

A Living Sacrifice

ROMANS 12:1-3

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Do we still need to offer sacrifices to God?

In Old Testament times (before Jesus came), God allowed people to kill an animal and put it on an altar as a sacrifice for their sin. The sacrifice had to be perfect—without a single spot or fault. But this sacrifice was only a sign pointing to the day when Jesus would give His life as the real Sacrifice. When Jesus died on the cross and rose again from the dead, His sacrifice was enough to pay for the sins of the whole world, which means that we do not need to offer animals for the forgiveness of our sins. However, there is an offering that we should bring to God every day: a sacrifice of praise for His mercy. By allowing God to be in control of our lives, we are offering ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice! And although we are not perfect (as a sacrifice should be) God is pleased to accept us because Jesus has made us pure and blameless!

Verse for today

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.
Hebrews 13:15

December 2

Corinthians 10: 23-33

Real Freedom

The believers in Corinth were surrounded by people who lived in sin and did as they pleased. Paul wrote this letter to help them understand that their freedom in Christ did not mean they could do whatever they wished to do. Read I Corinthians 10: 23-33. Paul tells them that all things are "lawful" but not all things are good for us! He also tells us to consider our weaker brother and avoid things that could hinder their relationship with Christ.

Am I free to do anything?

When Jesus died for us, He bought us with His blood and freed us from being slaves of the devil. And because the devil is no longer our master, he no longer controls us! We now willingly serve the Lord because we love Him with the love He put in our hearts. We, who belong to Christ, need not fear punishment for our sin, because through Jesus Christ, the Spirit of life has set us free from sin and death (see Romans 8:1-2). And so, we no longer keep God's rules because we are afraid of being punished, but we do what is right because we want to please God and because we want to avoid doing something that would make someone's faith weak. Jesus did not set us free to selfishly do whatever we want; but rather, He has given us real freedom—freedom from the hold that sin has on our lives, and freedom to decide how to live in order to make a difference for His kingdom.

Verse for today

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Galatians 5:1

December 3

Romans chapter 12:4-21

One Body

In the book of Romans chapter 12:4-21 Paul tells us we are all part of one body—the body of Jesus Christ (verse 4-5). For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

How do I know which part of the body I am?

Jesus Christ is the Head of the church (those who believe in Him) and the church is the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18). If Jesus rules in your heart, you have become part of the body. Without you there would be an important part missing! Every person, whether a child or an adult, can be a blessing to the other parts by letting the fruit of the Spirit show in their lives (see Galatians 5:22-23). As you grow, God will show you the special tasks He wants you to do. He has given you spiritual gifts to help you do your part well—whatever it may be. As you faithfully serve the Lord and help others, you will discover the spiritual gifts you have been given. Some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and Romans 12:6-8. Remember, as with the great heroes of the Bible, God may first need to prepare you for a certain task by molding and shaping your character

Verse for today

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:16

December 4

I Corinthians 13: 1-7

Charity, Love in Action

After Paul had explained to the Corinthians that we, as believers, are part of the body of Christ, he went on to write about the kind of love that keeps the body together and working properly.

I Corinthians 13: 1-7 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

How can I show love when I don't feel like it?

When things are going well, it's easy to love your family and friends. But what about the times when you're feeling miserable? And what about loving people you don't like and who irritate you? Does God really expect you to love everyone all the time? Jesus knows that our hearts don't bubble over with nice feelings all the time. He doesn't expect us to like every person, but He did say that we must love everyone—just as He loves us (John 13:34). Love is measured by our kind-hearted actions, not by our feelings. And so, because love doesn't depend on how we feel, we can still be kind towards others even when we don't feel very loving. A 'giving' kind of love can only come from God; so when you meet someone who is not easy to love, ask Him to pour His love into your heart through the Holy Spirit who lives in you (Romans 5:5). Then think of some way to be kind to that person.

Verse for today

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; 1 John 4:7a

December 5

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Living in a Tent

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul encouraged the believers to look forward to what God has prepared." For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

In what way is our body like a tent?

Have you ever spent a whole night in a small tent? It is fun when the weather is fine. But when the wind is howling and it is pouring with rain, a flapping, shaky tent no longer seems the best place to be. In the same way, our bodies are fragile in a world that is often unfriendly and unsafe. Yet, just as you can stay dry inside a tent, even in a storm, so your spirit will be kept safe inside your body until God gives your spirit a new home—a body that will last forever! When we get our new bodies in heaven, we will be absolutely perfect. We won't just be like invisible spirits or like angels, we will have real bodies. And the best part is that our new bodies will never feel pain, embarrass us or make us feel that we are not good enough. We will be totally happy forever and ever!

Verse for today

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Philippians 3:20-21

December 6

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Light and Darkness

Paul told the believers in Corinth not to become partners with those who do things that dishonor God. "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." (16-17)

How can I keep myself separate from the world?

What does it mean to be separate from the world? We know that Paul isn't saying that we should leave this world, because God put us on this earth for a purpose. What Paul means is that we should stay away from things (and people) that draw us away from God. Jesus, the holy Son of God, also came to this sinful earth—and He was even tempted to do wrong. The devil tried to make all sorts of deals with Jesus by offering Him things that would get Him to agree to his plan. But Jesus did not sin by listening to the devil, so the devil started using the people around Jesus to try and trap Him (see Matthew 22:15). We live in a sinful world with sinful people. We cannot leave this world to escape sin, nor can we avoid ungodly people. Yet we should be careful not to make close friends with those who want to do bad things. If we choose to spend our time with those who do wrong, we may start doing those same bad things. And if we get into the habit of doing wrong things, how would others see that we are different from unbelievers?

Verse for today

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, Romans 12:2a

December 7

2 Corinthians 12:6-10

The Painful Thorn

Paul tells us a bit about himself and how that an ongoing problem helped him not to become proud.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (7-9)

Can any good come from the things that frustrate me?

If you have stood on a thorn or had a sharp stone in your shoe, you would know that every step hurts until you stop and take it out. Paul tells us of a thorn that kept bothering him. We know that it wasn't an actual thorn, but a problem that pricked and irritated him all the time. Yet Paul's problem didn't keep him from doing God's work; it actually helped him depend more on God's grace and power. He could have been proud of who he was (see 2 Corinthians 11:21-28), but instead his thorny problem helped him to humbly trust God for strength and wisdom every day. What frustrations do you have? Does someone make life difficult for you? Remember that God can use people and difficult situations to change your attitude and get you to rely more on His wisdom, strength and grace.

Verse for today

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Romans 8:37

December 8

Galatians 5: 16-18, 25

Live by the Spirit

Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in Galatia to remind them of the simple message of being saved by faith and living by the Spirit—not by a set of rules.

Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

How does the Spirit make the Christian life exciting?

Do you go to church only because you're expected to go? Do you read your Bible only because you feel guilty if you don't? When we don't have a relationship with Jesus that is real, we could easily slip into a routine of 'religious duties' that become a heavy burden of boring rules.

Obviously it isn't wrong for us to obey the rules God has given us in the Bible. But the Lord doesn't want us to be trapped by a set of rules we follow only to ease our conscience. When you allow Jesus to be your best friend, the Spirit sets your heart free. So, for example, if you have always said the same prayer when giving thanks for a meal, remember that the Spirit has set you free to use your own words of thanks. Let love, not rules, be the reason for everything you do!

Verse for today

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. 1 John 5:3

December 9

Galatians 5:16-23

The Fruit of the Spirit

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”
Paul said in his letter to the Galatians. When the Spirit is in control of your thoughts, you won't want to do all the wrong things your human nature wants you to do. For our sinful nature wants to do the exact opposite of what the Holy Spirit tells us to do. What our human nature wants is quite obvious. It shows itself by impure thoughts, hatred, fighting, jealousy, anger, selfishness and complaining. But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, a special kind of fruit starts showing— the fruit of the Spirit. The good things that start to grow in our lives are; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

How can I bear fruit?

Have you ever walked through an orchard or picked fruit from a fruit tree? It is a miracle how God makes colorful, juicy fruit grow on woody branches. When the Holy Spirit comes to live in you, He does the same kind of miracle! He gives you new life and lets the fruit of the Spirit show in your life! An apple tree doesn't need to try as hard as it can to make apples grow from its branches. All it does is soak up the sunlight from above and moisture from the soil. In the same way, when you are rooted in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7), you will soak up the fresh newness of the Spirit. By living in the sunshine of God's love you will produce the kind of goodness that pleases the Lord. And as you grow in Him, He carries on working in your life—through your daily struggles—to prune away your natural reactions and replace them with the fruit of the Spirit.

Verse for today

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Ephesians 5:8-9

December 10

Ephesians 6:1-9

Relationships at Home and at Work

Paul wrote this letter to the church in the Greek city of Ephesus. He gives them practical advice on how to act in their relationships with others: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." As you read on Paul tells us how a christian at the place of employment as well.

Why is obedience so important?

Have you noticed how fair God is? God has given everyone rules and responsibilities, including parents, teachers and bosses. It isn't only children who have to obey and do things for others. Paul tells us that we all need to respect one another, and we all need to obey God. Your mom and dad have many things to care about. They may work for a grumpy boss, have difficult people working for them, and then come home to do all the things that parents need to do. Let's be honest, it isn't easy to have the right attitude towards everyone all the time. But trying to get out of doing your bit usually ends up with everyone getting upset. By simply obeying your parents without questioning or grumbling, you will make their lives easier and you will please the Lord. Obeying our parents willingly helps us to obey God willingly, and obeying God leads to a life of blessing (see the promise in Ephesians 6:3).

Verse for today

Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Philippians 2:14-15

December 11

Ephesians 6:10-17

The Armor of God

Paul ends his letter to the Ephesians with practical advice for believers struggling against their enemy, the devil. Be strong by relying on the Lord's strength within you. Put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand up against the enemy's tricks. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. "

Why do we need armour if we are serving a God of peace?

Our God, the God of peace, has an enemy who wants to destroy all that is good and all that belongs to Him! The devil—who was thrown out of Heaven when he rebelled—hates goodness. One of the ways the devil tries to get back at God is by tempting us to sin. When we sin, the sin wounds us and it dishonours the Lord. But God hasn't left us to struggle against the enemy without any help. He has given us strong armor to stop evil. We have armor that shields and protects us, and we have a sword (the Bible) to defend ourselves. In this way, the Armor of God gives us power to stop sinning, and it allows His peace to reign in our lives and in His Kingdom. This is how the God of peace gives you victory: "Be wise about what is good and the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet (Romans 16:19-20).

Verse for today

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Romans 13:12

December 12

Philippians 2:1-11

Being like Jesus

Philippians is a letter Paul wrote to the church he started in Philippi. In this letter, Paul shows them how that true joy can only come from following Jesus. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:" (5-6)

Can I really be like Jesus?

Does Paul really mean that we should have the same attitude as that of Jesus? How can we be as caring and forgiving as He is, and how can we be completely humble and obedient at all times? Well, the Bible would not tell us to do something if it were not possible to do. Read Philippians 2:2 again and you will see that the one thing that helps us to have the right attitude is LOVE. Jesus' love for God and His love for us is the reason His attitude pleases God. If you are struggling to have the right attitude you may need more of God's love in your heart. God is the source of love. Love flows from Him like a never ending spring of water, so ask Him to fill you with His love. Then start showing that love in practical ways, and your attitude will become more and more like that of Jesus.

Verse for today

And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Romans 5:5

December 13

Philippians 4:4-12

Completely Satisfied

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he tells them how they can be truly happy in Jesus. He says "Rejoice in the Lord always" and let the world know how good God is. If this is our attitude daily we will not only keep ourselves encouraged but lift the spirits of those around us.

Paul also admonishes us to keep our mind clean by thinking about the right things: Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Verse 8)

Is it wrong to complain to God in our prayers?

Remember how the Israelites kept grumbling and complaining on their way to the Promised Land? God became angry about their constant moaning because they weren't satisfied with the way He provided for them. On the other hand, David often told God exactly how he felt when Saul was chasing him all over the countryside. "I pour out my complaint before Him; before him I tell my trouble" (Psalm 142:2). God doesn't mind when we talk to Him about how we feel, or when we tell Him about our problems (see Psalm 142:6). But we shouldn't just complain and then not trust Him for an answer. By faith, we must believe that He is able to change our situation if, and when, He chooses. That is why we should thank God as we pray, because it shows that we trust Him totally to do what is best.

Verse for today

Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. Philippians 4:6

December 14

Philippians 4:13-20

I Can Do All Things

Paul ends his letter to the Philippians by telling them what a blessing the gift they sent him had been. He writes to them saying, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." He goes on to thank the church in Philippi for their help in the early days of his preaching. They were doing great things for the cause of Christ despite poverty and adversity in which they lived. Paul encouraged them with the fact that: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Can I do the impossible?

Did Paul say that he could do many things through Christ's strength? (see verse 13). Did Paul say he could do most things? No, Paul said that he can do ALL things through the power of Jesus that works in his life. Does that mean Paul was able to do anything and everything he wanted to? Could Paul have jumped over the moon? No! Paul knew that Jesus would give him the strength to do the things God wanted him to do. Paul also had the strength to face his problems because he had learnt to be content (at peace) in whatever situation he found himself. That means, despite Paul's hardships, he kept going because he knew that God was in control all the time. God promises to give us everything we need in order to do the things that please Him—and that may well include the "impossible"!

Verse for today

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. Mark 9:23

December 15

Colossians 1:15-20

Jesus Christ the Creator

While Paul was in prison in Rome, he wrote a letter to the Colossians telling them about Jesus, the Ruler of all. Paul wrote that Jesus is the exact image of the unseen God. He existed before anything in creation. For through Jesus, God created everything in all of creation— the things we can see and the things we can't: spiritual powers, rulers and kings. All were created by Him and for His glory. He existed before anything was created and holds all of creation together perfectly. Jesus was the first to conquer eternal death by rising from the grave. He has become the first in all things. For God wanted all of creation to come back to Him through His Son who brought peace by His death on the cross.

Who created the earth?

Did God create the earth, or did Jesus? In Genesis 1:1 it says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Then, in John 1:1-3 it says, "In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made." It is difficult for us to understand exactly how Jesus and God created everything together, but we do know that Jesus and God are one. Jesus said, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). We know that the Holy Spirit was also there, when the earth was still shapeless and empty (see Genesis 1:2). God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit do everything together because they are one. So when we think of God creating the world, we know that He created everything through Jesus so that Jesus, God's Son, would reign over all creation (1 Corinthians 15:27- 28)

Verse for today

Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things ; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; Isaiah 44:24

December 16

Colossians 3:11-17

Let Peace and Love Rule

Paul wrote that Christ is all, and is in all. There is nothing that makes one person more special than another because He lives one that has accepted Him as Savior. Paul writes: "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

How can I keep wrong feelings from my heart?

Because we are imperfect and we live in an imperfect world, others hurt us, and we hurt them. When anger, jealousy and guilt fills our hearts, we often take it out on others by our sulky and irritable moods. There is a way to guard against letting those kinds of emotions rule your heart: by wearing the love of Jesus like a coat around you. Read Colossians 3:14 again. Love will help you be in control of your emotions. When you love others, you can conquer irritability by being patient; pride, by humbly helping others; and bitterness, by forgiving. When love fills your heart, there is no room for those bad feelings that can lead to sin.

Verse for today

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 2 Timothy 2:22

December 17

I Thessalonians 4:13, 5:5

Jesus is Coming in the Clouds

Paul wrote this letter to strengthen the Thessalonians faith and tell them that Jesus is coming back. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." It not only encouraged their hearts to know the Christ was coming back to get them but they would also see their loved one who had died someday in heaven. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:"

Paul told us to comfort each other with these facts: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

What happens if I'm sleeping when Jesus comes?

The Christians in Paul's time were looking forward to Jesus coming back in their lifetime. But, as time went by, some believers died. The others became discouraged and wondered whether those who had died would miss out on the great day when Jesus would come back (see Matthew 24:38-41 and Acts 1:11). Although those who have died are in the Lord's presence right now (Luke 23:43), all believers will be given a special new body on the day that Jesus comes back. If you have missed out on some big event in the past, you may be afraid of missing out again. But you needn't worry at all! Wherever you are and whatever you are doing; on the great day when Jesus comes back; if you love Him, you will be taken up in your new body to be with Him forever.

Verse for today

Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Luke 12:40

December 18

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

Sitting and Waiting

Paul wrote a second letter to the Christians in Thessalonica to tell them that they shouldn't just sit around waiting for Jesus to come back, but that they should keep working. He said: Paul said to stay away from those who are lazy and refuse to work, and follow the example he set while he was with them. "Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing."(verse 12-13)

What is the difference between resting and being lazy?

The Bible tells us that it is good to rest. In fact, God even commands us to rest! (Exodus 20:9-11). So, if it is good to take it easy, is there really a difference between resting and laziness? Laziness is when we don't do what's expected of us. For example:

- Leaving work unfinished and doing things half-heartedly.
- Putting things off that should have been done right away.
- Letting others do our share and never offering to help. Resting is giving our minds and bodies a break. For example;
- We rest by taking a break from our daily activities to sleep. The Lord gives sleep to those he loves (Psalm 127:2).
- We rest in the Lord by spending time with Him (Psalm 91:1).
- We can have fun by spending our free time doing things we really enjoy. Always work hard and do your best, then you will enjoy a well-deserved rest!

Verse for today

That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Hebrews 6:12

December 19

I Timothy 1:2, 4:12-15

Set an Example

Paul wrote a personal letter to his friend Timothy, to encourage him and give him advice about leading a church. He told him to stand firm in his salvation and call of God despite his young age. Paul knew there were folks that would give him a hard time. His advice was to be a good example in the face of adversity.

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. He told Timothy to keep a close watch on his life and to truths he was taught. If you stay true to what is right, God will bless you and make you a blessing to others.

Can a young person be an example to an older person?

Can a child lead a blind man? Yes, it is easy for someone who can see to lead a person who can't. Some people can see with their eyes, but their hearts are blind to the truth of the Gospel. Maybe their hearts have become so hard towards God that even the words of an adult can no longer change their stubborn attitude. Yet, there is something about a child that can make the heart of an older person become soft? Maybe it is the honest and trusting nature of a child. Maybe it is the joy and freedom that shows in the face of a child that makes them long for God's peace. Jesus once used a little child to teach His disciples about God's kingdom. "Unless you become like little children," He said, "you can never enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 18:3). Remember, you are never too young to be an example to others.

Verse for today

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 1 Peter 2:21

December 20

2Timothy 2:1-7

Be Brave

Paul wrote a second letter to his friend Timothy. Paul wanted to prepare him for the difficult days ahead.

"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits.

Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:"

Is the Christian life always going to be tough?

A soldier doesn't have an easy life. He has to be brave and obey every instruction his commander gives him. An athlete has to train hard every single day so that he will be fit to run his race. The farmer has to work hard in his field to grow his crop. You could well be thinking that if the Christian life is anything like this, it sure sounds like a lot of hard work. Although the Christian life is hard, we don't have to go it alone. Jesus, who understands our struggles and hardships, is with us to help us all the time. Always remember: the soldier is on the winning side and his battle will be over some day (1 Corinthians 15:57). The athlete will win a prize when he has finished the race (Philippians 3:14). A day will come when the farmer can rest and enjoy the harvest (James 3:18). And one day, our troubles will be over too!

Verse for today

Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 1:8

Doing What is Good

Titus was a pastor who served the church on the island of Crete. Paul wrote this letter to Titus to give him advice on how to organize his church and what to teach: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

What happens to our sin when God forgives us?

Some think that when they no longer feel guilty about a sin, they don't have to do anything about it because it has somehow faded away.

Although you probably know that you should always say sorry when you've done wrong, you may not realize that when you ask God to forgive you, He actually has to do something with your sin to get rid of it. When Jesus died on the cross, God put all our sins on Jesus. Every time we ask God to forgive us, Jesus' blood washes our sin away and makes us clean. Micah the prophet talks about God actually taking our sin and throwing it in the deepest part of the sea (Micah 7:19). God takes our sin so far away that no one will ever see it again, and even God won't think about it ever again!

Verse for today

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:12

December 22

Philemon 3, 10-21

Be Merciful

Paul wrote this short note to his friend Philemon asking him to forgive a slave of his who had run away. Onesimus (the slave of Philemon) had become a big blessing to Paul and the ministry that he was doing at the time. In this letter Paul is sending Onesimus back and is asking Philemon to treat him with mercy.

Mercy is simply defined as: Not receiving a punishment that is rightly deserved.

Why should we be merciful to others?

In Paul's time there were laws that gave the master of a slave complete power over his slave. Philemon had every right to have his slave Onesimus killed for running away. However, he now had to choose whether to use his right to punish Onesimus, or listen to Paul and be merciful. What would you have done? Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." (Matthew 5:7). Every one of us has run away from God and deserves His punishment (Isaiah 53:6). But Jesus has been merciful by forgiving us and taking us back, not as slaves or servants, but as friends (John 15:15). That is true mercy! Maybe one day you will be in a situation where, like Philemon, you must decide whether you will use an opportunity to get even with someone who wronged you, or whether you will show kindness and mercy.

Verse for today

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Galatians 4:7

December 23

James 1:19-25

Looking in a Mirror

James, the brother of Jesus and a leader in the church at Jerusalem, wrote this letter to Christians in far-off places: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

How often should I read the Bible?

Would it be okay if I only read the Bible once a week—maybe a few verses on a Sunday? If you didn't use a mirror, how would you know whether your hair's a mess or whether your face is dirty? The Bible is even better than a mirror because it can show up the spots of sin in your life. When you look into the Bible by reading it, you will start seeing yourself as God sees you on the inside. You wouldn't look at someone else to find out if your face is dirty. In the same way you shouldn't compare yourself with others to find out if your life is clean and pleasing to the Lord. Keep looking into God's 'Mirror' by reading the Bible every single day. Once you have read it, do what it says and you will be blessed!

Verse for today

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
Psalm 119:11

Asking for Things

James asks in his letter to believers, where is all of the fighting and quarreling from? His answer is simple. Our wants and desires need to align with *God's Word*! "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

Is it wrong to ask God for things we don't really need?

Is James saying that we shouldn't ask God for any of the fun things we would like to have? James is talking here about things that draw us away from God: not only sinful pleasures, but also things that fill up our hearts, our thoughts and our time. These are things that keep us from thinking about God and from caring about others. How dull life would be if we couldn't look forward to receiving gifts or celebrating the wonderful things God has done for us. God wants us to enjoy life and have good things, but He will never give us something that will harm us (see Luke 11:11-13). It isn't wrong to ask God for things we would really like, but we should be happy with whatever He allows us to have. If you are patient and trust God to answer your prayer in the best way, your heart will be at peace and your faith in Him will grow. Godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Timothy 6:6).

Verse for today

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded; nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 1 Timothy 6:17

December 25

1 John 1:1-7

A Light to the World

The apostle John (one of the disciples of Jesus) had become an old man. He wrote this letter to the believers while he was in Ephesus: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

How does a bright star remind us of Jesus?

Jesus came as a light to our world, which had been darkened by sin and death. He brought the Good News of God's love; sending out bright beams of hope in a dark, scary world. The apostle Peter put it this way: "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19). As you think about the birth of Jesus and why He came to earth, let the light of His love bring you hope and peace, and let the light of His holiness make you pure.

Verse for today

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. John 12:46

December 26

1John 4:9-10, 16-18

God is Love

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

What does it mean 'to fear God'?

How do you feel when you've done something wrong and know you'll be punished for it? How do you feel when someone is angry with you and shouts at you? Sometimes we feel guilty and even afraid of God when we've done something we shouldn't have. Because we feel guilty, it is hard for us to imagine how God would still love us just the same. And because we doubt God's love we become afraid of Him. We may even imagine that God will take something away from us, or make us sick, or punish us in some way. When the Bible talks about fearing God, it doesn't mean we should be scared of Him, but rather that we should respect His awesome holiness. If God sent His only Son to die so that you could be forgiven, and if you have asked Him to take your sin away, why would He then punish you? The answer is; if you have given your life to the Lord, you need never be afraid of your Father in heaven because Jesus has already taken the punishment for your sins (1 John 1:9).

Verse for today

Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; Psalm 33:18

December 27

1 John 1:1-7

“We Know...”

John ends his letter by assuring Christians that they can be certain of their relationship with God.

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

How can I know that I am saved?

Have you ever wondered how you can be absolutely sure you will go to heaven? There are many things that can cause you to doubt: it could be something you heard someone say; it could be that you don't feel close to God; or it may be that you keep slipping up and doing things that are wrong. God doesn't expect us to live a sinless life and never slip up.

When we put our faith in Him, He makes us perfect by the blood of Jesus. We are sinners saved by God's grace. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

(Ephesians 2:8). Feelings cannot affect your salvation. If you have given your life to God by faith, you are born into His family and you will always be His child—even when it doesn't feel like it (John 10:28).

During the tough, dry times when you don't feel close to God, your faith has a chance to grow stronger. Instead of relying on your feelings, trust what God says! Remember, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).

Verse for today

Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. 1 John 4:13

December 28

Revelation 1:9-18, 4:1-3

The Glory of the Lord

John wrote this letter to the seven churches in Asia (and to all believers) while he was on the Island of Patmos. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

Will I be able to look into the face of God?

In the Old Testament we read that God had to shield His face to hide His glory from Moses, otherwise Moses—being sinful—would have died (Exodus 33:22-23). No one can see the face of God and live (John 6:46). Even John, who was not in his body when he saw Jesus, fell down before Him as dead. In our new (glorified) bodies we will be completely holy because we are made pure by the blood of Jesus. We will join the angels in glorifying the Lord, and we will even be allowed to sit on His throne (Revelation 3:21). Just think of it; one day we will be able to look into our Father's glorious, loving face (Revelation 22:4).

Verse for today

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2

December 29

Revelation 20:11-15

The Judgment

John wrote down everything God allowed him to see—things in heaven and on earth that would happen at the end of time, when God judges the earth.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Will I also be judged?

Are you afraid of standing before God to be judged for every wrong thing you have done? You have nothing to fear if you have asked Jesus to forgive you and let Him be Lord of your life. God, who is fair and holy, will judge those who have not followed Jesus or listened to Him. Because God is holy He must deal with sin; and those who have not asked Jesus to take their sin away must answer to God for every wrong they have done. The punishment for sin is eternal death, not in the way our bodies die, but a spiritual death in a place called hell. Hell is far away from the goodness of God, a place where sin causes eternal pain and sadness (Luke 16:23). Christians will be judged too. However, we will be judged for the good we have done—not for our sins. Our judgement is more like a prize giving to test our motives and to reward us for the things we did that brought glory to God (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Believers need not fear God's judgement because Jesus has already taken our punishment. What a wonderful God we serve!

Verse for today

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 1 Corinthians 5:10

December 30

Revelation 21:1-7, 22:3-5

Everything is New

After the final judgment, John saw a new heaven and a new earth. He saw the Holy City coming down from above—prepared and ready—like a bride, ready to meet her husband. Now God will live with His people and be their God. He will wipe away every tear and there will be no more death or sadness, crying or pain. The old things have disappeared!

“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever.”

What will Heaven be like?

Do you sometimes wonder what it will be like in heaven one day? It is hard for us to imagine how beautiful heaven is because we can only see and experience things with our physical bodies. What John saw was so wonderful that he couldn't describe it in words. The best he could do was to compare what he saw to things here on earth. What we do know is that God will make everything new. There will be no bad memories or regrets, the devil will not be able to tempt us or make our lives miserable and there will be no more tears or sadness. There will be so much to do in Heaven that you won't be bored for a single moment. You won't even need to go to bed because there will be no night. In heaven there will be unimaginable joy as we serve and worship our wonderful God for ever and ever.

Verse for today

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. **John 14: 2-3**

December 31

Revelation 22:12-21

“I Am Coming Soon”

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, which they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Can anyone come to Jesus?

Jesus invites all those who are thirsty for Living Water to come to Him. This is the same invitation He gave to the woman at the well (John 4:13). The Living Water is the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39), whom Jesus gives to everyone who comes to Him. The invitation is to every single person on earth. That is why Jesus simply said, 'whosoever', which is another way of saying, anyone and everyone. It is the same word used in John 3:16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Have you asked Jesus to be your Savior?

Verse for today

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen. 2 Corinthians 13:14

