

# *Good News Daily*

Volume XVIII

August 5-11, 2018

Number 31

## **Sunday, August 5**

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 *Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times you may abound in every good work. (vv.7-8 ESV)*

As my husband and I approach the autumn of our years, we are enjoying the blessings of gifts and acquisitions that more than forty years of marriage and children have gathered. And now it is time to disperse those blessings in that proverbial action of “downsizing”. It is easy to cast off the things that hold little emotional value, but so many objects hold special memories for us. They require the hard decisions. Family furniture and furnishings passed down through the years no longer have a place in the homes of our next generation. It gives us great joy when they do accept some of the things that will fit in their homes. As I contemplate the task ahead, my mind and heart are often redirected to the early followers of Christ who willingly sold all their possessions, gave to the poor, and followed him.

Judges 6:1-24; Psalms 93, 96; Mark 3:20-30

## **Monday, August 6**

Judges 6:25-40 *Then Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said, behold, I am laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said.” And it was so. (vv.36-38a)*

In our daily lives, we experience conflicting messages from advertisers, media, and salespeople, so we do research to prove their claims. Before we purchase a product or a service we need “proof positive” that it will perform. We need to see for ourselves. And so, too, did Gideon demand proof as we read this week in Judges. Gideon is called to lead Israel against the Midianites. Despite knowing that God led the Israelites out of bondage, he still asks for a show of proof that God will be with him to back him up if he undertakes the challenge. And he requested proof three times! In our daily lives, we read our Bibles that teach us about miracles and acts of faith. That is the only proof we need to trust in God and his plan for us.

Psalm 80; Acts 2:37-47; John 1:1-18

## **Tuesday, August 7**

Psalm 78:1-39 *They did not keep God's covenant, but refused to walk according to his law. Yet he, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath.* (vv.10, 38)

Parenting is replete with joyful, fascinating, and humorous moments. It also has its vexing and distressing scenes. Each parenting style is unique, but there are basics that apply to all families. Parents set the rules and expectations; children challenge, defy, test, and often ignore the rules. Then follows a punishment period before reconciliation. In today's psalm, we are reminded that God as our Father set the rules and we, along with the generations, disobeyed His commandments despite His enduring love that continued to provide sustenance and mercy. He sees through our hearts when we are not truthful, yet He forgives us. He delights in us as our Father, but still commands that we obey Him.

Judges 7:1-18; Acts 3:1-11; John 1:19-28

## **Wednesday, August 8**

Psalm 119:97-120 *Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope! Hold me up, that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually!* (vv.116-117)

The beauty of these two verses is their simplicity in asking God first to live a good life and then to be safe in that life. A good life is following the teachings of Jesus by showing love to all. A safe life is diverting evil and harmful things away from us. And notice how "Uphold me" and "Hold me up" seem to be poetically repetitive, but the phrases here have subtle differences. "Uphold" means support, confirm, sustain, and maintain, alluding to the psalmist's continual devotion to God's will. "Hold me up" implies a grasp or support to refrain from stumbling along life's paths. To live a good life and to be safe are surely our desires as well. We will always face adversity, but with God's help we will be guided through the troubles.

Judges 7:19—8:12; Acts 3:12-26; John 1:29-42

## **Thursday, August 9**

Acts 4:1-12 *This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.* (v.11)

The young man is autistic. He attended a local high school and graduated with his class. He always said that he was autistic, but he was not stupid. Let's call him Steven. Several weeks after graduation, he and his dad happened to stop into the local coffee shop. Steven received a great big hug by the worker who ran from behind the counter to greet him. Dad was introduced, and the two young men caught up on news. Several days later Dad returned to the coffee shop to ask the worker about how he knew his

son. The story is priceless. The worker said that he struggled with an advanced math course that he needed for graduation. Steven offered to tutor him during lunch for the better part of two semesters. The worker graduated and was exceedingly grateful for the help that was offered by Steven.

It is easy to overlook the perceived “least” among us. Yet everyone is blessed with a talent that is not apparent on the surface.

Judges 8:22-35; Psalm 145; John 1:43-51

### **Friday, August 10**

Acts 4:13-31 *So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”* (vv.18-20)

Standing up for what you believe in takes courage and boldness, especially when your adversary holds power or rank. In today’s reading, Peter and John were perceived as common and uneducated men by the high priests of Jerusalem, yet the priests were aware of the miraculous healing that had occurred. Their only response was for Peter and John to cease talking about Jesus. Led by the Holy Spirit, Christ’s followers continued to minister with boldness. This is a lesson for us in our modern society. With diverse opinions in every aspect of society, it takes boldness to talk about Jesus, to teach his Word, and to minister as he taught us to do.

Judges 9:1-16, 19-21; Psalm 88; Acts 4:13-31; John 2:2-12

### **Saturday, August 11**

Psalm 90 *You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.* (v.8)

What were those little secrets that were part of your childhood and are still held in your memory as reminders of the bad stuff you were not supposed to do? Are there still secret sins that are tucked away in your heart and recalled with sorrow and sadness? A most harsh lesson was learned by Ananias and his wife Sapphira as we read in today’s Acts lesson. They sinned by withholding proceeds of a sale and lying about it instead of giving all to the poor. The good news is that God, who knows all our sins, will forgive us these sins if we repent and humbly say that we are sorry.

Judges 9:22-25, 50-57; Psalm 87; Acts 4:32—5:11; John 2:13-25

*by Dorothy Magill*

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# *Good News Daily*

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## **Sunday, August 12**

Psalm 67 *May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us—so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.* (v.1 NIV)

Truly God has blessed us. We live in a free country where we can worship God without fear of our homes or businesses being destroyed or ourselves being thrown into jail or killed—threats many of our fellow Christians face daily in some places.

Our response should be to pray daily for persecuted believers throughout the world and contribute to their aid—never neglecting to praise God for the blessings He has given us.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, please protect our brother and sister Christians wherever they are. Keep them safe from harm.

Judges 11:1-11, 29-40; Psalm 66; 2 Corinthians 11:21b-31; Mark 4:35-41

## **Monday, August 13**

John 3:1-21 *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* (v.16 NKJV)

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, comes to Jesus at night to ask some important questions. Jesus tells him that he must be born of water and the Spirit. He also explains that God sent His Son into the world to save it.

It is always a thrill for me to see a sports fan holding up a sign at a sporting event that says John 3:16. I'm told it is the most quoted passage of Scripture, and is also known as "the gospel in a nutshell."

May we each share the gospel message with those in our world—how God loves you and wants you to have eternal life in Jesus. Truly, that is good news for everyone!

Prayer: Thank You, Father God, that You sent Jesus into our world to save us.

Judges 12:1-7; Psalm 89:1-18; Acts 5:12-26

## **Tuesday, August 14**

Acts 5:27-42 *But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."* (v.29 ESV)

Peter and the apostles have been arrested for preaching and teaching about Jesus. A Pharisee named Gamaliel, who was respected by all, spoke in their defense before the Council and convinced them to let the apostles go free. Then they went right back preaching and teaching about Jesus.

Too often these days, we want to be politically correct or not “hurt anyone’s feelings” so we keep quiet about our faith. We need to have the courage of Peter and the apostles—like the Christians who drive around with the bumper sticker I love: Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven! That is truly good news.

Prayer: Lord, help me be proud of my faith and to obey You rather than men.

Judges 13:1-15; Psalms 97, 99, 100; John 3:22-36

### **Wednesday, August 15**

Psalm 109 *For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save him from those who condemn his soul to death.* (v.30)

While writing these devotions I’ve been watching several specials on the life of Princess Diana on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death. She used the pain of her own life (her mother leaving the family when Diana was only 6 years old, and Diana’s husband loving another woman) to lead a life of service to crippled children, the homeless, and AIDS patients. (Her sons and daughter-in-law continue her acts of charity today.)

May Jesus use our hands and hearts to reach out to the needy in our world. Most churches have programs that can make a real difference—like feeding the homeless, after-school programs for needy children, providing clothing to the poor, and job training for the unemployed. Get involved!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, guide me where you want me to help the needy in my community.

Judges 13:15-24; Psalm 101; Acts 6:1-15; John 4:1-26

### **Thursday, August 16**

John 4:27-42 *Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.”* (v.39)

After Jesus asks the Samaritan woman for a drink of water and engages her in conversation, she returns to the village and tells the people to come and meet the man who “told me everything I ever did; can this be the Messiah?”

Even though she has a bad record for marriages and has to come to draw water at noon (when the other women come early in the morning), the people listen to her testimony and come to hear Jesus. They even ask him to stay longer.

We can give that same invitation to our neighbors, friends, and relatives: Come and meet Jesus at my church. He is the Messiah and that is truly good news!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, give me the courage of the Samaritan woman to invite others to meet you.

Judges 14:1-19; Psalm 105:1-22; Acts 6:15—7:16

## **Friday, August 17**

John 4:43-54 *So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.” The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.”* (vv.52-53)

The government official’s little boy was dying, and he came to Jesus for help. Jesus said, “Your son will live” and the man believed and started home. His servants met him with the great good news.

At our Healing Service every Tuesday evening, we pray for healing that can be seen now and healing that we will receive later, by faith. There have been wonderful miracles of healing of cancer, depression, ALS, family dysfunction, etc. (physical, spiritual, and mental healing). So, just like the father in today’s reading, bring your needs to Jesus and know that he will help.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you heal today just like during your earthly ministry!

Judges 14:20—15:20; Psalm 102; Acts 7:17-29

## **Saturday, August 18**

Psalm 108 *My heart is confident in you, O God; no wonder I can sing your praises with all my heart!* (v.1 NLT)

When one of us senior citizens looks back over his or her life, we marvel at all the answers to our prayers, rescues by our Heavenly Father, and the goodness and mercy He has sent our way. No family escapes every kind of pain or sorrow; we all have to lean on the Lord. But as we recount our blessings, we can definitely sing God’s praises—building our trust in the Lord as we face an uncertain future. “My heart is confident in you, O God” and that is great good news!

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for all the times You have rescued and helped me.

Judges 16:1-14; Psalm 107:33-43; Acts 7:30-43; John 5:1-18

*by Jacqueline Littleford*

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# *Good News Daily*

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## **Sunday, August 19**

Mark 5:25-34 ...*because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."* (v.28 NIV)

I collect antiques as a hobby. There is nothing wrong with that except I sometimes yield to the temptation to neglect prayer and charitable activities in the excitement of a search and negotiation for an interesting item. Then I'm angry with myself and ashamed.

The temptation to overspend time works in me like a noiseless file, as one holy person put it, quietly rasping away at my resolve to keep a reasonable balance. Sometimes temptation appeals to my emotions like Delilah wheedling Sampson for his secret as a pledge of his love: "If you *really* wanted this item you'd spend more time looking." Other times temptation is a swarm of bees with all kinds of logical arguments: "Keep looking; if someone is selling now, it might be gone before you find it."

I understand in a small way what the woman with the 12-year issue of blood must have felt: simply overwhelmed by the emotion of shame and the conflicting logic of her doctors. Lord, let me touch your garment by faith every day and be healed.

Judges 16:15-31; Psalm 118; 2 Corinthians 13:1-11

## **Monday, August 20**

Acts 7:44—8:1a *Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.* (v.60)

Take no vengeance. With his last breath Stephen pleaded for his slayers. Christians did not take revenge on Paul even though he was an accomplice in the brutal murder of Stephen and others.

Jesus repealed the ancient Lex Talionis, the Law of Vengeance that sanctions an eye for an eye and a life for a life. Can I as Christ's follower refrain from revenge against someone who would kill my loved ones or me? I'd like to think myself civilized enough to reject murder altogether—even the thought of it. On the other hand, what about my cruel put-downs of those who insult me? What about the guilt trips I occasionally lay on my wife and children when they disappoint me? What about the times I disparage people I don't like behind their backs? Isn't that revenge?

There's more. Jesus commanded me to love my neighbor as myself. This is an obligation to behave positively toward offenders, not just avoid acting negatively. Take no vengeance and forgive as well! Only with God's considerable help is that even conceivable for me.

Judges 17:1-13; Psalm 106:1-18; John 5:19-29

## **Tuesday, August 21**

Psalms 121 *My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.* (v.2)

The psalmist in verse one asks where his help comes from and answers his question in verse two. His help comes from God. It has taken me a lifetime to thoroughly engage with that answer. I am still prone to look to myself first for help in times of trouble or when an opportunity opens up. Maybe it's my individualistic personality; but most likely, it's my pride.

Last Lent my spiritual advisor suggested I do a spiritual exercise. I was to look back over my life and note the times the Lord had intervened in some way so that change happened. What an eye-opener! In looking back over time, I found that God has been in the midst of every change in my life that I can remember. In the good times God has been with me providing opportunities and encouragement. In the difficult times God has been active in bringing good out of the bad.

Judges 18:1-15; Psalms 120, 122, 123; Acts 8:1-13; John 5:30-47

## **Wednesday, August 22**

Psalms 119:145-176 *I rejoice in your promise like one who finds great spoil.* (v.162)

God's promise to me is that I will be saved through faith. To me, salvation means that God will make me whole—a complete person, being all I can be. When that occurs, I will be fully united with God in love without losing my sense of self. This union is now my goal.

Half a lifetime ago, union with God was the furthest thing from my mind. My gods were Fame and Fortune. Then God showed Himself to me in ways only God could and I realized that Fame and Fortune could be good as far as they went, but were certainly the lesser gods.

When I was awakened to God, He led me to His followers through books and personal contacts. The followers explained how sin separates me from God, my fellow humans, and my environment. But, miracle of miracles, He sent His Son to demonstrate how genuine repentance removes sin and restores good relationships. All I need do is have faith. Why would I not rejoice? Where would I be without God and His promise?

Judges 18:16-31; Acts 8:14-25; John 6:1-15

## **Thursday, August 23**

Acts 8:26-40 *"How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.* (v.31)

The eunuch was reading from the book of Isaiah and was smart enough to know that Scripture requires interpretation. Thanks to God, Philip was there to help him. I sincerely wish that a Philip clone had been right

there when my conversion experiences occurred. Instead, I tended to read some of the wrong books and consult the wrong people. I got the idea that the Bible was infallible and that Scripture was all that was necessary. After all, went the logic, if we can't depend upon the Bible to be infallible and literal (except for transcribing errors), we might as well give up. I was badly misled.

My mind changed as I began learning about scriptural incongruities and wondering if God, who is Love, is really as bloodthirsty as a literal reading of the Hebrew Bible would have Him. Later on, as I matured I began to understand Scripture as only one of as many as six elements of theology—Scripture, tradition, experience, revelation, culture, and reason. Things began to make better sense.

Job 1:1-22; Psalms 131, 132, 133; John 6:16-27

### **Friday, August 24**

Acts 9:1-9 *As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.* (v.3)

Beware the downside potential of fireworks. My conversion experience came during mid-life. It involved a frightening but insightful dream repeated three times, a vision that put me on my knees in tears of gratitude, a sense of love descending upon me so overwhelming that I had to ask God to stop, and more. Exciting? You bet!

The first downside: I concluded that God loved me more than others because of these favors. Soon I would be writing a best-selling book to lead other less gifted souls to the Lord. The Christian lecture circuit would be next! My naiveté and pride led to big letdowns as God weaned me from the milk of spectacular experiences to the solid food of daily Christian life. God knocked me off my horse initially because it took that to get my attention, not because I was better.

The second downside: regret that I wasted so many years settling for the wasteland of secular life without Christ. But regret, too, is chasing after wind. I now rejoice that I met him when I did and not later.

Job 2:1-13; Psalms 140, 142; John 6:27-40

### **Saturday, August 25**

Psalms 137 *By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.* (v.1)

I almost always read this sentence and the rest of the psalm with tears in my eyes because I substitute earth for Babylon and heaven for Zion. I weep not because I remember heaven, but because I do not. Yet I still yearn for heaven because God has revealed it to me in numerous ways. It seems a paradox; he instilled within me this great desire for heaven and at the same time gave me a will to live so that I would remain alive on earth.

Why? Why am I here and not there? The best I am able to come up with is that earth is heaven's college; I am here to learn to love. I am given endless opportunities to love: my wife and family, my community, others the world over, the environment, and even myself. These opportunities constantly provide lessons on love for me. Lord, help me be an excellent student.

Job 3:1-26; Psalm 144; Acts 9:10-19a; John 6:41-51

*by Herbert Kierulff*

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# *Good News Daily*

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## **Sunday, August 26**

Psalm 146 *I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.* (v.2 NIV)

When times are tough—health is an issue, relationships are in trouble, or finances are low—we get concerned and come to God asking, seeking, praising for a solution. When times are easier—life is good, health is good, finances are adequate—we get complacent. That’s not what the Lord wants. He wants us all the time, in the good and the bad. He expects an attitude of gratitude no matter what our circumstances.

The Christian group, Casting Crowns, says it better than I can in the following lyrics: “And as your mercy falls I raise my hands and praise. The God who gives and takes away. I’ll praise you in this storm and I will lift my hands; that you are who you are, no matter where I am. And every tear I’ve cried; you hold in your hand. You never left my side, and though my heart is torn, I will praise you in this storm. We know we were made for so much more than ordinary lives. It’s time for us to more than just survive. We were made to thrive—joy unspeakable, faith unsinkable, love unstoppable—anything is possible.”

Praise the Lord always and in all ways. Ponder that.

Job 4:1-6, 12-21; Psalm 147; Revelation 4:1-11; Mark 6:1-6a

## **Monday, August 27**

John 6:52-59 *Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”* (vv.53-54)

Was Jesus trying to make his followers become cannibalistic? Definitely not. What he was saying was he wanted his followers to be so close to him they would consume everything he said, read, felt, and understood. He wanted them to abide in him, and he in them. Have you ever been that close to someone? It is the picture of what a true marriage should be. A man and a woman are so close to each other they know each other externally and internally. They literally consume every part of each other’s lives—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Ponder that.

Job 4:1, 5:1-11, 17-21, 26-27; Psalms 1, 2, 3; Acts 9:19b-31

## **Tuesday, August 28**

Acts 9:32-43 *“Aeneas,” Peter said to him, “Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat.” Immediately Aeneas got up. (v.34)*

Peter was just traveling about the country and he decides to visit some believers in Lydda. He found a man, Aeneas, who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. Peter said to him, “Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat.” Immediately Aeneas got up. All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

We see miracles every day. Do we turn to the Lord? We should be thankful for each day. Did you know the earth rotates on axis of 23.8° from straight up and down? If that angle changed 1° either way, we could all burn or freeze! Do we give thanks for that simple miracle? People are cured of various chronic conditions. Do we give thanks for those miracles? Babies are born every day; truly a miracle. Do we give thanks that we just enjoy? Ponder that.

Job 6:1-4, 8-15, 21; Psalms 5, 6; John 6:60-71

## **Wednesday, August 29**

John 7:1-13 *“No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.” For even his own brothers did not believe in him. (vv.4-5)*

Jesus never performed miracles on demand. He was not a show off. He performed miracles so that people might believe in him—that he was the Son of the living God. Yet even his brothers did not believe in him. How about you and me? Do we need a miracle to believe in Jesus? Or can we just receive him in faith—believing, trusting, and obeying? What does it take for us to believe and testify to the truth? Does it take a miracle? Or is all that is required is faith? Just as I can only answer for me, you can only answer for you. But as the Scriptures say in Ephesians 2:8-9, we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Ponder that.

Job 6:1, 7:1-21; Psalm 119:1-24; Acts 10:1-16

## **Thursday, August 30**

John 7:14-36 *“Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.” (v.18)*

Jesus never ran around puffing his chest out bragging about the things he could do. He only did what the Father taught him or told him to do. Everything he did was to bring glory to the Father. Is it the same in our lives? Do we do things so someone else can get the credit? Or do we tend to be self-centered and look for all the glory for ourselves?

Jesus tells us to stop judging by appearances. He associated himself with the lowest of the low in the stratus of people at the time. He never gave

any consideration to outward appearance, but always looked for the condition of the heart. Should we not do the same? Ponder that.

Job 8:1-10, 20-22; Psalm 18:1-20; Acts 10:17-33

### **Friday, August 31**

Psalm 16 *Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my rock secure. I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.* (vv.1, 5, 8)

I wrestle with a chronic condition, Parkinson's disease. So I find the words of the psalmist very comforting. I had a career in the Coast Guard. When I was at sea and a storm would bear down on us, I could take refuge inside the ship. It was warm, dry, and comfortable. Jesus is like the ship.

Everything I need has been provided by the Lord. Not all the wants, but the needs. Even though the illness brings discomfort, I can stand on the rock of Jesus Christ. All other ground is sinking sand. I keep my eyes always on the Lord. In the eye of the storm he remains in control. His anchor always holds no matter how hard the wind blows. Ponder that.

Job 9:1-15, 32-35; Psalm 17; Acts 10:34-48; John 7:37-52

### **Saturday, September 1**

John 8:12-20 *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (v.12)

Have you ever thought about how most crimes are committed when it is dark? That's because the perpetrator thinks he will not be seen. Similarly, most sins occur in secret because the sinner does not want to be found out. But rest assured, no secrets are held from the Lord. Jesus illustrated that when he said he was the light of the world. Whoever follows him will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life—eternal salvation. Have you ever given any thought to why we sin? We all carry around original sin because of the Fall. I call that sin the noun. We all have a besetting sin also. It may be different for each one of us. I call it sin the verb. Why do we do it? Because we like it, we think it brings pleasure—but it really only brings darkness. That's why Jesus came: to shed light on our darkness, so he could redeem us. Ponder that.

Job 9:1, 10:1-9, 16-22; Psalms 20, 21; Acts 11:1-18

*by Richard Mead*

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