

RELIGION

Scripture of the Week

Romans 12:1-2

Be Of Good Courage!

BY MATTIE ANN CALLIER-SPEARS

The holiday season comes and goes; but, what does it leave behind? A lot of disgruntled people. "How am I going to pay for this?" and "How am I going to be able to get this -- when I've spent so much already?" Well! In the first place -- you should have managed your funds more efficiently. However, there are those who, like myself, have small children to think of ... and you don't want to disappoint the wee ones. "Lord I've got to have something under the tree on Christmas." This is the sigh that is heard around the world. We allow ourselves to get caught up in the type and circumstances, instead of "leaning on the everlasting arms" of the Lord.

Everyday God brings us baskets full of new hopes and new joys! We have, available to us, an untapped resource that we are not using. There are so many days and so many equitable ways that have gone astray because of foolish judgement calls...on our part. It's nothing that God has done; we've done it to ourselves! Many times--I've made the statement, "With all the people out there waiting to punch holes in our lives, we don't even give them a chance because we have beat them to it." This -- so often -- is the case. After you sit down, on your chair of despair, with your head in your hands and you feel like you've been run over by fifty people with football cleats on, you look up -- finally -- and cry out "Lord, what am I going to do?"

As far as New Year's Resolutions go, we should quickly make this one ... I will "Trust in the Lord, and do good; I will dwell in the land, and verily I shall be fed." [Psalms 37:3] God has been in the "providing business" much longer than we have. All He asks is that we would just put all our trust in Him. Trust in His precepts. Not our own. That's how we get into so many "messy" messes that have been tai-

lored by and for "moi." We are just too hasty in our actions.

How many of us are guilty of attempting to get a "jump start" on God's order of business? And then -- we fall in the ditch and wonder how we got there. The scripture says, "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." [Psalms 27:14] "Wait" is a seldom used word, in this "hurry-up", "hustle-bustle" world. We have to have everything now, yesterday or sooner. No one has anytime for anyone or anything. Instant gratification, instant cereal, instant coffee, instant pudding, just to name a few, is a result of this "hurry-up syndrome." We all seem to be suffering from this affliction.

Do you remember Sarah and Abraham? Sarah couldn't wait, even though God had promised to give her a son. She had to get a "jump start" on things. Can't you hear her saying, "I know that God said what he said -- BUT -- a lot of time has passed, I am getting to old and I know that God will probably be happy if I just helped him out a little bit." So -- she went to her servant, Hagar, and had her sleep with her husband, Abraham. Hagar got pregnant; but, that was not what God had intended. The result was chaos and a whole lot of confusion; and God is not in the midst of confusion. It is apparent that Sarah was wrong; just the way we are wrong when we are hasty in our conclusions. We can't seem to wait on the Lord to do His mighty work through us.

This new year should find us obediently waiting on the Lord and being of good courage. When will we realize -- that God has already experienced everything that we have experienced and more. Anyone who goes to God and says, "God, you just don't understand!" is a fool from the start. God knows all about us, for after all, he created us...he blew life into us. He

took upon himself the sins of the entire world. He died; he rose, and he daily pleads our case to the Father.

I know that God must get--just thoroughly--tired of our foolishness!

There is an old hymn that goes like this: Standing on the promises of Christ my king, Through eternal ages let His praises ring; Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing, Standing on the promises of God. Standing on the promises that cannot fail, When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail, By the living Word of God I shall prevail, Standing on the promises of God. Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord, bound to Him eternally by love's strong cord, overcoming daily with the Spirit's sword, standing on the promises of God. Standing on the promises I cannot fall, Listening every moment to the Spirit's call, resting in my Savior as my all in all, standing on the promises of God.

That last stanza says, "Listening every moment..." My Lord! Waiting and Listening. Waiting and Listening. Maybe if we say it often enough, we will get it right. Huh?

God has a divine order for each of our lives. We must learn to be "tuned in" instead of "tuned out"; for the Lord is speaking to us. Why can't you listen? Why can't you hear? Don't you know the voice of your Master? The scripture says that "...the sheep knew the sound of their Master's voice." [St. Hohn 10:4] Therefore -- if you can't hear, maybe you're not one of His sheep or maybe you're listening to that other guy, Satan! If you are, you shall suck sorrow; for he doesn't give goodness but sorrow. Satan messes up, corrupts, deceives, lies, kills and is just out-and-out rotten to the core. You do not want to listen to him -- not even for a little while.

Be of good courage! For God has overcome the world! Let not your heart be troubled--just Believe. Hallelujah!

Take time To Bless The Lord!

BY MICHAEL LINDSEY

Dean of North Portland Bible College

The text for the Sunday School lesson (International Series) for next Sunday is Psalm 103:1-17. As we begin 1992 together, I'd like to encourage all the faithful Sunday School teachers who have been teaching the Word of God over the past year (s). If any teachers would like to receive an advance copy of these weekly notes and comments, please contact NPBC at 288-2919.

Like Psalm 8 (December 29's lesson), our text for this week addresses the relationship between God and mankind. But this time the emphasis falls on the character of the Lord, and his many blessings on people here on Earth. God's goodness can be seen most clearly as our Redeemer.

"Bless the LORD (Yahweh),
O my soul:
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.
Bless the LORD (Yahweh), O my
soul,
and forget not all his benefits:"
(vv.1-2)

In the first stanza of this hymn, verses 1-5, David is literally talking to himself. He is reminding himself that his God is truly worthy of praise and worship; God's "holy name" should be "blessed" from the depths of his being.

When the Lord blesses us, he shows us many good things on us--things we can see and touch and taste (v.5), and even more important things we can't see: forgiveness, redemption from sin, lovingkindness and tender mercies (vv.3-4). These are the wonderful benefits which come to us as we accept God's lordship over our lives. We all know the guilt of sin, the pain of loss, the fear of death and enemies. And the Lord offers us his blessings to overcome these human predicaments, and they are the very things which fulfill the deepest needs of the human heart.

If we have received God's forgive-

ness, and healing, and tender mercies, then we know how wonderful he is. But have we taken the time to bless the Lord? No, we can't offer him anything comparable to the great gifts he has freely given us, but we can bless him through the words of our mouth, offering praise and thanks to him. David the psalmist asserts that he must remind his own soul to give thanks, to call to mind the specific ways God has blessed him. The danger, all too real, is that God's people will forget "all his benefits," and lose the joy we ought to have in the Christian walk.

Let me encourage you to take a few minutes as you read the Word, to close your eyes and remember all the blessings and benefits you have received from the Lord. Maybe you'll need to begin with your childhood, and maybe when Jesus came into your heart and became your personal Redeemer. Don't stop there! Remember the physical healings he has brought you. Remember the times when someone called or visited you, "because the Lord put you on my mind," just when you were most discouraged. Don't forget those times of worship with God's people, when you seemed lifted up from the trials and cares of life, and found the strength to carry on. And those narrow escapes from harm and danger, which showed you again that the Lord has "given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps91:11).

Of course, the Lord is not just interested in the personal needs of his people; he also works for social justice and righteousness throughout the world. David emphasizes these reasons to bless his holy name in the following stanzas. He says that "the Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed" (v.6). Isn't it great to know that, whenever we see people exploited, in the townships of South Africa, in Croatia, or on the streets of Portland, the Lord is on their side. Without God on their side, there would be no deliverance from the inhumanity of other humans.

The Lord's deliverance of Israel from the slavery of Egypt (v.7) serves as a model throughout the rest of the Bible for the power of Yahweh to deliver those who trust in him. And when we work for justice and peace in our community, we ought to bless the Lord most of all, for he has revealed the standards of true justice, and he gives us the power to triumph over the forces of evil.

He has a righteous character, but he is also compassionate and merciful and gracious. He sees our sins, but he leaves us room to repent and do right. David especially loves to proclaim God's forgiveness of sin. His mercy on sinners--"as the heaven is high above the earth"; his removal of their guilt--"as far as the east is from the west"; and his compassion on his loved ones--"as a father pitieth his children" (vv.11-13). What wonderful word pictures! do we take time to worship and bless the name of this wonderful god, not only for our own sakes, but also for all people of all nations?

There is a vital condition for this mercy and redemption from sin: it is only for "them that fear him" (vv.13,17). Not everyone in David's time received this great salvation, but only those who trusted the Lord (by faith, Heb 11:6), and as a result "feared" the Lord with reverential awe. With the coming of God's Son, Jesus Christ, we have a more perfect revelation of God's salvation (Heb 1:1-3), and Christ's sacrifice on the cross is shown to be the only basis on which the Lord will forgive sins (Rom 3:21-26). Yes, there is an exclusive quality to the good news of Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). We don't need to stumble over that. Instead, we ought to bless the name of the Lord for providing for us a means of salvation, a means of redemption which does not compromise the Lord's righteous standards of justice. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Community Mourns Death of Ernest 'Bubba' Woodland

There are so many things we simply can't explain, why one of us is taken while the rest of us remain. But until the day we see the Lord and He makes things clear, we must find comfort knowing that his love is ever near.

Ernest Woodland was born December 21, 1902 to the parentage of Benjamin and Alice Woodland in Paris, Texas.

He was a member of Mt. Sinai Baptist Church, Portland, Oregon.

After a short illness, on December 29th, God dispatched an angel to take him home to rest. He leaves to mourn: a daughter, Margaret Soloman; a son, Ernest Woodland Jr.; nine grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; one brother; and a host of nieces and nephews.

His family wishes to acknowledge with sincere appreciation, all of the cards, calls and messages of condolence in our time of sorrow.

Jesus Loves You!

Allen Temple CME Church

Psalms 34:3

4236 NE Eighth Avenue
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Phillip S. Nelson Pastor

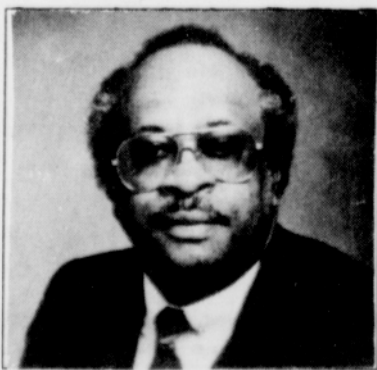
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Sunday Service
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Theme: Whatever you're going to do for the Lord, do it now

I Peter 4:11

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He that is too good to realize that he need to be saved, cannot be helped. But he that recognize he has a need, can be helped.

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