



**Daily Devotionals – January 23 to January 29, 2021  
To Encourage Franklin in Such a Time As This  
By Dr. Charles Qualls and Rev. Steve Gibson-- Franklin Baptist Church**

This brief series of daily devotionals are designed to speak into the days in which we live. But we frame that sacred time in the challenging days of the Covid-19 or Novel CoronaVirus that is spreading across our globe. Take in these daily words of devotion. We hope you will experience wisdom, perspective and yes even hope!

They draw from the Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings by date.  
(All scriptures will use the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted)

**Saturday, January 23 - Psalm 62:5-12  
by Dr. Charles Qualls  
*God Alone***

5 For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.

6 He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

7 On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.  
Selah

9 Those of low estate are but a breath, those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath.

10 Put no confidence in extortion, and set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

11 Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, 12 and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord. For you repay to all according to their work.

**Devotion:**

*Trust in him at all times, O people;  
pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.*

I'm not sure if you or I always trust in God quite this thoroughly. In fact, only you know in the privacy of your soul just how you react to the psalmist's words here. He bears testimony to the depth of his faith. Words and phrases like these would flow more easily when someone is living

in an easy or uneventful time. The harder assignment is probably to talk about our trust and faith in God if we are suffering at the moment.

However, the earlier verses (v1-4) that are not a part of today's reading do at least hint of some opposition. If truly from the heart of king David, these song lyrics leave open the possibility that he was under some opposition or pressure from within his kingdom.

Still, the conclusion he reaches is powerful. He will place his trust in God, such that the worst life has to offer will not overcome him. Strong words like "rock," "fortress," "salvation" and "refuge" may lose their strength in our familiarity. The need to even express God as "refuge," for instance, reminds us that this writer has had his faith tested. Life has threatened, but he has sought shelter in God and found safety.

Has life caused you to test the depth of your faith? Probably so. Maybe a few times. Did you wait for a word from God, only to find that voice speaking into your life at just the right time? This writer has poured out his heart to God. Perhaps you have, too. What did that do for you? What did you learn?

**Prayer:**

Lord, may we also find you more than able to meet the moments of our lives. May we speak our hearts to you and wait for you to speak. You are our refuge and our salvation. Amen.

**Sunday, January 24 - Mark 1:14-20**

**by Dr. Charles Qualls**

***Jesus Calls***

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea -- for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

**Devotion:**

*But I'm not Jesus!*

Maybe we've all muttered this...or shouted it...at some point in our spiritual lives. This is so obviously true. Yet we share a complex call from our Lord. While none of us ARE Jesus, we are called to be "like" Jesus. I'm sure there are so many responses to this ambitious call. But two obvious ones are to not try (since none of us can be Jesus) or to give this calling our best, despite knowing that we aren't Jesus.

We'll fall short inevitably, but we are called to try anyway. That seems to be what is asked of us. To try our best and to join in the work that Jesus began so long ago. To do so admitting our limitations, but just as quickly understanding our calling anyway.

There are limitations on what we can do, and maybe on what Jesus actually expected when he called even the original disciples. That is, the metaphor of “fishing for people” can only be stretched so far. When a net surrounded the fish in the water, they had no choice as to where they went next. Fishing for people is different. For one thing, the people we meet have a choice. God’s infinite love provides them with the free will to accept or reject Jesus’ invitations through us. Related, we are responsible for doing the fishing. But we are not responsible, ultimately, for the outcomes. That is between them and God.

So, you’re not Jesus. Okay. We get that. But you are you. Though it may sound cliché, God has made you special. Special as in *uniquely*. Within who you are, there is plenty with which our God can work.

You don’t have to be Jesus as much as you are at least asked to bear a resemblance to him. God can use the very best you have to offer when your transformed life is put to work within a world that needs the good news. You are enough. Can you trust that today?

**Prayer:**

God, give us the will to offer you our best. Just as much, help us to trust that we are enough for you to use as you see fit. We may not be Jesus, but we are enough. Amen.

**Monday, January 25 - 1 Corinthians 7:17-24**

**by Dr. Charles Qualls**

***The Life The Lord Has Assigned***

17 However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. 18 Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. 19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything. 20 Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called.

21 Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever. 22 For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ. 23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters. 24 In whatever condition you were called, brothers and sisters, there remain with God.

**Devotion:**

*But I’m just afraid I don’t really have a testimony.*

I used to hear that all the time when I was working with teenagers and arranging for someone to speak about their faith. When they said that, what they really meant was “But I’ve never scored the winning touchdown in a big game. I’m not a famous athlete.” Or, they might mean “But I was a good kid, so I don’t have a dramatic reversal of alcohol or drug use to talk about.”

Paul talks about a couple of the hot topics of his age and culture. His point is just like the one I tried to make when kids protested that they didn’t really have a faith testimony or story to tell --

God comes to you as you are. That's where all of our testimonies begin -- where we were. You don't need someone else's faith story. Yours is the only one you get to live.

Your story doesn't have to be like anyone else's. Your prayer doesn't have to sound like anyone else's. The calling God places upon your life won't be just like anyone else's either. Does that mean we have no standards, no common expectations around the Christian life? Of course not. We all are vulnerable to our own mistakes with morals or ethics. We are all called to become as much like Christ as we can. We should walk humbly and intently. Paul's point, though, is that you encounter God on your terms. That's all you can do.

Ever catch yourself living someone else's life? Ever catch yourself about to buy something popular, only to realize that deep down you actually don't want it? Same thing Paul's talking about in our spiritual walk with God here!

**Prayer:**

Lord, help us to live the life we are assigned. Give us the wisdom and self-awareness to understand that our own lives are the only ones we get to live. Amen.

**Tuesday, January 26 - Acts 5:33-42**

**by Dr. Charles Qualls**

***Let Them Alone***

33 When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. 34 But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a short time. 35 Then he said to them, "Fellow Israelites, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men. 36 For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and disappeared. 37 After him, Judas the Galilean rose up at the time of the census and got people to follow him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered. 38 So in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them -- in that case you may even be found fighting against God!"

They were convinced by him, 40 and when they had called in the apostles, they had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. 42 And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.

**Devotion:**

This is the famous episode in Acts where the legendary priest Gamaliel makes a wise but surprising gesture in favor of Christianity. In so doing, he paved the way for some of the earliest preaching the apostles ever did. Why should we find encouragement and instruction in it?

First some background. This action happens early in Acts, long before the apostle Paul is even converted. At this point, Jesus has not long been ascended. The early church there in

Jerusalem has received the power of the Holy Spirit and a great number of converts have accepted faith through the story of a risen Jesus Christ. Now, Peter and the apostles have been arrested for preaching publicly.

Scheduled to be tried soon, the apostles soon find the prison doors opened for them by God's messenger. They go right back up to the temple and begin preaching again. A goodly following assembles by the time the temple police and chief priests find them there. Now, they are before the assemblage of priests again. The body is frustrated with them, albeit unsure of how they had escaped jail the first time. The mood is to punish them good, to be sure they will stop this.

That's where the priest Gamaliel weighs in, to everyone's surprise. "Turn them loose. If this is not of the Lord it will fail. If it is of God, we will not stop it."

What should we take away? First, I am self-aware that I am not very patient in applying Gamaliel's wisdom. When the church needs protecting, I tend to protect it. That comes from a similar place as the priests were in the story, I suppose. I've simply seen too many oddball "movements" take root here and there that did damage to the church. Some things just don't need to be allowed to happen when they don't seem to represent the essence of Christ. However, I still agree with Gamaliel in principle. If we feel led to do something, time will tell if it was of God or if it wasn't. If it is of God, we couldn't stop a movement if we tried. That is better news than not. A lifetime of journeying with this one won't completely solve it for me, I realize.

**Prayer:**

God of wisdom and Lord of our days, may we trust your leadership and power. Even more, may we have the discernment to sense what is in keeping with you before we try to do it. Amen.

**Wednesday, January 27 - Psalm 46**  
**by Rev. Steven R. Gibson**  
***God's Defense of His City and People***

**To the leader. Of the Korahites. According to Alamo. A Song.**

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; <sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.  
*Selah*

<sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

<sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.

<sup>6</sup> The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

<sup>7</sup> The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*

<sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.

<sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

<sup>10</sup> “Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”

<sup>11</sup> The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*

**Devotion:**

Most of us have fears -- fears about our family, fears about our home and even fears about world events and how they might affect us. We all know that natural and man-made disasters are possible, maybe even probable. How do you address your fears?

The Psalmist presents a new reality that is not based on fear. The message of the Psalmist clearly states that even if the world ended, we do not fear. Even in the face of utter destruction, the writer states a quiet confidence in God’s ability to save him. The Psalmist speaks very clearly -- God is our refuge and our strength, even in the face of total destruction. God’s refuge is not temporary, but eternal. God is able to provide assistance whenever assistance is needed and asked for. The Psalmist speaks of God’s unshakable ability to save us. Regardless of the calamity, God is able and willing to assist us. God is not merely a temporary retreat, but an eternal refuge in *any situation!*

We are told that war and destruction are inevitable, but even war and destruction do not get the last word. The last word belongs to God and the Psalm ends in quiet confidence. “The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.” (V11)

How are you doing? It is my prayer that your faith is in the Lord Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth. If your faith is in God, then you will be able to “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.” (V10)

**Prayer:**

Holy God, please continue to be our refuge and strength, even during the pandemic. Increase our ability to trust you. Amen.

**Thursday, January 28 - Romans 9:6-18**

**by Rev. Steven R. Gibson**

***God’s Election of Israel***

<sup>6</sup> It is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all Israelites truly belong to Israel, <sup>7</sup> and not all of Abraham’s children are his true descendants; but “It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you.” <sup>8</sup> This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants. <sup>9</sup> For this is what the promise said, “About this time I will return and Sarah shall have a son.” <sup>10</sup> Nor is that all; something similar happened to Rebecca when she had conceived children by one husband, our ancestor Isaac. <sup>11</sup> Even before they had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God’s purpose of election might continue, <sup>12</sup> not by works but by his call) she was told, “The elder shall serve the younger.”

<sup>13</sup> As it is written, “I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau.”

<sup>14</sup> What then are we to say? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

<sup>16</sup> So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy. <sup>17</sup> For the scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." <sup>18</sup> So then he has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses.

**Devotion:**

This passage has confounded people throughout time. How can God be unjust? How can God work in a world of corrupt people? Has God's word failed?

Verse 6 assures the reader that God's word has not failed. It is impossible for God's word to fail. The implied question is this: Has God's word failed? The answer is this -- it is Israel that has failed! Here Paul is laying the groundwork for two Israels, in effect the broad, expansive Israel and the smaller Israel who does the Lord's work. This follows the story of Abraham's two sons Ishmael and Isaac, but only Isaac was designated as the seed of Abraham.

The distinction between Ishmael and Isaac is laid out in more detail. Ishmael was the eldest son, but was produced by the slave-girl Hagar, while Isaac was born of Sarah. The resulting friction between the different "Israels" implies potential Gentiles boasting against the unbelieving Jews. Thus the "chosen seed" was Sarah's son Isaac. God had promised a son and when the time came, this prophecy was fulfilled with Isaac. This duality of siblings occurred later with Rebecca and emphasizes the sovereign purpose of God. Paul is stating that God's purpose was always to have the true Israel that responded to the Gospel by the grace of God, not of works but of the grace of God who calls.

God's word has not failed, because God has always intended to work through Isaac, not Ishmael; through Jacob, and not Esau. This argument continues and the question is asked, "Is there injustice on God's part?" (V14) God's actions do not depend on human will, but on God's mercy.

God has always been sovereign and so are his works. It is above my pay grade to second guess God.

**Prayer:**

Eternally loving God, please increase our faith as we place our trust in you. Amen.

**Friday, January 29 - Psalm 111**  
**by Rev. Steven R. Gibson**  
***Praise for God's Wonderful Works***

<sup>1</sup> Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

<sup>2</sup> Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.

<sup>3</sup> Full of honor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.

<sup>4</sup> He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the Lord is gracious and merciful.

<sup>5</sup> He provides food for those who fear him; he is ever mindful of his covenant.

<sup>6</sup> He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.

<sup>7</sup> The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.

<sup>8</sup> They are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

<sup>9</sup> He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name.

<sup>10</sup> The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever.

**Devotion:**

Psalms 111-118 are part of the hallelujah psalms. Their positive and optimistic tone is one of praise to God. (Halleluiah means “praise the Lord.”) The Psalmist paints a picture of God’s goodness. All that God does is good, and our reverence of God is the beginning of wisdom.

A great litany of God’s goodness is recited -- God is gracious and compassionate, God provides food for those who fear him, God remembers his covenant forever. God provides redemption for his people, the ones who love and fear him.

The picture in verse 9 is the captivity in Egypt and eventually a return from captivity in Babylon. Redemption is an interesting word and means recovery of something or someone upon payment of a ransom. Until Christ, all people were being held in slavery to sin, but Jesus paid the penalty of our sin by sacrificing his life in place of ours. Jesus’ perfect life provided the remedy to our problem of sin. Today we are able to approach God because of the completed work of Jesus Christ.

Who or what holds you captive today? Do not forget that Christ stands ready to release you from whatever binds you -- all you have to do is ask!

**Prayer:**

God of our redemption, please increase our faith to trust in your amazing power to free your people. Amen.