

MON.
June
21

1 Thessalonians
5:12-18

Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else (1 Thess. 5:15).

NO PAYBACKS

KAROLYN PARSONS

A group of boys surrounded a child on the playground. Each boy took a turn roughing up the child and then quickly said, “No paybacks!” No matter what the child did to escape, the group around him continued to hurt him and insisted that he wasn’t allowed to do anything to defend himself. It wasn’t until an adult realized what was going on and intervened that the situation ended. The child was hurt, confused, and felt powerless against the other boys. In his pain, he wanted to hurt them, like they had hurt him.

The situation in Thessalonica had been a rough one. Paul’s letter to them addressed persecution, suffering, and distress. The believers had suffered, and no doubt some felt the desire to fight back in their hurt and frustration. Paul, however, encouraged them not to pay back wrong for wrong, but to strive to do good, not only for each other, but for everyone else. Paul did not dismiss their pain and struggle; he encouraged them to move forward in faith by being patient with each other and to live in peace with one another.

*Tho’ Satan should
buffet, tho’ trials
should come.*

“It Is Well with My Soul” by
Horatio G. Spafford

**The Spirit of the
Sovereign LORD is
on me, because the
LORD has anointed
me to proclaim
good news to the
poor. He has sent
me to bind up the
brokenhearted, to
proclaim freedom
for the captives
and release from
darkness for the
prisoners
(Isaiah 61:1).**

Please pray:

That many people in
Democratic Republic of
the Congo will come to
know Christ and receive the
fullness of the Holy Spirit.

TUES.
June
22

1 Thessalonians
5:19-28

May God himself . . . sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:23).

GO WITH GOD

KAROLYN PARSONS

Every Sunday, as the final words of the closing prayer were spoken, the preacher would raise his arms to the congregation, tell them to open their eyes, lift their heads, and to place their hands with their palms facing up to receive the final blessing. The blessing often included the words of Paul from his letter to the church in Thessalonica.

The words were not spoken softly, but powerfully and with confidence: *God of peace . . . Sanctify you through and through . . . Your whole spirit . . . Be kept blameless . . . The one who calls you . . . Is faithful and will do it* (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). The words were not spoken lightly, but as both an assurance of who God is, and the power of God working through one's entire being.

What words to encourage one another with! These words are not only a reminder of God's power, but what His power can do through you. What peace we can have when we allow God to fully work His way and His will in our lives! What an amazing experience when we know that God has called us into His faithfulness.

As we go out, may we live in the confidence of these words, trusting that we can go in God's peace and faithfulness!

*Now thank we all our
God With heart and
hands and voices, Who
wondrous things hath
done.*

"Now Thank We All Our
God" by Martin Rinkart

**I delight greatly in
the LORD; my soul
rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed
me with garments
of salvation and
arrayed me in a robe
of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom
adorns his head like
a priest, and as a
bride adorns herself
with her jewels
(Isaiah 61:10).**

Please pray:

For the development
of Christian leaders in
Democratic Republic of the
Congo.

WED.
June
23

Hebrews 13:7-14

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith (Heb. 13:7).

CHOOSE WISELY

KAROLYN PARSONS

Flip through television channels, radio stations, podcasts, live streams, and social media, and you'll find all sorts of voices with all sorts of opinions claiming to be the right one. Some claim to be experts, but rarely do we check their credentials, training, or reliability when considering the information presented. What is true or not is not always obvious. This includes our faith and those we choose to guide us to truth. Are we listening to those who declared themselves ministers, or those who were carefully trained, mentored, and held accountable in their calling? Lots of voices are out there, but how do you know whom to trust?

A professor once said that we tend to treat religion like a buffet: "You take what you want and leave the rest." Certainly, if we look around enough, we'll find something that matches our own opinions. We tend to leave the rest.

The writer of Hebrews understood that people would seek answers from many sources. The writer also knew that not all sources were truthful or reliable. We are encouraged to follow those who lead in the truth of God, and not to be led astray.

Choose whom you follow wisely.

*Jesus, Jesus, How I
trust Him! How I've
proved Him o'er and
o'er!*

"'Tis So Sweet to Trust in
Jesus" by Louisa M. R. Stead

**If my people would
only listen to me,
if Israel would
only follow my
ways, how quickly I
would subdue their
enemies and turn
my hand against
their foes!
(Psalm 81:13-14).**

Please pray:

That many people in
Equatorial Guinea will come
to know Christ and receive
the fullness of the Holy
Spirit.

THURS.
June
24

Hebrews
13:15-25

Now may the God of peace . . . equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ (Heb. 13:20a, 21a).

DON'T FORGET

KAROLYN PARSONS

When a child is rushing around in the morning getting ready to leave, there is often a parent saying, “Don’t forget!” Parents want to make sure that their child has everything that they need and is properly prepared for the day. We find similar sentiments at the closing of this letter in Hebrews.

The writer of Hebrews knew that times had been difficult. There were plenty of opportunities to become discouraged and give up on their faith. Here, however, we have words encouraging the believers to “not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (v. 16).

The believers are encouraged to press on, to continue in their faith, and to not give up on doing good. While circumstances were difficult, it did not mean that God had abandoned them and left them on their own. In fact, it’s quite the opposite. God equipped them with everything they needed to do His will.

As you face your day, remember to praise God through worship and doing good for others. Don’t forget that God will help you with everything you need.

Living for Jesus a life that is true, Striving to please Him in all that I do.

“Living for Jesus” by
Thomas O. Chisholm

They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the LORD (Psalm 112:7).

Please pray:

For the development of Christian leaders in Equatorial Guinea.

FRI.
June
25

John 17:20-26

I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity (John 17:23a).

UNITY BRINGS PEACE

KAROLYN PARSONS

A mother watched her husband and son playing a video game. They were on opposite teams and trying to outscore the other. As the games went on, their smack talk and insults to each other were escalating. They were getting angry. When the game was over, they were upset with each other and in a foul mood. It wasn't pleasant to live with either one of them at that moment.

Later, the mother noticed a change. The father and son decided to be on the same team instead of playing against each other. Their skills and efforts were now joined in a common purpose instead of fighting each other.

The change in attitude was remarkably better. What was the difference? *Unity*. Instead of fighting against each other, they worked together for a common goal and the results were much better.

Jesus desired that the faithful would not fight against each other but come together in unity, not only with each other, but also with God. In unity, there is peace. What greater good can be accomplished when we seek peace with God and each other to work for a common goal?

*Let us praise God
together on our knees.*

"Let Us Break Bread
Together" by Afro-American
Spiritual

**Let the one who is
thirsty come; and
let the one who
wishes take the
free gift of the
water of life
(Revelation 22:17b).**

Please pray:

That many people in
Ethiopia will come to know
Christ and receive the
fullness of the Holy Spirit.

SAT
June
26

Deuteronomy
7:6-12

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations (Deut. 7:9a).

CHOSEN

KAROLYN PARSONS

It's the moment every kid in gym class dreads: When the gym teacher picks two students as team captains and tells them to take turns choosing their teams. If you aren't the tallest, fastest, most athletic, or best friend of a team captain, the anxious process of waiting to be chosen can be difficult. We want to belong. We want to be chosen. We want to be valued. No one wants to be picked last.

In today's scripture reading, we read that we are chosen, treasured, and loved by God. What a contrast to all the rejection we often face by those around us! Such words offer us comfort and assurance of God's presence in our lives.

God's love is expressed through a deep commitment that is not a temporary arrangement but based on a "covenant of love to a thousand generations" (v. 9). God will continue to choose and love those who also choose to love Him because of His promise to many generations before us, and many more generations to come. His love is not fleeting, but steady, constant, and sure.

*Pass me not, O gentle
Savior; Hear my
humble cry.*

"Pass Me Not" by Fanny J.
Crosby

**If anyone
acknowledges that
Jesus is the Son of
God, God lives in
them and they in
God. And so we
know and rely on
the love God has for
us (1 John 4:15-16).**

Please pray:

For the development
of Christian leaders in
Ethiopia.

BLESSINGS AND REMINDERS

KAROLYN PARSONS

Sometimes life situations can get you down. You find yourself in a place you'd rather not be. You're feeling battle weary and ready to give up. You wonder where God is in the midst of it all. Doubts and questions fill your mind. Hope looks far away.

When we find ourselves like this, we're not looking for platitudes and pat answers. We need a sign of reassurance that the Lord knows what we are going through and hears the cries of our hearts. We want to know that the Lord still works in our trials.

Psalms like the one we read today are words of comfort, blessing, and assurance. No matter what the circumstances, protection, help, success, and victory are found in God's care for us. The last few verses of this reading are reminders of God's faithfulness, spoken in words of confidence.

The Lord gives victory to those He calls. He answers our prayers. We have every reason to trust God to answer us and give us victory when we call upon Him. We find hope to trust that we are not alone, and that God goes with us.

*And then I cried,
"Dear Jesus, come
and heal my broken
spirit"; And somehow
Jesus came and
brought to me the
victory.*

"Victory in Jesus" by Eugene Bartlett

**The righteous
will flourish like a
palm tree, they will
grow like a cedar of
Lebanon; planted
in the house of
the LORD, they will
flourish in the
courts of our God
(Psalm 92:12-13).**

Please pray:

That many people in Gabon will come to know Christ and receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.