

The Rock Upon Which Beauty Is Built

“The Gospel According to Matthew.” Settled and sure, and you can rest in this Rock. Message Magazine’s Online Devotional for Tuesday, December 11, 2018 [Listen to “Thoughts in Worship 12.11.2018” on Spreaker.](#)

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

This Rock Is Jesus

One day Jesus asked His disciples who people said that He was. They responded that some thought He was John the Baptist, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or another prophet. Jesus asked them who they thought He was. Peter, being the impulsive man that he was, and quick to speak, said that Jesus was the anointed Son of the living God. With joy, Jesus said that no human could have revealed such an incredible truth to Peter. In fact, the Lord revealed this to him. Jesus continued by saying that the church would be built upon this rock and the gates of hell would not be able to withstand or defeat it. The church was built upon Jesus.

There has been confusion since the time of Christ concerning His identity. Some say He was a good man. Others say that He was a prophet like Moses, or in their view, Muhammad. Still others consider Him an ordinary man; a mere human who may have done some good things. The Bible teaches that Jesus was no ordinary man. Rather, He was Emmanuel, that is to say, God with us (Matthew 1:23).

Jesus, Himself fully God, revealed the Father to the world. It was upon this firm foundation, this rock of Gibraltar, that the church was built. Hence, the name, Christian

No Other Name

Can you imagine how unsettled and shaky the Christian church would have been if it a human being established it? Take Peter for instance. Could the church have survived on him? Did the gates of hell ever prevail against Him? “And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew” (Matthew 26:73, 74).

Although in the end, Peter emerged a very faithful apostle, the church would be in trouble if we implicitly followed his or any other faithful person’s example. The foundation of God’s church must not only be faithful, but all-powerful and eternal.

Solid Rock

Suppose the church was built upon Christ. Would the foundation be stable and secure? Was Jesus ever overcome by the powers of darkness? “Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John 14:30). “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Revelation 1:18).

We are secure in Jesus, knowing His church stands upon Him. Jesus is the

foundation of the Christian church. With this firm foundation, there is no way that the devil can prevail. It's no wonder that throughout the ages, every attempt to destroy the church has failed. The devil could not kill it by murdering its Shepherd, inflicting twelve hundred sixty years of persecution, or infiltrating it with false doctrine.

Christ, The Cornerstone

The Holy Spirit, through the word of God, brings the insidious nature of lies to light. We are secure with Jesus as our foundation. He is the rock. "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:10-12). This has been the gospel according to Matthew. Be transformed by it.

Mighty Mind-When You Need A Spiritual Supercharge

"The Gospel According to Matthew." When you need the mental might to stay in the fight, God will provide. Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Monday, December 10, 2018

[Listen to "Thoughts in Worship 12.10.2018" on Spreaker.](#)

"But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 13:11).

Super Strength

After a great discussion with a friend concerning our need for the power of the Holy Ghost, and complete reliance on Christ, something dawned on me. I thought back to my elementary school science classes. In those classes, we learned about the so-called fight or flight response. When certain stressors threaten us, adrenaline, noradrenalin, and cortisol are secreted into our bloodstream. The blood rushes away from our digestive organs, our pupils dilate, sight sharpens, and overall awareness is keener. In this state, we are physically stronger and able to move faster than usual. Our heart rate speeds up and to a large extent, we lose pain sensitivity. This is why a petite mother of a young child in danger, can literally bench press a car, if necessary, to rescue her child. Under normal circumstances, that same loving Mom may have difficulty opening a jar of pickles.

All of this neurophysiological stuff made me think of God's willingness, and ability to supply us with what we need, at the very moment that we need it. The analogy may not correspond directly, but this is the way I see it. When we love the Lord and spend time with Him in daily devotional Bible study and prayer, He has promised many things. One such promise is that when we are faced with strong spiritual opposition and have to give an answer for our

faith, He will speak through us. He said that we should not practice or specifically prepare, because it is God that speaks.

Spiritual Adrenaline

In the fight or flight response, the one stressed cannot prepare for the activity at hand. They cannot prepare to run more than twenty miles per hour. They cannot prepare to move a one ton vehicle without the aid of a tow truck. All of these abilities are given to us by God in the moment they are needed. Can you imagine what it would be like if we stayed charged by adrenaline all of the time? We would become overcharged and probably have a heart attack. The point is this, just as God put a mechanism in place for our physical protection, He did likewise for our spiritual well-being. Just as we must trust Him to activate the systems that He put within our bodies, we must trust Him to do likewise within our minds. It is wonderful to know that God gives us instantaneous help when we need it. He is never too late, but always on time. This has been the gospel according to Matthew. Be transformed by it.

Suspicious Worshippers

The Gospel According to Matthew. The Path of Feigned Worship. Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Tuesday, November 27, 2018

[Listen to "Thoughts in Worship 11.27.2018" on Spreaker.](#)

"Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you find Him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship Him." After they were gone, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Get up! Take the child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to destroy Him"" (Matthew 2:7-8, 13, HCSB).

Wily Worshipers

Worship is not a joke! We were born to worship. Unfortunately, some worship self, money, unholy pleasures, sexual habits, entertainment, people, false gods, and the status quo. Some who claim to worship God, really are antagonistic to all that is godly and are displaying "... a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:5).

Today's theme passage chronicles an example of what lies, deceit, and hatred produces in those who claim to worship God. We all have heard the story during the holiday season. Herod felt threatened by baby King Jesus, feigned worship, and sought to kill Him instead. Is there any principle we can learn from this story?

While none of us are probably insecure monarchs who feel our thrones are threatened or are willing to commit mass murder to protect our legacies, some of us fear our pride will be dismantled by God, so we keep up appearances like we are true worshippers, but we really are not. In fact some of us have actually experienced the power and presence of God, but turned away from Him; and by virtue of that fact, "...seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." (Hebrews 6:6). Pretending to

worship God, but living in un-repentance is just like crucifying Jesus.

Hope for Prideful Pretenders

Yes, stories like Herod's are interesting, and even may provide information for our understanding, but we must adapt them so we can apply godly principles to our lives. Among the many principles we can apply from the story, one bubbles up to the surface: false worship or pretend worship of God leads to a host of atrocities. Therefore, it is our privilege to get to know our Creator and not give in to pride, fear, or self righteousness. We can commit to asking God daily to introduce His beauty and character to us, so love, power and trust will result. Remember, it's a daily journey, and God is with you every step of the way.

This has been the gospel according to Matthew. Be transformed by it.

New Birth Experience: Fully Rely On God This Time

The Gospel According to Matthew. Thinking of the New Birth during this season. Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Monday, November 26, 2018

[Listen to "Thoughts in Worship 11.26.2018" on Spreaker.](#)

"...Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Messiah. So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, 14 generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah, 14 generations. The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After His mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:16–18, HCSB).

Surprise

It was a miracle! A young woman who had never had sexual relations with any man was pregnant. How many times have you heard of instances when women did not know they were pregnant until the third trimester? How many times have you heard of a woman feeling weird, going to the doctor to find out what was going on, and then ... "surprise!" being diagnosed, not with something that caused weird feelings or nausea, but rather pregnancy? They simply did not know. Even when these women did not realize they were pregnant and were surprised by the fact, they did have sexual relations, and pregnancy was the

outcome of that experience. Makes sense.

Well, Mary's case was different. It was so different that God sent an angel to her to explain what happened. Even though she was indeed a virgin, she was pregnant. Miraculously, in fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies, this holy young woman of God was pregnant. The Holy Spirit reached down into her DNA, with all of its historic and genetic relevance and placed the blessed embryo (for lack of a better way of saying it) who we would finally recognize was the Son of God! God's power overshadowed the human predicament, and Mary bore the Son of the Living God. Miracle!

Weak Roots in The Family Tree

Since we do not have a lot of time to exhaust this holy topic, I would like to direct your attention to an intriguing aspect of the story. Even though Joseph had nothing to do with Jesus' birth, He did still come through the womb of a normal human woman. This means that the list of persons preceding our theme passage were all ancestors of Christ. This also magnifies the reality, that Jesus Christ entered upon the human scene with the need to rely on His Father, fully, so He could live a righteous life. Have you read the motley cast of characters, with all their foibles in the list? This simply says to us, that the Father did not orchestrate some sideshow and call it the plan of salvation. No! Jesus had real human ancestors whose genetics could have impacted His character if He did not rely on His Father's strength 100% of the time.

Are you willing to rely on God for power to live above sin just like Jesus did? We do realize there is a difference here – Jesus was victorious from His birth until He died. We all have sinned and come short of God's glorious intent for our lives. However, John 3, Romans 6, and Romans 8, all teach us that we can be victorious from our *newbirth* until we die or Jesus returns, as the case may be. If we make mistakes along the way, following our newbirth experience, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One.

This has been the gospel according to Matthew. Be transformed by it.

The Protest Is Not Over: Confusion in Confession

"The Protest Is Not Over: Transformation is Key to Reformation." Confession is good for the soul, unless, you're doing it with the wrong person. Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Monday, November 12, 2018

[Listen to "Thoughts in Worship 11.12.2018" on Spreaker.](#)

"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17).

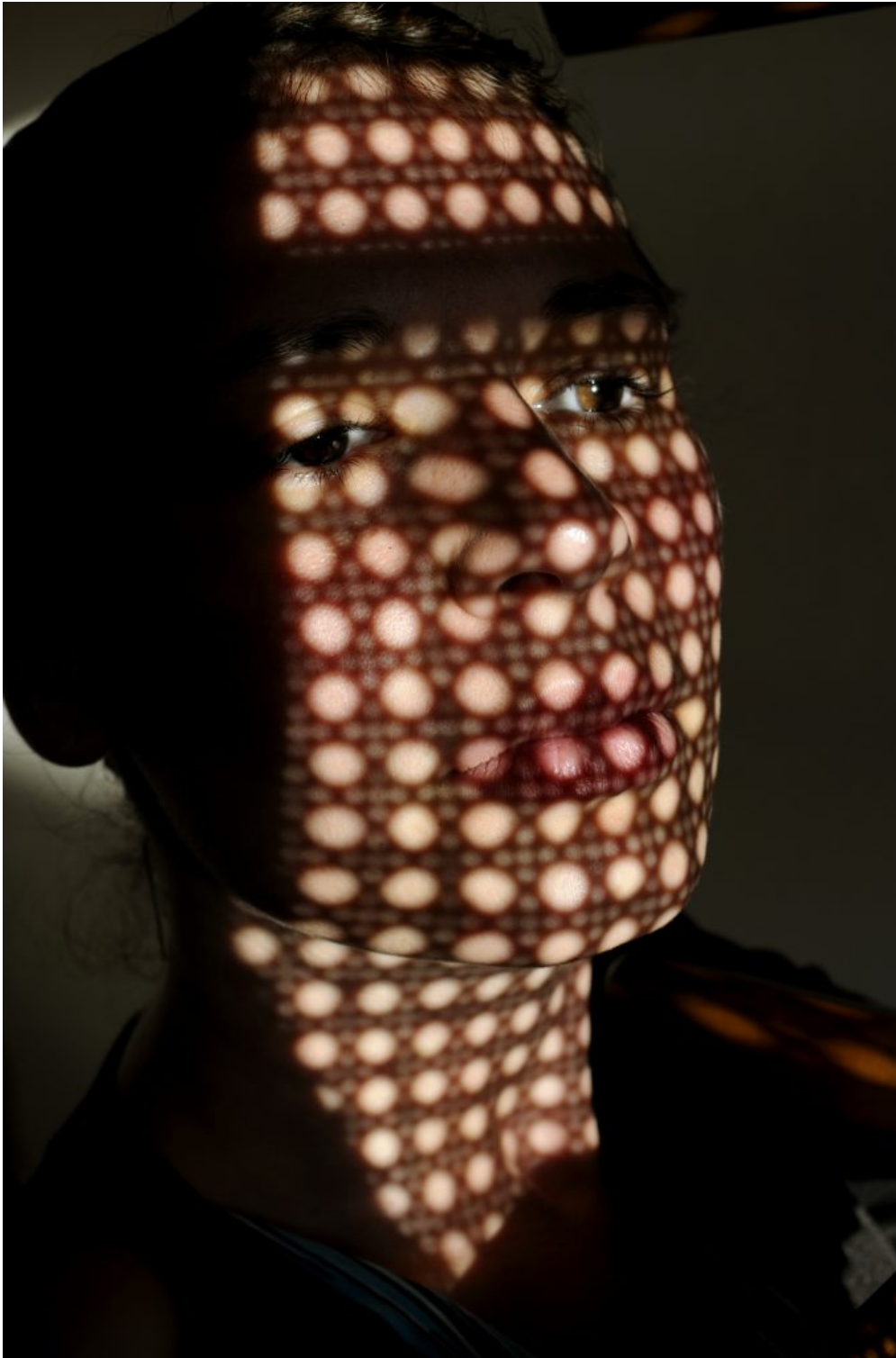
New Look at An Old Word

Repent! This is a powerful word; a word full of promise. In our common speech we don't use this word much unless we are in a religious setting. Simply put, repentance is a gift from God. He makes us aware of where we have missed the mark of holiness. His Spirit gives us the godly sorrow for sin, and the

resolve to do God's will by faith. He leads us to make restitution possible (Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

Let me share a familiar verse we have already used in this series: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The only way we are able to confess our sins (or agree with God's perspective on our sins), is that the Holy Spirit brings conviction. The only way we can act righteously upon His bringing our need to mind is with His power. This is a gift from God. He is faithful to forgive us. Not only is He faithful to forgive us, but if we continue in the spirit and mindset of confession and repentance regarding the sins we do recognize with His guidance, He will continue to guide us, not hold our sins against us, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He has got us fully covered. There may be times, when we have stolen from or defrauded someone, that fruit of repentance will be manifest in restoring what we have stolen. In cases like these and others, we have an obligation to



make us the injured
party. It's
only right to
do so.

God Has Us Covered. Why Confess to People?

Notice the blessing of the passages we have cited thus far. In neither of the passages does it say that we must confess our sins to a human priest. All human beings possess a sinful nature just like we do. They did not say that we must journey on a wearisome pilgrimage to somehow expiate our sins. It does not say that we should await priestly instruction on what act of mercy, voluntary sacrifice, or act of service we will perform in order to receive absolution.

Confession and repentance are not predicated upon third-party human intervention, whether priestly or by church authority. This is critical. We are not subject to some earthly validating power in order to reconcile with

God. We are not subject to the whims, behest, mercy, or self ascribed requirements of any human entity to receive the blessed gifts of forgiveness and cleansing from our unrighteousness. Do you believe it?

Gratitude for His Priestly Intervention

Thank God for giving us His Son, all sufficient and merciful; along with the power of the Holy Spirit to deal with our sin problems. Thank Him for not allowing human beings to control whether we are saved, lost, or want to attempt to earn our way into favor with heaven. Thank God for handling this dastardly beast, we call sin, all by Himself, and using faithful followers of His to guide us into His atmosphere, where we will find grace to help in times of trouble.

The Protest is Not Over: What Happened to The Sabbath?

“The Protest is Not Over: Transformation is Key to Reformation.” Somewhere along the way we forgot God’s Day. Message Magazine’s Daily Devotional for Sunday, November 11, 2018.

[Listen to “Thoughts in Worship 11.11.2018” on Spreaker.](#)

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Genesis 2:1–3).

Most Wonderful Time of The Week

I love the Sabbath. Every Saturday, God has provided special time for us to worship, fellowship, focus, serve, and experience regeneration on new levels, not available during the week. I say new levels because, while those who love God worship Him everyday, there is only one day (the Sabbath) that God blessed, set aside for holy use, and spiritual rest, commemorating our rest in the blessing of salvation. If God blessed it, that means it’s special.



Remember. Remember is an interesting word. Keep. Keep is an interesting word too. Holy. Holiness is an intriguing principle. In Exodus 20:8-11, the Bible

says God commanded in His perpetual law, for us to remember the seventh-day Sabbath. In this context, we are memorializing the creatorship of God. We are showing honor for His power to give life and to breathe new life into those who are being saved. The Bible says that we should remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. In this context, to keep means to consecrate, sanctify, dedicate as special, and to devote.

Holy Set-Aside

I am intrigued by the redundancy of God's command. He said to remember the Sabbath to consecrate it as holy. It's almost like He's saying that the day/time He blessed during the creation week should be holy, holy. To keep is to devote as holy, that which God said was holy. If God said it, I believe it. I want to experience all that He has prepared for those who remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

For some reason, we human beings seem to be anti. I mean, some of us are bent on doing the opposite of right. If a child's father says go left, that child often chooses to go right. If the speed limit says 55 miles per hour, we often go faster. It is strange behavior, which I could expound further, but I will stop here.



Even in the case of Sabbath time, our God said to remember and keep it holy, but we often forget and treat the time as mundane as the other six work days of the week. Then somebody got the idea that it would be acceptable to exchange the holiness only accorded to the Sabbath, to Sunday. Then, if that was not bad enough, some churches have added extra so-called holy days to the calendar like Epiphany, All Saints, Christmas (some call it holy), Ascension, Mary Mother of God, and other obligatory purported holy days depending upon your locale.

Last Holy-day Standing?

This is odd, since those who ascribe holiness to these times, disavow and discredit the only biblically valid holy day in our era. After God nullified all other holy days when Jesus gave His life for us, because they were shadows that pointed forward to His life, death, and everlasting ministry, the seventh-day Sabbath continued.

Let's ask God to help us keep things simple, shall we? God gave us blessed, holy time. Let's remember it every week. And, please do not venture upon hallowed ground and invent new holy days that God never sanctioned. This is way above all of our spiritual paygrades. Let God be God, and give thanks for

what He has provided to keep us in remembrance of His love, holiness, and sovereignty. Amen.

Perfecting Your Practice

“O For a Faith That Will Not Shrink.” Faith Practices in Perfection. Message Magazine’s Online Devotional for Tuesday, October 23, 2018

[Listen to “Thoughts in Worship 10.23.2018” on Spreaker.](#)

“David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee” (1 Samuel 17:37).

Getting Ready

You have heard it said that practice makes perfect, but I say to you that perfect practice makes perfect.

Many rehearse music in order to become the best that they can be. They put their all into it. Just imagine if you were rehearsing for a piano recital and the musical piece was selected for you? You go to the music store to purchase the score and go to rehearse. Weeks have passed and the time has come to perform. You sit and prepare yourself, and suddenly you realize that the music you had been rehearsing was all wrong. You heard wrong and now you are completely unprepared. Now what do you do?

David was a little shepherd boy. One day he left his sheep behind to check on his older brothers. At once, he discovered that a giant Philistine stood in the valley blaspheming God near to where his brothers were. The giant openly defied God and the armies of Israel. David was filled with righteous indignation.

“And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” I Samuel 17:26.

David proposed that in the name of the Lord, he should fight the Philistine; everyone that stood by discouraged Him. Eventually, He had audience with King Saul and told him the same.

Dress Rehearsal

“And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee” (1 Samuel 17:33-37).

Glorious, Godly History

There are many incredible details left in the story, but the short version is that David, armed with the might and determination of the Holy Ghost, defeated and removed Goliath's head using the Philistine's own weapon. In the end, the Lord was glorified, the Philistines had respect toward God, Israel realized their faithlessness, and young David saw his faith confirmed. It is incredible to see the point of reference David used as assurance that he could defeat Goliath. He recalled the times that God had given him opportunity to exercise, or practice his faith. When he encountered other predators, he defeated them. With each victory, his resolve was strengthened. This is indeed a case of perfect practice makes perfect. Many put their trust in self, others, and worldly strength. They experience what appears like victories, but when the crises come, they realize that their practice was not complete. They rehearsed the wrong sheet music, so to speak, and now they are at a loss as to what should be done.

When You Meet Your Test

As the Lord gives us opportunity to exercise faith, it is well that we do so. When the Goliaths of circumstance arise, we will be prepared and with God's power, we will be the victors. Remember; perfect practice makes perfect.

A Little Eye Contact, Please

"O For a Faith That Will Not Shrink," with undivided attention. Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Monday, October 22, 2018.

[Listen to "Thoughts in Worship 10.22.2018" on Spreaker.](#)

"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; And while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24).

A Moment of Your Time?

One of the biggest signs of disrespect and disregard for others is not paying them any attention. Let me narrow it a bit. For example, you are stepping up to a counter to order food because your stomach sounds like a lion cub is trapped inside. As you begin your order, the cashier does not acknowledge you, repeat your order, or tell you how long it will take for your meal to be ready. You pay in spite of the disregard for your presence; when the order comes out, it is wrong, and with no apology.

Try this one on for size: you are excited to tell your big brother about something that happened earlier in the day, and you want his advice. While you are talking, he never even looks at you. He is more concerned about getting in that last IG post, retweeting his favorite artist's post, or scrolling through his Facebook timeline than giving you eye contact. How do you feel?

My Time with You

It is unfortunate that a few moments of direct eye contact and attentive listening is out of the question these days. Could it be that this

inattentiveness leaks into our spiritual lives? Could it be that we are losing spiritual battles everyday because we cannot pull ourselves away from whatever is “so important,” that we miss our time with God?

Our God is different, thankfully. Even in less than ideal situations, He is always attentive. Even when we have made mistakes, or He is busy running the universe, He makes time to answer our prayers. He is so attentive to our needs that He prepares to deliver them before He inspires us to ask Him. He gives some blessings before we ask. He’s just good like that. How can we resist the love of such a God? Is He worthy of our time? Is He worthy of our attention? Is He worthy of us pulling away from the lights, notifications, bells, whistles, and distractions for alone time with Him? Is He worth it?

Fullest Experience

If we are to develop a shrink-resistant faith that will not fail when tested, we must learn to give God our undivided attention during devotional times, so we can experience Him to the fullest and be charged up when difficulties come.

Faith That Doesn’t Shrink: Enter His Presence

0 For a Faith That Will Not Shrink “Enter His Presence” Message Magazine’s Online Devotional for Monday, October 15, 2018

[Listen to “Thoughts in Worship 10.15.2018” on Spreaker.](#)

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said,

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: The whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:1–8).

Is This The End?

You knew things were bad, but you never thought they were this bad. Things were already making you feel oppressed, and you were being opposed at every turn. You already felt like nobody could be the voice of the people in this time of greatest turmoil, but then it happened: things things got worse. The dividing line among the peoples grew into a seemingly unbridgeable, yawning chasm. You don’t know how long you can take this. You are ready to throw in

the towel.

As Isaiah was getting his prophetic feet under him to really settle into his divine calling, the people of God had been rocked back on their heels because of one man, Tiglath-pileser, who was subverting the lives and consciences of people all around Asia. What impact do you think his oppressive ways had on the people of God?

Well, when they thought it could not get any worse, it did! The one hope they had amid dismal times was dashed violently to the ground with the death of King Uzziah. What would be the remedy for their fears, consternation, uncertainty, and desire to overcome the oppression?

There are certain things that do not change. God's remedy for things that disturb our peace has always been clearer vision of Him. In the prophet Isaiah's case, as he needed to overcome many of the same concerns the people did, and others, the Creator gave him a vision of the throne room. He gave Him a vision of the heavenly unity of angels who had themselves experienced turmoil.

There was a covering cherub named Lucifer who had clearly *lost* his spiritual mind in heaven. He set himself up as the king, but he was not. There were many casualties in the war there. Many angels fell into sin and have become our enemies. But there are holy angels, who excel in strength, who have never lost their focus.

Can You See It?

We need to take a page out of their book. Isaiah saw them worshipping God on such a level that the heavens shook! Do not miss this. God gave Isaiah a vision of the heavenly atmosphere of victory over every evil plot, plan, misunderstanding, oppressive action, political difficulty, interpersonal schism, and unholy character attribute. He gave him a vision of His glory, power to forgive, and mission to save bullheaded people from our sins. We can learn a lot when we enter into the presence of God to worship Him.

If we are to develop a shrink-resistant faith that will not fail when tested, we need a constant view of God our King that eclipses the frailty of humanity.

Wanted Alive: Shrink Resistant Faith Never Dies

0 For a Faith That Doesn't Shrink "Wanted Alive" is Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Sunday, October 14, 2018

[Listen to "Thoughts in Worship 10.14.2018" on Spreaker.](#)

This is devotional thought number 7 in our devotional series titled, "0 For a Faith That Will Not Shrink."

Psalm 88 (NLT)*

1 O Lord, God of my salvation, I cry out to you by day. I come to you at night.

2 Now hear my prayer; listen to my cry.

3 For my life is full of troubles, and death draws near.

4 I am as good as dead, like a strong man with no strength left.

5 They have left me among the dead, and I lie like a corpse in a grave. I am forgotten, cut off from your care.

6 You have thrown me into the lowest pit, into the darkest depths.

7 Your anger weighs me down; with wave after wave you have engulfed me.

Interlude

8 You have driven my friends away by making me repulsive to them. I am in a trap with no way of escape.

9 My eyes are blinded by my tears. Each day I beg for your help, O Lord; I lift my hands to you for mercy.

10 Are your wonderful deeds of any use to the dead? Do the dead rise up and praise you? Interlude

11 Can those in the grave declare your unfailing love? Can they proclaim your faithfulness in the place of destruction?

12 Can the darkness speak of your wonderful deeds? Can anyone in the land of forgetfulness talk about your righteousness?

13 O Lord, I cry out to you. I will keep on pleading day by day.

14 O Lord, why do you reject me? Why do you turn your face from me?

15 I have been sick and close to death since my youth. I stand helpless and desperate before your terrors.

16 Your fierce anger has overwhelmed me. Your terrors have paralyzed me.

17 They swirl around me like floodwaters all day long. They have engulfed me completely.

18 You have taken away my companions and loved ones. Darkness is my closest friend.

When You Have to Search The Word

Seldom do we quote entire chapters from the Bible, but this time it is appropriate. There are times in each of our lives that we are so depressed, lonely, and in despair, that only God can help us. Friends, as nice as they may be, cannot help us. Loved ones, as caring as they may be, cannot help us. Coworkers, as committed as they may be, cannot help us. When we get so far down in the dumps that death, darkness, and intermittent doubts become commonplace in our thoughts, we have to lay it all on the line and cry out to the One faithful, true, and living God (Blessed be His Name).

In verse 11, the psalmist poses a serious question. He asked if dead people can proclaim God's faithfulness. He was telling God that the trials he was experiencing could very well lead to death, but he was of more value to God alive than dead. The dead cannot praise God.

I find this intriguing. It would seem to me that most desponding people would welcome death. Death, in those circumstances, would seem to be a welcomed rest. But the psalmist found death to be out of the question. Despite his weakness and repeated questionings, the psalmist continued to cry unto the Lord. He never gave up. David never stopped communicating with the Creator. He carried all of his fears, tears, doubts, and difficulties to God. That is the epitome of faith. Refusing to give up even in our darkest hour is what faith is all about.

Decision Point

If we are to develop a shrink-resistant faith that will not fail when tested,

we must decide, that no matter how hard things get, we will not let go of our connection to our faithful God.