ to be always ready for His return. We don't know when and are exhorted to “Stay dressed for action” (**LUKE 12:35**). Another thing which seems to grab our quick attention is the warning of not being ready – “But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (**LUKE 12:39-40**). Take a moment to ask ourselves our level of readiness for His return. Have we thought about it recently? Like today. Like now. The implication of our Lord is that we are to live each moment anticipating this event. I am sure each of us has had moments of spiritual lapse where we are glad the Lord did not come at that precise time. Our actions and attitudes may not have been what they should have been. The Apostle John tells us this type of shame is quite possible for us – “And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming” (**1 JOHN 2:28**). This potential shame keeps the heart humble and makes our daily walk with the Lord Jesus diligent so as to avoid what John says is possible. There is a third thing in this passage which we must not miss and thrills the soul. It is about hospitality. Look who stands ready to serve those people who are diligently watching for the Lord Jesus – “Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them” (**LUKE 12:37**). Jesus Himself. We encourage one another to serve the Lord and rightly so (**HEBREWS 10:24**), but let the truth that Jesus will serve us warm the soul. He will show us the greatest act of hospitality we have ever known – He will seat us at His table and serve us. Want a motive to be watching for Him? Consider what a privilege to be the recipient of His gift of hospitality.

PRAYER: “Lord, keep me anticipating that great day of sitting at Your table with You.”

QUOTE: “Heavenly-mindedness is essential to holy living.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

JUDGES 13:21-24 – The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God." But his wife said to him, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these." And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and the LORD blessed him.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **A VOICE OF REASON.** I like Manoah, Samson's dad. Maybe because I see a little of me in him. Maybe you see a little of you in him also. Today's reference is only a portion of this account about Manoah and his wife. When time permits, read the entire dialogue between Manoah, his wife, and the Angel of the Lord. What we see are folks who exercised childlike faith in the Word of the Lord concerning the promise of a son (**JUDGES 13:1-21**).

Here are two illustrations of their faith. First, Manoah's simple trust in God's promise – "Then Manoah prayed to the LORD and said, "O Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with the child who will be born." And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field. But Manoah her husband was not with her. So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, "Behold, the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me." And Manoah arose and went after his wife and came to the man and said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to this woman?" And he said, "I am." And Manoah said, "Now when your words come true, what is to be the child's manner of life, and what is his mission (**JUDGES 13:8-12**)?" Manoah showed great faith with the words, "Now when your words come true" (**JUDGES 13:12**). No doubting from him. Just matter of fact trust in what the Angel of the Lord said would come to pass. Then we see Manoah and his wife worshipping – "And when the flame went up towards heaven from the altar, the angel of the Lord went up in the flame of the altar. Now Manoah and his wife were watching, and they fell on their faces on the ground" (**JUDGES 13:20**). A good litmus test of where we are in our spiritual journey is how much worship occupies our daily thinking. Samson's parents provide good models of faith. Samson's dad also provides a good example of what happens when faith gives way to human reasoning and the need for people in our lives who can help us get away from such reasoning.

After all the faith exercising exchange with the Angel of the Lord and He departs, Manoah says to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God" (**JUDGES 13:22**). What happened to the faith in God's promise? Forgotten and when promises get forgotten, welcome human reasoning leading to doubts and fears. But God's grace gave Manoah a pretty good wife, one with the voice of sound reason. She replies, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these" (**JUDGES 13:23**). Do we attempt to reason things on our own? Do we find ourselves trying to make sense of things that don't make sense? One of the clearest instructions we have in the scriptures is never to trust our hearts. One way to prevent that is wise counsel from godly people. Don't be alone when trying to cut through spiritual fog. Like Manoah, listen to a voice of sound reason who can help cut through the confusion.

PRAYER: "Lord, thank You for giving me Your Word and mature Christians to help see things clearly."

QUOTE: "To travel the Christian life trusting one's reasoning and heart is a road full of dangerous spiritual potholes."

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

MARK 13:32-37 - "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake--for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning-- lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **SPIRITUAL SLEEP WALKING.** The word is Somnambulism. I never heard of this technical name. I knew it by its simple name – sleep walking. Here are some tidbits I came across about it. Sleep walking is practiced mainly by children. It appears to be caused by an immaturity of the central nervous system. Some people sleep walk all their adult lives, and there are many tales of the things they have done—driving cars, cooking, even committing murder. Sleepwalkers frequently keep their eyes open and wear vacant expressions, but do not hold their arms out stiffly in front of them the way it's done in comic strips. They do, however, move somewhat rigidly. A man named Bobby Bessen once walked out the front door of his house, circumnavigated the block and then returned to his own bed without waking up. Like all sleepwalkers he never remembers his night's adventures.

I never experienced sleep walking from a physical standpoint. At least I don't remember and those near and dear to me haven't shared with me any personal sleep walking adventures. I wonder, though, if maybe I have experienced "spiritual sleep walking" to where I function in life with the many things to do, many places to go, many people to see, many events to attend and have been oblivious to the spiritual impacts and realities of everything I just mentioned. No doubt, I am guilty of spiritual sleep walking too often.

The words of Jesus in today's reference address spiritual sleep walking and come forth from Him with passion and urgency. Three times He commands us to "Keep awake" (**MARK 13:33**), "Stay awake" (**MARK 13:36**), and "Stay awake" (**MARK 13:37**). Three times in six verses places this as a high priority in the Lord's heart for His people. And what is a high priority in His heart is to be a high priority in our hearts. He commands us not to walk through the routines of our lives in a state of spiritual sleep walking. When we consider the emphasis He places on staying spiritually awake and maintaining a life reflecting spiritual priorities, we must conclude that such emphasis means we are prone not to stay awake and to drift away from a life of spiritual priorities. Jesus' repeated reminders show us the tendency within each of us to drift away from that very thing He reminds us of. The writer of Hebrews wrote, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it" (**HEBREWS 2:1**). Spiritual drifting leads to spiritual sleep walking. Drifting is not hard to do. Go boating or lay on a raft in a river, cut the engine on the boat or don't paddle yourself against the current. What happens? We drift and it requires nothing on our part to start the drifting process. Spiritually, it is the same. Allow some drifting and soon spiritual sleep walking takes over and it happens so fast, that like actual sleepwalkers, we might be oblivious to it even occurring. Sleep is a good thing. A nice healthy nap is highly recommended but let's strive to avoid going into a state of spiritual sleep walking by heeding the words of our Lord. He is coming. We want to be wide awake in our hearts, minds, and lives when He comes.

PRAYER: "Lord, when I want to take a 'spiritual time out', help me to lean more on Your neverending supply of strength."

QUOTE: "Spiritual rest does not mean spiritual sleeping."

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

EZRA 4:1-4 – Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the LORD, the God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' houses and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us here." But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses in Israel said to them, "You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us." Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **AVOID THE DOWNERS.** Negative people. Discouraging people. Drag you down people. The kind that looks for the dark cloud on a perfectly beautiful day. The kind that doesn't like change, rejecting it wholesale before they even hear it out. And those categories of people are not found just in the world and outside of Christ. They are in our churches, Bible studies, and prayer meetings. We might even find ourselves occasionally falling into one of those categories. I have to admit, I've been known to "go negative" and bring dark clouds of discouragement into people's lives on occasion. When that happens, I like to run to **ROMANS 7** and particularly this verse, "So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me, that is in my flesh" (**ROMANS 7:17**). It may make me feel like I am getting off the hook and shifting blame away from me, but in actuality, I choose to be a negative person. All of us do. We don't like it. Enter **ROMANS 7:17**, but we allow it. We choose to be "downers" at times. The reason is likely one of two things. First, we get grumpy and discouraging because we didn't get our way in something. Could possibly apply to the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin in today's reference when they didn't get their way in helping build the temple. The other reason causing us to be negative and discouraging is envy. Maybe a little jealousy of another brother or sister in some area has strained a relationship, though hidden to them, it eats away at us. We become inwardly dirty making our heart like the Peanuts character, "Pig Pen" who walked around with a dirty cloud over him. Stay away from that guy if you want to be clean. And stay away from spiritual negativism if you want to be inwardly clean too!

What happens when negativism takes over a heart and life? We may find ourselves like the enemies of Judah and Benjamin. These guys went from potential "partners in building" to "aggressors in stopping the building" and influenced the people of God into the deep pit of discouragement, "Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia" (**EZRA 4:4-5**). The pressure of negativism created fear and paralysis in the work of the Lord by the people of the Lord. Nothing so discourages tender hearted saints, wanting to see Jesus Christ exalted and His Kingdom work advanced, than other believers who look at the negative side of things. That doesn't mean avoid prudent and prayerful planning. It does mean don't be quick to discourage change or new direction. Jesus came to save and encourage. The battle is hard. The race is long. We need to avoid not only the downers in our spiritual journey but ensure we are not one!

PRAYER: "Lord, teach to be more and more a lifter up of people."

QUOTE: "The Lord comes to encourage, not discourage, us along the way to heaven. Go and do likewise."

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

PROVERBS 3:11-12 - My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: REMEMBERS WHO HOLDS THE ROD. A pastor was once trying to comfort a woman who experienced severe trials. Failing to cheer her up and dispel her doubts and fears, he took up a quilt she was working on and said, “What a confusion of thread! What a waste of time on a thing like that.” Somewhat offended but defensive of her work, the lady grabbed the quilt and turned it right side up and said, “Now look at it. You were seeing it from the wrong side.” The pastor smiled at this dear saint and said, “That is exactly the way you are looking at your trials too, sister. From the wrong side being up and in view. Turn them over and look at them from the right side, that is, from God's side. The Lord is working out a design of His own for your life and His glory. You must look at things from His point of view, and trust His workmanship.” It wasn't long before the sun shined upon her soul once again when she got her vision right.

It is easy to read a story like that and whisper an “amen” or nod of approval when our lives don't match the lady in the story above. When we are sailing along on calm seas of life with an occasional ripple or two, nothing big rocking our boats. Yes, it doesn't take much effort to read a story about another person going through the deep dark valley of trials and move on when we are not wearing their shoes. However, that scenario is fantasy for the true believer. We are either going into a trial, coming out of one, or experiencing one. It is the way of the cross. And the purpose of those painful trials is to get our point of view like the quilting lady. To see life always from God's point of view, not ours.

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he opens up the letter to them with God's point of view – “And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (**PHILIPPIANS 1:6**). What is that “good work” being done by God? We find the answer in the book of Romans, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (**ROMANS 8:28-29**). The good work is the conforming work of us into the image of Jesus. So, let me ask a real personal question. How much are you like Jesus? If you answer it like I answer it, I need a lot of work and that means a lot of trials to humble me, mold me, and bring me into submission to the good work He is doing. The key to us keeping the proper view and prospering during this work of painful conformity is our heart response. In today's reference, Solomon tells us two things to do under this work of God. First, don't get a hard heart about it – “do not despise the LORD's discipline”. If we do rebel, the trials get repeated and heated. His love won't let us stay in rebellion to His rod of correction. The second thing is don't get tired of it – “or be weary of His reproof”. And that isn't easy because this process of conformity is painful and we don't like pain. So, how do we avoid these attitudes? I think John Bunyan offers us the way. He said, “Let us learn to kiss the rod, and love it.” We will do that when we remember who holds the rod.

PRAYER: “Lord, forgive me when I think wrong thoughts of You when under Your discipline.”

QUOTE: FRANCOIS FENELON, “God never strikes except for motives of love.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

ACTS 21:10-14 - While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **LET IT GO.** Let's have a brief theology discussion. Brief because we will only ask one question. What are God's works of providence? We may not get out of the question with the simple answer, "Why it was His work of establishing the city of Providence, Rhode Island back in 1636." This is true and it does have a religious connotation since it was founded by Roger Williams, a religious exile from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He actually named the city in honor of "God's merciful Providence" which he believed was given for him and his followers as a safe haven. However, that doesn't answer the theology question, "What are God's works of providence?"

In the spirit of grace, this is an open book test so here are some helps in getting a handle on God's providence, "O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures" (**PSALM 104:24**), "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (**MATTHEW 10:29-31**). As we mull over these verses, here is how *The Baptist Catechism* summarizes them to form the definition of God's works of providence – "God's works of providence are His most holy, wise, powerful preserving, and governing of all His creatures, and all their actions." Isn't that good and comforting? Especially when we go back to **MATTHEW 10:29-31** and read of our Father's always loving work of providence in His children's lives. But what about those periods of "dark providence"? Dark providence is when we simply feel like we are walking alone in tough circumstances with our hearts breaking, the sense of the Lord's presence absent, and we cry out like David, "Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide Yourself in times of trouble (**PSALM 10:1**)? Neither "why" was true, but they felt true. God's mysterious providence doesn't always feel good, but it is always good. The Puritan Obadiah Sedgwick wrote a book titled *Providence Handled Practically*. Sedgwick wrote two chapters under the title "Don't Vex Your Mind" and how appropriately titled for during trying times we do exactly that very thing – vex the mind. There was some "vexing of the mind" going on in today's reference about direction for the Apostle Paul. Some gave counsel not to go to Jerusalem. Paul adamantly affirmed it was right for him to go. What was the final outcome – surrender to God's providence. Let it go – "And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done" (**ACTS 21:14**).

There are times when we just cannot figure out what to do and the best course of action might be no action, but waiting on God's providence to unfold. Sedgwick wrote, "Waiting upon providence is an unlimited resignation of ourselves and our desires to the seasons or times of God's good pleasure, with a continued expectation of some good promised." There are times where no action but waiting action is the right action. Sometimes, we just need to let go and wait on God.

PRAYER: "Lord, enable me to trust You in all situations, all the time, even when all appears dark."

QUOTE: "When the way isn't clear, don't be quick to move."

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

PHILIPPIANS 1:29 – For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for his sake.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A PURPOSEFUL PAIN. The book title intrigued me. I guess that is why wise people who write books work hard on titles to do just that. Once a title grips, then perhaps a recommendation grips, followed by a preview of a chapter that grips, and soon the book is in one's personal library. The book which accomplished all three of those gripping actions to me is called “The Call to Joy and Pain”.

Let's be honest. I don't think anyone really likes suffering. Perhaps some people do, but I haven't met any of them in my lifetime. I know people who have suffered tremendously and they either grew bitter or better from it, but I didn't see enjoyment in the suffering. Yet, when it comes to the Christian life, our theology must include what the title of the book I referred to states, “The Call of Joy and Pain.” That doesn't mean we go off the deep end and have every Bible study and pulpit series focus on pain, pain, pain, and suffering, suffering, suffering, but we do need to hear about it and hear about it often along with the joy of the Lord associated with our pain and suffering.

In today's reference, the Apostle Paul encourages these healthy believers in the church at Philippi with the truth that they have been given two great gifts from God. The first gift was faith in Christ – “it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should believe in Him” (**PHILIPPIANS 1:29a**). The King James Version reads, “For unto you it is given.” What do we normally give to people? Gifts. Get ready for the definition of the word “granted” or “given” in today's reference. It literally means, “to grant as a favor, that is, gratuitously, in kindness.” So that means for us as believers, God has granted us the tremendous gift or favor of believing in His Son. We are ready to gather around His throne and thank Him forever for such a privilege and we will. However, the verse doesn't stop there. There is another gift from God. It is the gift of suffering – “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for his sake” (**PHILIPPIANS 1:29**). Are we still ready to gather around the throne and thank Him for this gift? What about the last time we experienced deep suffering for the sake of Christ? A period of spiritual warfare that left us battered and tired or reproached from a family member as we sought to share the Gospel. How did we respond? Did we walk away knowing that such suffering was a gift just like faith? Here is an excerpt from the book I mentioned, “The Bible often describes suffering as an essential aspect of the Christian life. Therefore this should be a theme that appears often in Christian thinking and communication. Yet, with the affluence and technological advancement of the twenty-first century, many have come to regard comfort and convenience as essential human rights. Therefore the Biblical message of the essentialness of the cross has become culturally incompatible with the way many think today. The need for more reflection on this issue has become especially acute because some popular Christian teachers say that it is not God's will for Christians to suffer.”

Suffering is a purposeful pain. Whether it is suffering verbal abuse for Christ, suffering chastisement for our sins as God's children, or even at times physical suffering for Christ, it does a work on the soul that nothing else will. It purges one of self. It brings us to dependency on Him who suffered more than we will ever experience. And ironically, our greatest joy in Christ will occur during our greatest periods of suffering. I guess the title of the book was right on – we are called to joy and pain as believers in the Lord Jesus.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to see the sufferings in this life are purposeful pains.”

QUOTE: OCTAVIUS WINSLOW, “The preciousness and tenderness of Jesus are learned in the dark hour of suffering.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

JOHN 15:1-11 – “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A PRAYER TO LIVE BY. How does one describe these words of our Lord in today's reference? They are clearly the answer to living out the Christian life. They are profound, mysterious, soul-stirring, wonderful, challenging, lofty, overwhelming, humbling, and worthy of many hours of prayer for understanding and application as well as meditation to produce a genuine spirit of worship.

In my feeble attempt to get my heart around the parable of the vine and branches, the prayer called “St. Patrick's Breastplate” seemed to a good starting point to help understand what it means to abide in Christ and be consumed by Him. The prayer is over 1500 years old but is just as relevant for today's Christian who is genuinely hungry and thirsting for righteousness. Here is a part of the prayer, “Christ be with me, Christ in the front, Christ in the rear, Christ within me, Christ below me, Christ above me, Christ at my right hand, Christ at my left, Christ in the fort, Christ in the Chariot seat, Christ at the helm, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks to me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.”

As we read this prayer, doesn't it strike a chord deep inside of our souls with words like, “That is a great prayer to live by”? To walk through each day consumed with abiding in Christ in every word, thought and deed is God's desire for us. It is the distinction we are to offer the world of a living Christ on display, through us, at all times. Paul told the Philippians, “Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life” (**PHILIPPIANS 2:14-16a**). This is a tall order he gives with words like “do all things without grumbling and questioning” and such a tall order should drive us to not only the prayer of St. Patrick's Breastplate, but more importantly, the earnest seeking of living out the reality of the parable of the vine and branches.

As we seek to be consumed by Christ, it all begins with the simple truth we cannot be consumed with Christ on our own. In our desire for the parable of the vine and branches to become real and personal in our daily lives, we must begin with the truth of our inability, not ability. Don't miss what Jesus said, “For apart from me you can do nothing” (JOHN 15:5).

PRAYER: “Lord, consume my life with You – the beauty of Your majestic holiness and unparalleled humility.”

QUOTE: “The closer we get to Christ, the more people will notice Christ.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

ROMANS 12:9 – Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **REACTING TO SIN.** Some of you know I experienced an acute allergic reaction to food recently. I won't go into the details. Those who have experienced it know the details. Just one word sums it up – horrible. I think it was shrimp. It's a little humbling to say, “I got beat up by a shrimp.” Sounds like something one would hear on the playground where a fight broke out and some little guy got the best of the situation over a bigger guy. Whether my experience was caused by shrimp or not, I do know a couple of things have occurred in my life since I received the VIP treatment at the Newport Hospital emergency room. First, my attitude toward those little critters is different. Until I learn otherwise, I'm committed to avoid those things and where they might just so happen to be found. Should anyone desire to take me to lunch or dinner and the suggestion is seafood, I have a good idea of what you really think of me. Another thing has occurred in my thinking since this episode – something appearing small and harmless may produce big and bad consequences. Yes, I am not looking at shrimp like I used to look at shrimp. Due to my reaction, my reaction is different.

As I thought about this experience, I applied it to my reaction to a far greater danger than an allergic food reaction – my reaction to sin and particularly, my sin. Is there a healthy awareness of its danger to me? To us? There are three reactions to sin we may experience in our lives. First, we allow it. We struggle against it for a while, but grow tired of the fight and resign ourselves to this “thorn in the flesh” or “besetting sin” as something that is just going to be with us all the days of our lives. If we are reacting toward our sin in this fashion, we might be called “Christian defeatists” for we are failing to realize the glorious truth – “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under the law” (**ROMANS 6:14**). Another reaction toward sin is refusal to fight against it. This is close to position one, but may indicate a spiritual immaturity which is ignorant that the Christian life is a moment-by-moment conflict against sin. When we are weary of the fight and give into discouragement because we just never seem to get “over the hump” in the battle against sin, we might be labeled “Christian Prisoners of War”. It isn't that we lose our victory in Christ, but we do lose the joy in our victory in Christ. John wrote of those who are fighting the good fight as Christians soldiers, “I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one” (**1 JOHN 2:14**). A refusal to wage constant war against remaining sin is a very negative reaction to sin with severe spiritual consequences both now and in the future. A final reaction toward sin is to enjoy it. Don't think even as a Christian the pleasures of sin are removed. If anything, our adversary paints the delights of sin more vividly toward the believer. Moses knew the struggle and the need to be decisive against this evil - “By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin” (**HEBREWS 11:24-25**). Sin is serious. Jesus died for it. As we consider the negative consequences of sin, let's also consider the negative reactions toward sin which may seek to get a foothold in our minds.

PRAYER: “Lord, deepen my hatred and avoidance of the very thing bringing You to die for me - sin.”

QUOTE: MATTHEW HENRY, “The best of saints may be tempted to the worst of sins.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

1 SAMUEL 1:9-13 - After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. And she vowed a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head." As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE HEART IN PRAYER. I remember the very first Bible study and prayer meeting I attended onboard ship right after the Lord saved me. I don't remember the topic or text. What I remember was the praying. As I sat among a group of sailors who just a day or so before I mocked as religious Jesus freaks, but now I viewed as some pretty neat guys, I listened to their prayers. As I observed, I thought, "Please don't call on me. I don't know a thing about prayer. I don't know how to pray and what I am hearing reveals a knowledge of Jesus that is very personal, real, and that isn't me right now." Oh, I knew the Lord changed me, but I knew very, very, little of the Lord who changed me. Sometimes I still feel that way as the mysterious walk of faith with Jesus unfolds.

In recalling that shipboard Bible study and prayer meeting, I am reminded of the praying of Hannah found in today's reference. It isn't her words that strike me. Just like that night huddled on the deck in a small compartment in a ship steaming around the Mediterranean Sea. It wasn't the words of those believing sailors in their prayers that moved me. It was the heart behind the words and even the silent moments of waiting on the Lord that left their marks deep and lasting in me.

Let's attempt to observe Hannah's heart in prayer, not just the words in her praying. Experience her heart – "she was deeply distressed" (**1 SAMUEL 1:10**). The King James Version describes this distress as "bitterness of soul" revealing a pain nearly indescribable but known by all true believers in Jesus. We also see this in our Lord Jesus as He entered into prayer at Gethsemane, "My soul is very sorrowful" (**MATTHEW 26:38**). Do we find ourselves driven to prayer out of deep anguish of soul? I don't believe we really experience prayer as we should unless we know what Hannah and the Lord knew – a breaking of the heart to where words don't matter, just the inward groan of a heart. For Hannah and us, this groan is a genuine wordless yearning for the gentle touch of Jesus. John Bunyan once said, "That is but poor prayer which is only one of words. The best prayers have often more groans than words." Enter another truth about Hannah's heart of prayer – her inward distress did not cause her to abandon her praying, "As she continued praying before the Lord" (**1 SAMUEL 1:12**). Ever give up praying as it seems God isn't intervening? His timing is not ours and if we focus more inward while praying instead of outward and upward, we will quit. The flesh kills prayer. Quickly. What about discouragement when the heavens seem silent toward our groans for help and deliverance? It is when the heart breaks the most and deepest we are to pray the most and deepest. Praying out of the bitterness of the soul leads to the betterment of the soul. Prayer is talking to God, but that doesn't mean we always have to use words. The true language of prayer is often more expressive in groans than words.

PRAYER: "Lord, teach me to pray just as Your disciples of old asked of You."

QUOTE: "Prayer is simply talking to God and this talking doesn't always include words."

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

1 SAMUEL 3:4-10 –Then the LORD called Samuel, and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. And the LORD called again, "Samuel!" and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the young man. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: NO STRIKEOUTS WITH JESUS. I was thinking about baseball when I read over today's reference a few times. I know what you might be thinking, "Baseball? Samuel's call from the Lord and baseball? Jim, maybe that allergic reaction to shrimp last week did more than you think!" But stay with me here . . . The first call to Samuel, "Then the LORD called Samuel" (**1 SAMUEL 3:4**) and what did Samuel do? Swing and a miss -strike one. He missed the Lord, mistakenly thinking it was Eli – "Here I am!" and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again" (**1 SAMUEL 3:5**). My translation of "lie down again" from Eli is "get back into the batter's box, Samuel. You only have one strike on you." Once again, the Lord comes to Samuel, "So he went and lay down. And the LORD called again, "Samuel!" (**1 SAMUEL 3:6**). Swing and a miss – strike two. Once again, Samuel missed the Lord, contributing the voice to Eli – "and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again" (**1 SAMUEL 3:6**). If we have played baseball much or know the game, when a batter gets two strikes, it gets a little tense in the batter's box - no room for error. One more strike and the long embarrassing walk back to the dugout begins. Eli directs him back into the "batter's box" and Samuel gets his third pitch from the Lord – "And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me" (**1 SAMUEL 3:8**). Makes me think of the 1888 baseball poem, "Casey at the Bat". One of the lines reads something like "There is no joy in Mudville for mighty Casey has struck out." And if it were really baseball, Samuel struck out too. He failed to recognize the Lord not once, not twice, but three times. Get to the bench, Samuel.

Aren't we glad Jesus never "strikes us out" when it comes to us falling short in our walk with Him? The Lord didn't give up on Samuel – "And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" (**1 SAMUEL 3:10**) and His servant finally got it right. As we go through this perilous journey to heaven, we are going to stumble, fail, fall, and blow it time after time. Not that we want to (read **ROMANS 7**), but it is the stark reality of the Christian life. Christ did not save us and remove the battle against sin. Take courage, though, He also didn't save us to "strike us out" when we fail to heed His voice or act upon works of obedience. His patience doesn't end at three strikes. Glory in His long-suffering as you walk with Him today.

PRAYER: "Lord, thank You for being so patient with me as I stumble on my way toward heaven with You."

QUOTE: "The patience of the Lord is to be praised not presumed upon."

The QBC Daily Nugget August 19, 2010

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

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

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: QUALITIES OF A MATURE FAITH. Today's reference strikes a harmonious chord in the hearts of God's children being loved by Him as He takes them through this experience – “Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction” (**ISAIAH 48:10**). Do we long for a robust faith that produces everlasting fruit for the Lord Jesus? Get ready for the furnace. Do we desire to see God use us for His glory in reaching others for Christ? Get ready for the furnace. Do we hunger for a walk with Jesus Christ to where the delight of His holiness are “holy obsessions” of the heart and mind? Get ready for the furnace. John Calvin said this on the testing of our faith, “Our faith is really and truly tested only when we are brought into very severe conflicts, and when even hell itself seems opened to swallow us up.” David's experience in today's Psalm would qualify as being brought into severe conflicts. I call **PSALM 13**, “The Furnace Psalm” for it reveals much about refining our faith in the midst of some pretty hot and significant opposition to the contrary.

From the Psalm, let's identify some qualities of a mature faith that is produced in the furnace of refining. First, a refined faith is patient with the Lord's workings in all of life's circumstances. David isn't quite there as the opening of the Psalm reveals a hurting heart battling impatience. Four times, “How long?” comes from his heart. The lesson isn't difficult to understand. Difficult to live, but not understand. God will make us wait upon Him in the furnace of refining to teach us that mature faith is patient. Another quality of mature faith is persevering prayer – “Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes” (**PSALM 13:3**). In referring to a mature faith marked by persevering prayer, persevering prayer does not mean consistent prayer. There are unsaved people and very religious people who pray consistently who have no true faith. Persevering prayer coming from a mature faith is one that goes to God, keeps going to God, knows God is the only hope for his or her help, and simply will not let go until God answers. Remember Jacob wrestling with God all night long (**GENESIS 32:22-32**)? That was a mature faith in action – “Jacob said, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me’” (**GENESIS 32:26**). We discover much about the maturity level of our faith when in the midst of the refining furnace of God in trials and temptations, we find our prayer lives becoming a high, if not the major, priority in our lives. It won't be an issue of making time for prayer. It will be that prayer takes time away from other things. A final quality of mature faith coming out of God's furnace is a trust that overrides feelings and emotions – “But I have trusted in your steadfast love” (**PSALM 13:5**). This isn't easy. Believing isn't easy. That is why faith must be a gift from God, but it is a gift to exercise, not put on a shelf or in a closet. Mature faith fights off feelings by faith in God's character and promises. We may not like the furnace, but if want a mature faith, let's enter it. It is only there a mature faith is produced.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to see that an untested faith is not a true faith.”

QUOTE: A. W. TOZER, “Faith, like a muscle, grows by stretching.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 20, 2010

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

ROMANS 2:6 – He will render to each one according to his works.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **WE GET WHAT WE PAY FOR.** If you are a “nugget reader” at the end of your day, let me ask, “How was your day?” If you start your day reading the nugget, let me ask “How is your day going to be?” Both of those are addressed to our need to do either a little self-assessment at the end of the day or self-preparation for the beginning of the day. I remember telling my kids, “We are each writing our book today that will be opened on that great Day of Judgment.” I wish I could say my book will be perfect and full of pristine actions and words, but that won’t be the case. I am not always rightly motivated. I am not always diligent. I am not always loving. Though I believe we will experience tears at the judgment seat of Christ over missed opportunities and service, there is a reason for tears in heaven, “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (**REVELATION 21:4**), I rejoice that the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin (**1 JOHN 1:7-9**). We won’t be judged for sin, but we will be judged for works. And God is so good, so fair, that He will judge us individually based on what we individually did or did not do.

The Apostle Paul writes of this to the Corinthians, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (**2 CORINTHIANS 5:10**). And Paul added the emotion and motivation such a truth had on him in the very next verse – “Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience” (**2 CORINTHIANS 5:11**). In light of such a serious, but fair, certainty for each of us, it demands we think daily about it. I remember growing up with the wise counsel of my parents who told me, “You get what you pay for” meaning the quality of the merchandise is directly related to the price one pays. In regards to our day of reckoning before our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (please remember our Judge is also our Savior and looks forward to rewarding faithful service), we will truly get what we paid for when it comes to the reward or lack of reward based on our service on earth. Today’s reference will be true.

So, what about the day we just finished or are just about to start? Let’s put us all in the same category by using two questions to prepare us for each day God gives us to ensure we live ready for that great Day of Judgment. First, what is our motivation for all we need to do today? We are motivated by one of two people – self or God. It could be self-fulfillment, self-responsibilities, self-whatever, but normally in the Christian life anything to do with self is never good except one thing- self-denial, “Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (**MATTHEW 16:24**). A second question to ask is, “Will all my encounters and conversations with people, (family, friends, associates, strangers) be under the Spirit’s guidance in the controlling love of Christ?” Paul said, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (**1 CORINTHIANS 13:13**). As we enter into our today or prepare for our tomorrow, if we are able to pray, seeking to be motivated by all we do for God’s glory and live out all people encounters through Christ’s love, we need not fear disappointment at His Judgment Seat. He longs to reward us beyond measure. We will indeed get what we paid for and much, much more!

PRAYER: “Lord, I praise You for Your always fair treatment of me.”

QUOTE: “The Day of Judgment reveals what each of us have written in the books to be opened by the lives we lived.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

JOHN 13:15 – For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: IT'S FOOT WASHING AND A LOT MORE. The next time we are in a group of Christians and enjoying some spiritual conversation, try this question - “While our Lord Jesus walked upon the earth, what act of His shows the example of humble service?” Likely the majority of us would respond with the account found in John’s gospel, chapter thirteen, of the Lord washing the disciples’ feet. We would be right. Yet, if we took time to ponder the question, we should expand the answer. The truth that God became a man to dwell among fallen humanity, die and rise from the dead for them, then return to heaven to prepare a place for those very same creatures reveals that humility was not an act or two by our God, but a virtue in the very fiber of His character. In looking at **JOHN 13**, it is easy to just see this act of humble service and not go deeper into the other lessons Jesus unfolds. That is why we must go beyond just reading our Bibles. We need to mine the riches of the Bible to get to hidden treasures buried in the obvious (**PROVERBS 2:1-6**).

As we read the **JOHN 13:1-17**, there are two truths beyond humility coming forth as we observe Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. These truths address our influence and interaction with people. First, recognize the power of silent influence – “Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him (**JOHN 13:1-5**). Not a word is spoken by Jesus as He rises from His place and begins to serve His disciples. Never forget the power of our silent influence on other people. Don't fall to the lies of a deceitful heart and deceiving devil by thinking we are not under the watchful eyes of our children, extended family, co-workers, and neighbors who want to see the reality of our profession of faith in Christ.

The second truth is the need to be patient with all people – “He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you” (**JOHN 13:6-10**). Impulsive Peter wasn't getting the lesson Jesus was teaching. The Lord knew this, but we read of no harsh rebuke or a rolling of the eyes indicating impatience with Peter and His disciple's slowness in learning the lesson. The patient Lord responds out of His patient character. As people in union with Christ, is His patient character controlling us so that we respond like our Master when we interact with people? Are we known as patient and kind people (**1 CORINTHIANS 4:1**)? Yes, **JOHN 13** is a great example of humility. It is about foot washing and a lot more!

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to teach like You by example of silent influence and patience.”

QUOTE: “We teach every day to everyone we encounter and it doesn't always take words.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

2 TIMOTHY 4:2 – Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **DONE ANY PREACHING LATELY?** We might answer this question in more than a few ways. First, we could say, “I am not a preacher so I haven’t done any preaching.” That answer would be incorrect. More on that later. We may then answer, “Yes, I proclaimed the Gospel this week. God allowed me to tell someone about the Lord Jesus.” Good answer. Preaching is proclaiming and it doesn’t require a pulpit on a platform in a church. To a certain extent, all Christians are preachers who preach or proclaim as a responsibility to give verbal witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is also the gift of preaching which finds itself mostly exercised in local churches from a pulpit by men who have received this gift from the Holy Spirit. But there is a type of preaching every Christian must do if the desire is to enjoy fellowship with God. If we want to experience what Jesus calls “eternal life”, the knowing of God the Father and Himself (**JOHN 17:1-3**), we need to learn how to do some preaching. I call it “self-preaching” and its congregation consists of one person – ourselves.

Do we preach to ourselves? There are two ways to answer that question. We might say, “Yes, I preach to myself. I am constantly telling and yelling at myself to “do right, work harder, stop this, stop that” . . . this is the type of preaching where we are always condemning ourselves for not measuring up in the Christian life. No one wants to sit under this preaching. And no one wants to hear this preaching deep in one’s soul. The other way of preaching to ourselves is healthy and necessary. It is preaching the Gospel to that congregation of one. I am not referring to a three point outline one might hear on any given Sunday morning. This preaching is the truths of the gospel already embraced but being brought to mind to fight against the condemning conscience and accusing devil. It is the mind and heart being directed to known truths brought to bear against the foes fighting in our hearts. It is preaching **ROMANS 6** to one’s own soul. It is preaching **GALATIANS 2:20** to one’s soul. To illustrate this type of “self-preaching”, take **GALATIANS 2:20** – “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” How do we preach that to ourselves? Like this. When sin screams for fulfillment in our lives, we preach, “No, I have died to you, crucified with Christ.” Another point in our self-preaching sermon is when the corrupt flesh whispers, “Hey, there is plenty of time for serving Jesus. You are busy. Take a break. It will come.” We preach, “No, I am not allowed to determine my schedule or when to serve the Lord, I am dead and Christ lives in me. He controls me, I don’t control me.” The third point of our self-preaching from **GALATIANS 2:20** goes like this as the devil whispers, “Oh, great Christian you are. Look at that sin. Look how spiritually lazy you are. God couldn’t possibly love you”, we counter it by preaching, “Get behind me, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. It is what He did and does for me that matters, not my feeble efforts.” That dear friend is powerful preaching. Have you done any of it lately to yourself? It helps determine your enjoyment of the Lord Jesus. May each us start each day with a sermon ready to be preached to that congregation of one. It will make all the difference.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to preach Your gospel to myself so that I might effectively preach it to others.”

QUOTE: “We must personally experience the gospel in power before it goes forth from us with power.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

MALACHI 3:3 – He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: TWO “P’s” OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. I know there are more than two “p’s” in our Christian experience. Two that jump right out are prayer and praise. Another pair would be pain and pondering. The latter two could be reworded as suffering and meditating. In today’s reference, two more “p’s” which every Christian will experience along the pathway of faith and communion with Jesus are “purify” and “purge.”

As we mature in our walk with the Lord Jesus and exercise faith in His promises and commands, we begin to notice a “shedding of pounds” in our lives. Obviously, not those unwanted pounds that are being confronted with trips to the gym, miles on an exercise bike traveling nowhere, or the self-disciplined diet of good nutrition. The pounds we shed as we grow in maturity are those things of the old self, the putting off of those deeds of the flesh and passions of the heart associated with our sinful past – “But that is not the way you learned Christ!-- assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (**EPHESIANS 4:20-24**).

In the spiritual application of “shedding pounds”, it isn’t accomplished by self-help or self-effort. We do admit a mystery lies here. There is personal responsibility to “put off the old” and “put on the new” and there is the personal inability to do so as revealed in our Lord’s words, “Without me, you can do nothing” (**JOHN 15:5**). That is a spiritual knot we cannot untie in our finite minds, but it is a knot that does not exist in the infinite mind. In the process of this mysterious work, the two “p’s” of Christian experience found in today’s reference take center stage. Our Lord purifies and purges us from this passing world to prepare us for inhabiting the eternal world. And His wonderful grace begins by showing us those things needing to be purified and purged. He shows us our heart. Ruth Bryan, recognized as one of the great female devotional writers of the 19th century, wrote of this painful, but necessary work of the Lord in purifying and purging us these words, “He (Jesus) will have me know a little of what is in my heart that I may know more of what is in His heart, even love, most invincible, unalterable, unquenchable love! Love which endures to the end, amidst all my wickedness, and wandering, and ingratitude. It is indeed astonishing! Into the blessed depths of this love I desire to be daily sinking, in all the fresh discoveries of my utter worthlessness and vileness that thus I may praise Him more who has redeemed me from it all!” Recognizing her own sinfulness, Bryan knew many of Jesus’ timid sheep would go to the brink of despair as the Lord began to reveal the blackness of their hearts. With great sensitivity, she wrote, “The Lord does not show us how bad we are to cause despair but to show forth the riches of His grace in saving us, and to call forth new songs of praise to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!”

The two “p’s” of purifying and purging are unavoidable in the Christian life. Yes, they are painful. Yes, they are humbling, but don’t lose sight of this great truth - they are evidence of His love to us. He only purifies and purges His children.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me to pray just as Your disciples of old asked of You.”

QUOTE: “Amazing grace is only so to those who have seen how amazingly sinful they are.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

PSALM 23:1-3 - The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: KEEP THE SHEEP LIFE SIMPLE. This normally starts to happen around 8:30 p.m. on a Sunday night. I start thinking about what lies ahead in the week. What accompanies this racing of my mind is the very strong temptation to think I have way too much to do and not enough time to do it. The goal of this temptation is to keep me up all night mentally or actually planning, and even fretting, so that I will enter the week already tired! I attempt to fight off this whisper that comes from either my deceitful heart or my ever deceiving spiritual foe by realizing if I stay close to Jesus, I will do what I am supposed to do and He controls my time. Perhaps most of you don't ever get this type of temptation. If you do, you will know that just because we fight it off once, it doesn't go away. I liken this temptation to that pesky fly that sometimes gets in my office. It's persistently annoying. So how do we fight off this temptation to look ahead and think the week's mountain is too high and we are too weak to scale it? We head to the Shepherd. We make a beeline to get close to the Shepherd and let Him show us that the sheep life isn't to be complex, full of worry about all we have to do and all the things needing to be done. A sheep's life is to be a simple life.

In the beloved Shepherd's Psalm, David provides us four helps that our Shepherd Jesus will do for His sheep as they face trials and temptations common to all His sheep. We will only take three of them today for consideration and application. And these work even for those temptations toward being overwhelmed with a complex life and feeling we won't be able to accomplish all that the Lord puts on our plates. Before we look at these helps, let's make sure something about that plate I just mentioned. Let's ensure the Lord is setting the plates in our lives for the week. If we go alone, He might, in loving discipline, allow us to struggle with frustration and stress to show us that His way is the only right way.

Now in keeping sheep life simple, begin with remembering the Lord is the only source of needed spiritual nourishment – “He makes me lie down in green pastures”. Busy in life is okay. Paul was busy. Jesus was busy. Allowing busyness to steal away time for spiritual nourishment is not okay and it displeases the Lord. Notice what David says, “He makes me lie down”. The Lord will slow us down to seek Him. I don't know what that will look like for you, but I know His love for me includes “getting my attention” when neglect of Him creeps into my life. The next help we get from the Shepherd is that He will lead us to this spiritual nourishment. It may appear “harsh” that He makes us lie down, but we know He is never harsh with us. To help us believe that, David assures us with these words, “He leads me beside still waters”. What amazing truth that our Lord delights in leading us to the soul-refreshing experience of Himself. He doesn't want us to make life complex to where our soul is famished. A final way to keep the sheep life simple is to rely upon Him to give us what we need for the week - spiritual stamina – “He restores my soul.” When the soul is nourished and flourishing, life is seen for what it is. Nothing is too hard. Nothing is too stressful. Nothing is impossible. The life of Jesus' sheep gets real simple when the soul is prospering, not easy, but simple. Just like He designed it to be.

PRAYER: “Lord, forgive me for the too many times I make my Christian life complex and confusing.”

QUOTE: “Keep the sheep life simple – listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, then follow.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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 10:3-4— For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **WHAT WEAPONS ARE WE USING?** This story is told concerning a letter that President Eisenhower received during the time of heightened cold war tension. An eight-year old boy who lived in Connecticut wrote the president about his concerns over the issue. It read, “After listening to news about the Cold War, I am worried about the people in the world. In thinking it over, I have a plan. Get all these leaders who want war together and put them in a ring and let them fight it out.”

The little boy’s desire to let someone else fight might be our attitude sometimes when it comes to the spiritual war we fight, but it cannot be. Every Christian must fight. God has ordained this life is a life of warfare. In describing the foes in this war, the Apostle Paul writes, “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**). For our purpose today, take notice of the intense closeness of this battle every Christian has entered into. It is called a “wrestling” and here is the definition of the word “wrestle” as used by Paul, “A contest between two in which each endeavors to throw the other, and which is decided when the victor is able to hold his opponent down with his hand upon his neck.” Make this real personal for it is real personal. The devil and all his forces of evil – rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, spiritual forces of evil – have one objective. Look at the graphic picture this paints as we take the definition of “wrestle” and apply it. Spiritually, our foes want to take us to the ground and hold us down with their hands pressing down hard upon our neck. Obviously this isn’t literal since the battle isn’t flesh and blood, but think for a moment about how we approach our Christian life each day. Are we aware of this type of close in battle that drives us to make sure the right weapons are in place? Our foes are quite aware of this daily battle and if we are not, we might already have ourselves on the ground in a choke hold by spiritual foes. Paul David Tripp said, “Spiritual warfare makes us think of demon possession, horrific demonstrations of satanic control, and dramatic exorcisms. But Scripture presents spiritual warfare not as the violent, bizarre end of the Christian life, but as what the Christian life is!”

With this awareness of spiritual warfare, with what weapons do we engage these fiends of evil? In today’s reference, Paul defines them, not by specific name, but by their ability – “divine power to destroy strongholds” (**2 CORINTHIANS 10:4**). There is an important lesson for us by the way he describes the weapons for spiritual warfare. Too often we know all the right definitions of Christianity. Test ourselves for a moment. Define justification. Define sanctification. Define the Trinity. Define grace . . . see what I mean? We can get all the answers on the test, but do we pass the real test – the trials and temptations coming in the spiritual warfare we find ourselves in each day? We don’t need words and definitions. We need the Word and Divine power. And it is not the words coming forth from personal reasoning. It is the Word known as the only offensive weapon in our spiritual arsenal – “the sword of the Spirit” (**EPHESIANS 6:17**). In the glorious fight we are waging, the only way to win successfully and consistently is to ensure we fight with the right weapons – the ones with divine power from above, not the ones with no power from within ourselves.

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to use Your Word, not my reasoning, to fight against my spiritual foes.”

QUOTE: “The battle belongs to the Lord, but He commands us to enter into the fight.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 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)

1 SAMUEL 13:8-13 – He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: JUST A LITTLE LONGER. He waited the allotted time. He was patient. Then the delay. Things were not working out like he thought. Where was Samuel? Did something happen to him? The feeling we each know well started to churn inside Saul - impatience. Then outward circumstances fueled the inward unrest – the people were scattering from him. Saul was losing control and he did the exact opposite of what we should do when impatience gets the upper hand in a tense situation. He acted irrationally and sinned. Oh, Saul, if you had just waited a little longer.

Patience. It's required of the Christian who desires to grow in our Lord Jesus Christ (**2 PETER 3:18**). The Apostle Paul shows the necessity of this God-developed virtue – “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope makes us not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (**ROMANS 5:3-5**). Look at the progression of spiritual growth Paul describes – first, we get tribulations (sufferings). Next comes patience followed by experience and resulting in hope. Take away patience and the chain of growth is broken. Without patience we will not experience our Lord's love to its fullest. We also will hinder living a life of buoyant hope. Take away patience and we will find ourselves living out lives with more joyless days under dark spiritual clouds than joyful days under clear spiritual skies. As for the development of patience, it occurs not only in suffering but also in waiting as David describes – “I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I hope” (**PSALM 130:5**). What happens when the believer responds, not like Saul, but in submission to the instructions of Paul and David? It drives us to the means God has chosen to reveal Himself, counter our impatience, and develop patience - hope in His word (**PSALM 130:5b**). Think about the last time we were tempted toward or gave into the sin of impatience. What did not cross our mind during those tense moments? His Word. It did not cross Saul's mind during his great trial. When we are not governed by God's Word in the heat of our trials of patience and the sin of impatience occurs, it could be said of us what was said of Saul - “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God, with which He commanded you” (**1 SAMUEL 13:13**).

The next time a family member, co-worker, friend, a trying circumstance, or even a fellow believer tempts us toward the sin of impatience, don't blow the opportunity to grow in patience. Just wait a little longer. God will come with grace sufficient for the moment.

PRAYER: “Lord, teach me that waiting upon You is an opportunity for being patient not a temptation to the sin of impatience.”

QUOTE: “There are lessons in the Christian life that will only be learned through God's school of waiting.”

The QBC Daily Nugget August 31, 2010

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

LUKE 19:47-48 –And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: HOW CAPTIVATED ARE WE? It happened in Connecticut during the First Great Awakening. Word spread that the great preacher George Whitefield would be holding an open air meeting near the town of Middletown. A farmer was plowing in his field when he saw people passing by in a hurry. The farmer stopped one man and inquired as to what was causing such a rush. He replied, “George Whitefield will be preaching.” The farmer immediately unhitched his horse from his plow, gathered his wife and child, seated them on the horse and began to follow the crowd to hear the Word of God preached. The distance travelled was about twenty five miles. An average human being walks about three miles per hour. Since the man had a horse, let’s give him a break. Walking, it would have taken a little more than eight hours. With the horse, it probably took five to six hours to get to the place of the meeting. Would we say they were hungry to hear the Word of God preached? Now let’s see another hunger for the Word. This time taken from the Old Testament book of Nehemiah – “And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God” (**NEHEMIAH 9:2-3**). In this account, the people of God stood and read the Word of God for three hours. One more illustration of a hunger for God’s Word. It is in today’s reference. Jesus was teaching. Take notice of how the people responded – “for all the people were hanging on his words” (**LUKE 19:48**).

How is our hunger for the preached Word of God? I know there aren’t many George Whitefields around and we don’t have Jesus teaching in person. Yet, we have the Word of God preached and God has ordained that preaching is the primary means of spiritual growth (**1 CORINTHIANS 1:21-23**). Even though I might be a preacher, I still need to evaluate my hunger for the preached Word for my own spiritual growth. What if I was that farmer in the field in southeastern Connecticut? What if you were that farmer? Would we have the same hunger for the Word that even chores on the farm got delayed so as to feed our souls? Not to mention travel twenty-fives miles on horseback to hear the Word! And what about the people of God in Nehemiah’s time? This wasn’t a dull and lengthy sermon that we might find ourselves nodding off under or being distracted from because we lack the discipline for a challenging exposition. No, this was three hours reading the Word of God and standing no less! Would I fit in with the hunger in that crowd? Would you? And then we have Jesus. The response of His audience speaks volumes of their hunger – “They were hanging on His words” (**LUKE 19:48**). I don’t think they were on the edge of their seats waiting to hear, “Now my conclusion” or “In summary.”

As we approach the Lord’s Day, let’s do some personal soul searching. Are we eager to hear the Word preached? So much so that nothing but God’s providential hindrance would keep us from being under the sound of His Word at every opportunity on the Lord’s Day? God has given us His precious Word. He wants it proclaimed by His people, but He also wants us to hear it proclaimed and that with consistency.

PRAYER: “Lord, create in me such a hunger for Your Word that I never neglect opportunities to hear it.”

QUOTE: “Our desire to hear the Word preached reveals much about our spiritual health.”