

### Scripture for Today:

So David asked God, "Should I go out to fight the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?" The LORD replied, "Yes, go ahead. I will hand them over to you." ...

But after a while the Philistines returned and raided the valley again. And once again David asked God what to do. "Do not attack them straight on," God replied. "Instead, circle around behind and attack them near the poplar trees." ...So David did what God commanded, and they struck down the Philistine army all the way from Gibeon to Gezer. (1 Chronicles 14:10, 13–14, 16 (NLT))

### Encouragement for the Week:

"David didn't try to do things on his own. He prepared; he had his army ready, but he always inquired of God what to do. God answered and even gave David very specific instructions for his next steps. We need to remember this and inquire every day what God wants us to do. We can't assume that what God told us before is what we need to do now. His instructions may change even if the situation seems to require the same approach a second time. It's a matter of continually looking to God for direction."

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### Scripture for Today:

Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

Romans 1:21–25 (NLT)

### Encouragement for the Week:

"Note the progression in this passage: refusing to worship God or even give thanks leads to people making up their own notions about God—who He is and what He's like. Minds become dark and confused. They set up their own idols. Then sexual relations get twisted and distorted. Finally, every other kind of sin is indulged in. Sound familiar?"

God has called us to follow His Son and His teachings. He has called us to be His disciples. He has called us to be His church. In these days, when evil is called good and good is called evil, we're often left perplexed, confused, and confounded. While we sit back asking, "how could this happen?" we often miss the point that God has called us to pray for those you know who are in this progressive slide ... and to reach out in His love in times such as these in our nation.

'Lord, help us. Help us to live out your will. Help us to be strong in our faith. Help us as we offer that same faith to others. Help us, outside of these walls, to recognize and call sin what it is, help us to be willing and ready to offer the solution, which is the hope that we find through your Son Jesus Christ. And when it's our sin that gets in the way, give us the strength to overcome it, the knowledge of learning from our mistakes, and your promise of redemption. Give us the loving nudge or push that we need to get back on track with your plan for our lives.'

Let us give thanks to our Lord God, for His Word and the direction in which it gives; and for His sending His Spirit upon us, so that we may be His witnesses today and beyond."

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### Scripture for Today:

The **LORD's** promises are pure, like silver refined in a furnace, purified seven times over. Therefore, **LORD**, we know you will protect the oppressed, preserving them forever from this lying generation, even though the wicked strut about, and evil is praised throughout the land.

Psalm 12:6-8 (NLT)

**Encouragement for the Week:**

Yes...sometimes, as Christians, we feel like we are in a small minority. We feel like an Endangered Species. We feel like evil people are all around us...speaking lies, tearing us down, tearing down the church...

But within the context of a complaint about rampant evil comes this wonderful image of God's promises: they are totally pure, with not a speck of untruth or unfaithfulness to be found. Generations have tested his promises and found them reliable, like silver purified in a furnace seven times over. The Lord does see and He will act, despite appearances that evil is prevailing. Questions to ask yourself: "Do I really trust that God's promises are this rock solid? Do I really believe that He watches over and protects us?"

Believe it when I say, "God hears us when we pray, and as long as we do our part by serving Him... you can count on God to do His Part!" Praise God!

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**Scripture for Today:**

Trust in the LORD for protection. So why do you say to me, "Fly like a bird to the mountains for safety! The wicked are stringing their bows and fitting their arrows on the bowstrings. They shoot from the shadows at those whose hearts are right. The foundations of law and order have collapsed. What can the righteous do?" But the LORD is in his holy Temple; the LORD still rules from heaven. He watches everyone closely, examining every person on earth. . . .For the righteous LORD loves justice. The virtuous will see his face."

Psalm 11:1-4; 7 (NLT)

**Encouragement for the Week:**

What an apt passage for our times as we move toward the end of this year 2008, and get ready for 2009! Perhaps you've grown anxious about the economy, terrorism, the future. This passage reminds us to affirm our trust in God despite appearances. A fatalistic attitude isn't the answer. The answer is to remember that God still rules from heaven and is still in control, no matter what happens. The One who sent his Son to be born into a dark world still shines his light into our world now. We who look eagerly for Christ's return, meanwhile living out the virtues of the Holy Spirit, will soon see his face—and rejoice.

Stay encouraged...and I wish you a blessed and prosperous New Year in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!