

FAMILY FOCUS

SEPTEMBER 2020

Renew Your Strength

BY REV. DR. JONATHAN LOVELADY

27 Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"? 28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:27-31 NIV)

I worked my way through college, so it was always important to have a summer job. For a couple of summers, while I was attending Jacksonville State University (Jacksonville, Alabama) I worked at Hogue Tool, a tool and die shop in Piedmont, Alabama. This particular summer the work was very slow, and normally the shop shut down one week around the July 4th holiday, but the owner decided to close the shop for two weeks. This was devastating for a college student who had only the summer to work. My friend, Doug Brown, offered a solution. He was "pulp wooding" that summer and if I would help him we would split the profits from the two weeks. It sounded like a great plan, but it was extremely hard work. "Pulp

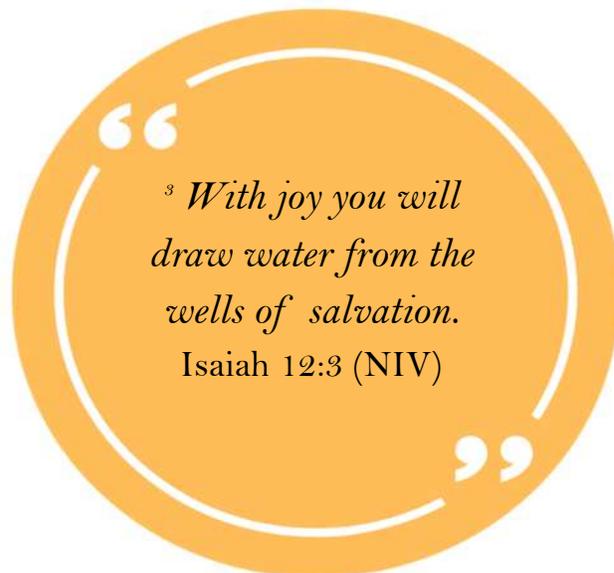
wood" is the process of buying a stand of pine trees, (suitable for being ground into "pulp", and cutting them into 8 foot lengths, and loading them in a truck for a local paper mill. This job seemed doable since I was young, strong, and I had used a chain saw for many years.

One afternoon, we were working in a pine grove well off the beaten path. It was one of the hottest days, and the heat was compounded by a running chain saw and the clearing of the trees, which left very little shade. To make matters worse, we had underestimated the amount of water to bring to the job site. As the hottest part of the afternoon approached, we had nearly loaded the whole truck, however, we were completely

without water. The nearest store was 4 or 5 miles away, and our only transportation was our large truck. After a little more than an hour, we came to the mutual realization that we were in serious trouble. Dehydration had literally drained our energy! Both Doug and I were children of the south, and we knew that heat stroke was a dangerous and strong possibility. Despite our partial load, we had to drive to the store. It took all of our energy to tie down our load. Since that day, I don't think I have ever experienced the same level of ravaging thirst or weakness. Even today, I can recall that first drink of water. I could feel it flowing into my body. I could sense the strength returning, and the weakness being transformed. I was refreshed and renewed from the inside out, and it was wonderful... all from just a simple drink of water!

God was gracious to my friend and me, that we were not seriously hurt. Things could have been much worse. This experience was providential and a parable for life. It helps me understand the passage from Isaiah. These people were exhausted with their circumstances. They thought that God had overlooked or forgotten them. They were trying to make it back home, but they had been drained by the difficulty of the journey. They were weakened from the circumstances, the hardships, and the hopelessness. Yet, God told them, "those who hope upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Some translations use the word "wait" upon the Lord. The Greek translation goes like this "those that endure with the Lord shall be transformed to strength." We are all weakened by the circumstances of this pandemic, the turmoil in our country, the negativity of an election cycle, and the inward turmoil of the circumstances in our personal lives. How are we to hope...wait...endure with the Lord? How do we get this life changing drink from the well of salvation?

This may sound mysterious and difficult, but in reality we have to return to the basics. This past Sunday was Rally Day (August 30). It is our day to be renewed in the basics that give substance to faith. The pandemic has made all of these things chal-



lenging for us, and Rally Day was no exception. Our waiting or hoping upon the Lord is to be found in our willingness to recommit ourselves to seeking the Lord in our lives. Let me give you a short, but not exhausting list of the "blocking and tackling" of the substance of hope:

Worship: I realize our worship life has changed, and we are encouraging online participation. It is easy to neglect worship if you are doing it as an individual in the comfort of your home. It becomes easy to neglect, because there is little community or accountability. Without motivation, it is easy to let worship drift. Isaiah also says: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." Isaiah 12:3, (NIV) The source of joy is worshipping the living God who is able to lift us into the marvelous light of hope when we are willing to look beyond the darkness. If you are running low on joy, make an effort to turn your heart toward worship.

Giving: This is also an easy one to neglect. This year we are running behind financially, and it does concern me. I am tempted, at times, to be fearful, but God reminds me to be faithful! This is how we wait upon the Lord and show our source of hope. We proclaim that materialism will not rule us, instead we want Christ to rule in our hearts. There is a

theme in our society that we do not have enough, thus many have given into hoarding, rather than sharing. Give unto the Lord and be set free to trust the Lord in your life. When we do this, we will find a blessing and be a blessing to others!

Scripture: Our Sunday school classes are getting back together, and you can join one in person or by using Zoom. Bringing scripture into your life regularly and routinely is one of the great sources of spiritual strength. Isaiah reminds us that God's Word will not return to God empty or voided, instead it will accomplish God's purpose. (Isaiah 55:11) God's intention long before this pandemic was to strengthen us for our circumstances in order to bear witness to God's power and goodness. This Word is alive for you and me, imparting to us the strength that we need for our most difficult times.

Service: Jesus reminds us that He came to serve us, not to be served. Jesus gave His life as a ransom for many! (Mark 10:45) Sacrificing our time to serve Christ is a reflection of Jesus's heart. We are to do everything in name of Jesus, but we get confused and do "nice" things so that people will like us, not because we are devoted to our Lord. Certainly kindness is always welcomed, and it is to be valued. Kindness done in the name of Jesus holds great opportunity to allow us to move beyond being "nice" to people to sharing the love of Jesus Christ. We know this love can change lives, because it has changed ours! The pandemic has reduced some of our opportunities for service, but opportunities are before you. It might be a phone call, or an encouraging note, but do it with a prayer that the love of Christ will shine in your heart!

Prayer: This is the last one that I want to highlight. Please pray for St. Johns and its ministry. Pray that God helps us to be more effective at bringing people to Jesus Christ! Pray for our nation, that God will help us to be healed and reconciled. On September 26th there will be a prayer march in Washington, DC organized by the Billy Graham Evangelis-

tic Organization (<https://prayermarch2020.com/>). We need to be praying more than ever for our ministry and for our nation. We may not be able to go to Washington, DC, but we can pray along with this group on Saturday, September 26, 2020 from noon to 2 pm.

Where does all of this lead us? Earl Palmer, one of greatest preachers of the 20th century, tells this story: The Amazon River is the largest river in the world. The mouth is 90 miles across. There is enough water to exceed the combined flow of the Yangtze, Mississippi and Nile Rivers. So much water comes from the Amazon that they can detect its currents 200 miles out in the Atlantic Ocean. One irony of ancient navigation is that sailors in ancient times died for lack of water, caught in windless waters of the South Atlantic. They were adrift, helpless, dying of thirst. Sometimes other ships from South America who knew the area would come alongside and call out, "What is your problem?" And they would exclaim, "Can you spare us some water? Our sailors are dying of thirst!" And from the other ship would come the cry, "Just lower your buckets. You are in the mouth of the mighty Amazon River."

Are you thirsty my friends? Drop your buckets into the living water of Jesus Christ! He will fill us to overflowing. Amen!

In Christ,



Small Groups



YOUTH GROUP Location: Loft @ 5 PM The group is middle and high school combined. Contact Chris Kellam @ chris@sjpcjax.org for more information.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY Location: Fellowship Hall @ 10 AM on the first Monday of the month This class will begin studying *1 and 2 Thessalonians, Living Faithfully in View of Christ's Coming* developed by John MacArthur. Contact Diane McFadden @ bmdm56@gmail.com for more information.

TUESDAY MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST Location: Fellowship Hall @ 6 AM on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month. This group will begin meeting on 10/13. Contact John Otterson @ ot-terpjk@att.net for more information.

WEDNESDAY MEN'S GROUP Location: TBD Contact Trip Stanly @ (904)866-2118 or wastanly@hotmail.com for more information

STEPHEN MINISTRIES Location: Kirk House Thursdays @ 6 PM Contact Lynne Turpin @ la-turp@bellsouth.net for more information.

MOM'S GROUP Location: Fellowship Hall Thursdays @ 9 AM Contact Pamela Smith @ barbregirl3@aol.com or Lauren McLaughlin @ lmclaughlin7@yahoo.com for more information.

Prayer Requests:

- SUE CULPEPPER
- DORIS CASS
- AIREN WALKER
- VIRGINIA STAATS
- MARYLEA RUSSELL
- RUTH LAVENDER
- LIZ MCKEAN
- MARY SAMFORD
- POLLY ANN ANDERSON
- FRAN MILES
- JUDY DAILEY
- KATE MARPLE
- WAYNE HOLLAWAY
- MAL MAY
- GAYLE TOLBERT
- GINNY WHITNER
- SHIRLEY DOUGLAS



FACING GREAT FEAR

by Lisa Reinhard

Fear has become a cozy companion to many of us during these days of COVID and political unrest. We watch the news and our skin crawls while we witness utter destruction of cities, stores, and historical statues. The world suddenly feels very unsafe and life has an uncertain and unreal quality to it. What is happening to our country? How can we possibly heal the rifts that have carved deep gashes into “the American way?” Who stands for what and whom do we believe? Our minds swirl with confusion, our sleep may become restless and interrupted, and it becomes increasingly difficult to maneuver through our days.

It's important for us to realize that we are not the first people to experience great fear. All through the ages, societies have been forced to stare fear in the face and have miraculously survived. Think of the fear experienced by the first settlers to America; they encountered Native Americans and were afraid of their “savage” ways, their language, and their customs. Imagine the fear that the pioneers who opened the West experienced. Most rode past the bodies of those who had not made it. There was the constant fear of “Indian” attacks.

The Scriptures are full of references to fear. Hebrews 13: 5-6 says, “God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So, we say with

confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’” This echoes Psalm 27, verses 1 and 2: “The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 34:4 states, “I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.”

Shortly after my husband Jack died, I became enveloped in fear of the dark. As soon as the sunlight began to fade, I barricaded myself inside my house, shutting the blinds and rechecking the locks many times. I simply would not venture out into the foreboding darkness. It was a real and tangible fear, causing me to sleep with lights on inside and outside my home. My washer and dryer are in my detached garage and many was the time I just let the loads sit because darkness had fallen quickly, and I was afraid to venture back to the garage. I had not lived alone since I first graduated from college and had my own apartment. Even though I moved into my house with two dogs, one after the other died and I was left truly on my own. One morning in church, Allison Stanley came up to me during the meet and greet and asked me softly, “How are you doing, Lisa?” I looked at her and my eyes filled with tears. Words began spilling out of my mouth and Allison was so caring and listened lovingly. She said we needed to pray against that fear, to ask God to remove it. I know she don-

sistently prayed for me because my fear of the dark began disappearing until it was gone. Looking back now, it's hard for me to realize how crippling that fear really was. It was the power of prayer, of two people petitioning God to remove the fear, that brought results.

Along with prayer, filling our minds with Scripture helps to allay fear. Memorizing passages like Isaiah 41: 10, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Or Joshua 1:9 (which became my constant prayer during my fear of the dark days): "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Recalling the words of wise people also girds us with courage. One of my favorite quotes has long been this one by Eleanor Roosevelt: "You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

Henry Ford said, "One of the greatest discoveries a man can make, one of his great surprises, is to find he can do what he was afraid he couldn't do." Babe Ruth quipped, "Don't let the fear of striking out hold you back." Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "He who is not everyday conquering some fear has not learned the secret of life." And Master Yoda sagely stated: "Fear is the path to the Dark Side. Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate, and hate leads to suffering."

When Jesus was introducing his disciples to the idea of the Holy Spirit, He spoke these words to them: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." Indeed, His

peace cannot be duplicated nor matched. It simply does not exist in our broken world. When we continuously turn to Him for our peace, I believe it is a sure-fire way to combat the fear we're experiencing today. I have to keep reminding myself that He is in charge, and as Mercy Me's song says so jubilantly, "We win!"

Fear is very real, yes. It can be gripping, terrifying, paralyzing. That's why I am so choosy about what I allow in my mind. I do not read scary books nor watch horror movies. When I was 14, a youth minister told a group of us that our minds have a basket at the back of them. Everything that goes through our mind dumps into that basket. Later, when we're tired, vulnerable, scared, the things in that basket come back into our conscious minds and torture us all over again. Those words made a profound impact on me, and throughout my teenage years until today, I guard my mind from evil.

Another of my favorite Psalms is 91. Here are the first six verses. "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.' Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday."

With a God like that, fear doesn't stand a chance!

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

All Sunday School classes begin at 10 am.



SUNDAY SCHOOL:

LITTLE FLOCK CLASS, Location: New Nursery Pre-K through 1st and 2nd through 5th Contact Mollie Lackey @ mollie@sjpcjax.org for more information.

MEN'S CLASS Location: Session Room This class is studying the Gospel of John. Contact Bill Mentz @ wmmentz@gmail.com for more information.

WOMEN'S CLASS Location: Purple Door Room 23 This class is studying *Get Out of Your Head*, by Jennie Allen. Contact Mashell Lingle @ mlingle3@gmail.com for more information.

NOLAN/PAJCIC CLASS Location: Adult Bible Study room in Kindergarten This class is studying Genesis. Contact Jim Nolan @ james.nolan@gray-robinson.com or Curry Pajcic @ curry@pajcic.com for more information.

KIRK HOUSE CLASS Location: Kirk House and on Zoom This class is studying *Bible Prophecy and Jesus: What the Prophets Said, What the Israelites/Rabbis Understood/Taught, How/When Jesus Fulfilled Prophecy Specifically/Perfectly*. Contact Kevin & Wendi Hunger @ wbirdh@comcast.net for more information.

FRIENDSHIP FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CLASS Location: Chapel This class is studying *The Epistle of Paul, written to all the Christians at Philippi and to all believers everywhere. A message to Be Joyful in Christ*. Contact Diane McFadden @ bmdm56@gmail.com for more information.

LITTLE FLOCK CLASS Location: New Nursery Pre-K through 1st and 2nd through 5th Contact Mollie Lackey @ mollie@sjpcjax.org for more information.

YOUTH CLASS Location: Loft Contact Chris Kellam @ chris@sjpcjax.org for more information.

September

BIRTHDAYS



RL	Eaton	September 01	Jim	Nolan	September 18
Virginia	Staats	September 01	Graham	Crainshaw	September 19
Anne	Carter	September 03	Melissa	Corrie	September 20
Jordan	Tribley	September 03	Pat	Mesing	September 20
Harrison	Brown	September 04	Allison	Stanly	September 20
Mary Elizabeth	Cofran	September 06	Savannah	Garland	September 21
Lisa	Lovelady	September 06	Robert	Hazlehurst	September 21
Sarah	Wright	September 06	Chad	Morris	September 21
Cathryn	Burke	September 07	William	Stanly III	September 22
Mathew	Gaines	September 10	Jacqueline	Smith	September 23
Melody	Rafferty	September 10	Cate	Wachholz	September 23
Charlotte	Wintz	September 11	Autumn	Hawkins	September 24
Jim	Cassidey III	September 12	Jill	Madden	September 25
A. Brooks	Collier III	September 13	Andrew	Russell	September 25
Levi	Hatcher	September 13	Alexandra	Hughes	September 26
Samuel	Sanford	September 14	Wendi	Hunger	September 29
John Wright	Stanly	September 14	Hunter	Hardin	September 30
Conleigh	O'Quinn	September 15	Laura	Peden	September 30
Pollyann	Anderson	September 16	Clyde	Wray	September 30
Darleen	Knoop	September 17			

If you have a birthday or prayer request that you would like to add to the newsletter, please email the church office at sjpc@sjpcjax.org.