

BE STRONG
STAY STRONG
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FEBRUARY
DAILY
DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

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FEBRUARY 01 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Romans 14:14 - NOTHING IS UNCLEAN OF ITSELF!

If you have a true understanding of New Testament liberty, you'll know that as far as God is concerned, **NOTHING** is unclean or inappropriate to have, use or enjoy in this life. No, I'm not talking about the issue of sin. The Bible, in many places, is quite clear about the evil of sin, and the penalties of sin, and what is and what isn't a sin in the eyes of God. But Romans 14:1 tells us not to argue and fight over "doubtful things". These are those issues, things and areas that many Christians think are sins, but which the Bible does not say is sin. And the whole chapter of Romans 14 is devoted to this very issue. Paul is telling his disciples that every man is to be fully persuaded in his or her own mind about things that the Bible doesn't specify as to whether it's a sin or not. In Paul's day, they were having arguments over things people ate and drank, and other related issues. In today's Christian circles, we have small wars being fought over what is and what isn't "worldly". And people are all the time trying to judge others by saying that the "Bible says...", or "God told me to tell you...."

Listen, if something is offensive to you personally, then that is a personal issue between you and God alone. Read Romans 14 carefully. There is a balance being taught here that many Christians fail to see. Yes, it says we shouldn't put a stumbling block in another brother's way, but at the same time, it's telling us that in Christ, we're free and have liberty. So, what does that mean in terms of everyday living? It means that if and when you're knowingly around other believers who have an issue with something that you have no issue with, you're to do your best to defer to their viewpoint as long as you're with them or in their presence. But when they're not around, you're free to enjoy life as you see fit. Not in sin of course, but in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free (Galatians 2:4/5:1/5:13). The wearing of jewelry, certain dress codes, certain foods to eat or beverages to drink. Whether or not it's right to go to movies, or to a dance, or watch TV. All of these things are called the "doubtful things", and basically, God leaves these issues up to us to take care of. Whatever brings you peace, there is where you need to be. And remember, doubtful things can originate from any number of sources. A Christian might have issues based upon culture, geographical location, or denominational training and heritage. But just remember, not everybody on earth comes from the same culture, geographical location or spiritual heritage as you, so be tolerant with areas of disagreement. God loves them as much as you, even if they're going to movies and you aren't! So, let's stop fussing about things that aren't that important. We're to interact with the world daily, and present a witness to them about the love of God. Let that be the focal point of your lifestyle emphasis, and everything else will fall into place.



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

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FEBRUARY 02 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Matthew 2:5 - WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT?

In today's devotional, we see a man brought to Jesus for healing. The man himself couldn't walk, so his friends brought him. When they couldn't get in for the crowd, they climbed up onto the roof, broke it open and let the man down into the presence of Jesus. When Jesus saw them do all of that just to get into position to receive this man's healing, Jesus made a declaration that no doubt was surprising to all those in attendance that day. Instead of addressing the man's obvious need for healing, Jesus told him his sins were forgiven! Of course, a few minutes later He did in fact heal the man miraculously, but isn't it interesting as to where Jesus placed the priority in terms of this man's needs? You see, God isn't nearly as concerned about the external as He is about the internal. Of course, God wants all men healed, living successful, fruitful lives while on earth. But more than that, God wants our spirit man to be in right relationship with Him at all times. That, as far as He is concerned, is much more important because that's the eternal aspect of our being and existence.

Before God addresses any of your external, physical needs, He's going to be addressing the needs you have spiritually. First, He will deal with us about sin, and second, He will deal with us about weights. Hebrews 12:1-3 tells us to lay aside every weight, and the sins which so easily beset us. Weights and sins are not the same. If they were, the Bible would say to lay aside every weight, which is the sin.... But God clearly differentiates between weights and sins. And if you want to please God, you'll need to be diligent to avoid both in your life. When this man came to Jesus for external healing, he wasn't even thinking about the sin issue in his life. But Jesus knew what was really important, so before He ministered healing to the man, He addressed his need for forgiveness. So, be like Jesus my friend. Always put emphasis and priority on the spirit, not the flesh. Spiritual issues are always more important to God, so they should always be more important to you too!



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FEBRUARY 03 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Matthew 7:13 - GOD'S GATE IS A NARROW ONE

The gate that leads to heaven and eternal life is a narrow one. Its not wide, but narrow. God has a righteous standard that transcends all generations, cultures and nationalities. And in this day and age of compromise and mediocrity, we would be wise to remember that fact. I've heard, over the years, people say that there are many ways to God. That's not what Jesus is saying here. He's saying if you want to make heaven your home some day when you die, the gate you pass through to get there is a narrow one. That simply means there are NOT many ways to God. John 14:6 says plainly that Jesus is THE way, THE truth and THE life. No one comes to God any other way, or through anyone else. Period.

One man said something recently that I've committed to memory because its so good. He said that the further you want to go with God, the fewer your options become! What a great statement! Salvation starts and ends with Jesus my friend. And from that point, your walk with God will progressively take you down an ever-narrowing road! Yes, God will always love you, and as one of His children, He will always be there to help you and bless you. But, you'll find in life that when you decide to take your relationship with Him to a higher level of sanctification, purpose, focus and purity, the blessings and favor of God begin to increase proportionately. Jesus said the road to death and destruction is wide and easy, and most people will go that way. Why? Because its wide and easy! People are always looking for the easy way. Very seldom are they looking for the right way. The right way and the only way to eternal life and God's blessings in this life → is Jesus. Find Him, draw close to Him, and make Him your best friend today, and every day! It will change how you live your life. I guarantee it.



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FEBRUARY 04 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Titus 2:12 - 3 WAYS TO LIVE LIFE EACH DAY

When Paul wrote to Titus, he gave him instructions for both himself and for those he was pastoring. In verse 6, we see that his initial audience was the young men in the church, but what he went on to say applies to everybody, including you and me. If you want to live right in this life, our verse today shows us the 3 ways to do that. We're told to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present life, constantly looking for the return of Jesus. Ask yourself today if this is the way you're living life right now. Are you sober-minded? Do you live in light of your righteousness with God? And, how godly are you in the ways you think, talk and act?

In our next few daily devotionals, we'll take a quick look at each of these 3 items that Paul listed here for Titus to follow and teach to others. And according to verse 13, the verse that follows our verse for today, we're to live this way because we're looking for the soon return of the Lord Jesus. Once again, the scriptures exhort us to adopt a vigilant lifestyle, alertly watching and scanning the horizon for the Lord Jesus. If Christians actually did this with diligence daily, we'd see a radical change in behavior, both privately and publicly. Ask yourself: ARE YOU LOOKING FOR JESUS TO COME BACK TODAY? Most of us, if we were honest with ourselves, would have to say no. I know in my own life, I would have to say no to that question for too many of my days on earth, and that shouldn't be. Not for me, and not for you. So praise God, even though we can't change the past, we can certainly do something about today and tomorrow. Be sober, understand your righteousness, and be godly in this present life. Amen!



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FEBRUARY 05 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Titus 2:12 - BE SOBER-MINDED!

Many in the Christian world have misunderstood this business of being sober-minded for Christ. They've thought that they were being told to be SOMBER-MINDED, not SOBER-MINDED! There is a big difference between being somber and being sober. Being somber speaks of being serious, very serious, and in fact too serious in terms of being an accurate Christian witness. This was my mistake when I was first born-again. I was an angry preacher in the early days of my ministry as a young man. I was angry at Christians for their lethargy, apathy and laziness. Well, it may be true that the majority of believers are in fact that way, but I needed to discover that my somber approach to the work of ministry was not helping matters any! As an example, people attending a funeral are taught that they're supposed to be somber. It's the way you should be at someone's funeral. However, it's not the way you're supposed to be in life if you're a Christian. Yes, we're to be serious about the things of God of course, but we're to do that in the light of our liberty, salvation and redemption in Jesus. Jesus was not a somber man, but He was sober man! What's the difference? Being sober, as opposed to being somber, means you're focused, prioritized, aware of your surroundings, the day in which you live, and the imminent return of Jesus to earth.

In context with what the Bible says about these two words, "somber" means joyless living, while "sober" means living alert, prepared and ready for earthly departure (death), or the return of Jesus.

What does it mean to pass a "sobriety test"? It means you've proven to the police that you're lucid, focused, and in a clear state-of-mind. In other words, you're sober. This is the way we're told to be as Christians every day. Sober. Not somber. Why not somber? Because we've got something to celebrate! We're saved, we're on our way to heaven, and we've got the blessed assurance of our Lord's soon return. That's why we're always running around saying "hallelujah!" It's supposed to be (at least in theory) our cry of triumph and victory in Christ. And that is what we're supposed to take to the world, the GOOD NEWS of the gospel. The good news is not bad news, its good news. As we exhibit sober-mindedness, we concentrate and prioritize the importance on fulfilling the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20). But as we do that, we do it from a position of joy, happiness and peace in Christ (Romans 14:17). So be sober, but don't be somber! Rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS (Philippians 4:4), and let that be the way the world sees you live your life in Christ.



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

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FEBRUARY 06 DAILY DEVOTIONAL Titus 2:13 - UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS!

Yesterday, we looked at the importance of living "sober" in these last days. The second way we're told to live in these last days is with an understanding of righteousness. Paul told Titus to tell the brethren that they were to look out for the soon return of Jesus, by living soberly, righteously and godly in this present time. What does it mean to live righteously? It means we live our daily live in a constant awareness of our right-standing with God. Hebrews 4:16 tells us that when we need help from God, we're to come BOLDLY to His throne of grace to get the help needed. How can we do that? Because of our righteousness in Christ. Righteousness simply means right-standing. When you received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, His righteousness became your righteousness! That's exactly what the Bible says (Romans 5:17, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21). We're righteous now in God's sight, not because of something we've done, but all because of what Jesus had done for us. Before Jesus came and died in our place, our "righteousness" was called FILTHY RAGS (Isaiah 64:6). We had no ability to approach God because of the sin nature in our flesh. But thank God, Jesus changed all of that, and now whenever you want to or need to, you can come right to God boldly - without any sense of guilt or inferiority.

That's something many Christians don't fully understand. How do I know? By watching how they act whenever they sin or fail God in some way. They run from Him - rather than running TO Him. Why? Because they FEEL guilty, and think that God won't have anything to do with them anymore, at least until they stop FEELING GUILTY! Well, guess what? Your righteousness has nothing to do with how you feel! You're righteous whether you feel like you are or not. You are in Christ if you're born again, and as a child of God, you have access to God's throne for help and fellowship anytime, anywhere, ESPECIALLY when you have sinned and need help to recover. The Old Testament Jews had to go through many elaborate rituals, rules and routines to have an audience with God, and it was only through the High Priest. The ordinary Jew had no access to God until Jesus came and changed all of that. But now, praise God, we can, and should, come to God because He's our Heavenly Father, and He WANTS us to come! Why? Because the sin issue has been dealt with, and now there's nothing standing in the way for you to come to God and commune with Him. Jesus is the Lamb of God who took away both the SIN (the nature of sin in our flesh) and THE SINS (all of our acts of rebellion and disobedience) of the world. His work on the cross dealt with our sin nature as well as all the individual sins we commit. We're redeemed, and so from now on, if you haven't lived in light of this, start today! No matter how you feel, you're still God's beloved child, and He wants you to come to Him. He's not angry with you! He loves you! You have right-standing with Him now in Christ. Take advantage of that, and don't let the devil lie to you anymore about God not wanting to be with you because of some sin you've committed. The devil's a liar, so never mind him. Live with a scriptural understanding of righteousness and ENJOY your access to God and His throne of grace, especially in times of need!



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FEBRUARY 07 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Titus 2:12 - BE GODLY!

The past two days, we've looked at the first two ways we're told to live in these end times. The third way we're told to live in these last days is by being godly. Paul told Titus to tell his people they were to live soberly, righteously, and godly in these last days. What does it mean to live godly? It means we think like, talk like and act like God. In other words, you become a mirrored reflection of Jesus. Just like Jesus told Philip - that whoever saw Him saw His Father, so too we're supposed to say that whoever sees us is really seeing Jesus (John 14:9). That's what it means to live godly. Are you there yet? I'm not, but I'm on the way! And all of us should be on the way towards this goal. And actually, that's the main work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. It's called the process of sanctification. Righteousness is a one-time happening that makes you something you weren't before. In Christ, the moment you got saved, you became the righteousness of God, and you'll never be any more righteous in the future than you are right now! Someone who has been saved for 3 minutes or 30 years is the same when it comes to righteousness. Either you are, or you aren't! However, living godly, (the process of sanctification), is an on-going work in progress. The goal is to become more and more like Jesus as time goes by.

A few years ago there was a popular phrase making the rounds in Christian circles. Remember the slogan "WWJD"? It stands for WHAT WOULD JESUS DO? And although the slogan itself was marketed to death in my opinion, the truth of it remains. To be godly is to be a mirrored reflection of Jesus Christ. Acting like Jesus, thinking like Jesus, and talking like Jesus. It's interesting to note that after the Lord had gone back to heaven, the Pharisees recognized His disciples by the way they acted and talked (Acts 4:13). When they listened to the boldness of Peter and the others, they marveled and took note that they had been hanging around Jesus! I think that's a significant revelation that many read right over and miss. How did the Pharisees know Peter had been with Jesus? By how Peter acted and talked. In other words, he sounded just like Jesus Himself. That's the way it should be, and that's what it means to be godly. So, it's time for you to do a gut check and find out where you stand with this on-going process. Are you more like Jesus today than at this time last year? Are you making progress, or have you regressed? To be like Jesus is to be godly. Are you on the way?



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FEBRUARY 08 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

1 Peter 1:7 - THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH

The life of faith is not without difficulties, challenges and obstacles. Some, when they preach or teach about faith, lead their listeners to believe that when they're walking in faith, all problems magically disappear. That's not at all what the Bible says about those who are strong in faith. In fact, the stronger you become in faith - the more you're going to be shot at by the enemy. The target on your back gets larger, proportionate to the level of faith you're putting out towards God and His Word. That's not a bad thing, because the Bible says we already have the victory in Christ. It's just something you need to be aware of, so that when you're under attack you won't think something strange is happening to you! Peter speaks in our verse today about the TRIAL OF FAITH. Yes friend, there are trials of faith in this life. Praise God, we are promised victory whenever we face these trials, but the trials will come to us all. Peter even goes so far as to say the trial of our faith is MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD! Ha! Is that the attitude most Christians have when it comes to the life of faith? Hardly!

Think about that statement for a moment with me. Would you like to have an unlimited amount of gold in your possession? If you're like any normal person, the answer would probably be a resounding YES! Well, do you have that same kind of desire for the trials of faith? The Word of God says those trials are BETTER, and MORE VALUABLE, than all the gold on earth! Wow! If we would just meditate on that truth for a while, it would really change the way we look at the trials and tests that come against our faith. You see, the more you're exercising faith to meet needs, pay bills, live life and get something of significance done for God - the stronger your faith becomes because of all the resistance to your faith! It's just like going to the gym to lift weights. The principle behind weight lifting is one called RESISTANCE TRAINING. The more the muscles are forced to work, the larger and stronger they become. Hence, the more weight you make your muscles lift, the bigger they get and the stronger you become. And you don't start out with the big weights, do you? No, when you first start out, you start with just a few pounds on the bar. But as you exercise consistently you get stronger, and as a result, you keep increasing the weights you're lifting. It's the same with faith. The more you exercise your faith, the stronger it becomes. So don't cry or complain when the tests and trials come your way. Instead, do what it says in Philippians 4:4. REJOICE ALWAYS! As long as you maintain that kind of attitude, no attack can succeed against you, believe me! God will always cause you to triumph, but you can't run away every time the devil takes a shot at you! No! Instead, shake your fist at him and stand your ground in faith. You'll glorify God when you do, and build yourself up on your most holy faith!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

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FEBRUARY 09 DAILY DEVOTIONAL 1 Peter 1:13 - GIRD UP THE LOINS OF YOUR MIND!

As long as you live on earth, you're in a spiritual battle. Whether you know you are or not - you are! You're a soldier in the army of the Lord, and we have the same enemy He has - the devil, the world system, and our dead-to-sin flesh. How do we keep the edge, and maintain the advantage in this fight? We do what today's verse tells us to do - we gird up the loins of our mind. What does that mean? It means we tighten things up in our thought life, and no longer allow our minds to wander away from the clear directions found in Philippians 4:8. That verse plainly tells us exactly what to think on and what not to think on! If you follow the directions in that one verse, you'll be doing exactly what Peter told his disciples to do - to gird up the loins of their mind. The words 'gird up' refer to what they would do in those days when they had to run fast. Because they didn't wear pants like we do today, they would have to gather up their cloaks, garments and clothing so they wouldn't trip and stumble by stepping on some piece of clothing hanging down around their feet as they ran. In other words, they got ready to run! It would be the equivalent to an athlete today putting on his uniform and track shoes before going out onto the track to run his race.

Bicycling is my hobby and free-time activity when my work load, travel schedule and ministry responsibilities permit. But you don't just hop on the bike and take off, at least if you're a serious cyclist like me. We're not talking here about straddling your \$29.95 Huffy that was bought down at Wal Mart, so you can tool around the neighborhood for 5 minutes and then go back inside the house. No, for folks like me, who routinely ride 40 miles or more when we do, there is a lot of prep work to take care of before you actually get on the bike to ride. In fact, it takes about 30 to 40 minutes just to get ready! There are specific shoes and socks to wear. Then you have specific jerseys, shorts and helmets to use and wear. Gloves for your hands. Water bottles to fill. Tires and brakes to inflate and check. Sun block to apply. Sunglasses to clean and adjust. All of this BEFORE you start your ride. It's like what God is telling us in our verse today. Before you can run your race of faith, you have to take the time and make the effort to 'gird up' your mind. You have to do what is necessary to renew your mind and keep the devil's thoughts out. Do this and you'll prevail every time in spiritual combat. Fail to do this and you'll be hard pressed to maintain victory and keep the devil out of your life. Is your mind girded up? Is mine? That's the question we must ask consistently, and if it isn't in yours, get busy and get your mind renewed - now! Future victories in spiritual battles depend upon it.



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 10 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

John 4:34 - ARE YOU EATING PROPERLY?

In these days and times in which we live, you hear two words over and over again when talking about physical health. DIET and EXERCISE. If you want to take care of yourself physically, and minimize your health risks, you need to be eating right, and exercising on a regular basis. Well, with our verse today, we see Jesus giving us God's recipe for proper diet. He told the disciples that his 'food' was to find and fulfill the will of God. In other words, that's where He drew all his nourishment for life and ministry. He found God's will, and made it His priority to keep it. That was his diet, or His FOOD so-to-speak. Is this your diet? Of course, doing the will of God also requires you to spend time feeding your spirit man with the Word of God, because we're told to nourish our spirits with the WORDS OF FAITH (1 Timothy 4:6). Jesus told the devil that man doesn't live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). So to have a proper diet, we find God's will, and meditate on His word day and night (Joshua 1:8).

It's important to note here that Jesus knew what His proper diet should be, but His disciples didn't. In verse 32, He plainly told them they didn't know what a proper spiritual diet should be. Too many Christians are in that same boat today. They love the Lord in a general sense, but aren't doing what they need to do to stay in tip-top shape spiritually for the work of the ministry. The poor diet and lack of exercise are the primary factors towards their spiritual 'obesity', and inability to be meet for the Master's use. Are you in that situation today? I hope not! But if you are, you can change things for the better. How? By making the decision to do those two key things - improve your spiritual diet, and level of spiritual exercise. Your diet must consist of an awareness of what God expects from you, in a general and specific sense. And, your exercise program must consist of a daily exercise regimen to develop your spiritual 'muscles'. Do those two things and God guarantees you success in this life for Him. Joshua 1:8 says so! Tomorrow we'll look more closely at the exercise program that goes hand-in-hand with our proper diet before the Lord.



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 11 DAILY DEVOTIONAL 1 Timothy 4:8 - THE HEAVENLY EXERCISE PROGRAM

In yesterday's daily devotional, we saw Jesus talking about a meat to eat that His disciples didn't know anything about. It was a spiritual diet they were unfamiliar with. But in today's world, we need a diet AND an exercise program that will keep us in tip-top shape for the work of ministry. We need them both. In today's verse passage, we see Paul talking about an exercise program most Christians are not familiar with. It's called the exercise program towards godliness! Remember the two key words for obtaining health and happiness spiritually. DIET and EXERCISE! Just like in the natural, those two words will make all the difference between health or sickness, and so it is in the spirit realm as well. Your spiritual diet is critical. What are you feeding your spirit man? And, are you exercising him in conjunction with a wise and proper diet - so that he becomes as strong as God intended?

Feeding your spirit with the Word of God is part of the exercise program prescribed by the Holy Spirit. Not only are you establishing a spiritually healthy diet by doing that, but at the same time, you're strengthening your spirit man in the same way one would get stronger by lifting weights down at the local gym or health club. Paul told Timothy to exercise himself towards godliness. How? For starters, by making God's Word first place in your life. Remember Mary and Martha from Luke 10:42? Jesus commended Mary because, according to Him, she had chosen THE GOOD PART. What is the good part? Spending time with Jesus, and with His Word. Martha was busy running around doing ministry work, but failed to see what was really important. Just like what Paul told Timothy - telling him that physical exercise will profit him only a little, but godliness will profit him much more, because it's beneficial now AND in the life to come. So make up your mind right now to start God's diet and exercise program. Exercise yourself towards godliness - by making a decision to be more like Jesus than ever before. And to do that, make the decision to find and fulfill His perfect will for your life, and simultaneously feed your spirit man daily with the Word of God! DIET and EXERCISE. Do those two things and everything else falls into place!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 12 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Mark 7:20 - WHAT'S COMING OUT OF YOU?

In today's devotional, Jesus talks about the importance of filling your heart with the good things of God. Why? Because our spirit man is like a computer. He can be programmed with information, and whatever he's programmed with, that's what you'll see and hear when he speaks or acts. In Matthew 12:34, Jesus made this statement: OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART, THE MOUTH SPEAKS. Think about that for a moment with me. Whenever you find yourself under spiritual attack of some sort, what do you find yourself saying and doing? Whatever it is, that's what you've got in abundance in your spirit. If it's the Word of God, then you'll be speaking and acting with words of faith in God. If you've spent more time filling your heart with the words and thoughts of the world, you're going to find yourself reacting with words or actions of anger, fear and insecurity for the future.

One of the problems with the Pharisees was that they were always so concerned with the outward man. They built their whole religious system on hypocrisy. They were only concerned with external appearance, but did very little about the issues of the heart. This is why Jesus called them hypocrites. He said that the external issues of life are far less important than the internal issues of the heart. That's why much of what we see in Christian denominations today is just a bunch of Pharisaical expression! People pointing their fingers at others to judge the way they're living, dressing, eating, living life or whatever. Jesus says that the truly important things deal with the heart. It's what you have down inside that will make you who you are on the outside. This was His message for all of us to remember. All sin originates on the inside of man, not on the outside. What we eat, how we live, what we wear, all of that is inconsequential in comparison to what we're talking about here. It's what we've put down on the inside - that's what really matters. Does it matter to you? What's on the inside in your life today? Faith or fear? Purity or impurity? Love or hatred? Forgiveness or unforgiveness? Patience or impatience? The list is long my friend. Make sure you're addressing the concerns of your heart, because they are much more important than anything else.



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

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FEBRUARY 13 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Isaiah 50:7 - SETTING YOUR FACE LIKE FLINT!

When it was time for Jesus to go to the cross, Isaiah said His face became like flint. What does that mean? It means He developed a steely determination that provided the strength needed to get the job done on our behalf. This is the same kind of determination you and I will have to have if we're to stand our ground in faith for the exceedingly great and precious promises found in the Word of God. Satan will contest us every step of the way, and nothing will be surrendered without a fight when it comes to the things of God. But praise God, we can overcome in faith if we develop the same kind of determination that Jesus exhibited. If you've ever been determined to see something accomplished in your life, you have an understanding of what we're talking about here. And whether you've been there or not, it's time to either get there – or get there once again!

In my own life, I'm more determined than ever to be pleasing to God. Paul told the Corinthians that whether he lived or died, his one goal in life was to be pleasing to Him (2 Corinthians 5:9). To do that, you're going to have to be a determined individual. And when you set goals for yourself, you're going to have to realize that the only way to achieving the success you want is to have a face set like flint towards the goal. Do you have that kind of face today? When it comes to excellence in Christ, do you have that kind of face? A face set like stone? Are you so determined to see victory that NOTHING can dissuade you, or stand in your way? That's the kind of determination Jesus had, and that's the kind you're going to need too. Are you tired of being just mediocre for God? Tired of constantly stumbling along with sin that so easily besets you? What are the areas in your life that have been chronic areas of failure before God? Its time to say ENOUGH! Draw that line in the sand, spiritually speaking, and finally set yourself to see victory in that area of your life in the Name of Jesus. Set your face like flint! Its time to let "divine determination" take over!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 14 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Luke 6:44 - WHAT KIND OF FRUIT ARE YOU BEARING?

One time the Lord told me something that I will never forget. He said, "The length of the line in Heaven someday, of the people you have helped or in some way brought closer to Me - will determine the value of your life while on earth." I'll never forget that statement! Neither should you! Think about it. If you were to stand judgment today before Jesus, to be judged for the value of your life on earth, how many people would be there to thank you for helping them find their salvation? The longer the line, the more value you had on earth as a child of God. The shorter the line, the less value you had, and if there would be no one in line, your life would basically be a waste of time as far as God was concerned!

In our devotional today, Jesus is telling all of us that we're known by the fruit we produce. In this passage, he talked about people bearing good fruit, and others bad fruit. The kind of fruit produced was up to the people, not God! So, how about you? What kind of fruit have you been producing for the Lord, if any? You understand of course that our Lord is not talking about actual fruit, like apples or oranges. He's referring to people. Bearing fruit, in Kingdom terminology, refers to the people we're leading to Jesus, for either salvation or for a closer walk in discipleship. So, getting back to what the Lord told me about one's value on earth, how long of a line would there be in heaven today if you died, and stood before Jesus to be judged? How many people would be there to commend your efforts to the Lord, saying to Him, "Lord, if it weren't for this person, I wouldn't be here today." The longer the line, the more value you have before God. Always remember this verse from Proverbs. A MAN IS VALUED BY WHAT OTHERS SAY OF HIM (Proverbs 27:21). God loves all men, we know that. He proved that by sending Jesus to die for all of us. But that verse in Proverbs isn't talking about God's love for us. It's talking about our VALUE to Him while on earth. And that value isn't determined by what God says about you, but rather, by what other people say about you! So, where's the fruit? The answer to that question will give you an idea of how long the line will be in heaven when you do, in fact, stand before the Lord for judgment.



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 15 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Luke 6:46 - IS JESUS THE LORD IN YOUR LIFE?

If Jesus is your Lord, how do you prove that to Him, and to yourself? The answer is simple. You do what He says! Just obey Him, and that proves He is really your Lord. So many Christians are Christians in name only, in the sense that although they have genuinely received Jesus as Savior, they haven't yet really yielded their lives to Him as Lord. In other words, they're on their way to Heaven, but aren't really sanctified to His perfect will here on earth. They still want to do their own thing, and just show up at church on Sunday morning! Are you like that? I hope not, for your sake! If Jesus is really and truly your Lord and not just your Savior, you should be doing all you can to find and fulfill His perfect will for your life. In other words, don't just give Jesus your lip service. If He's your LORD, then prove it by obeying His Word, and by fulfilling His plans and purposes for your life while on earth.

Too many believers just want a "convenient" Jesus. They go off and do whatever they want, whether it agrees with God's word or not. And as long as things are humming along, they don't give Jesus a second thought. But as soon as everything goes south on them, they come running to the Lord for help in times of need. I hope you're not like that, because most believers are, and that's a tragedy. It's a tragedy both for them, and for the world around them. How effective would anyone's army be if the soldiers in that army just did whatever they wanted, and basically ignored the orders of the commanding officer? Of course, they wouldn't stand a chance in battle against an organized and highly regimented enemy, would they? Well, that's pretty much what we see going on concerning the army of the Lord. He's the Commander-in-Chief, but very few of His foot soldiers are actually following orders! Most are off doing whatever they please, and will occasionally show up for the cause, giving once in a while in the offering, attending church once or twice monthly, and doing many other things in a haphazard and disinterested way concerning the things of God. May it not be so about you my friend! I think we Christians would do ourselves a favor by meditating on what the word "COMMAND" means! How many times do we find that word in the Bible, referring to the things God wants us to do? And yet, most of us don't give our insubordination a second thought! We ignore God's commands daily, and don't even care that we are doing it. Then, we wonder why God seems to be a million miles away when we find ourselves in trouble – trouble of our own making! Well, it's time to change that! If Jesus is our Lord, we should ACT LIKE IT, TALK LIKE IT, and show our loyalty and allegiance by what we DO, not just by what we SAY!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 16 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

1 Peter 4:8 - ABOVE ALL THINGS: LOVE!

Notice the phrase “above all things” in our verse today? You will find that phrase in several key places throughout the New Testament. They speak about God’s priorities - about what He wants us to pay special attention to in our daily walk with Him. And the first of these statements deals with the business of loving the brethren - fellow Christians like you! Above all else, God wants you to learn how to love other believers. Are you aware of this, and are you doing this? This is really where sanctification begins, right here, with this issue of loving the brethren. That’s exactly what Jesus told us, and in fact, commanded us to do in John 13:34-35. In those two great verses, He told His disciples to love one another, and by that love extended towards one another, all men would really know that they are true Disciples of Christ. Are you included in this or not?

Notice the word “fervent” is also included in today’s verse. That word means INTENSITY, which is an energetic and earnest attempt to do what we’re being told to do. We’re not to just casually try to love fellow believers. Instead, we’re told to love them with fervency, intensity, total abandonment and commitment. Do you practice loving other Christians like that? Most of us don’t, and that’s why the body of Christ on earth is such a fragmented, disjointed organism. Well, if you call yourself a Christian, it’s time to change your priorities if this isn’t at the top of your THINGS TO DO IN 2026 LIST. ABOVE ALL THINGS, have fervent love for fellow believers like you. You may not agree with other Christians on every point of doctrine and theology, but rise above all of that, and love them anyway! After all, God loves them as much as you, so why not start treating them that way? If you watch how we fight and fuss and quarrel with each other over so many things, you’d never know we’re all one in the body of Christ! It’s time to change that - and that means YOU! So, ABOVE ALL THINGS, have fervent love for one another - even if they don’t go to the same church we go to! Imagine that! God actually works with, and loves, and anoints people who don’t go to our church! Amazing! I’m being sarcastic of course, but that’s the sad state of affairs with so many believers. As far as many saints are concerned, it’s their church, their denomination and their Biblical interpretations that are right – and everyone else is wrong and needs to change! That kind of thinking is immature, divisive, and destructive. That’s NOT what Jesus told us to do when interacting with other believers. LOVE THEM, don’t criticize them! LOVE THEM, don’t persecute them! If at all possible, live PEACEABLY with all men – so that includes fellow believers (Romans 12:18)! ABOVE ALL THINGS, do this and you’re on the road to maturity, with blessings above and beyond your wildest expectations!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 17 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Ephesians 6:16 - ABOVE ALL THINGS: HAVE FAITH!

Currently, we're examining the things that God calls THINGS ABOVE ALL THINGS. Yesterday we looked at the business of loving the brethren, and today we see that from Ephesians 6, God is telling us that above all things, we're to put on and wear the shield of faith. So when it comes to things above all other things in the Bible, walking in love towards believers is number one, and having faith in God is number two. So let me ask you this question: how is your faith in God? Are you using the shield of faith like you're being told to here? Most believers are not using the shield of faith. They're just plodding along in life, hoping and wishing and wondering whether or not God is going to show up in their lives or not. For such people (and you if you happen to be one like that), I would suggest you read carefully the four gospels, and see how many times Jesus specifically told people that it was THEIR FAITH that had made them whole, or healed, or whatever! Their faith, not His! That's why faith is one of the things above all other things, because God is not going to violate your free will, my friend! He waits until you decide to believe Him and His word, and then He goes to work on your behalf.

Think about it. The Bible clearly says that God loves all men, that He is no respecter of persons, and that He wants all men saved. Jesus died for all men for all time. Every sin from every person was washed away by the blood of Jesus on the cross. Why then doesn't God just make all men get saved? And, why doesn't He just heal all of us who are sick and dying from disease? And, why doesn't He just dump boat-loads of cash on us so we can buy whatever we want whenever we want? And, why doesn't He just arrange everything so we get the greatest job in the world, or make us a rich and famous personality? The answer is too simple for many, but it's true nonetheless. FAITH opens heaven's doors to people, and becomes the bridge from heaven to earth. All of God's exceedingly precious promises (2 Peter 1:4) are contingent upon our decision to walk by faith and not by sight. Do you understand that? Why couldn't Jesus heal people in His own home town of Nazareth? Because of their unbelief! (Mark 6:5-6). He wanted to minister healing to them, but COULD NOT because of their lack of faith. Let that sink in for a moment. If the Son of God could not heal people due to their unbelief, who are we to think we can tap into God's power and provision without faith? It didn't say Jesus WOULD NOT heal, it said He COULD NOT! Some people think God just arbitrarily chooses who He will touch, and who He won't, but that's not it at all. He responds when YOU choose to believe His word. That's why faith is one of those THINGS ABOVE ALL THINGS. Therefore, I encourage you to take the steps necessary to shore up your own faith, and become strong in faith. Wear and use the shield of faith my friend, and no dart or arrow from the enemy will ever be able to hurt or harm you!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 18 DAILY DEVOTIONAL 3 John 2 - ABOVE ALL THINGS: BE PROSPEROUS

The third thing which the Bible calls a THING ABOVE ALL THINGS is found in today's verse. God wants us to prosper above all things, even as our soul prospers. Notice the verse differentiates between our spiritual soul and our physical prosperity. The way this verse is worded, it leaves no doubt that the "prosperity" under discussion is talking about physical prosperity in this world, and in this life. I've heard ignorant Christians try to make the argument that in this verse, the prosperity mentioned here is spiritual prosperity, not physical prosperity, as if God is against people being rich and financially independent. Nothing could be further from the truth. From this verse (and many others throughout the Bible), it is clear that God WANTS His children to prosper EVEN AS our soul prospers. He wants us to have prosperous souls prosperous, and then, He wants us to be financially set and independent of circumstances around us. Why does God want us to prosper, in our wallets as well as in our souls? Because of the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20). Jesus wants us to go into all the world and evangelize it. That costs large amounts of money in case you weren't aware! Evangelism costs money, and the more money you have, the more evangelizing you can do. It's that simple.

So as long as your motives are pure and scriptural, you never need to apologize for wanting to be prosperous. I know what I want my prosperity for - to have more to use to win more souls - period. Now along the way, Matthew 6:33 plainly says that God will take good care of us in terms of material goods and quality of life. But He wants us to have our priorities in this area firmly set on the business of winning souls - first. Nothing else matters to God, so nothing else should matter to us. So when you stand in faith for prosperity, and make your faith declarations and confessions, ask yourself why you're making such an effort to achieve financial prosperity. Is it just so you can buy more things pertaining to this life, or is it to be in a better and better position financially, to have more to give more towards the business of winning souls? As long as your motives are right, you have every right to expect God to move in your life, not only to provide you with seeds to sow into the Gospel, but to meet your needs and give you excess and surplus to enjoy life the way He intended. So ABOVE ALL THINGS, God wants you to prosper. Embrace that truth, and never again accept poverty and lack as if it's an acceptable lifestyle with God. It isn't!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 19 DAILY DEVOTIONAL 3 John 2 - ABOVE ALL THINGS: BE HEALTHY!

The fourth thing that God calls a THING ABOVE ALL OTHER THINGS is health. He wants us to be healthy physically while living on this earth. Notice He said HEALTH, not HEALING! Why do I make the differentiation? Because health is better than healing! Of course, thank God for the promise of healing should we ever get sick in some way, but it's better not to have to believe for healing at all! It's better to be walking and living in divine health. Why? Once again, it has to do with the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20). When Jesus commands His disciples to go into all the world and preach, it's understood that people need to be in health to do that. You can't go anywhere for God if you're sick and laid up in a bed somewhere. God needs His children to be healthy, so they can be used in the work of evangelism. That's why you should never listen to idiots disguised as Christians when they try to tell you that sickness is some form of punishment or instructional teaching from God - as if God needs to make you sick to teach you something?! Sick people can't obey God and maintain their post on the frontlines of world evangelism, therefore that fact alone should forever dispel any doubts you may have about whether or not God wants you well (if in fact you're sick and need healing).

Now this opens up a Pandora's Box of topics to discuss, doesn't it? If God wants you healthy, how does that affect your diet, your lifestyle, your spiritual priorities and your personal choices concerning free time? Concerning diet as an example, how many Christians are sick today simply because they've had a poor diet for years? Or, how many Christians are sick today simply because they've never exercised their body, and kept it in shape? Or, how many Christians are sick today simply because they've chosen to waste time day after day in front of their TV sets, when they could be out with family and friends, enjoying the day and communing with God? I'm sure you can answer these questions for yourself - you don't need my help! My friend, if God tells you that above all things He wants you healthy, then you owe God, and yourself, to do whatever it takes to get back to a place of health in your life. If you need healing, we'll start there of course. But once that healing comes, how are you planning to live for the rest of your life? If you want divine health, you must be disciplined spiritually (see 1 Peter 3:10) with your mouth, and physically, you must make wise choices with food, exercise and lifestyle. Eating bags of chips while guzzling gallons of Coke isn't making wise choices my friend! Eating triple Whoppers with an extra-large bag of fries with a large soft drink isn't making wise choices my friend! Exercising and lifting weights once a decade at your local gym isn't making wise choices either. No, you must make lifestyle changes if you expect God to honor His promise to protect you and keep you healthy. God's already made the promise, now it's up to you to do your part! BE HEALTHY! It's very important to Him, and to you!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 20 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

James 5:12 - ABOVE ALL THINGS: DISCIPLINE YOUR TONGUE!

The last of those things that God calls THINGS ABOVE ALL THINGS is found in today's verse. Above all else, God wants you to develop a disciplined tongue! That's what He means when He says that above all things, He wants our "yes" to be "yes", and our "no" to be "no". He wants us to be like Jesus, saying only what needs to be said (that agrees with God of course), and then having the personal discipline to shut up! And I dare say, this is a discipline very few Christians ever learn in life. They're always running off at the mouth - never thinking about what they're saying. They don't realize it is what they say that determines the quality of life they will have in the present, as well as in the future. Proverbs 18:21 says it all when it declares that death and life is in the power of the tongue. From birth to death, everything is under the power of spoken words! Think about that for a moment! When you do, it really makes you stop and consider the words coming out of your mouth. Actually, if you take a broad view of the Bible from front to back, you'll quickly see that it is a book of words about words. Example: how did God create everything in Genesis chapter 1? With words. He spoke, and everything He said came to pass. That's how it works, not only for Him but for us as well. That's why He says a disciplined tongue is something more important than other things. Your words frame your present, and determine your future.

James 1:19 tells us to do three things. Be swift to hear #1, slow to speak #2, and slow to anger #3. Most Christians practice this verse in reverse! They're slow to hear, quick to speak and easily angered. But if you want to see good days and live a fulfilled life (1 Peter 3:10), you must win the "Word Wars". A few years ago God had me produce a teaching series on this subject, which we've titled WORD WARS. If you don't have that CD set in your spiritual library, you need to order it today and get it! It's one of the best teachings I've ever been given by God, and I myself go back and listen to it over and over, so that I keep myself sharp in this all-important area of lifestyle and personal discipline. If you want to know why bad things happen to good people, much of it can be traced back to this issue right here. For years, people speak death, doubt, unbelief, gossip, rumor-spreading, backbiting, negative conversation, and then wonder why they're sick, broke, under stress and pressure, carnal and unable to walk with anointing and favor from God! Well, here's the reason why! If you could record your conversation for just one day, and then play the recording back to compare what you've said with what God says in the Bible, you'd see right quick how far your conversation is apart from God and His word! I speak from experience, so I know what I'm talking about. So, above all things, learn to watch what you say, and discipline your tongue. If what you're about to say doesn't agree with God's word, or doesn't give God anything to work with, don't say it! Learn the value of silence!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 21 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Luke 18:22 - YOUR TREASURE IN HEAVEN

How much treasure do you have saved up in Heaven right now? Do you know? And if you don't know, why don't you know? Many Christians have no clue as to how much treasure they've got accumulated in Heaven, if any. Why? Because they don't know how to make deposits! But in our verse today, Jesus talks about the importance of having treasure in Heaven, not on earth. Of course, there's nothing wrong with having some savings here on earth. God clearly promises prosperity to His children, but for what reason? So that we can all just sit around comparing the sizes of our house, car and clothes closets? No! A thousand times, no! It's alright to save for retirement, or for our children's educational expenses, and things like that. But in the grand scheme of things, our ultimate goal should be to keep accumulating treasure in Heaven, where it really matters.

Look at how meticulously and diligently people monitor their "investment portfolio" here on earth. They read their bank statements, pour over the stock quotes for the day, examine and study the performances for all their mutual funds, and much more. But do Christians do similar things with their Heavenly "investment portfolio"? In most cases, they don't. But that's where we should be focusing our attention, on our accounts in Heaven. And how do we do that? By getting involved each day with the business of reaching out to others in the Name of Jesus. As far as God is concerned, every time you do something kind for someone else, or do something that helps that person draw closer to Jesus, you're making deposits in Heaven. And the good news is that whatever you accumulate in Heaven will be yours forever. There aren't any "stock market corrections" in heaven my friend! No slides, downturns, or any of the other problems we see with earthly investment structures. Have you ever read over the literature when companies are trying to get you to invest with them? After giving you the profit margin and lifetime "performance" of some particular fund, they go into this long disclaimer about how past performance in no way guarantees future returns. In other words, they're covering their backside, absolving themselves of any responsibility should you lose all you invest. But in heaven, whatever you deposit is yours forever. It's protected and insured, not by some bank but by God Himself. And the more kind deeds you dole out to others, the more your investment portfolio increases in heaven. So, take heart my friend! You may not have all that much saved up down here, but in heaven you can have it all if you only make the decision to get involved in outreach and evangelism in this life. The results ARE guaranteed - God said so!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 22 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Hebrews 13:5,6 - DON'T EVER BE AFRAID!

One of the primary signs to indicate our Lord's soon return is FEAR. In fact, in Luke 21:25-26, Jesus said that just before His second coming, men's hearts would be failing them for FEAR of what they see coming on the earth. In other words, fear of the future will be one of the leading indicators that our Lord is coming very soon. Well, what should the Christian do about that? Above all others, we Christians should be examples of fearlessness in the face of uncertainty about the future. Why? Because, as we see in today's passage, the Lord is with us always. We're never alone! Ever! Under any circumstances, He is with us and He is faithful to His word! Oh, praise God for that my friend! No matter how things may look, or how you may feel, you are NEVER alone, and the God of the universe is with you. Not only is He with you, but He's also IN you! How "close" is that? So, never let fear have a place in you. The minute you realize that fear is trying to get a hold of you, stop right there, rebuke it and renew your mind to verses like the ones we're highlighting today. God will NEVER leave you or forsake you. Therefore, you should NEVER be afraid!

Don't be like so many in the body of Christ, who act, think and talk like those who don't know Jesus. In these perilous times in which we live, people need to know there's a hope to grab hold of. They need to be reassured, inspired and encouraged to keep going with their lives. They need to know that there is a CERTAIN FUTURE, and it's all good because it's all about Jesus. For a time, those you talk to in this way may laugh at you and make fun of you, but when they're losing their money, their jobs, their way of life and all the other things they trust in, then they'll be willing to listen to what you've got to say. Why? Because they'll see in your life a measure of stability and surety they don't have anymore. And when they ask you about it, you can tell them it's because you're never alone. Jesus Christ is always right there with you to guide, protect, provide and help you in any and every way possible. That's when "witnessing" becomes fun as well as effective! So if you've allowed fear of the future to enter into your heart and gain a foothold, rebuke it today, and re-establish your heart according to God's promises. RELAX! Nothing catches God by surprise, and nothing is too big, too bad or too complicated that He can't handle it on your behalf. For Christians, the future is bright and promising in every way. Rejoice in that, and let that be the first line of defense when the cares of this world try to steal away your joy, your peace and your sense of security!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 23 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Mark 14:29-30 - THANK GOD FOR HIS MERCY!

Just before Jesus was led away to be murdered via crucifixion, He ate what we commonly call "The Last Supper". During the course of this meal, many notable things were discussed and revealed by our Lord. In our verse today, we see one such revelation - Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed twice that same night. When Peter heard this, he vehemently denied such a thing would take place, but of course we know it did only a few hours later. How many times have we done the same thing with the Lord? How many times have YOU done this? In vs. 29, we see Peter proclaiming, almost boasting, that no matter what, he would never leave the Lord. How often have we made similar statements? "Yeah Lord, even if everybody else disappoints you, I'll never do it! You can count on me!" And then it isn't even a day later when we end up being the one who is disappointing to the Lord. I've been there, more than once, and I hate it! How about you?

This then, brings us to the title for today's devotional. In spite of all the times we've been like Peter, shooting our mouths off and then failing God miserably, He still loves us. Because of that great love, He is willing to work with us in spite of our inconsistencies, sins and failures, and extends His mercy on a daily basis. I've said this to you before, and I'll never stop saying it. This one aspect of God's character is so awesome and overwhelming to me, I can hardly grasp it or understand it. I mean, look at Peter. He's sitting right next to Jesus, bragging about how faithful he will always be to the Lord, even going so far as to compare his level of commitment to those around him at that same table. And Jesus, looking right at him in reply, says that it won't be but just a few hours until he has denied Him three times! If it were you that Peter was speaking to, who then went off and let you down like he did to the Lord, how would you respond? It's just incredible to me that Jesus deals with us like this, with mercy and love, instead of indignation, impatience and outright anger. THANK GOD FOR HIS MERCY! Even if you've been just like Peter, who have made promises to God and then failed time and time again, don't be discouraged! Be ENCOURAGED! God is still God, and He still wants to see you succeed! What a great God we serve!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 24 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Mark 6:5 - UNBELIEF ALWAYS STOPS THE POWER OF GOD

I want you to read this story carefully, and take a good look at why Jesus was unable to do mighty miracles in His own home town. It says He COULD NOT do any mighty work there. It did not say He WOULD NOT do any mighty work there. My friend, there is a world of difference between "would not" and "could not". Many Christians believe God helps certain ones, and leaves the rest to fend for themselves. They pray prayers like this: "O Lord, heal me if it is Your will..." Then if they don't get their healing, or don't get their prayer answered, they think it wasn't God's will for them. This is like saying the Lord had the ability to heal – but decided He would not heal anyone in His own home town of Nazareth. But it didn't say that, did it? No, it says that He COULD NOT impart His miracle-working power BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF. Their unbelief and lack of faith prevented Jesus from helping them, and it's the very same today. Nothing has changed in how God works with us my friend, and we would be well to remember that.

God's will for all sick people is for them to be healed - period. His will for all our prayers, whenever they're in line with His word and will, is that they're answered speedily. It's NEVER a question of whether He can, or whether He wants to. He's both willing AND able, no matter what it is we're facing in life. Romans 4:17-21 proves this beyond doubt. Abraham was FULLY PERSUADED in two things. 1) God's ability. 2) God's willingness. Never let the devil (or those who do his bidding) convince you of anything less. Jesus wanted to heal ALL the sick in Nazareth, but their unbelief blocked God's power and He was unable to take care of their needs. Unbelief today does exactly the same thing. Now if Jesus Himself could do no mighty work in His own home town, who are we to think we can get Him to do something for us if our hearts are filled with doubt, unbelief and fear? Yet, that's exactly how many Christians approach God in prayer. Is it any wonder their prayers are seldom answered? If you want to receive from God, whether it is healing, financial independence, a better job or whatever, you must be like Abraham. You must be fully persuaded in God's ability, and His willingness to use His power on your behalf. Once you settle those two things in your mind, you're well on your way towards victory. At that point, all you have to do is ask, and be patient with praise and worship until the manifestation comes! Bingo!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 25 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Mark 6:4 - THE ISSUE OF HONOR AND APPRECIATION

For years in my life and ministry, the opinions of others meant a great deal to me. Although I never openly acknowledged it, I craved the accolades and recognition of those whom I thought were important, whomever they were! But as time has gone by, that need has become much less of an issue with me. And that's a good thing because in today's verse, Jesus plainly tells us that if you want to serve God, be prepared to be rejected by men at every turn, especially among your own family members. Now if your family rejoices with you for your commitment to excellence in Christ, happy are you! But for many, it's not that way at all. Many Christians face a daily bombardment of hate from family, co-workers, classmates and others who persecute them mercilessly. Take heart if I'm talking about you, and if I'm not, pray for those I am addressing today. Persecution comes to all us (2 Timothy 3:12), and you can't avoid it. In fact, Peter says that if we suffer persecution with the right attitude, it's pleasing and acceptable to God (see 1 and 2 Peter)! But regardless, you need to arm yourself with the right mindset concerning these things.

For you and me, it should be enough to know God understands, sees everything, and will openly reward us someday in heaven. The honor, recognition and respect only matters when it comes from God anyway, so why should it matter to us if we don't get it from people down here in this life? If we prove ourselves faithful and upright to God, the honor will come, don't worry about it! Jesus Himself was without honor from His family, local friends and town folk. They didn't appreciate Him at all, and basically, rejected His claims to be their Messiah. When He came to Nazareth in today's verse and story, they openly questioned His doctrine, wondering where He had gotten all that info and insight. In short, they didn't receive Him, and didn't believe He was "qualified" to minister to them. They wondered where He had gone to school, being just a simple carpenter's son as they supposed Him to be. But listen my friend, God is ready and willing to openly reward you, and not just privately, but openly in front of all in heaven someday. So do what you do as unto the Lord, and never mind what anyone says about it! If they criticize you, let them alone and just pray for them. They criticized Jesus, so if they criticize you, you're in good company! In fact, Jesus said that a servant should be just like His master. So if they persecuted Him, expect them to persecute you too. Sometimes people do get a measure of honor and respect while living here on earth, but many times they don't. Whether they do or don't, keep your eyes on the Lord, and be at peace with the fact that He sees everything, and will reward you openly someday in heaven, where it really counts!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 26 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Romans 12:17-19 - THE DOUBLE STANDARD OF JUDGING

Too many times we grieve the Lord and commit sin by judging the actions of others around us. The Bible says we shouldn't do that, yet Christians do it all the time. The problem is that when we choose to judge others, it becomes one of the most blatant forms of spiritual hypocrisy! Have you ever seen evil done by others, and prayed that God would pass judgment on them? And then we ask God incredulously: "Why do You let this evil go on Lord?" This kind of thinking leads to two of the most common double standards. 1) Judging others more harshly than we judge ourselves, and 2) believing God should judge others but remain lenient with us! Either one of these double standards will put you in hot water with God! Why? Because only the Lord is qualified to judge people. Why? Because only the Lord can see into a person's heart, where the real motive for their decisions are to be found. No my friend, the Bible tells us to judge THINGS – like false doctrine and sinful lifestyles as examples. But leave the judgment of people to the Lord - that was Paul's message to the Romans. He told them not to worry about gaining a measure of revenge upon people who did them wrong. God sees everything and will accurately, impartially and righteously judge every man someday in heaven. Whew! That's a relief! It's nice to know I don't have to do that, because I (and you) would make a pretty lousy judge when it comes to matters of the heart.

And when you're being tempted to sin through the passing of judgment upon others, remember how merciful God has been (and is) with you and your sins. If we really want God to pass judgment on others for the evils they do, then we should, in the interest of complete fairness, ask God to judge us for the crimes and sins we've committed too. Well, of course, we don't want that, do we? Oh no! We want mercy for us, but judgment for everybody else! That's hypocrisy, and its sin! If you understand this from God's perspective, you'll never again have a problem forgiving people for the evils they do, or for the wrongs they perpetrate against you personally. I've found out through the years, as I've counseled people who are having a hard time forgiving others, that their main struggle is usually with the thought that if they forgive so-and-so of the wrongs they've done, that somehow they're "getting away with it". They think that unless they demand some form of punishment, and there is some measure of suffering experienced, that these individuals are getting off "Scott free" as we say. My friend, nothing could be farther from the truth. No! Instead of judging others, or seeking to exact revenge upon people who have hurt you, forgive them and ask God to be merciful on them in the same way He is with you! And once you've done that, move on and walk in love! By doing that, you avoid one of the most common sins and forms of spiritual hypocrisy that is out there. And, you keep your heart right and pleasing to the Lord to boot!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 27 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

John 6:29 - DOING THE WORKS OF GOD

One day the people had a question for Jesus. They asked: "Teacher, how must we work the works of God?" The answer was not what they were expecting I'm sure. They were thinking about doing impressive miracles, the kind of miracles they saw Jesus doing. But our Lord's answer shows us God's perspective, and lets us have a look at what He considers to be the "works" of God. The foundational work of God on earth is FAITH, believing the Word of God about everything it says concerning Jesus Christ, the son of God. That is what Jesus was saying to those people that day, and to us today. If you want to do "the works of God", you must realize it all starts here, with FAITH. Well, aren't miracles, signs and wonders and healings the works of God? Yes, of course they are, but understand that unless you perfect and develop your faith in Christ, you'll never see any of those things. Not for you, and not through you to others. My friend, our primary task on this earth is to get to a place of unwavering faith in Jesus, and then stay there day after day for the rest of our lives. Are you there yet? Are you doing the "works" of God?

You see, most people are always looking for something external to view, to see and to relate to. But concerning the things of God, it's always the opposite. God looks on the heart, and everything that concerns Him is always dealing with things you and I can't see, like intent, motive, purpose, passion, and faith. The things that emanate from the heart. If you want to become strong to do the works that Jesus did, you can! In John 14:12-14, Jesus plainly said that the works He did we could do also, so the miracles He did are clearly within our reach. However, everything starts with your choice to believe God, believe His Word, and live your entire life with the inner conviction that God's Word is final authority in your life. If you truly believe that Jesus is Lord, over your life as well as being the Lord over all creation, then be sure you're living your life in a way that demonstrates that daily. The works of God start with Jesus, and end with Jesus. His incarnation, immaculate life, substitutionary death on the cross, and all the rest is the ultimate work of God, so embrace that and you're doing the works of God! The miracles will follow!



FEBRUARY DAILY DEVOTIONALS

BY MIKE KEYES, SR

FEBRUARY 28 DAILY DEVOTIONAL 2 Chronicles 20:12 - WHERE ARE YOUR EYES TODAY?

This story in the Old Testament is one of my all-time favorites. I love it, and keep coming back to it time and again in my life and ministry. There are so many things in this story to study and learn about, and one such illustration is found in vs. 12. When the King and his people were standing before the Lord in prayer, reaching out to ask help from the Lord, they made a statement that thrills me every time I read it. In essence, they told the Lord: "We realize we can't stand against this invading army alone. We're no match for them, and if we try to fight against them, we will surely perish. But, we recognize You as our God, our Lord, and our protector, so we turn to you for help, strength, guidance and protection. OUR EYES ARE ON YOU!" Oh Christian! What a statement! "Our EYES are on You!" In other words, we are looking to You Lord. We totally place ourselves at your mercy, at your feet, and in subjection to your counsel. Whatever you say to do, we will do. Whatever you say to say, we will say. That, my friend, is the attitude that God looks for, and the one He ALWAYS responds to.

Where are your eyes today? I know in my own life and ministry, I NEED to have my eyes on the Lord today! Our ministry faces severe tests of faith, and strong challenges stand in our way, but praise God, as long as I keep my eyes on God and His Word, everything will turn out fine for us! Why? Because there is no situation too hard for God, no sickness too terrible He can't remove, no amount of money too large He can't supply. However, it takes a realization that on our own, we're no match for these things that come against us in life. Alone, we're vulnerable and basically unable to successfully repel these attacks. That's basically what King Jehoshaphat said with all of the Jews to God. They acknowledged the fact that without help from God, they were doomed. And it is in that very realization that we find the source of victory, which is our utter dependence upon God! So let me encourage you today, make sure your eyes are always on the Lord, not on the problems facing you! Keep your focus on Him, His Word, and those exceedingly great and precious promises He gives to all of us. Remember the question He asks all of us in Jeremiah 32:27, is there anything too hard for God? Keep your eyes on Him, and nowhere else!

