

FRIDAY

"THE NAME OF THE GAME"

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 16:13-23; Revelation 11:15-18

No football team is going to win a game by simply defending its own goal. To win, it must move out — initiate the movement — storm the other team's goal.

And Christ never expected to win this ball game between himself and Satan by playing a defensive game, expecting his people simply to hold the line or guard their own position.

But to look at some Christians today one would think his strategy had changed. The more frightened we become the more we huddle together, paralyzed with fear, calling out for help, seeing only the powerful onslaught, certain of defeat.

But Jesus said, "Fear not — I *have overcome* the world" The world is Satan's team. The championship has already been decided; the pennant is already Christ's. What we are playing today is the exhibition game to show people how it was done and how it is to be from now on.

So let us get up from our crouched, wary position. Let us get off the defensive, stand up and spread out as people whose leader is the Lord, and move forward with assurance.

It must be an unsettling experience for the world to see God's people cowering and fearful at the evil and depravation Satan is throwing at us. No wonder the world hesitates to come; to watch us, men would never guess the might and power of our God, would they?

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to claim in my heart the victory you have given us; let me live with such assurance that others seeing my joy, may be led to believe, too. Keep me from the despair of the world and remind me daily of the great gift of life you have offered to us. AMEN

SATURDAY

*"FAITH IS NOT A
WHITE ELEPHANT"*

SCRIPTURE:

Psalms 37:1-9

(Additional reading: Entire chapter Hebrews 11)

"How can your faith ever strengthen if you do not bring it to bear on your daily life? On your little disappointments, and troubles, and vexations. Remember that God has said 'that all things work together for good to them that love him.'

"Strive always to exercise an unlimited confidence in God. 'Though prayer be the key that opens God's treasures, yet faith is the hand that turns the key . . .'"

Why do we always keep our faith in the safe-deposit vault, and take it out only for the big occasions, the "great crisis?"

Faith is not a prize jewel, cold and inanimate. It is a living part of ourselves, and to remain healthy and functional must be used continually.

As mothers and home-makers, use it in everyday occurrences — a dinner you want to be special, a child who is extra touchy or sensitive . . . Men, women and young people can all begin to live lives of faith simply by beginning *now*, in all things large or small.

Prayer: Lord, we know we cannot be the judge of what is or is not important in life, so help us to use your gift of faith daily in all things as a sign of our trust in you and our total reliance on you. Make it so much a part of us that it becomes a way of living. AMEN

Daily Family Devotions

The thought begins in the Bible verse;
please take the time to read it first.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2025

"LAST MINUTE INSTRUCTIONS"

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 24:1-27; Luke 12:11, 12

A spy who during World War II had accomplished many many dangerous missions for the U.S. was asked what the most difficult part of the job was to him. He said, "Going into a situation cold, not knowing ahead of time what was expected of me. Often I did not receive my instructions until almost the hour of the encounter. I had to trust my superior to know what he was doing."

How often have you felt this way? How often has God placed you in a situation in which you felt totally inadequate, like a blind man walking a precipice . . .

Yet Christ says that these moments are planned and cared for by God. Just as the spy commits his life to his country, placing it in the hands of his superior, so we, as Christians have placed ourselves in God's hands; and he is God. He knows all things and has made provisions for us, even before the event. Knowing this, we must learn to trust him.

Is there someone you have been dreading to call? A situation you are afraid to face? A job you do not think you can finish? If God continues to lay this on your heart, trust him. Since he has chosen you, he has already prepared the way.

Prayer: Just as the Hebrew people had to gather manna for each day's need, so teach me to rely on your constant provision for my needs as they come. Help me to grow in faith and to experience your power in my life. AMEN

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TUESDAY

“BECAUSE OF YOUR IMPORTUNITY”

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 11:5-10

What is “importunity?” It means to beseech, plead, appeal: a request of a man’s heart, from the depths of his spirit. It is characterized by critical need. This is what Christ is talking about.

The man in the parable overcame even his embarrassment at having to awaken his neighbor in the middle of the night just for bread. He even gambled his neighbor’s opinion of him — perhaps even their future relationship, in order to serve another.

Christ says when we ask in this spirit, God answers because of our need; his compassion opens the floodgates of divine love.

Love is always like this. It responds so quickly to heartfelt need! And as we would never disregard the desperate cry of a neighbor or friend, neither will God ignore the sincere prayer.

Christ is saying that if we mortal men are capable of responding as we do to critical need, how much more will God answer our cries for help if we seek him selflessly for another’s needs. (*Supplementary reading: Psalms 20*).

Prayer: God, how good you are to make it possible for me to come to you in need at any time . . . knowing no place is too remote, nor any request too impossible for you. Make me more faithful in abandoning any pride as I bring others to you, trusting in your love, and your compassion for us all. AMEN

WEDNESDAY

“WHEN WE THINK WE ARE ALONE”

SCRIPTURE:

I Kings 19:9-18; Psalm 118:5-19

How does the Christian keep from succumbing to bitterness and anger in this day when our world seems to be crumbling and society is heading pell-mell for moral destruction?

We look about us — at schools, education, government, even some of the churches and it seems as though the front lines of defense have completely crumbled and the fort has been deserted — we are alone.

It is very natural for the Christian to feel he is alone on this devastated battleground — wielding his “sword” to the point of exhaustion, crying out, “My God, why have you forsaken us!”

Men have felt this way before . . . Elijah once gave up completely; many times David cried out — and our Lord himself called out the familiar cry of anguish — “My God, why have you forsaken me?”

A number of times in Scripture, we are told that evil must “come to a head.” A farmer will not harvest a crop until it is ready; a doctor will not lance a boil until the infection has localized — and God will not touch the evil in this world until it is ready to be cut out and destroyed forever.

Prayer: O God, may I remember that your timetable is always perfect. You alone know when your kingdom can come for all time, when Satan will be defeated. Help me to trust the future to your hand, the present to your power. Give me patience, Mighty Lord, and faithfulness as your Son know them so well. AMEN

THURSDAY

“THE TIME TO YIELD A BIT”

SCRIPTURE:

II Timothy 2:19-26; Titus 3:1-11

When a car is stuck, the man who pushes it does not give one mighty heave. He pushes, then releases, pushes and again releases.

Soon this pattern results in a gently rocking motion, and before long momentum carries the car up to where the wheels can gain purchase and roll out free. Without this rhythmic motion, the man would injure himself. Further- more, by this gentle action, the law of inertia is overcome, for inertia resists sudden, constant applied pressure.

There is a spiritual dynamic like this and Christians should become familiar with it.

One of the most characteristic things about Jesus was his refusal to push a man. Yet how often we are inclined to push and prod, pressure or pull to gain our purpose.

Perhaps if we yielded ground from time to time, moving gently as God directs us, we would be more effective and less offensive.

When we become pushy and aggressive we always meet with more resistance, more fatigue than we would if we only followed the Christian dynamics of yielding from time to time.

Prayer: Lord, keep me from being a “pushy” person. Help me to be more sensitive to the inertia of those who have been without you for so long. Give me the wisdom and gentleness of your Son, I pray. AMEN