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KEEP GOING
By Forrest McCullough

Daily Devotions For New Christians

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01 -- FIRST DAY -- IS THE REVIVAL OVER?

Read: Acts 2:46-47

TEXT FOR TODAY: And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42).

Often I've seen written on the church calendar on the date of the last day of a revival meeting, "Revival Ends." Too many times the revival has ended when the evangelist left town, but this doesn't have to be true.

Some of the things that were important during revival time are just as important now if the spirit of revival of revival is to continue:

We've received new light: let's walk in it. We've made God some promises: let's keep them We've prayed for friends and loved ones: let's continue praying.

We've gained spiritual ground: let's not lose it. We've come to love each other more: let's cultivate this love.

We've seen what prayer can do: let's pray more than ever.

We've come to a new appreciation of the Word of God: let's study it more.

We've put God first: let's keep Him first.

We've kindled new fire: let's keep it burning. It should be said of us as was said of the early Christians, "And they, continuing daily .

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: The spirit of revival will continue in any church as long as those conditions which brought revival continue.

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02 -- SECOND DAY -- MEET GOD IN THE MORNING

Read: Ps. 5:3 and Mark 1:35

TEXT FOR TODAY: I myself will awake early (Ps. 57:8).

Many people with good intentions to pray, fail because they don't have a practical, workable system of devotional life. Any resolution, no matter how good, will die unless it is supported by a plan by which to carry it through.

The best time for private devotions is the first thing in the morning. Most of us have a problem finding time in a busy day to stop for prayer, but by getting up a half hour earlier we will have this time that we didn't have before.

The morning prayer time is not meant to be the only time that we pray, but it should produce an atmosphere of prayer that lingers all through the day.

We have each set aside 30 minutes between four and eight o'clock each morning for prayer and Bible study. I'm sure that each of us will find our lives so spiritually enriched that we will want to continue this "morning watch" even after the first 30 days. Bishop Ralph Cushman said,

So I think I've found the secret
Learned through many a troubled way,
You must meet God in the morning
If you want Him through the day.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: He who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find Him the rest of the day (John Bunyan).

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03 -- THIRD DAY -- OUR DAILY BREAD

Read: Exod. 16:14-21

TEXT FOR TODAY: Give us this day our daily bread (Matt. 6:11).

For 40 years God fed the Israelites with manna. This "bread from heaven" would cover the ground each morning, stay on the ground long enough for the people to gather, and "when the sun waxed hot, it melted." Only one day's provision could be gathered at a time, and if they tried to hold any over until the next day "it bred worms and stank." The manna in the wilderness has some wonderful spiritual lessons:

1. It came from God.
2. It must be gathered.
3. It must be gathered daily.
4. It must be gathered in the morning.

Many try to live on "weekly," "monthly," or "revival time only" bread, but "daily" bread is needed if we are to keep spiritually alive and useful.

Let us determine that we will "daily" gather our spiritual "bread" by prayer, Bible reading, and faithfulness to God's house lest we become spiritually stale and lose the freshness that is necessary to radiant Christian living.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: Don't try to fight today's battles with yesterday's victories, or solve tomorrow's problems today. Jesus said, "Take no thought for the morrow... sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Live one day at a time!

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04 -- FOURTH DAY -- KEEP THE FIRE BURNING

Read: Lev. 9:24 and 6:12-13

TEXT FOR TODAY: The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out (Lev. 6:13).

Our scripture lesson for today is about fire. In chapter nine, God miraculously sent the fire to consume the sacrifice placed on the newly built tabernacle altar.

Before he sent the fire, God instructed Aaron and his sons (chap. 6) that they were to maintain the fire so that it would "never go out.

The sending of the fire was a miracle. The purifying fire that falls upon the altar of our hearts to cleanse and purify is also a miracle. But just as it was up to the faithfulness of the priest to keep the fire on the altar burning once God lighted it, so it is up to us to keep the holy fire burning on the altar of our hearts.

Many have received the purifying flame whose hearts have later grown cold. It was not necessarily open sin that smothered their fire, but neglect to add fuel daily to the fire by prayer, Bible reading, and church attendance.

It's one thing to remember "how the fire fell" but quite another to be able to say as of now "'Tis burning in my soul." God sends the fire, it's up to us to keep it burning.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: The gathering of the manna, as well as the rekindling of the altar fire, was to be done each 6 morning. In our experience is to stay fresh and vital we too must renew our "inward man ... day by day" (II Cor. 4:16).

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05 -- FIFTH DAY -- KEEP IN HIS LOVE

Read: Jude 21 and 24

TEXT FOR TODAY: Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass (Ps. 37:5).

One of the first lessons to learn in the Christian life is that we can't live it within our own strength. The devil is smarter than we are and if we try to overcome him with only human powers, we will fail.

But we don't have to fight the enemy alone. The secret to this matter of "keeping" is found in verse 21, where Jude said, "Keep yourselves in the love of God," and in verse 24, where he

talks about "him that is able to keep you from falling." in other words, he is saying that if we will keep ourselves in His love, that's enough. He'll do the rest. And as long as we keep close to Him, He will keep us from falling.

When we're doing all we know to please God, we need not worry about backsliding. When we are doing our best to meet His conditions, Jesus has assured us, "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

With the Apostle Paul we are "persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12). He will not let us go. Rest in His keeping power!

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

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06 -- SIXTH DAY -- FAMILY PRAYER

Read: Deut. 6:5-7

TEXT FOR TODAY: As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24:15).

The familiar statement, "The family that prays together, stays together," is true. Not only will the praying family "stay together" physically (meaning that they will avoid shameful separation and divorce), but they will find a bond of love and understanding that comes from sharing problems with the Lord that causes them to "stay together" in Christian fellowship making home life meaningful and blessed.

Each family has its own schedule, and time for family worship must be fitted into this schedule. Some find it better in the morning, while others find it easier to get everybody together at night. Each family must work out its own time that is set aside each day for this all-important purpose.

If you already have a family altar, I congratulate you! And may it become more meaningful and natural with each day of your faithfulness! If you don't have a family altar, start one today. If you should need help, ask your pastor. He'll be happy to give you guidance. You will also find the "Family Altar Packet" from your Nazarene Publishing House to be very helpful.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: To say that you don't have time for family prayer, doesn't make the tragedy any less (V. H. Lewis)

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07 -- SEVENTH DAY -- LIVE BY FAITH

Read: Heb. 10:38

TEXT FOR TODAY: I cannot see clearly here and I have to walk by faith (II Cor. 5:7, Laubach).

It's usually not very long after a person is saved before he realizes that he doesn't always have the same wonderful feeling he had when he first found God. This is crucial. The devil steps in to say that because he doesn't feel as he did before, he is therefore no longer a Christian. But our relationship to God is determined by faith alone, and not by something as changeable as our feelings.

Someone once asked Luther, "Do you feel that you're forgiven?" "No," he replied, "but I'm as sure as there's a God in Heaven." Then he wrote the lines:

For feelings come and feelings go and feelings are deceiving, My warrant is the Word of God, naught else is worth believing.

For though my soul should feel condemned for want of some sweet token,
There is One greater than my heart whose Word cannot be broken.

I'll stand on His unchanging Word till soul and body sever,
For though all things shall pass away, His Word shall stand forever.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: When you can't honestly sing "I Feel Like Traveling On," sing "I'm Living by Faith" and travel on anyhow.

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08 -- EIGHTH DAY -- FEAR NOT

Read: Isa. 41:10

TEXT FOR TODAY: Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am (Isa. 58:9).

Assurance of success is essential to living a happy Christian life. To be constantly possessed with the fear that we might fail is tormenting. Unless this fear is overcome, it can eventually lead to backsliding.

In our scripture lesson for today our Lord gives five reasons why we should not fear -- "I am with thee,"

"I am thy God,"

"I will strengthen thee,"

"I will help thee,"

"I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

If we are depending on our own strength, we have reason to fear that we may fail, but if we are depending on Him and looking to Him for strength and help there is no way to fail. When He is with us it is not a matter of whether we can live it or not. We will live it.

It should be settled in our hearts that we are not going to backslide. We didn't start out to turn back. Say to yourself right now, "By God's grace I'm going to make it. With Him as my Helper, I will not fail."

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: Without Christ we cannot succeed, with Him we cannot fall (Helen Smith Shoemaker).

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09 -- NINTH DAY -- OUR FATHER

Read: Rom. 8:15

TEXT FOR TODAY: When ye pray, say, Our Father.. . (Luke 11:2).

David Wilkerson, in his book I'm Not Mad at God, tells of a severe, hard-to-understand trial in his life in which he was tempted to consider the Lord as "a hard man who was "a cruel, hard-driving Father." He found wonderful peace of mind and heart when he realized -- through his own love for one of his children -- that God loved him as he loved his child, and that his Heavenly Father would do him no harm.

A realization of God as "Father" would solve the basic spiritual problems of many who are fearful and faithless. When we have the right conception of God as One who loves and cares, we don't have to understand all of life's seeming injustices to keep from becoming embittered. It is sufficient to know Him! Even though He doesn't always explain His reasons to us right now, we know that He knows best, and that He will not allow anything to come our way except that which will "work together for good."

In the assurance that He loves us, we find a positive faith that looks at all of life -- just like it is -- and says, "I don't need to understand, I just need to hold His hand."

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: Of all the ways by which Deity is known, Jesus chose the one most intimate, most full of love and tenderness, and the one which makes the Divine most approachable when He taught us to pray, "Our Father."

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10 -- TENTH DAY -- LOVE THE CHURCH

Read: Heb. 10:24-25

TEXT FOR TODAY: I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord (Ps. 122:1).

Occasionally we meet people who, though they profess to love the Lord, say that they don't want anything to do with the church. This is as unreasonable as saying we love our home and yet care nothing for our family. The true child of God will have a desire to be in his Father's house. The church Manual puts it this way:

The privileges and blessings which we have in association together in the Church of Jesus Christ are very sacred and precious. There is in it such hallowed fellowship as cannot otherwise be known.

There is such helpfulness with brotherly watch, care and counsel as can be found only in the Church.

There is the godly care of pastors, with the teachings of the Word, and the helpful inspiration of social worship. And there is cooperation in service, accomplishing that which cannot otherwise be done.

The church deserves our faithful attendance, our tithes and offerings for its support, and our service. There is a real sense in which we show our love for God by our love for His Church.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: "Christ... loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). How can we who profess to be His followers do less than to love in similar measure the Church for which He gave His life?

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11 -- ELEVENTH DAY -- PRAYER CHANGES YOU

Read: II Cor. 12:7-10

TEXT FOR TODAY: He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him (Ps. 91:15).

Some have enlarged the saying, "Prayer changes things," to say, "Prayer changes every thing." But sometimes when we pray God does not change things. He only changes us, while He allows things to remain the same.

Paul prayed three times for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed. God did not see fit to remove the infirmity but said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The new Paul wrote, "Most gladly therefore will I [suffer], . . . for when I am weak then am I strong." Not always when we cry to Him will the Lord get us out of the difficult situations from which we seek deliverance. But He

will do something! He may do to us like He did to Paul -- change our outlook and leave the circumstances as they are. It's not our circumstances that are so important after all; it is us -- our attitudes, our spirit, our commitment.

Our prayer must always be, "Thy will be done." If this means that God allows things to remain the same while He changes us, we will accept it as His all-wise will, and thank Him for doing it His way instead of ours.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: The Lord didn't keep Daniel from the 13 lions' den, or the Hebrew children out of the fire; He just got in with them.

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12 -- TWELFTH DAY -- PRAY WITH OTHERS

Read: Matt. 18:19

TEXT FOR TODAY: These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication (Acts 1:14).

Every Christian should pray with other Christians at least once each week. There is fellowship, power, and blessing in united prayer.

Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father." All through the Lord's Prayer this plural aspect is carried through.

An answered prayer for any one Christian benefits all the rest of God's children. We are the "body of Christ" and if "one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (I Cor. 12:26).

Fellowship in prayer binds our hearts together in the closest of earthly ties. A praying church is a united church. Someone has said that we can't really know a person until we have prayed with him.

Many times when it is hard to pray alone, we can "break through" when we get with other Christians whose faith unites with ours to bring the answer. Jesus said, "If two of you shall agree, it shall be done." Let us pray together.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: "One [shall] chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight" (Deut. 32:30).

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13 -- THIRTEENTH DAY -- LET PEACE RULE

Read: Col. 3:15-17

TEXT FOR TODAY: And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus (Col. 3:17).

Our scripture lesson for today is a good rule for determining right and wrong: "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

God places his peace in our hearts. "My peace," said Jesus, "I give unto you." We can have not only peace with God, we can actually enjoy the peace of God in our hearts.

This peace serves as an arbiter, and a constant "monitor" of our conduct. Anything that disturbs this inner peace is automatically "off bounds" and must therefore be shunned. This peace of God "rules" in our hearts, and must be obeyed at all costs.

If we would be careful not to disturb our inner peace we would always be doing those things that please God. It is His peace, and He gives it only to those who are pleasing to Him. The test of our conduct becomes not so much, "Will it hurt me?" but, "Will it help me?" And if it is not for our positive good -- if it does not produce an inner peace while we do it -- we will gladly leave it alone.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: Susanna Wesley's advice to her children was, "Whatsoever.., impairs the tenderness of your conscience . . . that thing for you is sin."

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14 -- FOURTEENTH DAY -- WHAT TO DO WITH PEOPLE

Read: Ps. 37:1-9

TEXT FOR TODAY: Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee (Prov. 20:22).

One of the greatest dangers we face is "getting our eyes on people." People are human. They will fail. They will do things hard to understand, and we cannot afford to let their apparent inconsistencies rob us of our own personal victory.

When but a young Christian I was greatly helped by a tract entitled, "Others May, You Cannot." I saw that

I must leave others and their actions up to the Lord while I went ahead serving God on an individual basis. One preacher said that he had built an imaginary room on the side of his spiritual house where he put people that he couldn't understand. Instead of letting these people defeat him, he put them in this room, locked the door, and turned them over to the Lord. He had made many additions to take care of the increasing number he had to put in there, but he said, "I've found peace of mind by just putting hard-to-understand people in that room, and saying, 'Lord you take over. I can't figure them out.'"

Is this not what the Psalmist meant when he said, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers"?

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: Don't "fret" (v. 1) or "be envious" (v. 1), just "trust" (v. 3), "delight" (v. 4), "commit" (v. 5), "rest" (v. 7), and "wait on the Lord" (v. 7) (Psalms 37).

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15 -- FIFTEENTH DAY -- WALK IN THE LIGHT

Read: Mark 4:16-17

TEXT FOR TODAY: 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 (I John 1:7).

The Christian life is a "walk" with God. Many try to "run" in the light, and they seem to do excitingly well for a while, but soon they seem to "run out of breath." Too many times, when they stop to get their breath they don't get started again.

Jesus told of the seed on stony ground that "immediately" sprang up, but just as quickly withered away because it had no depth. "Spurty" Christians tend to live for God only, in little bursts of religious emotion. These shallow, unstable ones fall easily by the wayside when the initial excitement dies down.

Living for Christ is not a feverish straining and striving, but a moment-by-moment walk of confidence. Our relationship to God, in order to be successful, must be on a consistent, regular basis. We must seek to make the Christian walk our "way of life" and not just an experiment that can be easily discarded if everything doesn't work out the way we would like it to.

Jesus said, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." It's the "faithful" servants who will hear the Master's "well done."

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: My mother used to tell us, "Children. it's not how you start out, it's how you end up that counts. It's the last mile of the journey that gets you there."

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16 -- SIXTEENTH DAY -- WATCH YOUR ATTITUDES

Read: Heb. 12:5-11

TEXT FOR TODAY: Keep your heart with all vigilance . . . for out of it flow the springs of life (Prov. 4:23, Amplified).

Our most treasured possession is our spirit, and we should guard it lest we allow any bitterness to get in. It's not the things that happen to us that determine the kind of people we are, it's the attitude we take to these things that matters. Samuel Chadwick said,

"God holds the soul and regulates the strike. Sometimes He makes the Devil His hammer-man. Satan strikes to smash. God regulates the stroke, and turns his malice into our perfecting, and the Devil sweats at the task of fashioning Saints into the likeness of Christ."

Joseph, after he had risen to power in Egypt, said to his brothers who had sold him as a slave, "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Gen. 50:20). He refused to get bitter. He treated his jealous, evil-minded brothers with utmost kindness and God both delivered him and saved the brothers from starvation at the same time.

Those things that seem so bad to us may be allowed as the chastenings of our loving Father -- to make us better children. We should not worry and fret and get bitter and sour at people and at life lest we be despising the chastenings of our Lord.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

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17 -- SEVENTEENTH DAY -- THE PRAYER SANDWICH

Read: Psalms 37:4

TEXT FOR TODAY: Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks (I Thess. 5:16-18).

Our prayers should be much like a sandwich -- we should begin with praise, close with praise, and put our petitions in between.

Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name," then present our petitions, and before the "Amen" to say, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever." This pattern of praise -- petition -- and then more praise, is also advocated by Paul in our text for today: "Rejoice -- pray -- give thanks."

Dr. Chapman used to say that before asking for anything, he would first praise the Lord for what He had already done. As he praised God and meditated in His presence, the Lord would ask, "Son, what do you want?" He said he would then reply, "Lord, I have what I want now; I have You." And this is what is most important after all.

We have so much to praise God for. Before we ask for anything today let's first praise Him for what He's already done. And after we have asked Him, let's again thank Him for what He's going to do.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: "Serve the Lord with gladness . . Enter into his gates with thanksgiving" (Ps. 100:2-4).

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18 -- EIGHTEENTH DAY -- KEEP AN OPEN HEART

Read: John 7:17

TEXT FOR TODAY: Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken (Acts 16:14).

When one is seeking the truth, the most important attitude is an open heart. The Bible talks about people who have ears to hear, but won't hear, and eyes to see but won't see. It's one thing to go to church, or read the Bible, and it's another thing to "hear" while we're listening and "see" while we're looking.

For all of us there is still plenty of room for improvement. The man who says, "I know all I ever want to know," is in a sad state of stagnation. Our only hope for spiritual growth is an open heart that continues to ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6)

Not everyone has the same degree of light, but all must have an open heart to the light. The prerequisite for those who will "know the doctrine" is a will to "do his will." If we will keep our hearts always open to Him, we will be sure to hear His voice, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa. 30:21).

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: Martha was "careful and troubled 20 about many things" while Mary "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word." Martha may be commended for industry but it was Mary who had "chosen that good part" (Luke 10:38-42).

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19 -- NINETEENTH DAY -- FORMULA FOR DIVINE DIRECTION

Read: Prov. 3:5-6

TEXT FOR TODAY: I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight (Isa. 42:16).

Life is made up of choices, and living with their consequences. We are faced daily with decisions which must be made -- sometimes major ones like family, future, employment, and finance. A thousand unexpected things crop up.

Our desire is to always make the right choices. Even the slightest deviation at the crossroads will lead farther and farther from the right way. Our scripture for today gives us the formula for receiving divine direction:

1. Wholehearted trust in God. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart."
2. Utter distrust of personal wisdom. "Lean not unto thine own understanding."
3. Total involvement of God in our plans. "In all thy ways acknowledge him."

To fully trust Him, we must abandon our self-sufficiency. "I need Thee, oh, I need Thee; ev'ry hour I need Thee!" is a basic attitude if we are to expect or receive divine assistance.

The promise is that if we will wholeheartedly trust Him -- admitting our own inabilities and committing our ways completely to Him -- "he shall direct thy paths."

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him (Author unknown).

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20 -- TWENTIETH DAY -- TEMPTATION IS COMMON

Read: I Cor. 10:12-13

TEXT FOR TODAY: Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand (Eph. 6:13).

Someone has rightly said that the devil has not a more subtle temptation to ensnare me than to think myself above temptation. Our scripture reading for today tells us that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." Whatever temptation we must face, we can know that we are not the first ones to have run into it. Even Jesus faced our human temptations at "all points."

By realizing that we are subject to temptation, we will use the utmost care to keep ourselves out of the line of the enemy's fire as much as possible. Ruskin said, "No one can honestly or hopefully be delivered from temptation unless he has himself honestly and firmly determined to do the best he can to keep out of It.

To be overcome by temptation does not mean that we have been overly tempted. "God is faithful," and has promised not to allow us to be tempted "above that we are able." We must realize that we are going to be tempted, but that we can always be victorious by keeping spiritually prepared through prayer, Bible study, and faithful attendance at the house of God.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: God does not tempt man (Jas. 1:13), but in His wisdom, He allows us to be tempted, for we are much stronger Christians after overcoming a temptation than we could have been had we not had to face it.

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21 -- TWENTY-FIRST DAY -- WHAT TO THINK ABOUT

Read: Phil. 4:8

TEXT FOR TODAY: For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7).

What we think about determines how we live. People who live clean lives are people who have clean thoughts. One of the characteristics of the "blessed" man in Psalms 1 is that "in his [God's] law doth he meditate day and night."

Much of today's literature, music, and television programming are designed by Satan to "draw away the Christian by enticing to evil, and therefore should be carefully avoided. Someone has said that to pray to be delivered from temptation and yet rush into it, is like thrusting one's finger into the fire and praying for it not to burn.

The best way to handle sin is to leave it alone, and the best place to start is with the mind. By keeping our minds free from evil thoughts, we build a fence of prevention at the top of sin's precipice.

Evil must be overcome by good. If we keep our minds filled with good, wholesome thoughts we will have "No Vacancy" left for the devil.

Wondering what to think about? Read today's scripture again and ask the Lord to show you some things to think about today that are "true ... honest ... just. . . pure..., lovely.. . of good report.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Ps. 19:14).

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22 -- TWENTY-SECOND DAY -- KEEP GOD FIRST

Read: Matthew 22:35-38

TEXT FOR TODAY: But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

The extreme pressures of modern-day life make such demands upon one's time and devotion, that it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep God in His rightful place.

It's one thing to say we're going to put God first, but quite another thing, after the initial enthusiasm has died down, to keep Him first. When Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," He didn't mean just at revival time, or at other special times; He meant all the time.

This means:

- Putting God first in our day by taking time first for devotions.
- Putting God first in our finances by paying tithes as the first obligation.
- Putting God first in loyalty to His Church and its work even above personal and family interests.

The verses preceding our text for today talk about necessary things such as, "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" The promise of Jesus is that if we will keep God first, "all these things shall be added unto you."

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: Total surrender is all that "fits" in the light of Christ's great sacrifice for us.

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23 -- TWENTY-THIRD DAY -- PATIENCE IN PRAYER

Read: Luke 11:5-9

TEXT FOR TODAY: For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise (Heb. 10:36).

God has three ways of answering prayer: "Yes," "No," and "Wait awhile."

The "wait awhile" answer is probably the hardest one to accept. We want it right now, and one of the greatest trials in prayer is to wait for a delayed answer.

Dr. Samuel Young said, "God's delays are not to be considered as God's denials." Because we do not see an immediate answer doesn't mean that God has forgotten us.

We are tempted to ask, when nothing seems to happen from our praying, "What am I doing wrong? Is there something in my life that hinders the answer from coming?" While it is possible that something may be in the way that needs to be removed, it is also possible, according to the text for today, for us to have "done the will of God" and still not "receive the promise." We simply "have need of patience" to keep holding on until the answer comes. Keep on praying! Don't give up! Have patience!

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY:

Keep holding on, just one more hour
May bring to thee the promised power.
Keep holding on, thy Lord doth care,
He'll not forget to answer prayer.

-- W. C. Poole

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24 -- TWENTY-FOURTH DAY -- PRAY FOR WISDOM

Read: James 1:5-7

TEXT FOR TODAY: Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding (Prov. 3:13).

Our scripture lesson for today gives us the following steps to obtaining wisdom:

1. We must realize that we are not wise within ourselves. James puts it, "If any of you lack wisdom..." The fact is, all of us lack wisdom, but the first step to receiving it is to admit that we don't have it.

2. We must ask for wisdom. "Let him ask." When Solomon had the opportunity to ask for anything he desired, he chose wisdom and received it. Speaking of wisdom, he said, "All the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it" (Prov. 8:11).

3. We must recognize God as the source of wisdom. James said that wisdom is "of God." "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom" (Col. 2:3). Knowledge may be acquired by study. Wisdom is the ability to apply that knowledge -- and this comes from God alone.

4. We must have faith that God will give us wisdom. "Let him ask in faith." The promise must be claimed, before it becomes effective. James warns that the doubting man will not "receive anything of the Lord." As with all our prayers, the prayer for wisdom is worthless unless it be mixed with faith.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4:7).

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25 -- TWENTY-FIFTH DAY -- LEAVE IT THERE

Read: Phil. 4:6-7

TEXT FOR TODAY: Casting all your care upon him: for he careth for you (II Pet. 5:7).

There's a familiar story about the farmer who was walking into town with a heavy sack across his shoulder. His neighbor, passing in a wagon, stopped to give him a ride. After riding for awhile the neighbor inquired why he still carried his burden on his shoulder without laying it in the wagon. "It's nice enough of you to let me ride," the farmer replied, "without taking my burden too."

Too many times we have taken our burden to the Lord, but instead of casting it on Him and leaving it there, we have kept carrying it. We have continued to worry, when we should have simply committed it to God and walked away believing in His ability to better care for us than we can care for ourselves.

Our scripture lesson for today gives the cure for anxious care. "Don't worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer, and the peace of God . . . will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus" (Phillips). What an exchange! His peace for our care! His peace "that passeth understanding" is obtainable through the prayer of surrendered care.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: If "he telleth the number of the stars; 27 and calleth them all by their names" (Ps. 14 7:4), then surely He knows how to care for us. He wants to bear our burdens. Take them to Him -- and leave them there.

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26 -- TWENTY-SIXTH DAY -- YOU "CAN" PLEASE GOD

Read: Micah 6:8

TEXT FOR TODAY: By faith Enoch. . . had this testimony, that he pleased God (Heb. 11:5).

Hidden away in one of those "hard to find" Old Testament books, we find this simple formula for pleasing God. What does God require? He tells us here: (1) "Do justly"; (2) "Love mercy"; (3) "Walk humbly with thy God."

That's it!

The way to heaven is so plain that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8). When Jesus wanted to teach us how simple our faith should be, He set forth a child as an example.

The temptation to confuse and complicate the Christian life increases with spiritual age. Like the unprofitable servant in Matthew 25, there is a danger that we regard our Master as "an hard man" and therefore give up ever trying to completely satisfy Him.

God can be pleased! And He's not hard to please. Jesus said, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:30).

Let's refuse to get confused! In simple faith let's walk in humble obedience to His reasonable and blessed will.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY:

Lord, that I may learn of Thee,
Give my true simplicity;
Wean my soul, and keep it low,
Willing Thee alone to know.

-- Gibbons

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27 -- TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY -- IF YOU FAIL

Read: 1 John 2:1

TEXT FOR TODAY: A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench (Matt. 12:20).

A sincere but struggling teen when asked the reason for her spiritual instability said, "I guess I just get discouraged, and then I give up too easy." Many young Christians have given up before they really backslid, simply because, in a time of discouragement, they quit trying.

Our Scripture for today tells us not to sin. It also tells us the road to take if we do! If we fail, we should by no means quit trying. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." In a time of failure we should immediately go to Him, ask forgiveness, claim His promise of mercy and get up again with our face toward the Cross, believing that He will help us to make it this time.

F. B. Meyer used to talk about "keeping short accounts with God." If we "get in the red" spiritually we should go immediately to God for reconciliation. We don't have to wait to go to the public altar at church but, wherever we are, when we realize our failure, we can right then and there call on our "Advocate -- Jesus Christ the righteous."

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: Worse than the person who falls, is the one who stays down.

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28 -- TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY -- GROW OR DIE

Read: II Pet. 1:5-8

TEXT FOR TODAY: Beware lest ye . . . fall. .. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3:17-18).

A preacher told of an experience he had in a large department store. He wanted to go up to the next floor but couldn't find the escalator going up. He saw the one coming down, however, so, looking around to make sure no one saw him, he ran up the "down" escalator. He said, "If I had

stopped anywhere on the way up, even if it had been at the last step from the top, I would have ended up back at the bottom."

Just so, in the Christian life, there is no place to stop. "Grow in grace lest ye fall." We will grow or die! No neutral ground exists on this battlefield. We either go forward or backward.

Even after our hearts are purified, we still have a long way to go before reaching spiritual maturity. The crisis experience is only the beginning. It should be our earnest desire to be better Christians today than we were yesterday. With the Apostle Paul, let us continue to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: We don't make a tree grow by pulling on the top, but by cultivating the roots. Likewise, spiritual maturity demands that we faithfully take care of the basic growth factors of prayer, Bible reading, and faithful attendance upon the means of grace.

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29 -- TWENTY-NINTH DAY -- ACT LIKE IT

Read: Col. 3:1-2

TEXT FOR TODAY: And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom. 12:2).

When Louis XVI and his queen, Marie Antoinette, were killed, their son was put into prison with vicious men who tried to get him to do vulgar acts, and to say wicked things. He would always say -- "Oh, no, I can't do that. I was born to be a king."

God's children -- "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" -- should act like it! We must be too big to be little and too Christlike to be worldly!

Ours is an exalted position -- "risen with Christ." A greater relationship could not be found. We must therefore set our aspirations "on things above."

To say we are "Christian" means that we profess to be Christlike. To live inconsistent with our testimony is to bring reproach upon the name of Christ.

A young soldier was brought before Alexander the Great for bad conduct. When asked his name, he replied, "Alexander, Sir." The infuriated general cried out, "Young man, change your conduct, or change your name."

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY:

Forth in Thy name, O Lord, I go,
My daily labor to pursue;
Thee, only Thee, resolved to know

In all I think, or speak, or do.

-- J. B. Dykes --

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30 -- THIRTIETH DAY -- REJOICE IN THE LORD

Read: Ps. 103:1-5

TEXT FOR TODAY: Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice (Phil. 4:4).

Laubach's translation of our text for today says, "Be glad all the time in the Lord." This kind of "all the time" rejoicing can come only from a deep, underlying faith in the faithfulness of a Heavenly Father who constantly cares for His own and makes "all things work together for good" to them that love Him.

The difference between radiant, happy Christians and those who live in the "spiritual doldrums" is that one has his eyes on the Lord, while the other is looking at his problems. Our problems appear to us according to which side of them we're on. If we allow them to get on top of us they are depressing and crushing, but if we by faith get on top of our problems we find that even they can be stepping-stones to victory.

The next time you find it hard to pray, try praise. You will find as you count your blessings, sing a joyful song, or quote a scripture promise, you will be "praising your way through." By refusing to use carnal weapons, and continuing to "rejoice in the Lord" under every circumstance, we can discover the joy of having the Lord to fight our battles for us.

THOUGHT TO LIVE BY: Praise is as important as prayer.

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THE END