

Good News Daily

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Sunday, June 3

Acts 8:26-40 *“Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked? “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?”* (vv.30b-31a NIV)

I am amazed at the way most people are glued to their electronic devices like cell phones, tablets, and computers. People walk and even drive with their heads down looking at their cell phones. It’s not uncommon to see two people at a restaurant together scrolling through their phones rather than conversing with each other. Maybe I am “old fashioned.”

I can get really frustrated with all the technology one is supposed to know in today’s age. I manage to make my way with computers and cell phones. There is so much information available to me anytime I want it—and even when I don’t want it!

Rather than letting it irritate me, I am thankful for the advantages I have because of technology. There is literally abundant knowledge at my fingertips. I can look up Bible verses on my phone and connect to the internet in an instant. I can now easily access a multitude of Bible commentaries that help explain God’s Word to me in the comfort of my own home and at my convenience.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11; Psalms 63, 98; Luke 11:1-13

Monday, June 4

Matthew 13:44-52 *“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish.”* (v.47)

Sometimes the parables of Jesus are hard to understand. It helps me to be able to see and read the words Jesus spoke. Having the benefit of Jesus’ words in writing gives me time to study and digest what he was saying. I love to read and hear the words of Jesus.

One of the other things I love about Jesus is the way he treated people. Jesus broke many barriers of his time. He spoke to women and taught them. He touched those with infectious diseases. He treated the poor with respect and kindness. He also taught the religious and respectable

people of his time. Like the verse above, his kingdom was available to *all* people—just like “all kinds of fish.”

And his truth is still for the people of today. All of humankind is invited to partake of his salvation. No one is exempt from his invitation. May we be thankful that we are included in the great plan of his salvation.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-15; Psalms 41, 52; Galatians 1:1-17

Tuesday, June 5

Ecclesiastes 2:16-26 *A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see is, from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?* (vv.24-25)

When last did you compare yourself to someone else? It’s a pretty common thing to do. At times, I have wished I had someone else’s lifestyle or talents. I find it rather easy to look at other people and see what I lack.

However, I know God has a unique plan and purpose just for me. These verses redirect my thoughts to that. My life doesn’t and shouldn’t look like someone else’s. I can relax and live according to the plan God has set before me.

Too often I have worried about not doing the right thing or not doing what other people are doing. I complicate the purposes of God’s work in my life by doing that. I am learning to simplify my walk with God by asking Him what He wants *me* to do. I focus my mind and spirit on just doing and enjoying the things He has placed in my path. This ability is a gift from God.

Psalm 45; Galatians 1:18—2:10; Matthew 13:53-58

Wednesday, June 6

Galatians 2:11-21 *“We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.”* (vv.15-16)

I have heard several people say, “I’m a good person and I try to live by the Ten Commandments.” This is their way of saying that God will accept them into heaven simply because they are good, moral people. The idea is that they do more good than bad, and that is acceptable to God. It is very hard for me to give a reply knowing that this is not what the Bible teaches.

I, for one, am glad that God doesn’t look at my own goodness because I have done many things that are sinful. Some sins were done in ignorance and some done with full knowledge. There is a play on the word “justified” which helps me understand what Paul is talking about. It means “just as if I’d” never sinned.

This is what happened when I put my faith in Jesus. My debt to God was paid by Jesus. I am forever grateful. It's just as if I'd never sinned. I am clean, pure, and holy in Jesus. I am not justified by the things I do or don't do, but by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It is by his grace alone that I am saved.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15; Psalm 119:49-72; Matthew 14:1-12

Thursday, June 7

Matthew 14:13-21 *When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat to a solitary place.* (v.13a)

I am an introvert by nature. For a while I served in a large church as an ordained minister. There were always people around me that had needs. Sometimes it was overwhelming. I could not meet all their needs. It was important for me to take time away from the large number of people and get away by myself to recharge. This was something I learned over time.

At first I felt guilty about taking time away from church matters and people and even my own family. But God revealed to me that this was wise. How could I minister to others if I was worn out? How could I have the compassion of Jesus if I was overwhelmed with people's problems? It was necessary so I didn't experience burnout.

Even Jesus needed time away. He is our example. May we have the freedom to fill ourselves up with God first, before we try to meet the needs of others. We will be following the way of Jesus when we do.

Ecclesiastes 3:16—4:3; Psalm 50; Galatians 3:1-14

Friday, June 8

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 *Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know they do wrong.* (v.1)

I have been a Christ follower for many years. I have attended church on a regular basis for many years as well. I don't like to admit it but at times I have felt pretty good about myself and my righteous lifestyle. Inwardly, I have thought God must be pretty happy with me. What pride!

This is a reminder to me that it's important to go to church with the right attitude. To listen and hear, not pat myself on the back for going. It's a reminder that even though I have faith in Christ, I still have the bent toward sin. Foolish people say they have no sin. God says otherwise.

My prayer is that God will always keep my heart soft and open to the whispers of the Holy Spirit. I want to be able to hear God when He says there is something in my life that needs attention. Maybe it is a sin I need to deal with. Often times, I need to correct my course. I pray I will never be

foolish enough to think I am good enough on my own. I owe everything to the work of Jesus.

Psalms 40, 54; Galatians 3:15-22; Matthew 14:22-36

Saturday, June 9

Matthew 15:1-20 “*These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.*” (v.8)

Because I have been a Christ follower for many years, I know the “right” words to say. I can talk a whole lot about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible. It’s easy for me to use words and language that sound like things you would hear in a church setting. Sometimes people call this talk “Christianese.”

But sometimes my words can get in the way of what I am actually feeling on the inside. What’s going on inside my head and heart can be very different than what I let on to other people. This can even creep into my relationship with God. I’m not always open and honest with myself, others, or God. This is humbling to admit.

This verse is a reminder to me to be completely open and honest with God. He already knows the truth and what is really going on anyway! Why do I try to hide things from Him? I simply need to come and confess the reality of what is going on in the interior of my life. When that happens, He can work with me to be pleasing to Him and accomplish His will in my life. I can stop hiding behind words and let God see the real me.

Ecclesiastes 5:8-20; Psalm 55; Galatians 3:23—4:11

by Pamela Newton

Volume XVIII

June 10-16, 2018

Number 23

Sunday, June 10

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12 *I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men; God gives a man wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them...* (vv.1-2a NIV)

When I read this passage in Ecclesiastes, I ponder about my level of contentment with the wealth I have accumulated. A statement has been attributed to a Romanian church leader who spent time in the West in which he said, “95% of believers who face the test of persecution pass it; 95% who face the test of prosperity fail it.”

The lesson I'm hearing is that no amount of money is going to make me satisfied or happy. Rich or poor, if I'm not connected with God, then there will be no contentment. So, if life is a struggle, I can still celebrate all the many blessings that I have received by sight and what I will receive by faith. God is my source of enjoyment and it is by His grace that he enables me to be aware of my many blessings.

Psalms 24, 29; Acts 10:9-23; Luke 12:32-40

Monday, June 11

Matthew 15:21-28 *Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."* (v.23)

Honestly, this is not my favorite Jesus story. His attitude toward the Canaanite woman almost seems racist: "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." I had to read, necessarily, several commentaries to get a better understanding of the context of Christ's ministry and what was transpiring at this time.

So here is my "take-away." Faith is not an "easiest road to travel." There are starts and stops and stumbling blocks. As the Canaanite woman demonstrated, persistence is required. I am discouraged when my requests are not answered in *my time*. God has a plan for me, in His time. In faith, I cry out to God. My prayers are heard by God. God, in His mercy, answers my prayers.

Ecclesiastes 7:1-14; Psalms 56, 57, 58; Galatians 4:12-20

Tuesday, June 12

Ecclesiastes 8:14—9:10 *So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun.* (v.15)

The author of Ecclesiastes speaks a lot about man's perception of creation on earth as being meaninglessness and chaotic. That's because he (and I) are creatures of God and cannot comprehend what God has done nor "what goes on under the sun." The righteous men get what the wicked deserve and the wicked get what the righteous deserve. Good people suffer and bad people prosper. That's not fair! And then, everyone dies and is forgotten in time! What kind of plan is that?

It's not a plan. It is a test of faith. I have to live *in* the world and not be *of* the world. And so, I will get out of the judgment game and stop the second guessing of why, why, why. Let me live in contentment with the lean

times as well as the fat times in my life. I want to live my life in joy and with a peace which passes all understanding. Amen.

Psalms 61, 62; Galatians 4:21-31; Matthew 15:29-39

Wednesday, June 13

Matthew 16:1-12 *Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.* (v.12)

Yeah, I know it's not funny, but I always get a chuckle out of how "obtuse" the apostles were at times. Actually, it just makes me feel a little better about myself when I eventually realize how limited my own understanding, action, statement, etc. has been.

The teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees was symptomatic of the old ways, and the apostles, as well as everyone else, were susceptible to their logic and persuasion. There are competing voices in our churches today. Divisions, based on denominations, new learnings, new understandings and heresy, are prevalent. As I continue my study of the Bible and learn more about the theology of my faith, it is apparent that effort and diligence is required. So, I point myself to the words of Paul in 2 Timothy when he reminds the reader, "Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." Great advice that I will follow.

Ecclesiastes 9:11-18; Psalm 72; Galatians 5:1-15

Thursday, June 14

Galatians 5:16-24 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.* (vv.22-23)

Are the fruits of the Spirit exclusive to the Spirit? Do non-believers (and even evil doers) get to enjoy the qualities of love, joy, and self-control? Apparently so. Why is it that I lose my self-control and my gentleness? That I stomp about the world in my abruptness?

Maybe I am a little too hard on myself and a little too naive when I observe other people. They probably get their fair share of difficulty, frustration, and shame. The lesson I am getting from Paul in his exhortation to the Galatians is that there is a conflict (a constant and ever-present conflict) between my flesh and my spirit. When I was much younger, I was of the mind that such conflicts would eventually, you know, just go away. Well, that's one more thing I was wrong about.

This reading ends with, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” It’s time to “walk the walk” and not just “talk the talk.” I’m not sure that I have crucified my flesh of its passions and desires, but I do know that I have experienced more and more of the fruits of the Spirit. And if that is taking place in my life, perhaps my flesh is moving ever so closer to the cross.

Ecclesiastes 11:1-8; Psalms 70, 71; Matthew 16:13-20

Friday, June 15

Matthew 16:21-28 *Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”* (vv.24-25)

I read this passage and condemn myself. I seek a comfortable life for myself and not the cross. Jesus is telling his disciples (that’s me included) that this world is to be denied. I can barely deny myself an ice cream treat after a big meal.

Am I any different than a morally up-right non-believer? What is setting me apart? OK, maybe I’m forsaking worldly status—that’s not hard—not much status to forsake. How about worldly plans (if I had them, which I don’t). The cross means death. Whether I discern that fact in a literal or metaphorical sense, it is inescapable. Jesus came to save me from my sin, and accepting him must include recognizing his right to rule my life. I am so far from perfection that having a loving God who would seek a relationship with me is in itself a mystery. I recognize who my Lord is. I pray for the strength to bear my cross.

Ecclesiastes 11:9—12:14; Psalm 69; Galatians 5:25—6:10

Saturday, June 16

Numbers 3:1-13 *The LORD said to Moses, “Bring the tribe of Levi and present them to Aaron the priest to assist him. They are to perform duties for him and for the whole community at the Tent of Meeting by doing the work of the tabernacle.”* (vv.5-7)

I delight in this passage because it reminds me of the privilege I have received as being a member of my church’s Altar Guild. Being called out for service has been a blessing and a continuing ministry. The Levites were elevated to perform holy service, presumably, for their ability to channel their strong character in the service of God. Loyalty to Moses during the episode of the Golden Calf resulted in their reward of spiritual service that was lost to the firstborn of the other tribes.

Performing spiritual service is a reward in and of itself. My connection with the Altar Guild is an experience that connects me with each and every person attending our worship service. It is a service that provides an additional pathway to connect with the Spirit in prayer and with a grateful heart.

Psalms 75, 76; Galatians 6:11-18; Matthew 17:1-13

by Larry Standish

Volume XVIII

June 17-23, 2018

Number 24

Sunday, June 17

Numbers 6:22-27 *The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites.’”* (vv.22-23 NIV)

Almost every Sunday, our priest raised his hand and repeated these verses as he made the sign of the cross over the congregation. The words became almost diluted of their power after a while until I realized that this was a commandment from God to the priests from the very get-go. Then suddenly their power seared into my heart like a brand onto a steer’s hide.

Much of our rich, liturgical tradition stems back from the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Bible. These practices have been carried on for thousands of years and passed from priest to priest, synagogue to church, city to city, all over the globe.

Jesus is our Vine, and the roots of our worship run very, very deep indeed. As it states in the lesson from Luke, the master puts the manager in charge of his servants and holds him (or her) accountable. How often do you thank your priest (or pastor) for carrying out the Master’s commands?

Psalms 93, 96; Acts 13:1-12; Luke 12:41-48

Monday, June 18

Psalm 80 *Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.* (v.3)

The allusion to the Aaronic blessing from yesterday’s passage is repeated almost as a chorus throughout this psalm. What does it mean and why is it so important?

Think of when people’s faces shine. Couples in love have a glow about them. So do women who are pregnant, or grandparents when they hug their grandchildren.

When, through confession, our sins are forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus, God can then turn to us. When He does, His face

shimmers with love and happiness. His child has returned. The relationship, once broken by sin, is restored. Being able to shine His face upon us, His children, was important enough for God to sacrifice His own Son in order to make it happen. Should it not carry a great deal of weight with us as well?

Lord, may I start out each day with this verse on my lips and in my heart.

Numbers 9:15-23, 10:29-36; Romans 1:1-15; Matthew 17:14-21

Tuesday, June 19

Romans 1:16-25 *The wrath of God is being revealed against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness.* (v.18)

If you live in Texas, as I do, June “Teenth” has a special meaning. On this day in history, the slaves in my state learned of the Emancipation Proclamation. (No cyberspace or TV back in 1863 to broadcast the news quickly.) Some owners didn’t want the word to get out. They wanted to keep people in slavery.

Today, people are still enslaved—by sin. Nothing new. As you read what Paul wrote to the first century Romans, you’d almost believe he meant it for today’s readers. Pleasure cannot set us free. Exploitation of others either. Money can’t do it or power. Only the blood of Jesus can.

As was the case two thousand years ago, we have a choice. We can be restored to a right relationship, or go on about our wicked ways just as our ancestors did. Let us choose to loosen the chains that bind us to sin and then quickly proclaim to others the emancipation that is available to all who believe Jesus is Christ.

Numbers 11:1-23; Psalm 78:1-39; Matthew 17:22-27

Wednesday, June 20

Matthew 18:1-9 *And he [Jesus] said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”* (v.3)

Have you ever watched a child as they expectantly wait for something? Their eager faces and antsy little bodies scream their expectation of the joy which is to soon arrive. And when it happens, be it a pony or an ice cream cone, they are unabashed in showing their pleasure. Such child-like faith.

Do we react that way while waiting for God’s blessings, or do we grumble because He is “taking His sweet time”? Faith is positive anticipation and assured hope that what God has in store for us is good, even if things seem just the opposite at the moment. Also, with the trust of a child

to his parents, we must realize that even when the thunder rocks our world, our Father is there to comfort and guide us. We never outgrow the need to have our *Abba* Father near.

Don't burst a child's bubble and tell them to grow up and face reality. Instead, adopt their joyous faith—need for dependency, and lack of skepticism. See how much fuller your life can become.

Numbers 11:24-25; Psalm 119:97-120; Romans 1:28—2:11

Thursday, June 21

Psalm 83 *Make them like tumbleweed, my God, like chaff before the wind.* (v.13)

Oh, how honest the psalmist is. Smite my enemies, God. Make them all go away. Show them who's boss. If only life was so simple, right?

We may not have enemies barreling down upon us to physically threaten us as the psalmist did, but who hasn't almost prayed, if not downright demanded, for vengeance? If vengeance is yours, God, then would You kindly do something? We'd like a little justice over here, please.

The psalmist asked God to shame his enemies. But Jesus, when he came to earth hundreds of years later, took a different stance. He said to be kind to them and love on them (Matthew 5:43-48). Paul tells us in Romans 12:20, it'll be like heaping burning coals on their heads.

God answered the psalmist, and He answers us today. Convict them with the love I instill in your hearts. Then they will see I am God, through you. Many an abuser or assaulter has been convicted by a believer's refusal to retaliate in hate—including the soldier at the foot of the Cross who proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God.

Numbers 12:1-16; Romans 2:12-24; Matthew 18:10-20

Friday, June 22

Numbers 13:1-3, 21-30 *They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land.* (v.26)

The explorers reported to the Hebrew people in the desert what lay beyond the Jordan River, i.e. in the "Promised Land." The sojourners dangled the juicy fruit in front of them knowing these people were tired of eating manna after forty years. Then they added a disclaimer. But wait, you won't be able to get much of this delicious food because there are mean giants over there. All became discouraged, except for Caleb who trusted the good outweighed the bad. Why? Because he believed God kept His promises.

Are you a glass half-empty or half-full type of person? Do you look for the other shoe to fall, or seek the good in the situation, trusting God is, as the hymn states, working His purpose out? Sometimes blessings come hidden, and at times they are attainable, but at a cost.

It is our perspective that makes all the difference. We can stress over the giants or, like David, trust our God is bigger and that He will provide what we need to fell them.

Psalm 88; Romans 2:25—3:8; Matthew 18:21-35

Saturday, June 23

Romans 3:9-20 *What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.* (v.9)

There is a misnomer seeping into pulpits these days; something Paul spoke about in today's verses. It has been embraced by pseudo-spiritual movies and books. It states that mankind is essentially good with a God-spark inside. We just need to tap into it. Wrong.

To believe this negates the reason Jesus came to earth. It reduces him to a wise, love-prophet who taught us how to live with each other a bit better. Yes, once we confess him as Lord, his Spirit dwells within us. But not until then. We are not automatically born into God's family. We have to be re-born into it.

If man is essentially good, then the Garden of Eden never happened. We do not need a Savior, and we can achieve salvation on our own. Many other religions believe this, but only *one* man claimed to be the Way, the Truth and the Life who could lead us out of the darkness of our sins into the light of love. His name is Jesus, and one day every knee will bow at the sound of that name.

Numbers 13:31—14:25; Psalms 87, 90; Matthew 19:1-12

by Julie B Cosgrove

Volume XVIII

June 24-30, 2018

Number 25

Sunday, June 24

Psalm 66 *Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he did for me.* (vv.16 NLT)

I remember a time when I experienced feelings of depression and hopeless despair. I wanted to curl up in a ball under the covers of my bed in a darkened room; I did not want to see anyone, hear anyone, or talk with

anyone. While I was walking down the hall to a bedroom at the end of a long ranch-style house, I said to Jesus, “Jesus, I feel depression; I don’t feel any hope; there isn’t anything I can do! Nothing will help!” Before I had taken more than a few additional steps, I noticed the depression had lifted, and no longer was I cloaked in despair. I felt excitement as I realized that I had only described to Jesus how I felt; I had not asked for help. When I simply described my feelings, he recognized my need, and he answered my cry. I rejoice in his love!

Thank you, Jesus, for giving me what I needed, even though I did not ask in the usual way.

Numbers 14:26-45; Psalm 67; Acts 15:1-12; Luke 12:49-56

Monday, June 25

Psalm 89:1-18 *Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship, for they will walk in the light of your presence, LORD. You are their glorious strength. It pleases you to make us strong.* (vv.15, 17)

I play piano for a small traditional worship service that exists within a larger, more contemporary-oriented church. I am a volunteer who is an intermediate-level player; I work very hard to prepare arrangements of worship music for preludes, offertories, and communion services that represent a style of music with which the worshippers can identify.

The response of the people to the joyful call to worship in that service has been encouraging; I have been strengthened to learn and play music that is more difficult than I am typically able to play. As a result of the response of the people, I have grown musically, spiritually, and personally. I am so grateful for the way God strengthens and speaks to me through them.

Lord Jesus, thank you for expressing yourself to us through others. Thank you for the ways in which they allow you to speak through them. Please help us be encouragers who hear, and respond to, the joyful call to worship.

Numbers 16:1-19; Romans 3:21-31; Matthew 19:13-22

Tuesday, June 26

Numbers 16:20-35 *“Quick!” he told the people. “Get away from the tents of these wicked men, and don’t touch anything that belongs to them. If you do, you will be destroyed for their sins.”* (v.26)

I remember a situation in which I suffered the consequences of someone else’s sin. I had been tempted to align myself with a person who had made significant questionable decisions, and I did not want to confront the person with the seriousness of the sins that had been committed. I was

afraid of how the person would respond to me if I spoke up. I allowed myself to succumb to the temptation to remain silent.

Once I succumbed to that temptation, I lost peace; I became tormented by fear—fear that the person would get caught, fear that the person would turn against me even though I did not confront them, and fear that someone would discover that I had helped the person cover their sin. It was not until I confessed to someone the sin of aligning myself with this person, and corrected the situation, that I experienced the peace of God that passes all understanding.

Lord, we pray for courage to embrace our responsibility to speak the truth in love.

Psalms 97, 99, 100; Romans 4:1-12; Matthew 19:23-30

Wednesday, June 27

Psalm 101 *I will search for faithful people to be my companions.* (v.6a)

I treasure friendships that have been shaped over time—relationships hewn through circumstances and smoothed by shared experiences through which mutual trust grew. Faithfulness developed and was discerned as we walked together in relationship through life's winding paths.

I have searched deliberately for faithful companions, only to see my hopes shattered. Potential faithful companions sprang up speedily like seed, sown on shallow soil, which did not thrive: the relationships were not deep-rooted; they were not healthy; they did not endure. I learned the process cannot be hurried; I refined the way in which I viewed the process so that patience was woven into the search.

I value being open to friendship while I am seeking to discern what the Lord may be saying to me through a developing relationship. What do I notice? How am I responding? Am I drawn closer to the Lord when I am in relationship with this person, or am I pulled in another direction?

Lord, please guide us through the process of building relationships with faithful people that bring joy to You.

Numbers 16:36-50; Psalm 109; Romans 4:13-25; Matthew 20:1-16

Thursday, June 28

Matthew 20:17-28 *But Jesus answered by saying to them, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink?" "Oh yes," they replied, "we are able!"* (v.22)

When I ponder this passage, I experience feelings of encouragement. I am strengthened by the example of people committing to a goal even though they do not know the details of what they will experience.

However, unlike these people, I do not want to be overly bold; I do not want to ask for something that is not mine to possess. My goal is to yield myself without restraint while discerning the Lord in all of my ways.

What experiences will Jesus use to test my character? What situations will Jesus allow in my life that will reveal what I am truly like? Will I rejoice when surrounded by circumstances that would not have been my first choice—or even my choice at all? How will I respond? Am I able?

Lord Jesus, please help us realize that when you call and we respond, we become able. Help us resist the temptation to be presumptuous; help us seek you, discern you, and walk with you wherever your path may lead.

Numbers 17:1-11; Psalm 105:1-22; Romans 5:1-11

Friday, June 29

Psalm 102 *But you, O LORD, will sit on your throne forever. Your fame will endure to every generation. The children of your people will live in security. Their children's children will thrive in your presence.* (vv.12, 28)

I feel comforted by the knowledge that the Lord will sit on His throne forever; there is no power that can take Him down. This knowledge is not for me alone; it is also for those who come after me...one generation after another after another.

Has the Lord redeemed me? Has He freed me from my enemies? I must declare His mighty acts; they are not to be kept secret. Am I living securely? I must communicate hope to those who are still in chains; the Lord will listen to their prayers too. I cannot be silenced; I must speak out!

Lord, help us to be brave communicators of Your fame—Your strength, Your mercy, Your compassion, Your restorative power, Your love. Give us courage to declare Your mighty acts; give us wisdom to teach Your ways. As we gather together to worship You, we will celebrate and praise Your fame.

Numbers 20:1-13; Romans 5:12-21; Matthew 20:29-34

Saturday, June 30

Psalm 107:33-43 *Those who are wise will take all this to heart; they will see in our history the faithful love of the LORD.* (v.43)

Of all the subjects I studied in school, history was the subject I liked the least. The assignments could be described as ever-growing mounds of busy work that did not relate to my life; the lectures were extended drones of words that often put me to sleep. I regret that those who taught the classes may not have had an appreciation for this subject. Indeed, a life-giving perspective of history, that could have been provided, was missing.

My perception of the study of history was transformed after I began reading the Bible and learning about events from God’s perspective. As I read about God and His people, and how they interacted with each other and with the inhabitants of the world, I learned how God works through individuals and world events to keep His promises even over long sequences of generations.

Lord, thank You for preserving ways for us to learn about You, so that as we look at history and as we experience current events we can see the outworking of Your faithful love.

Numbers 20:14-29; Psalm 108; Romans 6:1-11; Matthew 21:1-11

by Elizabeth Ann Franks

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