



thispassingday

## Cover the Bases!

by Mark Brunner

### *The Perfect Game!* (Philippians 1:12)

***"Did you see that?" How often have you heard that? You're standing there and someone sees something you don't because you're looking in the wrong direction. My friend, life's a story, stayed tuned for more on This Passing Day.***

Recently there was a meteor shower over our little valley. All day, prior to the next morning when the shower was predicted to be most visible, the local radio and television stations promoted the fact that there was a certain time, between 3:00AM and 4:30AM when the most activity could be observed. They also suggested that you needed to be looking, in general, to the southeastern sky. That's where the most activity would take place. Well, the next morning, since I get up that early anyway, I was out on my morning walk at around 4:00AM. I scanned the sky in no particular direction for the telltale sign of a meteor trail. At first I didn't see anything; but suddenly there was a flash in the southwest. "Aha!" I thought. "The show is about to begin." I kept my eyes peeled on the southwestern sky even though the radio had suggested the southeast. After a few minutes of nothing happening, neck and eyes a bit strained, I lost my enthusiasm. "Bummer!" I thought. Then I remembered where I should've been looking. I turned to see one faint glimmer of a streak and that was it. The sun was rising and the show was—over. It had been going on out of my sight the

entire time. Sometimes we get so caught up in focusing on small details that we miss the bigger picture altogether.

Here's a story: As a boy, Leith Anderson grew up outside of New York City, an avid fan of the old Brooklyn Dodgers. One day his father took him to a World Series game between the Dodgers and Yankees. He was so excited, and just knew the Dodgers would trounce the Yankees. Unfortunately, the Dodgers never got on base, and his excitement was shattered. Years later, he was engrossed in a conversation with a man who was a walking sports almanac. Leith told him about the first major league game he attended and added, "It was such a disappointment. I was a Dodger fan and the Dodgers never got on base." The man said, "You were there? You were at the game when Don Larsen pitched the first perfect game in all of World Series history?" Leith replied, "Yeah, but uh, we lost." He then realized that he had been so caught up in his team's defeat that he missed out on the fact that he was a witness to a far greater page of history. (Alan Smith)

I wonder how often the same thing happens to us. We get so caught up in the "defeats" in our lives, the times when things don't turn out, as we wanted, that we miss the bigger picture. So we're depressed because an illness continues to linger, or when people don't treat us the way we think they ought to, or when we face financial difficulties. But we're often so blinded by the pain and disappointment of our "defeat" that we fail to appreciate the fact that we might be witness to something far greater that God is doing in our lives—often when we just aren't looking in the right direction.

*"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt 6:34)*

## *Six Pack Faith!* (Ephesians 6:9-20)

*I think that a hammer is about the most fascinating tool I own. It only works by swinging it, but the swinging can either put something together or take it apart. My friend, life's a story, stayed tuned for more on This Passing Day.*

Years ago, my daughter asked me this question: "Why do we need temptation? Wouldn't life be a whole lot simpler if there wasn't anything to tempt us? Dad,

think how much better our lives would be if we just didn't have to be tempted every day." A good question, I remembered thinking. Why DO we need temptation? You would think that a God who designed the human cell and created the entire vastness of space by merely speaking His Word could have come up with something a bit more efficient than temptation?

When you think about it, it would seem that she was right; life would be a whole lot more fulfilling without temptation. Right?

Here's a story. I took my daughter by the hand and we both walked down into the cold and dreary basement. I turned on the ceiling light and illuminated an array of terribly frightening torture equipment. There was a skier parked to one side; next to it a weight bench. We both sat down on the bench and I asked her this question: "Why do I put myself through this Monday through Friday every week out of the year?" She looked at me and thoughtfully smiled. "I thought it was because you liked doing it." I shook my head and laughed. "No! It's dark and dusty down here and, personally, I really don't enjoy it. I do this because it helps me stay fit." She looked at me and frowned. "So, what's this got to do with temptation? Are you tempted to quit or something?" "Sure!" I responded. "I am tempted to quit often. But, the reason I keep going is so that I stay fit enough to avoid the temptation the next time I get up in the morning and my body tells me not to do it! You see!" I gestured around the room. "This stuff makes me stronger every time I use it. The temptation to quit is always with me. But each time I use this stuff, I grow stronger in my ability to resist it."

I looked at my daughter and could see that she was starting to get it. "Sweetheart, God uses temptations in our lives to build us up, not tear us down." I said. "The little temptations make us stronger until we can resist the really big ones. Eventually, after a whole lot of them, you can build up a faith that can resist many of the temptations you once couldn't resist. In a way it's like doing enough exercise so that eventually you have, as my daughter called it, a "six-pack" faith. It's the kind of faith that can withstand the devil's blows because it's rock solid and able to hold up under even the greatest temptation." "Good!" she proclaimed. "I think I want to get me one of those!" "And so you will sweetheart." I replied—"So you will!"

*“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt 6:34)*

## *Keep Driving!* (Ephesians 6:9-20)

*When life gets you down did you ever notice how much you neck can hurt?  
There's a reason. It's looking down instead of up that can cause the pain. My friend, life's a story, stayed tuned for more on This Passing Day.*

In the days where variable speed windshield wipers were something you could only find on an expensive luxury car, driving through a downpour could be a real test of eyesight and patience. You had two speeds to choose from: slow and not quite so slow. For example, I drive an old Corvair made in 1966. The wipers have those two speeds. That works pretty well except when you have the real pesky intermittent rain or the torrential downpour. In the first case “slow” speed is too fast and in the last, “fast” isn’t fast enough. I remember just such a storm that hit when we were driving home from my grandparents’ house many years ago. We were crossing a bridge over a pretty large lake when the heavens opened up on our, old ‘59 Plymouth. The rain, resounding off the roof of the car, was deafening and all conversation stopped. My dad hit the “not so slow” speed and slowed to a crawl with the rest of the traffic. Alarmed in the back seat, I found myself asking, “Dad, what are you going to do?” He simply replied, “Mark, we’re on a bridge. There’s only one thing TO do—keep driving.” And even though I think my Dad had his nose nearly pushed against the windshield due to the low visibility and beating rain, driving really was, the only option.

Just keep driving. Sometimes, despite our fears of what might happen, it’s the only choice.

Here’s a story: A lady once asked John Wesley if he knew that he would die at midnight the next day, how would he spend the intervening time. He replied, “Why, madam, just as I intend to spend it now. I would preach this evening at Gloucester, and again at five tomorrow morning; after that I would ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the societies in the evening. I would then go to Martin’s house . . . talk and pray with the family as usual,

retire myself to my room at 10 o'clock, commend myself to my Heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in glory." (Today in the Word,)

Just keep driving. God's will for us is sometimes hard to see, especially when the rains of life come pouring down on us. You and I have two choices, we can stop or go forward; it's that simple. My Dad made the only choice that he could when he was on that bridge in that line of traffic. Stopping was dangerous and going back was impossible. Similarly, Wesley treated his life as a bridge, a bridge to heaven. Stopping wasn't an option and going back meant certain, spiritual death. That's called facing life fearlessly. Keep your nose forward and eyes on the goal; God's will for you today may mean stormy weather. Keep in mind, though, if you keep moving forward, His light WILL show the way; guaranteed!

*"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt 6:34)*

## *Nil Credam!* (Ephesians 6:18)

*A good sense of skepticism seems to be in order with most things people teach? Is there a time, though, when we need to put skepticism on the shelf for God's sake? My friend, life's a story, stayed tuned for more on This Passing Day.*

Holly and I were cleaning out some boxes of books in our attic recently when I ran across a copy of an old Latin text from school days long gone by. It had been a long time since I had cracked that binding so I took a couple of moments to thumb through the well-worn pages. On the top of one of them I noted an inscription I had made over 40 years ago: "Nil credam et omnia cavebo." After all of these years my Latin is pretty rusty but a rough translation is: "Believe nothing, guard against everything." As I put the book down it struck me how cynical I must have been in my teen years. Was I that distrustful of all things or just some things? I'm glad that time has taken the edge off my cynicism.

When you think about it, is that often the way you and I look at prayer? Do we really believe God can or will do all things; or are we really cynics at heart?

Here's a story: A miracle occurred years ago at the Pacific Garden Mission of Chicago, which got its start in the 1880s, when a notorious saloon called the Pacific Beer Garden was leased by a sweet Christian couple, George and Sarah Clarke. Dropping the word Beer, they added the word Mission and launched a ministry to downtrodden men and women. In the early years, they bore the cost of the work themselves, but the ministry's growth depleted their funds.

Eventually they couldn't pay the rent, and had only twenty-four hours to make payment; otherwise they would lose their lease. Praying through the night, they reminded the Lord of the lives being saved. Emerging from their house at daybreak, they gasped. Their yard was blanketed with rare mushrooms of the highest quality, though it wasn't the season for them. Gathering the crop, they carted the mushrooms to the Palmer House and sold them to the chefs for enough money to pay the rent. Years later, Mrs. Clarke, commenting on the experience, said, "No mushrooms were ever seen there before—nor any since."

(Author unknown. If anyone has a proprietary interest in this story please authenticate and I will be happy to credit, or remove, as the circumstances dictate.)

The Bible says: "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers . . ." (Ephesians 6:18). Mushrooms? I guess they qualify as a legitimate answer to a prayer request. The skeptic might frown at the odds and likelihood, especially if he were convinced that even a Christian ought first to "believe nothing." I kind of grew up with that attitude toward modern day miracles myself. Perhaps that explains the notation in my Latin book. But after nearly 60 years of getting to know the awesomeness of God, I'm far more ready now to believe than be on guard. Prayer works when we choose to believe it does. Besides, skepticism is far more likely to kill mushrooms than to pay the rent. I'll take believing any time. Thanks!

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***Heaven's Grocery Store!*** (Ephesians 6:18)

*Remember getting gifts for your birthday? If there were packages to open, it sure was hard to pick which one first. Thank God his blessings are much like that? My friend, life's a story, stayed tuned for more on This Passing Day.*

I bought the wrong filters for my fish tank recently. So, it was back to the store, box of filters and receipt in hand. Returning things is tedious and I've never had the patience for standing in line to return an item that, had I gotten the right thing in the first place, I wouldn't have to be wasting my time standing in line for. The line at the pet shop was short, only one lady and her two kids. "Great!" I thought. I'll get this over and be out of here in no time. Well, that's when she started talking about rabbits with the cashier and the time dragged. I reached for my wallet and "No cash." I didn't have the checkbook with me. "Great!" Finally my turn came and the clerk rang up the return. "No charge!" she smiled and handed me the receipt. There had been a credit on our account and the cost of the filters was covered. "Great!"

Prayer is often like that. There's lot's of credit waiting; but we need to have the patience to approach the cashier to get it.

An unknown author writes: "I was walking down life's highway one day and I read a sign that said Heaven's Grocery Store. As I got closer, the door opened wide and I found myself standing inside with a host of Angels. One handed me a basket and said, "My friend, shop with Love." Everything a Christian needed was there. First, I got some patience. Love was in the same row. Farther down was understanding. You need that everywhere you go. I got a box or two of wisdom and a bag or two of faith. I couldn't miss the Holy Spirit, it was all over the place. I stopped to get strength. Salvation was free, so I took enough of that for both you and me. As I went up the aisle, I saw prayer. I took some for I know that when I know there's sin out there. Peace and joy were plentiful. They were on the last shelf. Songs and praises were hanging near so I helped myself. Then I started to pay my grocery bill for I thought I had everything I need for the Master's will. I said to the Angel, "How much do I owe you?" He smiled and said, "Friend, Christ paid for them for you." (Author Unknown)

God's will tells us to ". . . pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. . ." (Ephesians 6:18). As Christians it's important to keep that "all occasions" in perspective. There's not a lot of selective there and a whole lot of broad application. God is telling us that there isn't just one blessing or one gift that has our name on it; there are many, if only we have the foresight and the patience to ask in the first place. God covers all the bases, not just one or two. Sometimes, though, we need to be willing to not only ask in

the first place but be content with the waiting in the second. There's just something about hearing "no charge, your bill is paid" that makes the waiting that much more the sweet.

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