

Daily Devotions
August 30th – September 5th

Monday, August 30th – Carried Through The Storm

He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.

Psalm 107:29

During Scottish missionary Alexander Duff's first voyage to India in 1830, he was shipwrecked in a storm off the coast of South Africa. He and his fellow passengers made it to a small, desolate island; and a short time later, one of the crew found a copy of a Bible belonging to Duff washed ashore on the beach. When the book dried, Duff read Psalm 107 to his fellow survivors, and they took courage. Finally, after a rescue and yet another shipwreck, Duff arrived in India.

Psalm 107 lists some of the ways God delivered the Israelites. Duff and his shipmates no doubt identified with and took comfort in the words: *"He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven"* (vv. 29–30). And, like the Israelites, they too *"gave thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind"*(v. 31).

We see a parallel to Psalm 107:28–30 in the New Testament (Matthew 8: 23–27; Mark 4:35–41). Jesus and His disciples were in a boat at sea when a violent storm began. His disciples cried out in fear, and Jesus—God in flesh—calmed the sea. We too can take courage! Our powerful God and Savior hears and responds to our cries and comforts us in the midst of our storms.

When have you cried out to God in a "storm"? How did God respond?

Prayer

Father, thank You, for not leaving me to face the storms on my own. I needed You then and I need when the storms have subsided. I cannot walk this journey successfully with out You! Amen.

Tuesday, August 31st – Peace in the Chaos

Our help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Psalm 121:2

Something that sounded like firecrackers roused Joanne from sleep. Glass shattered. Wishing she didn't live alone, she got up to see what was going on. The dark streets were empty and the house seemed to be okay—then she saw the broken mirror.

Investigators found a bullet only a half-inch from the gas line. If it had struck the line, she probably wouldn't have made it out alive. Later they discovered it was a stray bullet from nearby apartments, but Joanne was afraid to be at home. She prayed for peace, and once the glass was cleaned up, her heart calmed.

Psalm 121 is a reminder for us to look to God in times of trouble. Here, we see that we can have peace and calm because our *“help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth”* (v. 2). The God who created the universe helps and watches over us (v. 3)—even while we sleep—but He Himself never sleeps (v. 4). He watches over us day and night (v. 6), *“both now and forevermore”* (v. 8).

No matter what kind of situations we find ourselves in, God sees. And He's waiting for us to turn to Him. When we do, our circumstances may not always change, but He's promised His peace in the midst of it all.

When have you experienced God's peace in a troubling situation? How have you seen Him help others?

Prayer

Loving Father, thank You for Your peace. Please continue to calm my heart in the areas of my life that feel chaotic. Amen.

Wednesday, September 1st – Remember and Celebrate

[Jesus] took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” Luke 22:19

On December 6, 1907, explosions rocked a small community in the state of West Virginia, producing one of the worst disasters in the history of the coal-mining industry. Reports tell us that 360 miners were killed, and it’s been estimated that this horrific tragedy left behind about 250 widows and 1,000 children without fathers. Historians maintain that the memorial service became the seedbed from which the celebration of Father’s Day in the US would eventually grow. Out of great loss came remembrance and—eventually—celebration.

The greatest tragedy in human history occurred when human beings crucified their Creator. Yet, that dark moment also produced both remembrance and celebration. The night before He would go to the cross, Jesus took the elements of Israel’s Passover and created His own memorial celebration. Luke’s record describes the scene this way: *And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me’* ” (Luke 22:19).

Still today, whenever we take communion, we honor His great, unflinching love for us—remembering the cost of our rescue and celebrating the gift of life His sacrifice produced. As Charles Wesley said in his great hymn, “Amazing love! How can it be that You my King would die for me?”

What are some ways to keep your focus on the cross?

Prayer

Father, when I come to the memorial table, help me to remember why my forgiveness was so costly, and help me to celebrate Your great, awesome and amazing love. Amen.

Thursday, September 2nd – When We Don't Understand

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Job 2:1

“I don't understand His plan. I turned my whole life over to Him. And this happens!” Such was the message of a son to his mother when his dream to succeed as a professional athlete was temporarily derailed. Who among us hasn't had some kind of unexpected, disappointing experience that sends our minds into overdrive with exclamations and questions? A family member cuts off communication without explanation; health gains are reversed; a company relocates unexpectedly; a life-altering accident happens.

Job chapters 1 and 2 teach us about a series of tragedies and setbacks in Job's life. Humanly speaking, if there was anyone who qualified for a life free from trouble, it was Job. “This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil” (Job 1:1). But life doesn't always work out the way we'd like it to—it didn't for Job, and it doesn't for us. When his wife counseled him to “*curse God and die!*” (2:9), Job's words to her were wise, instructive, and fitting for us as well when things happen—big or small—that we'd rather not face. “*‘Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?’ In all this, Job did not sin in what he said*” (v. 10).

By God's strength, may our trust in and reverence for Him remain, even when we can't understand how He's at work during life's difficult days.

When was the last time your faith has been tested?

Prayer

Father, help me to trust You and honor You when I can't see Your hand or understand Your plan. Amen.

Friday, September 3rd - The True Nature of Love

They gave as much as they were able.

2 Corinthians 8:3

During the pandemic lockdown, Jerry was forced to close his fitness center and had no income for months. One day he received a text from a friend asking to meet him at his facility at 6:00 p.m. Jerry wasn't sure why but made his way there. Soon cars started streaming into the parking lot. The driver in the first car placed a basket on the sidewalk near the building. Then car after car (maybe fifty of them) came by. Those inside waved at Jerry or hollered out a hello, stopped at the basket, and dropped in a card or cash. Some sacrificed their money; all gave their time to encourage him.

The true nature of love is sacrificial, according to the apostle Paul. He explained to the Corinthians that the Macedonians gave "*even beyond their ability*" so they could meet the needs of the apostles and others (2 Corinthians 8:3). They even "pleaded" with Paul for the opportunity to give to them and to God's people. The basis for their giving was the sacrificial heart of Jesus Himself. He left the riches of heaven to come to earth to be a servant and to give His very life. "*Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor*" (v. 9).

May we too plead with God so that we *might "excel in this grace of giving"* (v. 7) in order to lovingly meet the needs of others.

Who needs your encouragement?

Prayer

Loving Father, You are so good. Please give me opportunities to bless others for You in Your power and wisdom. Amen.

Saturday, September 4th – Good Trouble

Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Amos 5:24

When John Lewis, an American congressman and civil rights leader, died in 2020, people from many political persuasions mourned. In 1965, Lewis marched with Martin Luther King Jr. to secure voting rights for Black citizens. During the march, Lewis suffered a cracked skull, causing scars he carried the rest of his life. “When you see something that is not right, not just, not fair,” Lewis said, “you have a moral obligation to say something. To do something.” He also said, “Never, ever, be afraid to make some noise and get in good, necessary trouble.”

Lewis learned early that doing what was right, to be faithful to the truth, required making “good” trouble. He would need to speak things that were unpopular. The prophet Amos knew this too. Seeing Israel’s sin and injustice, he couldn’t keep quiet. Amos denounced how the powerful were oppressing “*the innocent and taking bribes and depriving the poor of justice in the courts,*” while building “stone mansions” with “lush vineyards” (Amos 5:11–12). Rather than maintaining his own safety and comfort by staying out of the fray, Amos named the evil. The prophet made good, necessary trouble.

But this trouble aimed at something good—justice for all. “*Let justice roll on like a river!*” Amos exclaimed (v. 24). When we get into good trouble—the kind of righteous, nonviolent trouble justice requires, the goal is always goodness and healing.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, if I’m left to myself, I’ll likely play it safe, stay comfortable, keep quiet. But I know that You might ask something different. Help me discern what to do to honor You. Amen.

Sunday, September 5th – He Hears Us

Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

Jeremiah 29:10

President Franklin D. Roosevelt often endured long receiving lines at the White House. As the story is told, he complained that no one paid attention to what was said. So, he decided to experiment at a reception. To everyone who passed down the line and shook his hand, he said, “I murdered my grandmother this morning.” The guests responded with phrases like, “Marvelous! Keep up the good work. God bless you, Sir.” It wasn’t until the end of the line, greeting the ambassador from Bolivia, that his words were actually heard. Showing no emotion, the ambassador whispered, “I’m sure she had it coming.”

Do you ever wonder if people are really listening? Or worse, do you fear that God isn’t listening? We can tell if people are listening based on their responses or eye contact. But how do we know if God is listening? Should we rely on feelings? Or see if God answers our prayers?

After seventy years of exile in Babylon, God promised to bring His people back to Jerusalem and secure their future (Jeremiah 29:10–11). When they called upon Him, He heard them (v. 12). They knew that God heard their prayers because He promised to listen. And the same is true for us (1 John 5:14). We don’t need to rely on feelings or wait for a sign to know that God listens to us. He’s promised to listen, and He always keeps His promises (2 Corinthians 1:20).

When have you felt that God wasn’t listening? Why did you feel that way?

Prayer

Father, thank You for always hearing my prayers. But there are times when I may sometimes doubt it. Help me to trust Your promise that You listen to me. Amen