



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

January 8, 2021

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Member,

We are all familiar with New Year resolutions at the end of a year or at the start of a new one. They are to promote positive changes in our lives; to fight practices that we evaluated unfavorable in the past for ourselves or our loved ones.

Yesterday we could read that God also encourages positive transformations in us. And when we make up our minds to live by the best possible standards provided by our Creator, we are not alone in this attempt of ours. The process may take longer than one year, though. We definitely need perseverance and consistency. There can be days when we fail, and we may get discouraged by or tired of our deficiencies.

The Our Daily Bread meditation below reminds us that we have been provided a good, and supportive companion in the above struggle. We have the Bible available to inspire and strengthen us on our daily journey. As Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: **“... from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”** (2 Timothy 3:15-17)

It reminds us that **“As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. ... But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children ...”** (Psalm 103:13-14; 17)

When we feel discouraged, we may hear the strengthening encouragement: **“Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; ...”** (Isaiah 40:30-31)

We may gain hope from Jesus’ words: **“Because I live, you also will live.”** (John 14:19); and hear the confirmation of this promise from Apostle Paul, who considered his faith in Christ a **“surpassing worth”** (Philippians 3:8): **“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (Romans 8:38-39)

So, let us allow God to support and encourage us through the Scriptures, as we mature both in years and in faith.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



A Ripening Process

When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight.
Jeremiah 15:16

READ JEREMIAH 15:15-18

Early in his fifty-year ministry in Cambridge, England, Charles Simeon (1759-1836) met a neighboring pastor, Henry Venn, and his daughters. After the visit, the daughters remarked how harsh and self-assertive the young man seemed. In response, Venn asked his daughters to pick a peach from the trees. When they wondered why their father would want the unripe fruit, he responded, "Well, my dears, it is green now, and we must wait; but a little more sun, and a few more showers, and the peach will be ripe and sweet. So it is with Mr. Simeon."

Over the years Simeon did soften through God's transforming grace. One reason was his commitment to read the Bible and pray every day. A friend who stayed with him for a few months witnessed this practice and remarked, "Here was the secret of his great grace and spiritual strength."

Simeon in his daily time with God followed the practice of the prophet Jeremiah, who faithfully listened for God's words. Jeremiah depended on them so much that he said, "When your words came, I ate them." He mulled and chewed over God's words, which were his "joy" and "heart's delight" (Jeremiah 15:16).

If we too resemble a sour green fruit, we can trust that God will help to soften us through His Spirit as we get to know Him through reading and obeying the Scriptures. – By **Amy Boucher Pye**

REFLECT & PRAY

God, the Scriptures feed me and protect me from going astray from You. Help me to read them every day. Amen.

How has reading the Bible changed you? Why might you sometimes not read it?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

In Jeremiah 15:15-18, several metaphors vividly capture Jeremiah's experience of his calling as a prophet. In verse 16, he uses the metaphor of eating to capture the idea of fully embracing and internalizing God's words. Some scholars suggest that to "bear [God's] name" in this context may allude to the shared name that results from marriage. In addition, the words joy and delight elsewhere in Jeremiah are always connected with wedding festivities (7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11).

In Jeremiah 15:18, the prophet uses the metaphor of streambeds or wadis to capture his bewilderment at the stark contrast between his initial intimacy with God and his current anguish. Such streambeds in the summertime were often dried up and therefore unreliable sources of water. In this way, Jeremiah vividly captures a feeling of deep betrayal at experiencing God in this way, rather than as the everlasting "spring of living water" He'd described Himself as (2:13).

Learn more about how the [geography of the Holy Land](#) enhances our understanding of the Bible. – By **Monica La Rose**

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