



**Daily Devotionals – February 6 to February 12, 2021
To Encourage Franklin in Such a Time As This
By Dr. Charles Qualls and Rev. Steve Gibson-- Franklin Baptist Church**

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

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

**Saturday, February 6 - Matthew 12:9-14
by Dr. Charles Qualls
*Is It Lawful?***

9 Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, 10 and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

11 He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? 12 How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

13 Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. 14 But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Devotion:

Sometimes, no matter what you do or say it just isn't enough. When your critics put you in their cross-hairs, even being the Son of Man is insufficient to them. That is what Jesus had run into just before our scripture. The Pharisees had followed him through a field hoping to catch him breaking some law. Jesus' disciples began to pluck the heads of grain for nutrition. They were probably "gleaning" as was permitted for the indigent to do.

The problem is that this happened on a Sabbath. That was their offense, picking food and feeding themselves on the wrong day. So now Jesus went into the Pharisees' synagogue. Immediately a man approached him for healing of his withered hand.

Jesus made the man whole. He did so no doubt for a couple of reasons. Foremost, the man needed some help. Jesus had the ability to heal him, so he did. The man was given a fully restored hand, equal in size and strength to his good hand. But also Jesus did this as a living sermon. Is there ever a

bad day on which to heal someone? Is there ever a wrong day on which to do something that someone needs so badly?

I once preached a sermon about Jesus' encounter with the Syrophenician Woman. I did so on Mother's Day. The woman is a sterling example of the power of a mother's love. It wasn't a bad sermon, if I do say so. Except that the next day, I received a lengthy email informing me that I had preached on the wrong mother. This person who wrote to me happened to think that a Mother's Day in which Mary (the mother of Jesus) isn't featured is a Mother's Day misspent. To her, it didn't matter what I'd had to say. She couldn't hear a word.

The Pharisees couldn't heal the man. The man needed healing. He had come to the church, yet again, hoping against hope that God might have something to offer him. There Jesus was, but his act of healing was all wrong to his critics because he had dared to do so on the wrong day.

Is there ever a bad day to heal someone? Is there ever a wrong biblical mother to inspire us?

Prayer:

Lord, help us to keep our eye on the ball. Forgive us when we stray from your priorities, only to be ruled by our own. Amen.

Sunday, February 7 - Isaiah 40:21-31

by Dr. Charles Qualls

The LORD Shall Renew Their Strength

21 Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

22 It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; 23 who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. 24 Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

25 To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. 26 Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. 27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"?

28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. 29 He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. 30 Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; 31 but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Devotion:

Some people like to push a car's gas tank to the limit. I did this quite a bit in my college years. Most of the time, I won. A couple of times, I didn't. It becomes a game to see how far you can go past the "E" mark. Sometimes we play a similar game with our lives.

In this text, we get to explore a writing from the past that points us forward to future happenings with God. This is Isaiah the prophet, speaking a word for God. In the process, what could we learn? For starters, we'll look back and be encouraged at what God has already done. We just may also be encouraged by some of the promises we hear.

We might also be encouraged as this text reminds us that God is able to sustain us. When life takes us past the "E" mark, God is able to supply what we need in the way of daily bread.

With that encouragement banked away, where is God headed? To what is God calling us? What resources could God provide so that we can fulfill our calling? Isaiah's prophecy is a reminder that we are not in this life alone. Here, we are reminded of the very foundations of Creation under God's watchful eye. God has created, planted and nurtured. God has created all that is, and still rules with an inexhaustible force.

What has God given you during your spiritual lifetime? When has God surprised you with just what you needed, whether that be wisdom or sustenance and whether it be hope or shelter?

We do need to admit to the limits of our understanding when it comes to God. But, perhaps we also have some spiritual experience from which to draw. Think on these things as you listen to Isaiah's testimony.

Prayer:

Lord, may I admit today that you are enough. And that I am not. Amen.

Monday, February 8 - Acts 14:1-7

by Dr. Charles Qualls

In Iconium

14 At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. 2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. 3 So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. 4 The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. 5 There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. 6 But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, 7 where they continued to preach the gospel.

Devotion:

The apostle Paul was on his first missionary journey here, concentrating in parts that today we would know mostly as Turkey. Iconium is now known as Konya, Turkey, a city of roughly 2 million people. A mostly Muslim population, it is the fourth largest city in the country. As was his custom, Paul went and spoke effectively in the Jewish synagogue there.

He got a good, strong response as the scripture indicates. However, as he became all too accustomed, there arose mostly Jewish opposition to his message. He and Barnabas didn't leave

right off. Eventually, tipped off that trouble was mounting, they left and went on to Derbe and Lystra. They didn't go far; these two towns were in the same district as Iconium.

There are a couple of things we should notice here. First, Paul had a steady way of life as he traveled. When he stopped in an area, if he were to be received well he stayed for a while. He threw down roots in many areas during his ministry. But, if trouble started up he would advocate for the gospel of Christ as long as was practical. He was more tolerant of opposition than most of us probably would have been. Countless times, he was beaten or jailed. Often he was brought before ruling councils to testify. When it was time to move on, though, he did.

Which brings me to the second thing. Paul understood something that I have not yet grasped fully. His job was to preach, teach and to model. God's job was to move in the lives of the people around him. If they accepted, they accepted. If they did not, they did not. Paul could not welcome himself for them. He could not accept the grace of Christ for them.

Our job is to live our lives as though they were worthy of being a prayer offering to God. Our job is to preach our sermons, mostly without words, and God's job is to move in the lives of others.

Prayer:

Lord, help me to have the strength and courage to be who you have made me to be. Help me to trust that you will handle all the rest. Amen.

Tuesday, February 9 - Acts 15:36-41

by Dr. Charles Qualls

Disagreement Between Paul and Barnabas

36 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." 37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. 39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. 41 He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Devotion:

Don't the kids hate it when the parents fight!?

Many of us were raised hearing the phrase, "Paul and Barnabas..." We associate these two with each other, and have grand images of them being the best of friends. Moving through the missionary journeys together and doing great things. This is what we see in our minds. This is what we want.

Today, we are reminded that Paul and Barnabas parted company. They argued and disagreed so that they couldn't work things out. We are not privy to why John Mark had left them the first time, but whatever it was, Paul was not in a hurry to give him a chance to let them down again. Far as we know, Paul and Barnabas never worked together again.

Lloyd Ogilvie once wrote of this episode, "Paul had fought and won one of history's most crucial battles over the Gentile converts. He was not able, however, to apply the same truth to his

relationship with John Mark.” Barnabas was related to John Mark, and wanted to give his relative a second chance. Family ties can be quite strong!

Maybe they did the healthy thing here. Maybe the church advanced because these two strong missionaries -- Paul and Barnabas -- split up and began to cover double the ground. Maybe the church also advanced because John Mark eventually used his second chance so well. He is said to have become a strong missionary himself once he rejoined the effort under Barnabas.

Sometimes, when we have differing opinions, the healthier move is to just go separate ways and stop the bickering. It's what Paul and Barnabas did. We hate to see it, but what they did sure beat the destructive possibilities of trying to stay together...when they really couldn't.

Prayer:

Lord, help us to know when the greater good for the cause should guide us. Help us to do the healthy thing rather than persist within the unhealthy. Amen.

Wednesday, February 10 - Mark 3:7-12

by Rev. Steven R. Gibson

A Multitude at the Seaside

⁷ Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him; ⁸ hearing all that he was doing, they came to him in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon. ⁹ He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him; ¹⁰ for he had cured many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. ¹¹ Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, “You are the Son of God!” ¹² But he sternly ordered them not to make him known.

Devotion:

This short passage teaches the reader many things, among them how Jesus interacts with people compassionately. To live compassionately is to risk exhaustion. Why should we focus on the compassionate Jesus?

Jesus knows and acknowledges the need of the people for his compassion. His ministry of compassion allows the crowds to come and see Jesus up close and personal. The crowds of people suffered with fevers, demons, unclean spirits, leprosy, paralysis, deafness, muteness, blindness, tax collectors, sinners, children, women, the hungry and the thirsty, immigrants, beggars, widows, slaves and those living in poverty. In short, Jesus did not exclude anyone. Even when the disciples tried to take Jesus away for a period of rest, the crowd's followed.

In today's contentious climate, how do we respond? When our friends and church family hold opposite viewpoints, how can we minister to all of them? I believe this passage has the answer to that question -- we should practice the ministry of compassion.

The ministry of compassion compels us to order our compassion and follow the example of Jesus. How did Jesus respond to the crowds? He always allowed them to be in close proximity to him. In fact, he often encouraged them! Jesus even interacted with those who live on the fringe of society. How should you or I act to those who live outside the mainstream of society?

It is interesting to note that Jesus is no ordinary healer because he combines his healing with truth telling. By doing so, Jesus was a threat to organized religion. He challenges religious leaders and the self-righteous people at the core of their being.

Even today, when a person speaks truth to power, the risk of retaliation is great. The religious system will do everything in its power to preserve its system, thus their problem with Jesus. When the problem is found, then a battle occurs.

To practice the ministry of compassion is difficult, but meaningful work. The ministry of compassion goes well beyond the individual to the church family. The more people assisting with this ministry, the easier the individuals' load becomes. This ministry takes on many forms, disaster relief, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and so on. All of these practices are needed and appreciated.

The challenge for us today is to not grow weary in doing good. We would do well to share the load of ministry with the desired outcome to be able to stay in the game. There will always be a need for the ministry of compassion -- will you join this ministry, the one that makes Jesus known in concrete ways?

Prayer:

Compassionate God, give to us the ability to work together in the ministry of compassion. Amen.

Thursday, February 11 - 2 Corinthians 2:12-17

by Rev. Steven R. Gibson

Paul's Anxiety in Troas

¹² When I came to Troas to proclaim the good news of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; ¹³ but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said farewell to them and went on to Macedonia.

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. ¹⁵ For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶ to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence.

Devotion:

In this short passage, Paul discusses the dichotomy of life. On the one hand, one group who responds to the Gospel acts as a fragrance from life to life. The other group has a fragrance from death to death. How do we choose between the two?

The fragrances become obvious to those around us, and the aroma can either attract or distract others. In today's society where people look for encoded messages, Paul offers, perhaps, a new message. The Corinthians encoded message is this: Paul is the aroma of Christ; Paul's gospel is the Gospel, they came to faith through Paul's spreading of the Gospel. For Paul, the choice is clear, there is no neutral ground concerning the Gospel.

Of note is the end of verse 16, "Who is sufficient for these things?" It sounds as if Paul had completed his theological argument and threw his hands up into the air. By doing this, Paul affirms several claims:

- 1) God chose or selected him for this job -- he did not chose it.
- 2) Paul does not overreach -- Paul is playing the role in God's drama that was assigned to him.
- 3) Neither competence nor sufficiency rests on human hands, but solely on God's graceful pleasure.
- 4) Paul draws a distinction between him and those "who are hustlers of the gospel.

Throughout Paul's writings, one thing is certain -- life is not static. The Christian life is not lived in a straight line because shifts occur from time to time. But nevertheless, we continue to progress toward the goal. We need to remember that if Paul's life did not consist of a straight line of progress, then why should we expect anything different? If Paul had missteps and disappointments, why would we expect anything else?

Just as Paul was disappointed in his time on earth, we too, become disappointed from time to time. We stumble and fall every day, in spite of our best intentions.

What troubles your spirit? How do you resolve your disappointments?

Remember that Paul was not in charge, yet through him God spreads the Gospel. Paul celebrates the fact that God is triumphing in spite of Paul's or your or my actions.

"But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. " (V14)

Prayer:

Give to us the ability to focus on our own spiritual path and not to compare our spiritual path to others. Amen.

Friday, February 12 - 1 Timothy 1:12-20

by Rev. Steven R. Gibson

Gratitude for Mercy

¹² I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, ¹³ even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners -- of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

¹⁸ I am giving you these instructions, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, ¹⁹ having faith and a good

conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith; ²⁰ among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Devotion:

Paul expresses his deep appreciation to God for taking his sinful past and transforming him into an apostle and evangelist. The point is well taken and gives us hope -- if God can take Paul, chief among sinners and remake him, then surely God is able to do the same for you and me.

The main point is this: If Paul the zealot, Paul the persecutor, and Paul who put Christians to death is able to be redeemed, then no one is too far away from God, who in Christ is reconciling the world to himself. No one is beyond the loving reach of God, regardless of your past. Paul becomes the poster boy that illustrates how very patient and loving God is.

Paul becomes one of the central voices in spreading the Gospel. Many would describe Paul's action as a risky proposition, but not God. Many would describe Paul as a frail and fallible person, not worthy of sharing the gospel. But, look closely, and you will discover how God uses all things for his Kingdom's benefit. This is God, doing what God does best, using what others have cast off to accomplish God's purpose.

Paul encourages us to stay in the fight of faith. Paul encourages us to remain true to the faith, hope and love that is the cornerstone of the Christian life. Don't ever become discouraged, because God's love contains just the recipe that will keep you and me on the path of faith!

Prayer:

Infinite God, thank you for allowing us to spread the Gospel. Amen.