

Possessing God's Maximum

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

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Forward



Count Your Blessings

By Johnson Oatman Jr.

1. When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

○ *Refrain:*

Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
*Count your many blessings, see what God has done.
[*And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.]

2. Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,
And you will keep singing as the days go by.

3. When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;
Count your many blessings—*money cannot buy [*wealth can never buy]
Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high.

4. So, amid the conflict whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

Chapter 1



Possessing God's maximum.

Blessing come only from God.

John 3:27

John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.

Why did John the Baptist continue to baptize after Jesus came onto the scene? Why didn't he become a disciple too? John explained that because God had given him his work, he had to continue it until God called him to do something else. John's main purpose was to point people to Christ. Even with Jesus beginning his own ministry, John could still turn people to Jesus.

Those who have, God will give more.

Matthew 13:12

"For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

This phrase means that we are responsible to use well what we have. When people reject Jesus, their hardness of heart drives away or renders useless even the little understanding they had.

Blessings used in a wrong way will be taken away.

Luke 19:26

"I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away."

Why was the king so hard on this man who had not increased the money?

He punished the man because

- (1) He didn't share his master's interest in the kingdom;
- (2) He didn't trust his master's intentions;
- (3) His only concern was for himself, and
- (4) He did nothing to use the money.

Like the king in this story, God has given you gifts to use for the benefit of his kingdom. Do you want the kingdom to grow? Do you trust God to govern it fairly? Are you as concerned for others' welfare as you are for your own? Are you willing to use faithfully what he has entrusted to you?

By your standard of measure, you shall receive.

Mark 4:24

And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides."

The light of Jesus' truth is revealed to us, not hidden. But we may not be able to see or to use all of that truth right now. Only as we put God's teachings into practice will we understand and see more of the truth. The truth is clear, but our ability to understand is imperfect. As we obey, we will sharpen our vision and increase our understanding (see James 1:22-25).

Those who receive much will be required much.

Luke 12:48

But the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few from everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

Jesus has told us how to live until he comes: we must watch for him, work diligently, and obey his commands. Such attitudes are especially necessary for leaders. Watchful and faithful leaders will be given increased opportunities and responsibilities. The more resources, talents, and understanding we have, the more we are responsible to use them effectively. God will not hold us responsible for gifts he has not given us, but all of us have enough gifts and duties to keep us busy until Jesus comes.

You may know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 13:11

Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

We are responsible to use well what we have. When people reject Jesus, their hardness of heart drives away or renders useless even the little understanding they had.

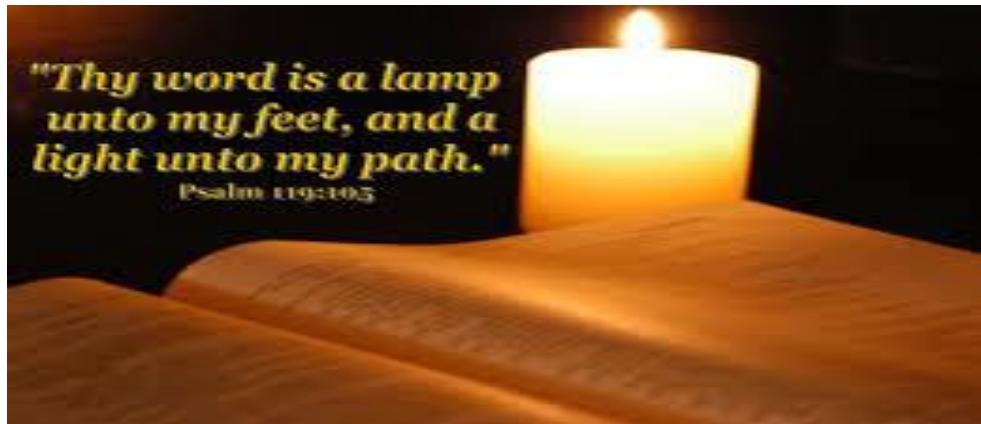
No one can come to Christ unless God grants it.

John 6:65

And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

The Holy Spirit gives spiritual life; without the work of the Holy Spirit we cannot even see our need for new life (John 14:17). All spiritual renewal begins and ends with God. He reveals truth to us, lives within us, and then enables us to respond to that truth.

Chapter 2



Adding blessings

Matthew 13:12

"For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

This phrase means that we are responsible to use well what we have. When people reject Jesus, their hardness of heart drives away or renders useless even the little understanding they had.

He who has, more shall be given.

Luke 8:18

"So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."

Seek God's kingdom and more will be added.

Matthew 6:33

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Continue to add blessings.

2 Peter 1:5-7

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

God will help us remain true to our faith through whatever difficult times we must face. The “last time” is the judgment day of Christ described in Romans 14:10 and Rev. 20:11-15. We may have to endure trials, persecution, or violent death, but our souls cannot be harmed if we have accepted Christ’s gift of salvation. We know we will receive the promised rewards.

Why were Christians the target of persecution?

- (1) They refused to worship the emperor as a god and thus were viewed as atheists and traitors.
- (2) They refused to worship at pagan temples, so business for these moneymaking enterprises dropped wherever Christianity took hold.
- (3) They didn’t support the Roman ideals of self, power, and conquest; and the Romans scorned the Christian ideal of self-sacrificing service.
- (4) They exposed and rejected the horrible immorality of pagan culture.

Peter mentions suffering several times in this letter: 1 Peter 1:6-7; 1 Peter 3:13-17; 1 Peter 4:12-19; 1 Peter 5:9.

When he speaks of trials, he is not talking about natural disasters or the experience of God’s punishments, but the response of an unbelieving world to people of faith. All believers face such trials when they let their light shine into the darkness.

We must accept trials as part of the refining process that burns away impurities and prepares us to meet Christ. Trials teach us patience (Romans 5:3-4; James 1:2-3) and help us grow to be the kind of people God wants.

As gold is heated, impurities float to the top and can be skimmed off. Steel is tempered or strengthened by heating it in fire. Likewise, our trials, struggles, and persecutions refine and strengthen our faith, making us useful to God.

God will add length of days to your life.

Proverbs 3:2

For length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.

Love and faithfulness are important character qualities. Both involve actions as well as attitudes. A loving person not only feels love; he or she also acts loyally and responsibly. A faithful person not only believes the truth; he or she also works for justice for others. Thoughts and words are not enough—our lives reveal whether we are truly loving and faithful. Do your actions measure up to your attitudes?

Years added to king's life.

2 Kings 20:6

"I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake."'"

Over a 100-year period of Judah's history (732-640 B.C.), Hezekiah was the only faithful king; but what a difference he made! Because of Hezekiah's faith and prayer, God healed him and saved his city from the Assyrians. You can make a difference too, even if your faith puts you in the minority.

Faith and prayer, if they are sincere and directed toward the one true God, can change any situation.

The king's mind was restored.

Daniel 4:36

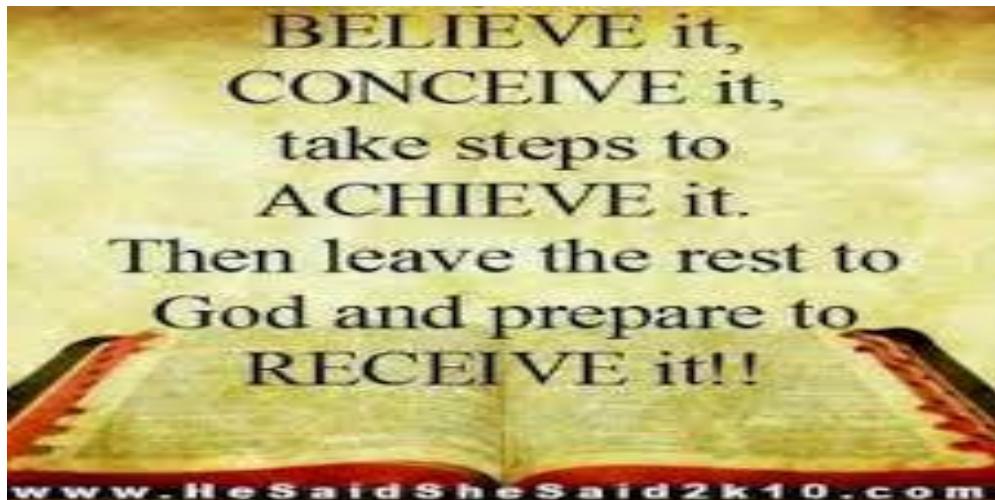
"At that time my reason returned to me, my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.

Nebuchadnezzar's pilgrimage with God is one of the themes of this book. In Daniel 2:47, he acknowledged that God revealed mysteries to Daniel.

In Daniel 3:28-29 he praised the God who rescued the three Hebrews. Despite Nebuchadnezzar's recognition that God exists and works great miracles, in Daniel 4:30 we see that he still did not acknowledge God as his Lord.

We may recognize that God exists and does wonderful miracles, but God is not going to change us until we acknowledge him as Lord.

Chapter 3



Those to Whom God Gives blessings

Matthew 19:11

But He said to them, "Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given.

A man receives only when it is given from God.

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Why did John the Baptist continue to baptize after Jesus came onto the scene? Why didn't he become a disciple too? John explained that because God had given him his work, he had to continue it until God called him to do something else.

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Chapter 4



Temporal blessings from God

To Noah, at the time of the flood

Genesis 7:1

Finally, the day came when the Lord said to Noah, "Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I consider you alone to be righteous.

Pairs of every animal joined Noah in the ark; seven pairs were taken of those animals used for sacrifice—the “clean” animals. Scholars have estimated that almost 45,000 animals could have fit into the ark.

To Abraham

Genesis 24:1

Abraham was now a very old man, and the Lord had blessed him in every way.

In Abraham’s culture, putting a hand under the thigh was how an agreement was sealed or a covenant ratified. To accomplish the same purpose, we shake hands, swear oaths, or sign documents in the presence of a notary public.

To Isaac

Genesis 26:12-24

That year Isaac's crops were tremendous! He harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the Lord blessed him.

He became a rich man, and his wealth only continued to grow. He acquired large flocks of sheep and goats, great herds of cattle, and many servants. Soon the Philistines became jealous of him, and they filled up all of Isaac's wells with earth. These were the wells that had been dug by the servants of his father, Abraham.

And Abimelech asked Isaac to leave the country. "Go somewhere else," he said, "for you have become too rich and powerful for us."

So Isaac moved to the Gerar Valley and lived there instead. He reopened the wells his father had dug, which the Philistines had filled in after Abraham's death.

Isaac renamed them, using the names Abraham had given them. His shepherds also dug in the Gerar Valley and found a gushing spring.

But then the local shepherds came and claimed the spring. "This is our water," they said, and they argued over it with Isaac's herdsmen. So Isaac named the well "Argument," because they had argued about it with him.

Isaac's men then dug another well, but again there was a fight over it. So Isaac named it "Opposition." Abandoning that one, he dug another well, and the local people finally left him alone. So Isaac called it "Room Enough," for he said, "At last the Lord has made room for us, and we will be able to thrive."

From there Isaac moved to Beersheba, where the Lord appeared to him on the night of his arrival. "I am the God of your father, Abraham," he said. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you. I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will do this because of my promise to Abraham, my servant."

God kept his promise to bless Isaac. The neighboring Philistines grew jealous because everything Isaac did seemed to go right. So they plugged his wells and tried to get rid of him. Jealousy is a dividing force strong enough to tear apart the mightiest of nations or the closest of friends. It forces you to separate yourself from what you were longing for in the first place.

When you find yourself becoming jealous of others, try thanking God for their good fortune. Before striking out in anger, consider what you could lose—a friend, a job, a spouse?

The desolate Gerar area was located on the edge of a desert. Water was as precious as gold. If someone dug a well, he was staking a claim to the land. Some wells had locks to keep thieves from stealing the water. To “stop” or plug up someone’s well was an act of war; it was one of the most serious crimes in the land. Isaac had every right to fight back when the Philistines ruined his wells, and yet he chose to keep the peace. In the end, the Philistines respected him for his patience.

Three times Isaac and his men dug new wells. When the first two disputes arose, Isaac moved on. Finally there was enough room for everyone. Rather than start a huge conflict, Isaac compromised for the sake of peace. Would you be willing to forsake an important position or valuable possession to keep peace? Ask God for the wisdom to know when to withdraw and when to stand and fight.

To Jacob

Genesis 35:9-15

God appeared to Jacob once again when he arrived at Bethel after traveling from Paddan-aram. God blessed him and said, "Your name is no longer Jacob; you will now be called Israel."

Then God said, "I am God Almighty. Multiply and fill the earth! Become a great nation, even many nations. Kings will be among your descendants!"

And I will pass on to you the land I gave to Abraham and Isaac. Yes, I will give it to you and your descendants." Then God went up from the place where he had spoken to Jacob.

Jacob set up a stone pillar to mark the place where God had spoken to him. He then poured wine over it as an offering to God and anointed the pillar with olive oil. Jacob called the place Bethel—"house of God"—because God had spoken to him there.

God reminded Jacob of his new name, Israel, which meant “he struggles with God.” Although Jacob’s life was littered with difficulties and trials, his new name was a tribute to his desire to stay close to God despite life’s disappointments.

Many people believe that Christianity should offer a problem-free life.

Consequently, as life gets tough, they draw back disappointed. Instead, they should determine to prevail with God through life’s storm. Problems and difficulties are painful but inevitable; you might as well see them as opportunities for growth. You can’t prevail with God unless you have troubles to prevail over.

This oil used to anoint the pillar was olive oil of the finest grade of purity. It was expensive, so using it showed the high value placed on the anointed object. Jacob was showing the greatest respect for the place where he met with God.

To the Israelites in Egypt

Exodus 11:3

(Now the Lord had caused the Egyptians to look favorably on the people of Israel, and Moses was considered a very great man in the land of Egypt. He was respected by Pharaoh's officials and the Egyptian people alike.) (

Moses told Pharaoh that God made a distinction between Egypt and Israel. At this time the distinction was very clear in God’s mind: He knew the Hebrews would become his chosen people. The distinction was taking shape in Moses’ mind also. But the Hebrew still saw the distinction only in terms of slave and free. Later, when they were in the desert, God would teach them the laws, principles, and values that would make them distinct as his people. Remember that God sees us in terms of what we will become and not just what we are right now.

Water is supplied in the wilderness.

Exodus 17:1-7

At the Lord's command, the people of Israel left the Sin Desert and moved from place to place. Eventually they came to Rephidim, but there was no water to be

found there. So once more the people grumbled and complained to Moses. "Give us water to drink!" they demanded.

"Quiet!" Moses replied. "Why are you arguing with me? And why are you testing the Lord?"

But tormented by thirst, they continued to complain, "Why did you ever take us out of Egypt? Why did you bring us here? We, our children, and our livestock will all die!"

Then Moses pleaded with the Lord, "What should I do with these people? They are about to stone me!"

The Lord said to Moses, "Take your shepherd's staff, the one you used when you struck the water of the Nile. Then call some of the leaders of Israel and walk on ahead of the people.

I will meet you by the rock at Mount Sinai. Strike the rock, and water will come pouring out. Then the people will be able to drink." Moses did just as he was told; and as the leaders looked on, water gushed out.

Moses named the place Massah—"the place of testing"—and Meribah—"the place of arguing"—because the people of Israel argued with Moses and tested the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord going to take care of us or not?"

Again the people complained about their problem instead of praying. Some problems can be solved by careful thought or by rearranging our priorities. Some can be solved by discussion and good counsel. But some problems can be solved only by prayer.

We should make a determined effort to pray when we feel like complaining, because complaining only raises our level of stress. Prayer quiets our thoughts and emotions and prepares us to listen.

Manna is supplied

Exodus 16:14

When the dew disappeared later in the morning, thin flakes, white like frost, covered the ground.

Manna (Exodus 16:31) appeared on the ground each day as thin flakes like frost. The people gathered it, ground it like grain, and made it into honey-tasting pancakes.

For the Israelites the manna was a gift—it came every day and was just what they needed. It satisfied their temporary physical need. In John 6:48-51 Jesus compares himself to manna. Christ is our daily bread who satisfies our eternal, spiritual need.

Exodus 16:31

In time, the food became known as manna. It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey cakes.

The Hebrews put some manna in a special jar as a reminder of the way God provided for them in the desert. Symbols have always been an important part of Christian worship also. We use special objects as symbols to remind us of God's work. Such symbols can be valuable aids to our worship as long as we are careful to keep them from becoming objects of worship.

Quail is provided for food.

Numbers 11:31-32

Now the Lord sent a wind that brought quail from the sea and let them fall into the camp and all around it! For many miles in every direction from the camp there were quail flying about three feet above the ground.

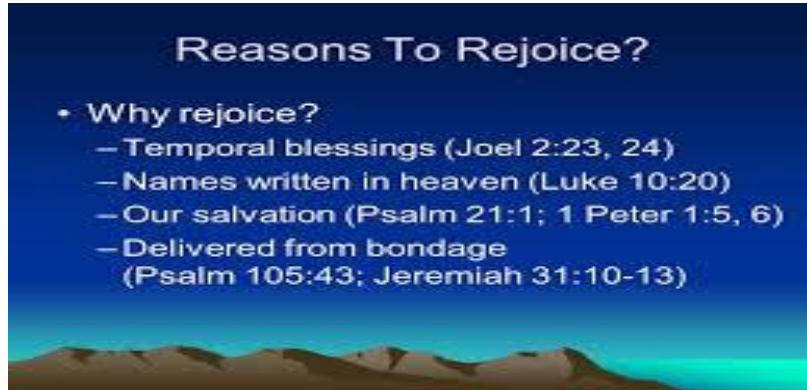
So the people went out and caught quail all that day and throughout the night and all the next day, too. No one gathered less than fifty bushels!

Craving or lust is more than inappropriate sexual desire. It can be an unnatural or greedy desire for anything (sports, knowledge, possessions, and influence over others). In this circumstance, God punished the Israelites for craving good food!

Their desire was not wrong; the sin was in allowing that desire to turn into greed. They felt it was their right to have fine food, and they could think of nothing else.

When you become preoccupied with something until it affects your perspective on everything else, you have moved from desire to lust.

Chapter 5



Reasons to Rejoice

Blessings to David

2 Samuel 5:10

And David became more and more powerful, because the Lord God Almighty was with him.

“David knew that the LORD had established him. . .” Although the pagan kingdoms based their greatness on conquest, power, armies, and wealth, David knew that his greatness came only from God.

To be great means keeping a close relationship with God personally and nationally. To do this, David had to keep his ambition under control. Although he was famous, successful, and well liked, he gave God first place in his life and served the people according to God’s purposes. Do you seek greatness from God or from people? In the drive for success, remember to keep your ambition under God’s control.

To Obed-edom

2 Samuel 6:11

The Ark of the Lord remained there with the family of Obed-edom for three months, and the Lord blessed him and his entire household.

David was angry that a well-meaning man had been killed and that his plans for a joyous return of the ark had been spoiled (2 Samuel 6:8). He undoubtedly knew that the fault was his own for transporting the ark carelessly.

After cooling down, he had the ark put into temporary storage while he waited to see if the Lord would allow him to bring it to Jerusalem. This also gave David time to consider the right way to transport the ark. The fact that God blessed the home of Obed-Edom was a sign to David that he could try once again to move the ark to Jerusalem.

To Solomon

1 Kings 3:13

And I will also give you what you did not ask for—riches and honor! No other king in all the world will be compared to you for the rest of your life!

Solomon asked for wisdom (“discernment”), not wealth, but God gave him riches and long life as well. While God does not promise riches to those who follow him, he gives us what we need if we put his kingdom, his interests, and his principles first (Matthew 6:31-33). Setting your sights on riches will only leave you dissatisfied because even if you get the riches you crave, you will still want something more. But if you put God and his work first, he will satisfy your deepest needs.

Solomon received “a wise and discerning heart” from God, but it was up to Solomon to apply that wisdom to all areas of his life. Solomon was obviously wise in governing the nation, but he was foolish in running his household.

Wisdom is both the ability to discern what is best and the strength of character to act upon that knowledge. While Solomon remained wise all his life, he did not always act upon his wisdom (1 Kings 11:6).

Solomon’s settlement of this dispute was a classic example of his wisdom. This wise ruling was verification that God had answered Solomon’s prayer and given him a discerning heart.

We have God's wisdom available to us as we pray and request it. But, like Solomon, we must put it into action. Applying wisdom to life demonstrates our discernment.

The Nation of Israel stood in awe seeing Solomon's blessings.

1 Chron. 29:25

And the Lord exalted Solomon so the entire nation of Israel stood in awe of him, and he gave Solomon even greater wealth and honor than his father.

Solomon surpassed his father's wealth and splendor. David's legacy resulted from his vital relationship with the Lord, and he passed his spiritual values on to Solomon. Any money or power we leave to our children are far less valuable than the spiritual legacy we pass on. What spiritual inheritance will your children receive?

To Elijah

Fed by ravens

1 Kings 17:2-7

Then the Lord said to Elijah, "Go to the east and hide by Kerith Brook at a place east of where it enters the Jordan River. Drink from the brook and eat what the ravens bring you, for I have commanded them to bring you food."

So Elijah did as the Lord had told him and camped beside Kerith Brook. The ravens brought him bread and meat each morning and evening, and he drank from the brook. But after a while the brook dried up, for there was no rainfall anywhere in the land.

Those who worshiped Baal believed he was the god who brought the rains and bountiful harvests. So when Elijah walked into the presence of this Baal-worshiping king and told him there would be no rain for several years, Ahab was shocked. Ahab had built a strong military defense, but it would be no help against drought.

He had many priests of Baal, but they could not bring rain. Elijah bravely confronted the man who led his people into evil, and he told of a power far greater

than any pagan god—the Lord God of Israel. When rebellion and heresy were at an all-time high in Israel, God responded not only with words but with action.

Elijah fed by an angel

1 Kings 19:5-8

Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" [6] He looked around and saw some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again.

Then the angel of the Lord came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, for there is a long journey ahead of you."

So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God.

When Elijah fled to Mount Horeb, he was returning to the sacred place where God had met Moses and had given his laws to the people. Obviously, God gave Elijah special strength to travel this great distance—over 200 miles—with additional food.

Like Moses before him and Jesus after him, Elijah fasted for 40 days and 40 nights (Deut. 9:9; Matthew 4:1-2). Centuries later, Moses, Elijah, and Jesus would meet together on a mountaintop (Luke 9:28-36).

To the widow of Zerephath

1 Kings 17:12-16

But she said, "I swear by the Lord your God that I don't have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die."

But Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid! Go ahead and cook that 'last meal,' but bake me a little loaf of bread first. Afterward there will still be enough food for you

and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be plenty of flour and oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!"

So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her son continued to eat from her supply of flour and oil for many days. For no matter how much they used, there was always enough left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.

When the widow of Zarephath met Elijah, she thought she was preparing her last meal. But a simple act of faith produced a miracle.

She trusted Elijah and gave all she had to eat to him. Faith is the step between promise and assurance. Miracles seem so out of reach for our feeble faith. But every miracle, large or small, begins with an act of obedience. We may not see the solution until we take the first step of faith.

Hezekiah prospered

2 Kings 18:6-7

He remained faithful to the Lord in everything, and he carefully obeyed all the commands the Lord had given Moses. So the Lord was with him, and Hezekiah was successful in everything he did. He revolted against the king of Assyria and refused to pay him tribute.

Judah was sandwiched between two world powers, Egypt and Assyria. Both wanted to control Judah and Israel because they lay at the vital crossroads of all ancient Near East trade. The nation who controlled Judah would have a military and economic advantage over its rivals.

When Hezekiah became king, Assyria controlled Judah. Acting with great courage, Hezekiah rebelled against this mighty empire to whom his father had submitted. He placed his faith in God's strength rather than his own, and he obeyed God's commands in spite of the obstacles and dangers that, from a purely human standpoint, looked overwhelming.

To Asa

2 Chron. 14:6-7

During those peaceful years, he was able to build up the fortified cities throughout Judah. No one tried to make war against him at this time, for the Lord was giving him rest from his enemies.

Asa told the people of Judah, "Let us build towns and fortify them with walls, towers, gates, and bars. The land is ours because we sought the Lord our God, and he has given us rest from our enemies." So they went ahead with these projects and brought them to completion.

Asa's reign was marked by peace because he "did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God." This refrain is often repeated in Chronicles—*obedience* to God leads to *peace* with God and others. In the case of Judah's kings, obedience to God led to national peace, just as God had promised centuries earlier. In our case, obedience may not always bring peace with our enemies, but it will bring peace with God and complete peace in his future kingdom. Obeying God is the first step on the path to peace.

Simply attending worship services is not enough to secure God's peace. Like Asa, we must also actively remove anything that is offensive to God. Becoming more active in church attendance or good deeds will still leave us in turmoil if we have failed to eliminate sinful practices from our lives. We should continually ask God to help us remove any source of temptation from our lives.

"Rest on every side" means that Judah had peace with all her neighbors. Times of peace are not just for resting. They allow us to prepare for times of trouble. King Asa recognized the period of peace as the right time to build his defenses—the moment of attack would be too late. It is also difficult to withstand spiritual attack unless defenses are prepared beforehand. Decisions about how to face temptations must be made with cool heads long before we feel the heat of temptation. Build your defenses now before temptation strikes.

To Jehoshaphat

2 Chron. 17:3-5

The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father's early years and did not worship the images of Baal.

He sought his father's God and obeyed his commands instead of following the practices of the kingdom of Israel. So the Lord established Jehoshaphat's control over the kingdom of Judah. All the people of Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so he became very wealthy and highly esteemed.

The people of Judah were Biblically illiterate. They had never taken time to listen to and discuss God's law and understand how it could change them. Jehoshaphat realized that knowing God's commands was the first step to getting people to live as they should, so he initiated a nationwide religious education program.

He reversed the religious decline that had occurred at the end of Asa's reign by putting God first in the people's minds and instilling in them a sense of commitment and mission. Because of this action, the nation began to follow God. Churches and Christian schools today need solid Christian education programs.

Exposure to good Bible teaching through church school, church, Bible study, and personal and family devotions is essential for living as God intended.

To Uzziah

2 Chron. 26:5-15

Uzziah sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. And as long as the king sought the Lord, God gave him success.

He declared war on the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod. Then he built new towns in the Ashdod area and in other parts of Philistia.

God helped him not only with his wars against the Philistines, but also in his battles with the Arabs of Gur and in his wars with the Meunites. The Meunites paid annual tribute to him, and his fame spread even to Egypt, for he had become very powerful.

Uzziah built fortified towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, and at the angle in the wall. He also constructed forts in the wilderness and dug many water cisterns, because he kept great herds of livestock in the foothills of Judah and on the plains.

He was also a man who loved the soil. He had many workers who cared for his farms and vineyards, both on the hillsides and in the fertile valleys.

Uzziah had an army of well-trained warriors, ready to march into battle, unit by unit. This great army of fighting men had been mustered and organized by Jeiel, the secretary of the army, and his assistant, Maaseiah. They were under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's officials.

Twenty-six hundred clan leaders commanded these regiments of seasoned warriors. The army consisted of 307,500 men, all elite troops. They were prepared to assist the king against any enemy.

Uzziah provided the entire army with shields, spears, helmets, coats of mail, bows, and sling stones.

And he produced machines mounted on the walls of Jerusalem, designed by brilliant men to shoot arrows and hurl stones from the towers and the corners of the wall. His fame spread far and wide, for the Lord helped him wonderfully until he became very powerful.

These machines were similar to the catapults later used by the Romans and were capable of slinging stones or arrows a great distance.

To Jotham

Chronicles 27:6

King Jotham became powerful because he was careful to live in obedience to the Lord his God.

The tribute he received amounted to 3 3/4 tons of silver and 62,000 bushels each of wheat and barley.

To Daniel

Daniel 1:9

Now God had given the chief official great respect for Daniel.

God moved with an unseen hand to change the heart of this Babylonian official. The strong moral conviction of these four young men made an impact. God promises to be with his people in times of trial and temptation (Psalm 106:46; Isaiah 43:2-5; 1 Cor. 10:13). His active intervention often comes just when we take a stand for him. Stand for God and trust him to protect you in ways you may not be able to see.

Jesus is knocking at your heart's door.



Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible.*

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