

Good News Daily

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Sunday, January 22

John 5:2-18 *When Jesus saw him lying there and learned he had been in his condition a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"* (v.6) NIV

There comes a time when we all need to ask ourselves this question. Change is scary. We can become used to the way things are, even if they are unpleasant, unproductive, or unhealthy. I know smokers who have given up and claim they will never have the gumption to quit. A dear friend has a sister who keeps relapsing into heroin addiction, and has for decades. I constantly struggle with my weight. It is so easy to just say, "God made me this way, so why fight it?"

Notice when Jesus asks the man if he wished to get well the man doesn't pout and say, "What's the use? It'll never happen." He tells Jesus he has no one to help him into the healing waters. But he does say he has tried. The man realizes it is up to him to begin the process, but that he cannot do it on his own.

Ah-ha! That is the good news. Jesus will provide the means as long as we honestly put forth the desire. He healed the man because he put out some effort to change his situation in spite of his helplessness. He will do the same for each of us. The first step is to acknowledge it is our responsibility. The second is to admit we need his strength and healing power to assist us.

Isaiah 47:1-15; Psalm 63:1-11, 98; Hebrews 10:19-31

Monday, January 23

Isaiah 48:1-11 *I know how stubborn you were, the sinews of your neck were iron, and your forehead was bronze.* (v.4)

I admit it. I have a stubborn streak. Part of me wants to try it my way, thank you very much. I can be hard-headed and stiff-necked as a mule. But, God is slowly helping me to change. More and more, through experience, I have learned to peel my fingers away and let Him grab the handle on the situation, trusting that His timing and way of doing things are far better than my own.

Through Isaiah's words, God acknowledges His people's shortcomings. But He doesn't give up on them, and He won't give up on me or you. I like the saying, "God meets us where we are, He just doesn't want us to stay there." He is the God of second chances, and thirds, and fourths...

Later in this passage from Isaiah, God states He will refine His people through the furnace of affliction (v.10). Often times, doesn't it take something dramatic to jolt us out of our complacency? When things get a bit toasty, perhaps we should rejoice, knowing God loves us enough to work on us.

Lord, help me be less stiff-necked and hard-headed. Instead, make me more pliable to bend to Your will, knowing Your ways are not mine—they are best. Amen.

Psalms 41, 52; Galatians 1:1-17, Mark 5:21-43

Tuesday, January 24

Mark 6:1-13 *"Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "Isn't he the carpenter?"* (vv.2b, 3a)

When I began a career of writing and lecturing, people who had known me did not become my biggest fans. Some supported me and prayed over me. Others had their doubts. But when they heard me speak, their arms uncrossed. When they read my writings, their brows became less furrowed. When I started winning awards, others finally took me seriously. However, most of my fan base, or street team, are people who have only known me as an author and public speaker.

People may not see God working in your life. They might recall the things you did when you were younger and not as wise. They know your background and have made their minds up about what you can and cannot achieve. It is not up to you to convince them. That is out of your realm of control.

There is a saying that a zebra cannot change its stripes. But I say, by the grace and mercy of God anything is possible. I am changed because of Jesus' stripes suffered on the cross. So are you, if you will allow him to work in your life to develop you into the person he knows you can be.

We cannot change people's reactions, but by God, and only God, we can evolve into something wonderful that points to His glory. The rest we must leave up to Him.

Isaiah 48:12-21; Psalm 45; Galatians 1:18—2:10

Wednesday, January 25

Galatians 2:11-21 *When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him because he was clearly wrong.* (v.11)

Pretty bold of Paul to stand up to the man Jesus had claimed was the rock upon which he'd build his church. Yet, Paul has the audacity to do so because he knew Peter had gone down a path God did not intend. Perhaps he'd heard of Peter's dream and encounter with the Gentile, Cornelius. Maybe the Holy Spirit gave him the discerning wisdom to know now was the time to set Peter straight. And Peter, in humble obedience, agreed. He stood corrected. Jesus died for all men, not just the Jews.

Today, some churches are deviating from traditional Biblical teachings. In the quest for filling pews, they are watering down the gospel. On the other hand, other congregations refuse to change because things have "always been done that way." The Body divides because no one wants to be corrected in their thinking. Each pound their fists and claim they are right and how dare anyone oppose them.

What if we opened our ears to godly voices the way Peter did to the newcomer, Paul? What if we opened our hearts to the Holy Spirit's corrective guidance? Jesus came to fulfill the law, not tear it down in favor of something more modern and universal. But He also came to change hearts. In the Galatians passage from yesterday, Paul explains that Peter realized Paul's unique ministry and vice versa. After all, they both had the same goal—to win souls for Jesus. Peter just needed to be reminded of that fact. He was willing to alter his thinking in favor of the truth for the spread of the gospel. Perhaps we believers today should take a lesson from these two apostles.

Isaiah 49:1-12, Psalm 119:49-72, Mark 6:13-29

Thursday, January 26

Isaiah 49:13-23 *See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.* (v.16a)

Long before smart phones with calendars and messengers, if I wanted to remember something I wrote it in ink on the palm of my hand. That way, during the day if I looked at what I'd scrawled it would spark my memory. That is, until I washed my hands too many times...

But our Lord Jesus has engraved us on his hands, the nail-scarred ones. Those holes are a constant reminder of what he did for us. They are a permanent marking of his love.

The rest of the verse states that our walls are forever before the Lord. Commentaries state the walls of Jerusalem were in ruins at the time Isaiah wrote this in exile, yet God saw the wall intact. God is telling His people that He has not forgotten them and still protects them.

The next time you look at your palms, think of the ones that have been pierced by nails. They're the ones who know you, guide you, and never let you go—even if you feel God is far away and you are living in exile. Even when things don't make sense. Even if you realize you have sinned.

He will never wash us from His hands. He will restore us and draw us to Him. Remember that always—He does.

Psalm 50; Galatians 3:1-14; Mark 6:30-46

Friday, January 27

Mark 6:47-56 *About the fourth watch of night, he went out to them, walking on the lake.* (v.48b)

A devotional writer friend of mine, Marilyn Ehle, gave me permission to use her comments on this passage in one of my novels, *Hush in the Storm*. The preacher reminds Jen, my main character, that she doesn't have to work to get to God. He chooses to come to her. Jesus bridges the gap we could not traverse alone. Ehle points out that Jesus could have calmed the storm from the mountaintop where he had

been praying. But he chose to be closer so he could comfort the men. She also notes the disciple never asked for his help, even though they were floundering. He came anyway.

The rest of the verse states Jesus meant to walk right by them. Why? I surmise it was to get their attention. To get them to fix their eyes on him, not their situation. In Matthew's version, Peter walks on the water until his eyes dart from his Savior's gaze to the waves. In Mark's telling, Jesus' walking towards them freaked the disciples out even more, so Jesus crawled into the boat with them and calmed the sea to prove to them he really was there.

The point is the same. Are we so different? Jesus wants our attention, and he will get it, whatever it takes. He is showing himself to you right now. Are you too wrapped up in your struggles to notice him?

Isaiah 50:1-11; Psalms 40, 54; Galatians 3:15-22

Saturday, January 28

Psalm 55 *I said, "Oh that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest and stay in the desert."* (v.6)

Perhaps you recall the commercials where the woman would sigh and ask her bath product, "Take me away!" As a working mom, I can relate. Those quiet bathtub soaks were rare, but always welcomed.

I think there are times when we would all like to run away from home, right? Some people try through sex, alcohol, drugs, gambling, video games, or even novels. Reality can be a harsh and uncomfortable place. David knew that first hand. He literally had to run for his life and hide out from his enemies. But David doesn't stop with verse 7, wishing his problems would all go away. Neither should we.

He states, "But I call to God and my Lord saves me" (v.16). Whatever the situation, this week we have seen over and over through the Scripture passages that God loves us, cares for us, and saves us. Our job is to believe that and rely upon that merciful grace. He meets us where we are, He gets our attention, He refines us, He helps us become who He created us to be. We are permanently on His mind.

May we always remember that, and when we stray from His will, may He, even if it is through a believing friend, correct our path and lead us back to His arms. We don't need to soak in a bath product. We don't need diversions. We need Jesus, right where we are.

Isaiah 51:1-8; Galatians 3:23-29; Mark 7:1-23

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