

# The Daily Press

Abby VanSolkema

December 8                      Read 2 Corinthians 1

Paul was not ashamed or discouraged by his sufferings, but rather he gloried in them. How could this be? He recognized that the various types of trials that we experience in this life are valuable lessons from God which serve to strengthen our faith. When we experience discomfort in this life because of the loss of earthly goods, opportunities, health, or relationships, we learn that the only source of true comfort is our heavenly Father. Seeking comfort in anything other than him can only provide temporary relief and distraction.

Paul also recognized that the sorrow we experience on this earth can benefit our fellow Christians. By the grace of God, the testimony of our conduct in the face of severe trials can serve as an example for others. In addition, the trials that we go through enable us better to understand the suffering of others and cultivate our ability to offer consolation to others who are enduring their own trials. Because of our own suffering, we are further equipped humbly to use the gospel message in order to lead others to the only source of genuine, lasting comfort.e, lasting comfort.

Sing or pray Psalter #255.

December 9                      Read 2 Corinthians 2

Paul had previously written a letter to the Corinthian churches instructing them on how they were to deal with one of their members who had fallen into sin (1 Cor. 5). It brought great sorrow to Paul to write this, but he recognized that the discipline of this erring member was necessary. The church leaders had obeyed his instructions and appropriately disciplined the member, and he had repented. There was a time for discipline, but now was a time for forgiveness. Yet the church was having difficulty moving past the discipline stage to the goal of forgiveness and reconciliation.

How often are we also reluctant to offer love and forgiveness to our fellow believers who have repented of a sin? As Paul points out in verse 11, we must not be ignorant of Satan's devices. When he fails to get a child of God to continue in a particular sin, Satan continues the attack from a different angle by keeping other believers from truly forgiving their brother or sister in Christ. Forgiving but not forgetting, holding grudges, and being overly suspicious of others are all things that serve to undermine our fellowship in the church and destroy relationships between fellow believers. Do you genuinely forgive others "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32)?" (Eph. 4:32)?

Sing or pray Psalter #257.

December 10

Read 2 Corinthians 3

As a minister in the New Testament, Paul gloried in the superiority of the new covenant, which was founded on the blood of Jesus Christ rather than simply the blood of sacrifices. As New Testament believers, we also glory in the fact that we are justified by faith in Christ and are under the control of the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts, rather than the rules of the Mosaic law. The gospel has set us free from bondage to sin and the law. Many of the Jews were still stuck in the old covenant. They wrongly emphasized outward conformity over inward character. But it is more important to be a Christian than simply to look like one.

Bondage to the law produces external adherence to rules and regulations, but the freedom of the gospel produces internal, spiritual transformation. As we behold the glory of the Lord, and his Spirit works powerfully in our hearts, we are slowly conformed to the image of God. This ongoing sanctification gradually produces fruit in our lives, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, and self-control.

Sing or pray Psalter #260.

December 11

Read 2 Corinthians 4

All followers of Christ can expect to experience suffering in this life, and ministers of the gospel are no exception. Like Paul, they may face internal battles against emotional weakness or false motivation. And they must constantly fight against the attacks of Satan, who hates true gospel ministers and seeks to hinder their work in all different ways. But despite all the difficulties that Paul encountered in his ministry, he was thankful that he had been called to be a minister of the gospel and rejoiced in what God had done through his life.

Young men, I ask you seriously to consider whether God is calling you to be a minister of the gospel. The church is in desperate need of faithful ministers to be lights in the spiritual darkness of this world, to shine the knowledge of God into the hearts of the people. Are you worried that you will not be able to handle the work? Although even the greatest of men are only weak vessels, God uses these vessels to show his infinite power. There will be struggles, but there will also be victory. The light, momentary affliction of earthly ministry "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (v. 17).

Sing or pray Psalter #262.

December 12

Read 2 Corinthians 5

Every day we are confronted with the fact that our earthly bodies are weak and feeble, and this becomes increasingly clearer as we get older. These bodies are only temporary dwellings, susceptible to disease and aging. Paul was very aware of the weaknesses of his earthly body. He ached in anticipation of the deliverance of death, just as the whole creation groans for deliverance from the effects of sin (Rom. 8:19–23).

When the failings of our earthly bodies leave us discouraged, we can find assurance in the promise of a new body, just as Paul did. The temporary hope that modern medical advances or the latest anti-aging procedure give us fades quickly. But the new, heavenly body that God's people are promised is "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4). This hope keeps us from seeing death as something to be feared. Instead, we recognize that it is a means of deliverance from the pain of this sinful world to perfect, eternal glory.

Sing or pray Psalter #265.

December 13            Read 2 Corinthians 6

Although Paul is speaking specifically about ministers of the gospel in the first half of 2 Corinthians 6, this section of verses also paints a striking picture of what a genuine Christian life looks like. It is a paradox, a series of beautiful contradictions that reflects both the brokenness of this fallen world and the joy and hope of the gospel. There is persecution and affliction to be faced from every side, but the Holy Spirit gives us provision to endure these attacks and promises that we will ultimately triumph.

Our earthly bodies and emotions also exhibit these contradictions. As our bodies age, we are actively dying, yet we live. We are chastened by the suffering that we endure, but it does not kill us. We are sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. In the face of sickness, trials, and the death of ourselves or a loved one, we experience pain and grief because we are only human. But yet we still rejoice because we have the hope of everlasting life and a joy that cannot be extinguished!

Sing or pray Psalter #268.

December 14            Read 2 Corinthians 7

In verse 6 of this chapter we read that Paul was greatly comforted by the coming of Titus, a dear friend and fellow laborer in the gospel. He speaks in some of his other letters as well, such as 1 Corinthians and 2 Timothy, about being reassured by the presence of certain people at difficult times in his ministry. Although all true comfort for Christians has its source in God, he does often use human means to bring consolation to his people. to his people.

Can you think of a time in your life when the presence of Christian friends brought you joy and relief even though you were going through a difficult trial? In our increasingly individualistic culture, it can be tempting to isolate yourself when you are having a hard time. However, God has placed believers on this earth not to exist in isolation, but in community within the church. Of course, these relationships will be troubled at times because of the effects of sin, but we must not overlook the great blessing of Christian community. Follow the example of Paul and seek comfort in good friends who will bring you the consolation of the gospel.

Sing or pray Psalter #271.

December 15

Read 2 Corinthians 8

These next two chapters of 2 Corinthians comprise a section of the letter where Paul is encouraging the Corinthian church to contribute to a relief fund for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. Today, I would like to focus on the differences between biblical giving and the worldly practice of philanthropy. There are many generous ungodly people in the world that will give millions of dollars to charity over their lifetimes. But even though giving all this money away may give them a good feeling or other benefits, they will never experience the true contentment that comes from giving with the correct motivation of bringing glory to God.

Philanthropy is simply the practice of people giving to other people, while biblical giving is the practice of people showing the love of God to other people by giving. Worldly giving is all about bringing glory to yourself and receiving the recognition of others, while biblical giving is about bringing honor to God without expectation of getting anything in return. Is your giving marked by the pride of worldly philanthropy or the humility of biblical giving?

Sing or pray Psalter #275.

December 16

Read 2 Corinthians 9

As we continue with the theme of Christian giving, ask yourself this question: Are you hesitant to give openhandedly to the causes of the church because you think you will not have enough left over for what you “need”? This reservation is a symptom of a lack of faith in God’s ability to care for your needs. Philippians 4:19 reminds us that “God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Christians must be careful not to let a desire for financial security result in anxiety about giving and about money in general. If we give generously and cheerfully, God will bless us by graciously working contentment in our hearts and helping us to find satisfaction in spiritual treasures instead of earthly treasures.

Nothing that we have accumulated in our time on this earth really belongs to us. We are simply stewarding money and possessions that actually belong to God. How much of it will you keep for yourself? How much will you give to others? Think about how seeing yourself as an instrument of God to supply the needs of others could change your perspective on giving.

Sing or pray Psalter #283.

December 17

Read 2 Corinthians 10

As Paul goes about proving his apostolic authority against the claims of the Judaizers, he makes clear that he is carrying out his apostolic office according to God’s specifications, not other people’s desires. He rejects foolish human comparison and criticism as he defends his activities, characteristics, and authority. Paul is confident that the Lord approves of his ministry.

Are you unsure of what God's will is for your life? Follow Paul's example and do not let comparison to what others have accomplished or a desire to earn the commendations of men determine your path. Instead, focus on living your life in accordance with scripture, and the path you should follow will be made clear. In light of eternity, the esteem of other people does not really matter. But what God thinks about you is of eternal importance. "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (v. 18).

Sing or pray Psalter #286.

December 18            Read 2 Corinthians 11

What characteristics do you desire in a pastor? Good public speaking skills? A pleasing appearance? A pleasant personality? Would you have wanted the apostle Paul to be your pastor? He did not wear nice clothing, and he likely had some type of physical or speech impediment. While it is not wrong for a pastor to have agreeable characteristics, we must be careful to look below the surface to what is truly important when seeking a pastor. The fact is, a lot of false teachers have excellent public speaking skills, good looks, and a winning personality. The Corinthian church had been fooled by the outward appearance of the Judaizers.

One important characteristic that we should look for in a pastor is his ability to preach the truth of the word of God. His preaching should contain a major focus on fundamental truths such as those found in the Heidelberg Catechism. Another characteristic of a good pastor is one who is faithful to rebuke, reprove, and exhort with patience and true doctrine those who oppose the truth (2 Tim. 4:2).

Sing or pray Psalter #289.

December 19            Read 2 Corinthians 12

Satan is often given permission by God to afflict the saints at certain times. Therefore, even when we face lingering physical or spiritual trials as 'messengers of Satan' (v. 7) such as Paul did, we still must be aware that these ailments ultimately come from God and are consequently for our good. Although we may certainly pray for the Lord to take away our problems, we must also pray for his will to be done. And it is not always his will to take our afflictions away. But even when our minds and bodies are weak, by God's grace his strength will sustain us.

Paul ultimately came to be at peace with his affliction. He did not just endure it, but even gloried and took pleasure in it. Are you struggling with a lingering physical or spiritual trial? Ask God to work this same peace in your heart so that you are able to praise and thank him not just in times of strength but also in times of weakness.

Sing or pray Psalter #291.

December 20            Read 2 Corinthians 13

From an earthly perspective, Paul had a very weak and humble ministry. Similarly, Jesus lived a meek and unassuming life on this earth and went to the cross with humble obedience. As Christians, we are called to follow the example of these “weak” men. We are not called to seek after a glorious existence in this life, but rather to live humbly in gentleness and meekness and to bear persecution and trials. What are some situations in your life when you are called to be weak?

But then again, there are also times when Christians are commanded to be strong. Although Jesus died in weakness, he was raised in power and now reigns over all things at the right hand of God in heaven. Paul was strong in his admonitions of the people and did not hesitate to use his apostolic authority when necessary for the good of the church. We are also called to be strong in the Lord when fighting against the power of sin and the devil in ourselves and in the church. What are some situations in your life when you should be strong in the Lord?

Sing or pray Psalter #293.

December 21            Read Romans 1

Paul proclaims boldly to the believers in the church at Rome that he is not ashamed to preach the gospel of Christ (v. 16). This gospel, which he summarized in the previous verses, is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that hears and believes it. When God works in the hearts of his people and declares the gospel to them by means of his written word and his messengers, then they believe, are justified by faith, and have peace with God.

Are you sometimes scared to share the gospel with others? It is helpful to remember that we are not simply offering the gospel to people and hoping they will accept it. Also, the spread of the gospel does not depend on our eloquence or theological knowledge. We are merely instruments of God to proclaim the living, transforming power of the gospel. Do not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ! Pray that God will use you as a chosen vessel in the service of the gospel despite your sins and weaknesses.

Sing or pray Psalter #298.

December 22            Read Romans 2

As human beings, we love to be appreciated and feel the approval of others. Social media feeds this desire by giving us a way almost instantly to receive affirmation from others based on what we post. But when our actions and posts show that we love the approval of man more than we love the approval of God, that is a sign of sin. Romans 2 reminds us that the judgment of men according to their arbitrary standards does not matter in the end, but the judgment of God according to the truth is of eternal importance. We cannot escape this judgment.

God’s love and approval of us is so much more important and fulfilling than any approval that we get from our social media followers. Gaining approval and fame on this earth pales in

comparison to wearing a crown of righteousness for all eternity. The notifications of likes or comments that pop up on our phones are like candy: they bring us pleasure in the moment but ultimately leave us unsatisfied and longing for more. But when we strive to lead a life that glorifies and honors God, we will be fed and filled eternally.

Sing or pray Psalter #301.

December 23            Read Romans 3

God fully accomplished our salvation without any help from us. He sent his Son to save ungodly, proud sinners in order to uphold his own glory. Because of this work, we are declared righteous in Christ. But we certainly cannot boast that we had anything to do with it. We are justified apart from our works, not because of them. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8).

Boasting is an outward expression of pride, the greatest problem of man. Pride can take many forms, but it is essentially the glorification of ourselves as greater than God. It is self-worship instead of worshipping the one, true God. But those who have genuine faith will not boast of themselves. 1 Corinthians 4:7 reminds us, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”

Sing or pray The Song of Zacharias.

December 24            Read Romans 4

Abraham is one of the great heroes of faith described in Hebrews 11. His amazing faith during all the events of his life, such as packing up his entire household and leaving for an unknown country, childlessness for many years, and being commanded to sacrifice the son that he had finally received, seems impossible. How could he have such faith? Well, Abraham believed in the God of impossible things, a God who brings the dead back to life and created everything out of nothing, a God who saves his people who are hopelessly dead in sin and makes them alive again in Christ.

Do you believe in the living God? Do you have confidence that he will carry out all his promises? The things that Christians believe do not make sense to the rest of the world, and sometimes they don't even make sense to us. How could a child be born of a virgin? How could God come to earth as a man? But the word of God testifies to us that the God who was faithful to his people in the past will be faithful in the future as well. So, by the faith that God has implanted in our hearts, we have hope. We believe in the impossible.

Sing or pray The Song of Mary.

December 25            Read Romans 5

It is easy to think that we are strong. It is easy to think that we can survive whatever difficulties are sent our way by taking refuge in the promises that this world has to offer. But when we are given a life-shattering trial all of our false self-confidence is stripped away, and we realize that we are unable to endure suffering in our own strength. We are made aware of our own weakness.

When God's people experience difficult trials that they never thought they would be able to endure, they also experience his provision of the strength that he has promised and that they so desperately need. God uses these trials to produce endurance and character in us by his power. And this gives us great hope (vv. 3–4).

We rest in God. We rest in his constant presence. We rest in his promises, especially the promise that he would send his only begotten Son to conquer death and save his people from their sins. As we commemorate the birth of Christ today, we are reminded of God's great love for his people and the certainty of God's promises. This is the hope that will carry us through any trials that we face.

Sing or pray The Song of Simeon.

December 26            Read Romans 6

If salvation is all of grace and justification is by faith alone, can a child of God continue in his sin unrepentantly and still call himself a believer? Paul gives us the answer here: "God forbid" (v. 2)! No truly regenerated child of God would genuinely ask this question. Because of our union with Christ, we have been freed from the prison of only being able to sin. But we are not set free in order to live for ourselves. Living for ourselves would just put us right back in slavery to sin. We have been set free to live for Christ. Are you living like one who has been set free from sin to be able to serve God?

Although we will never be able fully to shed our old, sinful human nature on this side of the grave, it no longer has the power to dominate our thoughts and actions. Instead, there is a war going on in our hearts between the old and the new man. Are you actively fighting this war by putting on the whole armor of God? Even though the struggle is difficult, we can go into battle against Satan with confidence by remembering that we already know who is going to win this war.

Sing or pray Psalter #302.

December 27            Read Romans 7

Our natural inclination is to love this life and its myriad temptations. The pleasure of accumulating earthly luxuries can be intoxicating. The excitement of accomplishing our goals and receiving the praise of men is powerful. The mind-numbing effects of worldly entertainment are addicting. But for the grace of God we would not even be aware that there is something infinitely better.

But when we think about heavenly life, we begin to see just how empty and misery-filled our life on this earth really is. We say along with Paul, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (v. 24). It is necessary for us to serve God in our lives on this earth, but we must do so in a way that shows what we are really looking forward to is our heavenly home. Do you live your life in a way that shows that your ultimate desire is to be in heaven, not to reach peak living on this earth? When we contemplate eternal glory, we do not dread death, but rather long for it.

Sing or pray Psalter #304.

December 28            Read Romans 8

Over and over scripture draws our attention away from the things that we see on this earth to the things that we cannot see. We are instructed to find our hope in the unseen things of God (v. 24). This is what true faith is, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Even the creation that we can see, when properly regarded in the light of scripture, still points us to the unseen glories of the new heavens and new earth that it foreshadows.

Your attention will be captured by what your heart loves. Are you drawn to all the things you can see in this world? Are these images what consume your thoughts and steal your time? Do you find it difficult to look away? There are so many tempting sights that Satan uses to capture our attention by means of our smartphones, computer screens, televisions, billboards, magazines, and any other way that he can reach us. We must pray with the psalmist, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way” (Ps. 119:37). 119:37).

Sing or pray Psalter #305.

December 29            Read Romans 9

In this section of his letter to the Romans, Paul expresses his great compassion and grief for his fellow Jews who did not believe in the truth of the gospel. Even though Israel had been given so many spiritual privileges, as a whole they still rejected God and crucified the promised Messiah. Does this mean that God was not faithful to his promises to save his people? Can we still believe in the reassuring promises of the previous chapter?

Romans 9:6 answers this question when it reminds us that it is “[n]ot as though the word of God hath taken none effect.” Not all those who belong to the nation of Israel in their generations are the chosen people of God. But verse 27 reminds us that he will still save a remnant. And in his sovereignty, he chose many Gentiles to become his people as well. These are the true, spiritual descendants of Abraham. As spiritual descendants of Abraham we can be confident in the promises of his word.

Sing or pray Psalter #306.

December 30

Read Romans 10

On my first reading of verse 3 of this chapter, I thought that “God’s righteousness” was referring to one of his chief attributes, that he is free from guilt and sin. But after hearing a sermon recently by Prof. Cammenga on this text, I learned that it is actually referring to the righteousness that God has worked out for his people in Jesus Christ by means of his perfect obedience and death on the cross. God imputes this righteousness to his children because we desperately need it and are unable to earn or buy it for ourselves.

As you read on in the chapter, Paul explains that many people (including the Jews of his day) had refused to submit to this righteousness. Blinded by their pride, they willfully ignored all the signs and Old Testament scriptures and tried to earn righteousness for themselves instead. All these efforts were futile and wicked. The only way to submit to the righteousness of God is by faith in Jesus Christ. Justification is by faith alone. We may try to find justification in excuses, self-justification, blaming others, or the distractions of work and pleasure. But these things can never give us true, lasting assurance. Do you live in the consciousness of this truth?

Sing or pray Psalter #307.

December 31

Read Romans 11

*Soli Deo Gloria* is a Latin phrase meaning “Glory to God alone.” You may recognize this phrase as one of the tenets of the Reformation. It is illustrated in the beautiful doxology found in verse 36 of this chapter. But what does it mean?

The glory of God is the radiance of his holiness, put on display for all people to see. It is a display of his infinite perfection and beauty. It is a reminder that his greatness is beyond our comprehension. Since God created all things, the entire creation reflects his glory. The glory of God is the goal of all things. Yet the glory of the creator puts all of creation to shame. Our reaction to beholding this glory in creation and God’s word is to fall on our knees and worship, and to declare his glory to all nations. Our ultimate hope is that we will someday be in the presence of God’s glory for all eternity and be partakers of it as well. Do you treasure the glory of God?

Sing or pray Psalter #308.

January 1

Read Romans 12

The apparent love that ungodly people have for each other is a very hypocritical type of love. It may look like love on the surface, but underneath it is not really love at all. Sincere, Christian love is only possible as a result of Jesus Christ’s death on the cross for our sins, the ultimate example of love. The knowledge of our sin and salvation, combined with the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, allows us to show a small beginning of this love to others. Romans 12 describes what it means to show love without “dissimulation” (v. 9), another word for hypocrisy.

True love hates evil; it does not tolerate or celebrate it. True love exists in the community of fellow believers, not in isolation. True love shows itself in a zeal for serving the Lord and serving others, not in complaining or laziness. True love causes us to be patient when things do not go our way and to rejoice in every circumstance, not to wallow in self-pity. True love leads us to offer hospitality and assistance to others without being stingy or selfish. True love gives us humility and sympathy in our dealings with those around us. Do you show true love to your neighbors?

Sing or pray Psalter #312.

January 2                      Read Romans 13

We are currently living in the darkness and night of this sinful, fallen world. Most of the world stumbles around in the darkness, going about their business, unaware that light even exists. But by faith, we are able to see the day of the Lord arising even though it is not quite here yet. For God's people, it is dawn. That is why we say that the day of the Lord is at hand. How will this knowledge impact the way that we conduct ourselves as we begin another year on this earth?

First, we must awake! We must put off our nightclothes, the works of darkness—rioting, drunkenness, sexual immorality, debauchery, strife, and envying. Second, we must put on our day clothes, the armor of God—truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God. But we will not be able to do this on our own. We need the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts in order to awaken from the sleep of sin. Pray for new mercies every morning so that you are able to lay off the works of darkness and live in the light.

Sing or pray Psalter #315.

January 3                      Read Romans 14

Clean eating, exercise plans, supplements, and alternative medicine are all very popular trends right now both in the world around us and in the church community. But as Christians we must be cautious about how much emphasis we place on these lifestyle choices. It can be tempting to look down on our fellow Christians who do not follow our health principles, or believe that others' choices are sinful. The Bible does not specifically tell us what diet we should follow or what types of medicine we should use. But Romans 14 does address the gray area of health choices by reminding us that they are exactly that—choices.

Paul emphasizes that restrictions we place on ourselves that are not specifically addressed in scripture do not make us more or less righteous. Therefore, we must not place more importance on these things than they deserve. If you recognize that this is a temptation for you, ask yourself these questions: Do you find your hope in your health and fitness methods, or in the gospel? Are you as passionate about pointing others to Christ as you are about converting them to your diet or exercise plan?

Sing or pray Psalter #319.

January 4                      Read Romans 15

Have you ever been reading a particularly tedious section of the Old Testament and wondered, how is reading any of this beneficial for me? Well, Romans 15:4 reminds us that it is important to read the Bible, the whole Bible. Every single part of it is profitable for both learning and encouragement, even all those difficult parts of the Old Testament that you are tempted just to skip over. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Regular, in-depth study of the word of God is the best way for us to learn about our heavenly Father. And in doing so, we also learn how we must live a thankful life according to his commands. Learning about the attributes of God also brings us great comfort. When we recall the stories of his faithfulness to saints in the Old and New Testaments and how he always kept his promises to them, we can have hope. What a comfort and encouragement it is to read over and over again in the scriptures that God will always keep his promises to his people!

Sing or pray Psalter #325.

January 5                      Read Romans 16

As Paul’s letter draws to a close, he gives some final warnings to the Roman church. In verse 17 he cautions them to identify and avoid false teachers who seek to cause division in the church. Those who make it their business to do this serve only themselves, not Christ (v. 18). They may appear on the outside to be noble, but this is simply a mask for selfish motives of pride and ambition.

We must beware of these dividers and deceivers as well, and the dangerous threat they pose to the preservation of the truth and the unity of the church. In order to be able to recognize false teachers, even young people must be diligent in studying the truth of scripture and in prayer. Pray that God will give the leaders of your church wisdom to deal with these matters in a way that limits the destructive power of heresy.

Sing or pray Psalter #343.

January 6                      Read Acts 20

In his final address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Paul reminds them again of an important teaching: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (v. 35). Paul’s own earthly ministry exemplified this principle. He showed no love of money or fine clothing. He had a heart of sacrifice and lived with only the bare necessities so that he was better able to share the message of the gospel with his flock. He was more concerned about what he could give the people than what they could give him.

What is the purpose of your labors? Do you faithfully do your work so that you are able to support the poor and needy? Or do you feel entitled to spend your money on whatever you want because you earned it? Pray that God will work a spirit of cheerful giving in your heart so that you are able to remain faithful to Jesus' command.

Sing or pray Psalter #346.

January 7

Read Acts 21

Agabus' prophecy at Caesarea made it clear that Paul was going to experience suffering and imprisonment if he decided to continue on to Jerusalem. But even in the face of certain persecution, God gave Paul the courage to say, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (v. 13).

Do you have anxiety about the increased persecution that is coming for the church? Do you doubt whether you would really be able to give up your life for the service and honor of Christ? Being a Christian is not about intentionally choosing suffering and hardship, but it is about choosing God's will instead of our own, whether it means suffering or not. You can rest assured that the same God who gave Paul the courage to make his bold confession will also give you the strength to pray in the face of unknown suffering, "Thy will be done."

Sing or pray Psalter #349.

Originally published in Vol. 78 No. 12