

Good News Daily

July 21–26, 2008

What is this “fruit of theirs”? Paul had been talking about the indebtedness to minister to the residents of Jerusalem physically. Evidently Paul had to approve the contribution the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia had gathered for their fellow believers.

It may be difficult to imagine, In order to understand more fully the context of what Paul was talking about, we need to consider what it was like in that era. They walked, rode horses and donkeys, or sailed in ships to get to their destination. They had no food coolers, motels, restaurants, email, walkie-talkies, nor cell phones. It took days to travel to destinations we can get to in hours. And where did they sleep on the way? That takes a lot of imagination. With this paradigm in our minds, we can understand better what the disciples had to go through to spread the Word. And it must have been a major project to pack up these gifts and take them to other believers. It took much concern, empathy, and commitment, especially if they were under persecution.

We, who live in a free, relatively prosperous country, have difficulty putting ourselves in their shoes. For instance, we drink water we can get when we turn on a faucet. And where did they get it? From a spring, or a river, or a well to which they had to take a vessel to and carry in their hands or on their heads on the way back home. I am reminded me of the time when the electricity went off where I grew up and I had to go across the street to pump water from the town well. When I was finished, I needed to remember to fill the can that was left there so the next person who needed water could prime the pump, as I had with the water left there for me by the person who used the pump before I did. Do we still care for our neighbors in that way?

Joshua 23:1-16; Psalm 55; Matthew 27:11-23

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Monday, July 21

Pray for your pastors' families.

God's peace and protection.

A growing love relationship with their spouses.

A commitment to quality and quantity time together.

Romans 13:8-14 *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.* (v.14)

I *put on* the Lord Jesus Christ, as soon as I wake up in the morning, when I do my prayer and meditation. First, there is praise and thanksgiving, including a verbal statement of Psalm 91 in first person, where I remind myself that I am abiding in God's presence. Next, I confess my sinfulness, petition my Heavenly Father for my own needs, and intercede for others. I then drink five cups of water (not all at one time!) in order for my physical body to get rid of the toxins it collects. That takes care of my physical body. When I get dressed, I *put on* clean clothes, warm in cold weather. They are not tight because I don't want to try to look “sexy.”

Then my husband and I take care of the soul and spirit together. During our prayer and Bible study, we always *put on* the armor of God. The helmet of salvation protects our brains from onslaught by “the world, the flesh and the Devil.” The breastplate of righteousness, God's approval, protects our hearts, His dwelling place. The belt of Truth makes sure the breastplate of righteousness *stays on*. The shoes of the gospel of peace encourage us to share Him with others. The shield of faith protects us from the darts of the Enemy and the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, increases our knowledge of Him and His objectives for us during our sanctification.

I have discovered in Isaiah 58:8 that His people can still claim the rear guard of the glory of God, as the Hebrews did during forty years of their travels in the wilderness.

Joshua 7:1-13; Psalms 41, 52; Matthew 26:36-46

Tuesday, July 22

Pray for wisdom for your pastors.

The mind of Christ.

Godly decision-making.

Understanding of biblical truth.

Romans 14:1-12 *But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.* (v.10)

We need to remember that, because we are all God's children, we won't grow up until we arrive at Home. We also need to remember that, because we are all His children, we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Some of us may have a judgment personality; some are perceptive. We are all oriented either intellectually or emotionally. I am intellectual/judgmental, and tend to judge others. I have to curb it because, as my teacher used to point out, "type is no excuse." I often find myself in the self-defense mode to justify what I think or do—then I need to repent and ask forgiveness. I need to remind myself that "the ground is level before the cross" and that, as Jesus said in Matthew 7:2, I shall be judged as I judge others.

Joshua 8:1-22, Psalm 45, Matthew 26:47-56

Wednesday, July 23

Pray for your pastors' ministry focus.

Clear vision.

Commitment to biblical priorities.

Remain true to their God-given gifts and strengths.

Matthew 26:57-68 *But later on two came forward, and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'"* (vv.60b-61)

Jesus gave up His "temple" Himself and came back into it three days later. He had told the disciples about his death at least three times. I wonder why they didn't discuss it with Him. Jesus tried to warn them about what would happen in the future.

Romans 8:11 tells us that The Spirit Who raised Him from the dead, in essence, caused Him to be born again!! So He was the first one to enact what happens to us when we receive Him into our hearts! His body was healed physically in the tomb and we can "be healed by His stripes" via the Spirit. I can recall how a lady in California was physically healed when we prayed for her in Florida!

Our bodies become temples when we invite Him in to live there. And He can "rebuild" them when we do things to them that cause injury, like breaking a bone. Isn't that wonderful?

Joshua 8:30-35; Psalm 119:49-72; Romans 14:13-23

Thursday, July 24

Pray for your pastors' health.

Protection of their body and mind.

An extra portion of stamina and strength.

Commitment to stress-releasing activity.

Joshua 9:3-21 *But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them. This we will do to them, even let them live, lest wrath be upon us for the oath which we swore to them."* (vv.19-20)

We can see here how important a covenant was. Even if they did not write it down or record it, it was honored. Even when the "invaders" had been deceptive, the Hebrews kept the covenant—even when there was "grumbling in the camp." Old Testament means "old covenant," of law, and New Testament means "new covenant," of grace. Last year, Ray Vander Laan explained to my congregation how a covenant is a relationship between a stronger authority and a weaker one. The Hebrews learned by experience how important a covenant was. It may have been that Achan was punished for breaking a covenant (Joshua 7:24-26).

Psalm 50; Romans 15:1-13; Matthew 26:69-75

Friday, July 25

Pray for your pastor's spiritual growth.

A heart for God and the lost.

Fresh biblical insights.

Personal devotions not related to sermon preparations.

Psalms 40 *He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay; and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.* (v.2)

While we were living in Sarasota, Florida, we were considering building a solar-powered house on a piece of property in a low, marshy area. Then we heard words of prophecy in our Bible study group saying that God wanted us to move to the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee. The daily lectionary reading for the day was Psalm 40! This, to us, was confirmation that we were to move. God is a great communicator. We just need to listen!

Joshua 9:22—10:15; Psalm 54; Romans 15:14-24; Matthew 27:1-10

Saturday, July 26

Pray for your pastors' purity.

Pure motives.

Pure thought-life and faithfulness to their spouses.

Romans 15:25-33 *Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.* (v.28)