

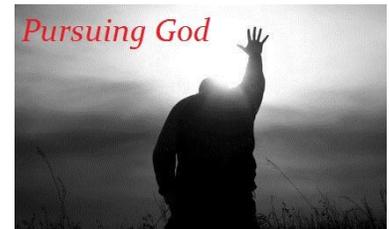
PURSUIT OF GOD

PAUL SPENCER, GMI VOLUNTEER MINISTER

As parents our expectation for our children is for them to love us not for what we give them but for who we are. We want our children to love us unconditionally. Now the expectation of unconditional love from our children does not remove our responsibility to love them unconditionally. Unconditional love means that we will provide for them, protect them and nurture them. In short, unconditional love constrains us as parents to be there for our children no matter what. However, should we (as parents) feel slighted if our children only loved us for what we give them? What if our children only spoke to us to get something from us? What if our sons or daughters only spoke to us to receive \$30.00 to go to the movies? What if our sons or daughters asked to drive our car but would not complete the chores we assigned to them? What if our sons or daughters wanted us to buy them the latest fashionable clothing but would not obey us? What if our sons or daughters never said "thank you" or never demonstrated any appreciation for us? We would still love them, but the favor (extra perks) would diminish, somewhat.

Imagine how God feels when we seek Him only for His stuff and not for whom He is. For a moment, let's think about who God is and what only He can do for us in Psalm 103.

1. He forgives all our iniquities (v. 3)
2. He heals all our diseases (v. 3b)
3. He redeems our life from destruction (v. 4)
4. He crowns (surrounds) us with loving kindness and tender mercies (v. 4b)
5. He satisfies us with good things so that our youth is renewed like the eagles (v. 5)



These benefits are just a few of the good things that only God can do for us. Our response to Him should be the response listed in verse 2. We should "bless the LORD"! We should love Him with all of our hearts, minds, body and strength. We should worship Him. That's our only response that is fitting for God.

David declared in Psalm 27:4, "One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek, That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple."

The presence of God was David's "One Thing". What is our "One Thing"? Is it God's stuff (house, cars, money, etc.?) or is it God? Indeed, His stuff is good but He is better! David realized that pursuing God was the most important pursuit of his life.

Jesus said in Matt. 7:31-33 NLT, "So don't worry about these things. What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear? These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your Heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He (God) will give you everything you need".

God is saying, "I got this". Seek Me first. So what will be our response to God? Will we pursue Him for His stuff or will we pursue Him for who He is? My hope is that we will do the latter.

"FROM THE YARD"

NICHOLAS MARTIN AKA SWEETZ. – LANSING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

(Each month we will bring you content from one of your brothers inside)

"And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:

And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."

1 Kings 19:11-12

The circumstances of a person's life do not make him or her. Anyone who thinks that is the case, is sadly mistaken. Circumstances reveal who we are on the inside. This is in fact the reason that God places us in the furnace of adversity. Sometimes, we forget that the Lord make our hearts, thus, knows the best circumstances, in which to place us in order to push us to evolve. How can one prove yourself to be the Champ, if you've never been in a fight???

The Scripture says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." Circumstances, can sometimes blind us to what is really going on with us. Sometimes, we cannot see the forest because of the trees. Understand, that we can be blinded by the wind, shook up by the earthquake, burned by the fire and be so caught up to what we are going through...we forget to go through and reach what the Lord has in store for us. We can't see it, nor do we have any proof, that's why it's faith. When has the Lord ever broken a promise to you???

Most of us, never offer a sincere prayer to the Lord until, we find ourselves in a circumstance that we have no control over. Then we try and bargain with the Lord. "Lord, if You get me out of this **situation, prison, trouble, etc....**Just this one time, I swear I'll serve you for the rest of my days." Does this sound familiar???

Then He answers our prayer, we go on with our lives as if we never said these words.

Yet, while we are going thru the storm, the Lord is our shelter. I know from personal experience. A few years ago, it looked as if cancer would kill me. The leukemia almost did what the tumor in my brain did not. Twice, I was told that I would not live to see the end of six months. At the lowest and most, scariest moment in that fight, my celly found me passed out on the floor, bleeding from my mouth, eyes, nose and ears. I woke up in a hospital bed, after an emergency brain surgery to remove a tumor the size of a pear from my brain that had gone undiagnosed. The Lord spoke to me in that still, small voice. Two and a half years later, here I am, alive and cancer-free. So now, when I receive a round of applause after a speech, I can hear the Lord telling me, "Be of good courage. I have my hand on you, my son." In my heart, I believe that my illness, as well as my recovery, is part of my testimony of the reality of the Lord. What do your circumstances reveal about you?

WARRIOR

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



© 2007 Michael D. Waters
www.joyfultoons.com

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith,
— 1 PETER 5:8-9 NIV

“WORDS TO GROW BY”

LINDA LEWIS, GMI DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

God didn't promise days without pain,
Laughter without sorrow,
Or Sun without rain,
But He did promise strength for the day,
Comfort for the tears,
And light for the way.
If God bring you to it,
He will bring you through it.
For He, Himself has said,
“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
Hebrews 13:5
Hang on in there!

SAVE ME

Save me from myself, Lord;
Save me from my need
To always run my life, Lord,
To control my every deed.

Save me from my pride, Lord,
My focus on just me;
Help me learn to serve, Lord;
Show me how to be.

Save me from the world, Lord,
When tempting things entice;
Remind me of eternity
With You, in paradise.

I give my life to you, Lord
My every need you fill;
I'm resting in my faith, Lord;
You saved me, and you always will.

By Joanna Fuchs

CLOSING WORDS

LONNIE JOHNSON, GMI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Last month, we celebrated Mother's Day. This month, we celebrate Fathers. Traditionally, one would give a lecture on being a good father, even behind bars. It is also customary to talk about how fathers must break the cycle of irresponsibility for the next generations. It would be fitting to talk about how you should honor your fathers whether you feel they are worthy or not, simply because the bible says so.

If I were a betting man, I would wager you have heard all that several times before. So, I am not going to tell you that because if you have not secured a right relationship with your Heavenly Father, none of the above will do much for your "spirit man".

However, I do want to emphasize that God, **your Father**, loves you more than you know and wants the best for you. Before you were born, He established plans to prosper you and not to harm you. He does not sit high and look down for reasons to punish you. It is His desire for you to be kings, priests, and even have authority over all evil. His forgiveness is immeasurable for anyone that confesses their sins. According to His word He has crowned us with glory and honor. Because we have such an awesome Father, who wants nothing more than to have a close relationship with us, we should be proud to carry His name as our own, worship Him, and submit with complete obedience and trust. **Every day should be a day we honor our Heavenly Father.**

What must I do to be saved?

If you have never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, or if you have turned away from Him living a life of unrighteousness, and you wish to be connected to Him and have ever lasting life, then take a moment and say the prayer below:

"Lord, I confess that I am a sinner and ask that you forgive me. I believe that your son Jesus died on the cross for my sins and was resurrected with all power. I invite Jesus to be the Lord of my life and that your Holy Spirit comes into my heart and guides me for the rest of my life. Amen."

Romans 10:9 says that *if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

If this is you, please write Growth Ministries and we will gladly help you start your new life in Christ.

Growth Ministries Inc. is a nonprofit organization whose belief system is Christian based with a passion and desire to assist individuals improve spiritually and socially through a variety of services, activities, and events.