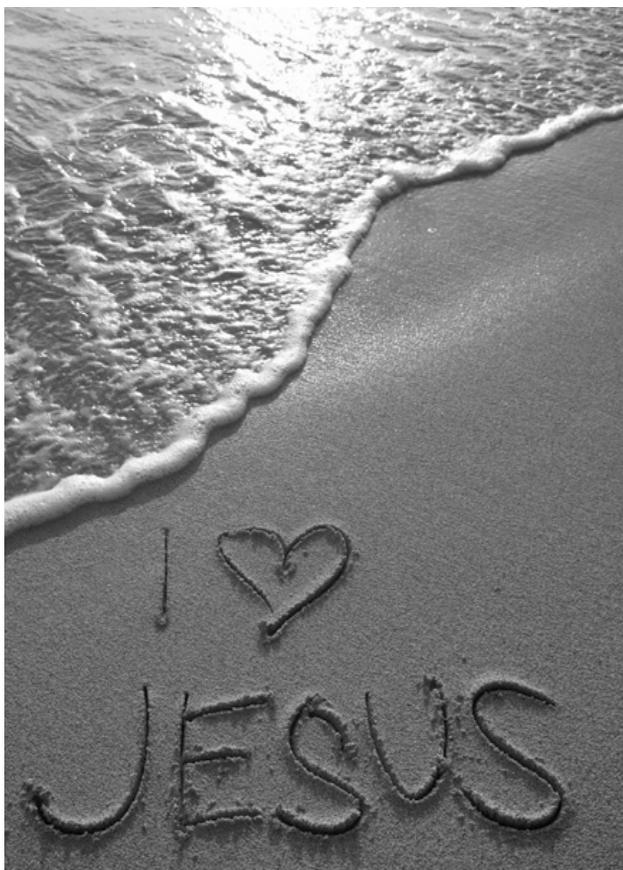


The Silent Moment

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

—Deuteronomy 6:4, 5



December 2018-February 2019

Photo © Digital Stock

Hidden Blessings

In the future, when your son asks you, “What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?” tell him: “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand” (Deuteronomy 6:20, 21).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:20-25

Song: “10,000 Reasons”

The story is told of a young man who desired a car for his graduation present. On graduation day, his father expressed his pride and then handed the son a wrapped box. The son opened the gift to discover a Bible. He yelled angrily, “With all your money, this is what you give me? Keep your Bible!” He left, vowing never to return. Many years later, he heard his father was very ill but did not arrive before his father passed. The now middle-aged man went through his father’s things and discovered that graduation day Bible. As he flipped through the pages, a key with a dealer’s tag fell from the back cover—the dealer who had the sports car he had wanted so badly.

If that young man had taken the time to open God’s Word, he would’ve reaped a great reward. Instead, he rejected the father’s gift and lost the desire of his heart as well. We might look at the “stipulations, decrees, and laws” of God as restricting when in fact, obeying them leads to deliverance and great blessing.

Thank You, **Father**, for Your laws that show Your love for me! In Your Son’s name, amen.

Timeless Truths

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. (Deuteronomy 6:6-8).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Song: “I Love to Tell the Story”

Ever heard of Patek Philippe watches? Made in Geneva, these hand-made, pricey adornments can set you back as much as a million dollars or more and “low end” models are easily in the five-figure range. The company promotes itself by saying, “Ask the owner of a Patek Philippe to talk to you about their watch, and you will hear a story of passion, love, and tenderness. It is a unique, personal object steeped in precious memories . . . and offering it as a gift is the most eloquent expression of love or affection.”

If owners of watches feel that way about metal on their wrists, how much more should we be passionate about God’s Word on our hearts! The Israelites were told to pass down the commands, decrees and laws of God from generation to generation. Today, it’s our privilege to tell our children and grandchildren about the most unique gift ever—eternal life. It’s personal and precious. The gift of God’s Son is truly the most eloquent expression of love and affection. Truly priceless!

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your love that transcends time and space. Help me to share the good news of Your loving kindness throughout today and beyond. In my Savior’s name, amen.

December 3

Has the World Seen It Yet?

For I, the LORD thy God, am a jealous God (Exodus 20:5, *KJV*).

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-11

Song: "I Surrender All"

The doctor prescribed sea air for his wife Emma's asthma, so Dwight took her on a voyage to England. Though concerned for her welfare, excitement welled inside him. In England lived his heroes, the famous preacher Charles Spurgeon and the great German Christian George Müller, whom God had used to found orphanages. He hoped to hear Spurgeon preach and meet Müller.

In the spring of 1867, they reached their destination. Though Dwight did hear Spurgeon preach and did meet George Müller, his pivotal encounter with God happened during a prayer meeting with Henry Varley, an English minister. Varley's words hit him like a thunderbolt: "The world has yet to see what God can do with one man wholly committed to Him."

Dwight latched onto this challenge and determined to be that man. God would raise up Dwight Lyman Moody to become one of America's greatest evangelists.

Our loving God is a jealous God. He's not jealous of us, but for us. He doesn't want to share our hearts with any other god because He alone has our best interests at heart. When we love Him totally, like Moody did, He'll use us in marvelous ways. Oh, we may not become famous like Moody, but we will be a blessing to others. And in return, the Lord will bless us.

Dear God, I surrender totally to You. Use me, Lord, in any way You see fit, according to Your pleasure and will. In Christ, amen.

Loving God, Loving Our Neighbor

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant . . . nor any thing that is thy neighbour's (Exodus 20:17, *KJV*).

Scripture: Exodus 20:12-17

Song: "Alive in You"

The count rushed outside to greet strangers at his castle with all their belongings.

"Sir," their leader said, "We are emigrants from Moravia fleeing persecution. Are you Count Zinzendorf, sir?"

"I don't much care for that worldly title." The count chuckled. "My name is Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, but please call me Lutz, like my friends do."

"We heard you are a man of God. We have no place to live. May we camp here?"

"Of course!" Lutz grinned as he surveyed his visitors. "My estate is yours. My land is your new home."

Although my account is fictional, the Moravian Christians did obtain this pious count's permission to settle on his estate. Eventually they spread the gospel and played a key role in John Wesley's spiritual life.

In 1722, Lutz demonstrated his consecration to God by showing compassion to these persecuted believers. Similarly, the Moravians demonstrated their consecration to Him by not coveting the count's wealth.

As God teaches us in our Scripture reading, His last six commandments, we show our love for Him by how we treat others. Let our hands and feet be totally consecrated to the one who loves us, so that we might demonstrate His love.

Dear Lord, please give me an opportunity today to serve others out of my love for You. In Your name I pray, amen.

Our Faithful God

And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you (Joshua 23:5, *KJV*).

Scripture: Joshua 23:1-6, 14-16

Song: “Trust and Obey”

Brow furrowed, I looked at the path from the hole to my golf ball. I gave the ball a tap. It rolled . . . clunk. Right in. I was happy. But then my father putted and I grimaced. Lost another hole.

While walking to the next tee, my father said, “When you beat me, Jack, I’ll buy you a new set of clubs.”

I knew he’d keep his promise. On another occasion, he’d promised my sister he’d give her a \$100 if she made a hole-in-one. To his amazement and her joy she did it, and he followed through with the deal.

My father’s one condition for giving me a new set of clubs was that I improve so I could beat him. Since I never beat him, I never got the clubs.

God promised His children He’d give them their inheritance on one condition—obedience. He warned them against going back and serving other gods. It was up to them to obey.

God kept His word and gave Israel its promised land. When the Israelites failed Him and then repented, He always forgave and restored them. Even so with us. When we love God, we’ll want to obey Him even though we’ll also fail Him at times. God forgives us when we admit our failures, though. Let us always seek to please Him.

Father God, help me to walk obediently. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

The Provider

Ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season (Joshua 24:7, *KJV*).

Scripture: Joshua 24:4-12

Song: “Jehovah Jireh, My Provider”

Snow in Alabama? Yes! Not every winter, though. Maybe once every few years. And when the icy white stuff drifts down and blankets the Alabama landscape, cities, towns, businesses, and numerous roads close. Since most of us deep-south Southerners aren't used to snow, our rare blizzards are an epic event.

Several years ago, the weather news alerted me that such a blizzard was heading my way. Since I enjoy bird watching and live near a wooded area, I filled my bird feeder to provide for God's feathered creatures' needs when the storm hit.

When I awoke the next morning, I looked out my window. Snow lay several inches deep; cardinals perched in my trees. My backyard looked like a Christmas card. Soon all kinds of birds flocked to my feeder. They'd probably never seen snow before; it was a freezing wilderness. Thanks to my feeding them, though, they survived.

The Israelites wandered a scorching wilderness but didn't go hungry, either. They lived in it “a long season,” Joshua said. God took care of them. He gave them water out of the rock to drink, manna and quail to eat. Forever faithful, He provided for their needs.

Our faithful God is our Jehovah Jireh, our Provider. Trust Him to take care of you. When you have a need, ask Him to provide, even during difficult times.

Dear Lord, thank You for Your faithfulness. I put every situation and my every need into Your hands. I know You will take care of me, Lord, because You love me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

God Our Deliverer

For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed (Joshua 24:17, *KJV*).

Scripture: Joshua 24:16-21

Song: “Mighty to Save”

Hitler’s tanks, planes, and soldiers swarmed over Europe and the free world stared at a dark future. When the retreating Allies were encircled at a French coastal town, Dunkirk, their annihilation seemed a certainty. During a deadly nine days, as the Nazis closed in, Allied naval vessels and civilian boats rescued some 340,000 men off its beaches. Winston Churchill called it the “Miracle of Deliverance.”

And a miracle it was. As director of the Bible College of Wales, Rees Howells and his students devoted themselves to prayer during the Allies’ evacuation and continued praying till the war ended. Through their intercession, and that of others who prayed, God intervened and ultimately delivered Europe from Hitler’s brutal rule.

Israel had suffered under Pharaoh’s brutality. Slaves to do his bidding, they cried out to God who brought their deliverance.

A brutal tyrant also once ruled those of us who walk with Christ. This tyrant’s name? Sin. But God sent us a rescuer and deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who offered Himself up as a sacrifice for us. By turning from our sins and asking Him into our hearts, we can walk in freedom from this tyrant’s chains. What a wonderful God we serve!

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your only begotten Son, Jesus, to bear my sins on the cross. Thank You for Your love. In Christ, amen.

True to God

It shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God (Joshua 24:27, *KJV*).

Scripture: Joshua 24:25-28

Song: “Jesus Lover of My Soul”

Shortly after his conversion at Oxford, George Whitefield harbored fears of being seen in the company of other Christians, especially the Wesley brothers, John and Charles.

He wrote in his journal: “Mr. Charles Wesley . . . walked with me in order to confirm me, from the church even to the college. I confess, to my shame, I would gladly have excused him; and the next day, going to his room, one of our Fellows passing by, I was ashamed to be seen to knock at his door. But, blessed be God! This fear of man gradually wore off.”

He goes on to recount the persecution he and other Christians suffered from their peers: contempt, mockery, forsaken by former friends, dirt thrown at him, and so on. But through all of this, he did not deny his Savior. Though these trials were small, he learned from them and other trials, growing spiritually till he became the man God could use to proclaim His Word.

When we stay true to God, and especially during difficult times, He gives us the same grace He gave Whitefield. Let’s follow this great evangelist’s example. Don’t rebel against the Lord. Don’t deny Him. Let Him teach us through our trials. He’s the lover of our souls. Our trials are meant to help us grow into that person He can use. His grace will be sufficient. Draw strength from it.

Dear Lord, teach me Your ways so that I may walk wisely. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

No Sweat

And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat (Joshua 24:13, *KJV*).

Scripture: Joshua 24:1-3, 13-15, 21-24

Song: “Grace Greater Than Our Sin”

During my short lunch break at work, I went to the food court to place my usual order. I took my place behind a man who wore a Christian T-shirt, his small son beside him. When my turn came, the woman behind the register smiled and handed me my food. “He paid for it,” she said.

“What?” I was stunned.

“I told him you usually ordered pizza, so he paid for your food.”

While the man was getting his soda from the drink machine, I thanked him profusely.

“Be blessed!” he told me as he and his son strolled out, onto the sales floor.

Isn’t this just like the Lord? This was God’s grace in action, providing for me something I didn’t labor for. He gave the Israelites the land He promised them, all ready for their occupation, complete with cities and vineyards and olive groves.

Though we don’t deserve God’s grace and forgiveness, He provided for it through Christ’s death on the cross. And since He showed us grace, let’s ask the Lord for opportunities to show His grace toward others. How? Through forgiveness, service, and love. With His help this is something we can all do.

Dear Lord, thank You for Your love and Your grace. Help me to show Your grace toward others. In Jesus’ name. Amen.