

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

There are treasures in God's word that are yet to be uncovered. For the rest of your life as you immerse yourselves in the Scriptures, God has a word for you, God has words specifically for you that will absolutely enrich your life, that will add strength to your faith, that will encourage you in your walk with God. The Scripture is sufficient to give to you exactly what God wants you to hear. As you digest the truth of God's word your endurance will increase, the ability to stay faithful to God regardless of how tough life gets.

I just came off a few days of vacation out in Washington state visiting family and friends. Returning to the pulpit, this is what I wish to be heard. Stay in the Word. Live in the Word. Be in the Word every day in order to face the challenges of living in this fallen world. God knows exactly what you need to hear and that is only found in the Bible. Specifically, what I sense in my spirit is for all of us to deepen our knowledge and experience in who God is. The stress of our day is enormous. God's provision for us in God's word is more than enormous and has for us grace and truth to be the overcomers God calls us to be. The Holy Spirit takes the word of God and makes it most personal to you. In times of discouragement God's word fills you with hope for God is by far more powerful than any circumstance you are facing.

Philippians 4:6-7(NLT) *⁶Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.* There are some of us here who are worry warts. We have a mountain of worries that keep us awake at night and anxious throughout the day. The Bible tells us that worry adds nothing to our lives that is good. Worry taxes our physical bodies of inner strength and can bring on sickness by lowering our immune systems. God instructs us to hand over to God everything that we worry about. I know that is not easy, but as we stay in the Word of God,

we gain the perception that God is causing or allowing difficult things to happen to us to increase our faith in God, not decrease it. God's word nourishes our souls so we can shine ever brighter for Christ even through difficult times.

God specializes in the impossible. A circumstance comes your way that absolutely shatters you. It may make you question everything you believed to be true. God says, "Give it over to me and I am going to bring good out of it. Keep believing. Keep trusting. The Bible says, ⁵*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;* ⁶*in all your ways acknowledge Him, and he will direct your paths* (Proverbs 3:5-6). God's word comes to your aid. God comes to your aid through His word. You listen to God and your stomach begins to relax. Your circumstance, as hard as it is, is an opportunity for you to experience God's rescuing grace. God wants your entire being surrendered to Him. God has plans for you and your future is secure in God's hands. God is increasing in you great hope. This fallen world wants you in despair and to lose hope. God's word strengthens your hope for you have gained that inner confidence that God is involved in every circumstance in your life. God's saving grace is always sufficient for the need no matter how deep the pain.

Psalms 91:14-16(NLT) ¹⁴*The LORD says, "I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name.* ¹⁵*When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honor them.* ¹⁶*I will reward them with a long life and give them my salvation."*

There are a few people here who if you took the time to meditate on this one verse you would discover God's provision for your need. Whatever is troubling you is an avenue for God's grace and power to come to your rescue. The greater the need the greater the grace. The greater the need the more time you immerse yourself in God's word and God will pick you up. "*Draw near to God and God will draw near to you.*" "*Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will pick you up.*" Friends God has everything that we need. Eat of his word and you will find sufficient strength for the day. Please do not miss a meal or you will find yourself famished.

When you are fed directly by God, please do not keep what God is saying to you all to yourself. There are times that God orchestrates happenings in your life so as you learn to overcome them, you can help others with the same difficulties. I have a go to person in this congregation that I do not hesitate at all to call on when I am in a difficulty I know this person has faced before. She always has exactly what I need to hear because she has faced the same thing numerous times with other people. God has helped her through it all and she helps me whenever I call. God teaches us so we can teach others what God has shown us.

Let us pray. Dear Lord God, we all need You more than ever. We all want to stay faithful to you and obey your very word. O Lord, may we never tire of your encouraging word that strengthens our faith and ability to endure as we live in these days full of trouble. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Psalms 1:1(ESV) ¹Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ²but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. ⁴The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Luther loved reading and teaching from the Psalms for in every Psalm he found Christ. The Lord Jesus is our Shepherd (Psalm 23:1). The prediction of Jesus' resurrection from the dead is found in the Psalms (Psalm 16:8-11). The first and second verse of our passage today could be referring to the Person who did exactly what it says, and that person is Jesus, the Christ. Jesus did not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers but delighted in the law of the Lord and mediated on it day and night. Every time Jesus was tempted to sin, Jesus countered the temptation with the Word of God. Jesus delighted in the entire Old Testament.

There are two major signs of the end times and they are wickedness and lawlessness. A few of us have attended a seminar called ALICE and it was presented by one of our members. The presentation gives to the listeners tools of what to do when you find your life in danger and in harm's way from a person who wants to take you out whether that be at a store, in a church, at a movie theatre, wherever. I found it quite helpful and wish for more to attend when it is offered again. Why are seminars as such offered even at churches? Because we are living in a day of incredible wickedness and lawlessness. I know some of you in your 70's and 80's never thought you would read of such happenings that are taking place and there is no end in sight.

As Christians, God has provided a way for us not only to survive such times but to thrive through our faith in Jesus Christ. Delighting in the Word of God is a healthy aim and goal for all of us. God's treasure is right in front of us, God's supply for our every need. There are times when we study the Bible we may not feel all that fed. Then something happens and the verses you read become more alive to you than ever. There are times your soul will soar like an eagle when God's truth is revealed to you. When the Bible makes sense, life makes sense. But it takes discipline on our part to partake of God's word. The wickedness and lawlessness of our time can be seen as people deliberately mocking God, scoffing and sneering at God's truth, thinking they are wiser and smarter than God Himself. Wickedness and lawlessness ignore the sacredness of life. Having a conscience that no longer works, there is no activity too low for them to enjoy, even that of taking lives.

²but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. Friends, God is in the tree business. God knows exactly where to plant a tree so it can bear the most fruit year-round. I learned a phrase young in life, "Bloom where you are planted." God plants you in a specific location so you can bear fruit year-round. God plants you so you can be a Christian witness in your neighborhood, your

place of employment, your school, your church. God knows the best place to plant you and that is where you find yourself until the Lord uproots you and transplants you somewhere else where God wants you to bear increasing fruit year-round.

Friends, God has a purpose for every tree. God has a purpose for all of us who belong to God. Some do bear more fruit than others, some 10-fold, some 60-fold, some 100-fold. We are all fruit bears with roots that grow deep into the Word of God which keeps us bearing fruit. God has ministries for all of us to be about using the gifts that God has given to us. I think of Stephens Ministers in this church. Your ministry is bearing fruit because God is using you to help others. You are serving God by helping those in need and may your numbers only increase.

We are looking for more to help with Vacation Bible School, a ministry that bears great fruit for God as children are introduced to the person and love of Jesus Christ so their souls can be saved for eternity. We are all here to bear fruit, planted by God Himself. I just happen to be a transplant from Washington state. We have many transplants here. God is good.

⁴The wicked are not so but are like chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Friends, no one is getting away with the wickedness and lawlessness of our day. Jesus sees it all. On judgment day this will all be brought to light. That which was done in the darkness will be brought out in the light and God will make all things right. There is a judgment to come. All evil will be exposed, and evil will be no more. God will do away with all evil. God's goodness wins out and as believers in Christ, we are on the winning side. It may look today like we are losing the battle, but the war has been won, and Jesus won that war on the cross and His resurrection and ascension into heaven proves it. Take delight in God's word and you will have food for your soul that will bear fruit year-round. Amen and Amen.