

Through The Bible In One Year

The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

Daily Devotional Companion

Week 30

Day 204. Read 2 Chronicles 8.11-10.19; Romans 8.9-21;
Psalm 18.16-36; and Proverbs 19.26.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: Success came just as God had promised. Nothing was made of silver, because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's time. When Solomon asked God for what pleased God-for wisdom to govern instead of power over his enemies or long life-God promised him all that he had not asked for as well. And God always delivers on his promises. Solomon was literally a king of kings. For he ruled over all the kings from the river Euphrates that was the border with Assyria, to Egypt in the south, and the Mediterranean Sea on the west. The Queen of Ethiopia heard of the magnificence of his realm and came to test his wisdom. His military might was unmatched. Solomon had 4,000 chariots and 12,000 horses that he stationed in garrisons strategically placed to protect his kingdom, including a force in the capital city, Jerusalem. Intrigue and enemies were always lurking nearby, like Jeroboam, who was sheltered by Solomon's own father-in-law, the Pharaoh of Egypt. Chronicles recapitulates the sad lesson all too common in history: a son following an amazing father tries to outdo him, only to undo all that he has accomplished. Perhaps he wanted to make a place in history for himself, a name that would be greater than his father's. Instead, the kingdom is divided, as the northern, ten tribes rebel. The sun is setting on the glory of Israel. It will take a true King of kings to show what real glory is: a Son who gives all glory to the Father, even to his death.

Questions: 1. How has pride or envy caused me trouble in my life? 2. Is there someone at this point in my life that I am envious of? 3. How have my parents influenced my life and, especially, my relationship with God? How am I influencing those around me in their lives in general, and in their relationship with God especially?

Romans: Abba! Father! My new nature cries out to God from within me. To live by my old nature leads only to death. To live by the Spirit means to live. But how shall I get a new nature? Is there a store somewhere where I can take it down from the shelf and purchase it at the checkout counter? No, the new nature comes only by the action of God. By sending Christ Jesus to die and rise, God has done what I cannot: made me a child of God again. As at the first creation, where he moved over the waters and all things were created, the Spirit of God enters into me as I hear the good news; and by the power of the

Spirit, faith is born...and I along with it. It is no Spirit of slavery, but of sonship, so that I am truly God's child, united with God through love, not servitude. The whole creation eagerly awaits the day when all the children will be revealed, and it will be freed from its bondage and restored to its joyful freedom God intended for it from the beginning. In this time before the final liberation, the Spirit's presence in us that teaches and empowers us to cry to God as Father is the sign and guarantee of the fulfillment to come. **Questions:** 1. Do I pray to God personally and intimately as 'Abba,' which might best be translated as 'Papa' or 'Dad,' or do I tend to pray as if God were more remote and impersonal? 2. Do I pray to the Holy Spirit within me, believing the Bible's message that I am a temple of the Holy Spirit? 3. Do I live every day with courage and confidence for God, as though I have God's guarantee of the Spirit that God will fulfill all his promises to me? How does having the guarantee of the Spirit influence my words and actions?

Prayer: Abba, Papa, you bid me believe I am your child, precious to you, and able to live fully free in that unshakeable truth. Forgive my turning away from you and pretending you are the one who is distant and aloof, uninterested and uncaring. Your Spirit living within me teaches me to call you Abba. Let me learn that lesson well. Let me take that lesson literally to heart, so that in my heart I believe you truly are my Papa. Then let me live day by day, minute by minute, as who I truly am: your child forever.

Day 205. Read 2 Chronicles 11.1–13.22; Romans 8.22-39; Psalm 18.37-50; and Proverbs 19.27-29.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: It was the war that wasn't. Solomon's son, intending to restore the kingdom to himself when the northern, ten tribes of Israel rebelled, mobilized a huge army to compel their allegiance by force of arms. On the eve of battle, God send a word to the troops: 'Go home. Don't fight against your kindred. This is my doing.' And the war stopped before it began. Instead, Solomon's son set up fortified cities to defend Judah. But God was waging a more devastating war upon the rebellious tribes, while at the same time creating an even stronger defense for Judah and Jerusalem than the king could: all the priests and Levites living among the rebellious northern tribes, the people appointed by God to lead and instruct the people in faith, abandoned their homes and property and went instead to Jerusalem; because the rebellious king, Jeroboam, would not allow them to serve the Lord as priests. Jeroboam, knowing that the greatest danger to his power lay with people knowing and following God, set up his own people as priests and golden, calf idols of his own making for the people to worship. Solomon's son, himself, later turned his back on God. As a result, Shishak, the king of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem. Solomon's son humbled himself and turned back to God, so God spared Jerusalem's destruction. But Shishak took away all the treasures of the temple, including the 200 solid gold shields Solomon had made. His son made bronzed shields instead, a poor pretense to cover the

glory that had been lost. From gold to bronze. From precious to paltry. What a step down. Such is the trade, whenever people trade a relationship with the living God for anything else. Whenever someone does that, they are 'trading down.' Better it is to always make sure you are trading up. **Questions:** 1. When have I 'traded down' in my life and relationship with God, turning to or settling for something less important than a real relationship with the real God? 2. Whenever I have done that, how have circumstances or consequences shown me that I have traded down? How did I come to realize I had made a mistake? 3. How does it help me in life to know that God is always ready to forgive and receive me back when I turn to him again after mistakenly going my own way or following the world?

Romans: We've got a helper; the one we truly need. We don't even know how to speak with God in prayer or pursue the deep, personal relationship God wants us to enjoy with him; so God gives us the helper we need to have it. The Holy Spirit, the living presence of God within us, prays for us above, below, and beyond our ability to pray. God burns with desire to enjoy the fullest possible relationship with each child of his; and in our weakened state, we cannot hold up our end of the relationship, so he provides for that, too. He gives us his Holy Spirit. The same Spirit who moved over the waters at creation and through whom all things came to be, lives and moves within us, by God's gracious gift. He chose us from before the foundation of the world to become like his Son. And if God burns like that for us, who can quench his love for us? If God is for us, who can be against us? Nothing, not even devil or death itself, can separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen for us. **Questions:** 1. How does God's amazing love for us, that even supplies us the power to love him in return and restore our relationship with him through his Holy Spirit, give me courage and confidence to approach God personally and intimately in prayer? 2. How does remembering God's limitless and endless love for me in Jesus Christ, who was crucified for me that I might be restored into right relationship with God forever, give me courage and confidence for life? 3. Knowing how God burns with love for me, how will I live, speak, and act in ways that show I am his totally?

Prayer: For me, God? You burn with love for me? For me, the cross and tomb? For me, you gave up your Son? I have sought love elsewhere, hoping to have it from lesser sources but never found anything like you. Such love is beyond me. How can anybody or anything separate me from your love, who burns with love for me so as to give your own Son that I may be yours forever. Very well. I am. I am yours forever. Do with me as you will. Only this do I ask, that in everything I say and do I may honor and love you, who loves me so. You will have to help me do what I really long to do. Through your own Spirit's power, let me love you as I would, until at last I can. Amen.

Day 206. Read 2 Chronicles 14.1-16.14; Romans 9.1-24;
Psalm 19.1-14; and Proverbs 20.1.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: Solomon's son's son, Asa, reverses his own father's course and turns back to God. He removes all the altars and shrines to the idols. A good leader concerned for the spiritual well-being of his people, he commanded the people to seek the Lord and obey his word. His reward? Peace. For a long time God gave him rest from his enemies, and none of the enemies and powers surrounding Judah waged war against him. He fortified Jerusalem and Judah, enlisting an army of 300,000 fighters. Then an enemy attacked with a vast army. Outnumbered and facing almost certain defeat, Asa did what came natural to him: he turned to God for help. His own tiny army overcame and conquered, capturing great wealth of spoil. A prophet of God went out to meet Asa returning from the victory to offer him a great prize: 'The Lord will stay with you as long as you stay with him. Seek him and you find him; abandon him and he will abandon you.' Encouraged by this promise from God, Asa reformed the land and restored the temple. Then he led the people in renewing their covenant with God, returning to the deep, personal relationship to which God had called them. A time of peace and prosperity followed. But at the end of his life, Asa, when attacked by the king of Israel, sent money to hire a neighboring king to fight with him against Israel, trusting in human strength instead of seeking God's help. And because of that, the very help he sought, the foreign kingdom he sought to enlist as savior, became the chief source of danger to his kingdom. He threw the prophet who delivered God's message into prison. In his latter years, Asa oppressed some of his own people. When he developed a deadly disease, he sought help only from the physicians and not from God. Well begun is only half-done. He who finishes well, finishes best.

Questions: 1. Is my relationship with God and reliance upon God as strong or stronger than when I first believed? Why or why not? 2. What in my life tends to make me turn to things other than God for my well-being? 3. What enemies or difficulties do I face in my faith walk with God that might cause me to doubt God's ability or desire to help me? How can I seek God's help to endure or overcome them?

Romans: How can love received cause such unbearable pain? Paul, himself the recipient of God's amazing love that turned him from a persecutor and killer of Christians to a proclaimer of Christ, now is tortured by the pain that any of his Jewish brothers and sisters might be lost. Such is the awful injury caused by love; that love shares the hopes and hurts of the Beloved. To love God is to suffer as God suffers. To love the God whose heart burns that everyone of his lost children be rescued for life with him, means to have your heart beat and burn with the same painful desire. God has every right to exercise judgment against the lost...and every right to be as he is—patiently refraining from executing judgment, so that everyone might have every opportunity to turn to him for life.

Questions: 1. How is my heart for seeking the lost? Burning? Lukewarm? Cold and indifferent? 2. Who among my family, friends, fellow workers, neighbors and acquaintances is God longing for me to reach with his love, so they might live with him forever? 3. How can I share God's love with those around me through my actions first, and ultimately by inviting and bringing them to God? What specific action for which specific person will I undertake next?

Prayer: God, I was lost but now am found. That was your doing, through some people and circumstances you put in my life. Thank you. Could you use me to help others to know and love you, too? To help others have life in you, even as I do? With you all things are possible. You proved that in bringing me to you. So use me to bring others. You put me in this place at this time for this purpose. Use me in whatever way you will. I am yours. Amen.

Day 207. Read 2 Chronicles 17.1-18.34; Romans 9.25-10.13; Psalm 20.1-9; and Proverbs 20.2-3.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! He did jump, in fact. Jehoshaphat jumped clean over his father's fallen, later years and bad example, to follow instead his father's earliest years when he had been strongest in faith and following. Jehoshaphat followed his father, Asa's, early example by being wholeheartedly devoted to God. He sought his father's God and obeyed his commands, just as the younger Asa had before he went wrong. Where did Jehoshaphat get such wisdom? However it happened, it happened. The result? He became very wealthy and highly esteemed. He reformed worship by removing idols and shrines to false gods. Best of all, he sent leaders and priests into all the towns to teach the people. He gave them copies of the scriptures, and they traveled all throughout the countryside teaching the people. To make peace with his neighbors, he even gave his son to marry the daughter of the king of Israel, Ahab, who enticed him to go to war against an enemy. Jehoshaphat's response: first inquire of the Lord. Four hundred of Ahab's pet prophets predicted success. Still, Jehoshaphat hesitated. "Isn't there a prophet of the Lord we can ask?" Ahab said there is just one, who never prophesies good. Sure enough, when asked, the prophet predicts disaster. Ahab has him arrested and put in prison until he comes back safely, thus proving the prophet of the Lord was lying. Ahab doesn't come back from the battle. In the midst of the battle himself, Jehoshaphat is hard pressed by the enemy. He cries out to the Lord to save him...and the attack turns away. Not so lucky, Ahab. Seemingly at random, an enemy archer lets fly an arrow that finds the only weakness in Ahab's armor. As the sun was setting, he died. Strange coincidence, don't you think?

Questions: 1. Whose bad example in faith and discipleship have I had to overcome in my life? 2. What kind of example am I setting for those around me? 3. How can I sort out what good to emulate and what not to follow in those around me? 4. What are the weaknesses in my faith armor (see Ephesians 6.10-17)?

Romans: Those who were close have turned away. The result is, those who were far off have been brought near. The chosen people who had the word and promise of God turned away. The Gentiles, who never had the benefit of the word, now are chosen to

receive the promise. What a wonderful God! Who among humans could imagine such a fortuitous turn of events? The very downfall of the one into works meant the uplifting of the other by grace through faith. All this because God wants all to be saved and have life with him forever. All are made right with God in one and the same way: through faith in the Son of God. Whoever confesses with their lips that Jesus is Lord and believes in their heart that God raised him from the dead will be saved. Period. Everyone. Jew or Gentile. All can be, all will be saved, if they believe. God gives his riches to anyone who asks. So ask already! **Questions:** 1. Since I am included in God's salvation simply by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, how can I help others to know about and receive the same great gift I have received for free? 2. What are the riches God has given me as a gift through faith in Christ Jesus? What should I place on the inventory list? Life? Forgiveness? Peace? Knowledge of the Truth? Hope? Courage and confidence for life? What else? 3. Whom do I know who is still slaving away to earn God's favor? Who has despaired of every having God's favor? How can I help them discover God's amazing love for them?

Prayer: You are quite a case, God! You give away as a gift what we could never earn. You could keep us slaving away to seek your favor, and instead you lavish it freely on us. Oh, it is costly, to be sure, this gracious love of yours. It cost your Son the cross and the pains of death. All so I would have life. So everyone could have life. Simply by grace through faith. No one of this world thinks or acts like that. You are quite a case, God. I hope to become a case just like you. Make me so, I pray. May everyone around me see your gracious love at work in me and through me so they say, 'he's quite a case!' Amen.

Day 208. Read 2 Chronicles 19.1-20.37; Romans 10.14-11.12; Psalm 21.1-13; and Proverbs 20.4-6.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! What a study in great leadership he provides! The list of what this king of Judah accomplished keeps on growing! He appointed judges throughout the land, so that the whole nation would be just in all its doings. What is more, Before he sent out the judges, he carefully instructed them on how they should arrive at just decisions: 'Always consider carefully before rendering judgment, and remember that you do not judge to please people but to please the Lord.' To other judges appointed to hear cases involving both the law of the Lord and civil matters in Jerusalem, he gave instructions to 'always act in the fear of the Lord with honesty and undivided hearts.' When three nations joined forces to wage war with a vast army against Judah, Jehoshaphat immediately sought the Lord for guidance when he learned of it. He stood before all the people in the courtyard of the temple and prayed aloud to God. As he prayed, the Spirit of the Lord came upon one of the men listening to him. Filled with the

Spirit, the man proclaimed, 'Don't be discouraged by the mighty army you face, for the battle is not yours, but God's! Take your positions, then stand still and watch God win the victory.' Leading his army into battle the next morning, Jehoshaphat roused his fighters by telling them, 'Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be able to stand firm!' He set singers to walk ahead of the army, singing, 'Give thanks to the Lord, for his faithful love endures forever!' At the very moment they began to sing; the three, enemy armies started fighting among themselves, two against one, and then the two remaining destroyed each other. God had won the victory. The army of Judah simply gathered the plunder and marched home, full of joy. At the end of his life he stumbled. He made an alliance with a wicked king of Israel who led him astray. The game isn't over, until it's over. **Questions:** 1. How certain am I that God will win the victory over everything I will face in life? Does that confidence show in my attitude and actions? 2. What spiritual enemies are waging war against me and my faith community today? What is my part in the 'war' against them? 3. Does my worship of God display the confidence and joy of his victory over all my enemies, including sin, death and the devil? Do I even give God thanks and praise, as Jehoshaphat did, when the situation is dire and the outcome appears doubtful? How can I keep the confidence strong?

Romans: Salvation is free as a gift for all who believe. Fine and dandy! There's only one problem. How can anybody be saved—how can anybody experience life full and free through faith in Jesus Christ—if they haven't even heard of him?! Faith comes like the measles—you catch it from someone who has it. Faith comes from hearing. But no one will ever hear, if no one goes to tell them. No one will go, unless someone sends them. The good news is: we have heard the Good News. And everyone who hears and receives it is sent...to share the Good News. News, good or bad, isn't news until its shared..

Questions: 1. Who shared the Good News with me first? Who shared the Good News, so that it finally sunk in and swept me up totally in the wonder of Christ crucified and risen for me? 2. To whom is God sending me to share the Good News? 3. What is the practical, next step that I will take with someone I know to prepare the ground and gain an opportunity to share the news of how much Jesus Christ loves them?

Prayer: God, you are always and everywhere near me, before me, behind me, above me, below me, beyond me, beside me. Forgive me when I get it wrong and feel and act as though you are light years away and unconcerned for me. Like an loving father, you are always eager and ever willing to hear me—much more than I am eager or willing to speak with you. No wonder I don't live with the courage, confidence, and compassion that you do every moment. Well, that's not the real me. That's not the Good News. You have redeemed me through the death and resurrection of your Son. You have given me the victory I could never have won...as a free gift. Help me give this gift to others, for it is only by giving it away that it will be truly mine and truly what it is for me: not just good news, but the best news! Amen.

Day 209. Read 2 Chronicles 21.1-23.21; Romans 11.13-36;
Psalm 22.1-18; and Proverbs 20.7.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: A good grandfather and father will lead to a good son, right? Sadly, no. Not necessarily. There are other influences at work in the world. Jehoram, son of Jeshoshaphat and grandson of Asa, becomes king and immediately assassinates all his brothers and many other leaders of Judah. He had married a daughter of the wicked king Ahab of Israel, and was turned, as milk turns, sour. His rule lasted only eight years and saw the power and influence of Judah diminish, as vassal states revolted and enemies on the borders attacked. He died a bitter death of diseased bowels, symbolic of the poison that dwelt inside him. When he died, no one mourned. He wasn't even buried with his ancestors in the royal cemetery. His son, Ahaziah, ruled just one year, and was assassinated when the army commander of Israel killed his master, the king, and seized the rule for himself. His mother seized the throne in Judah, murdering all the royal family to protect her power. All except one that is. Joash was hidden by the high priest and raised in the temple to know the Lord. At age six he suddenly was suddenly revealed and crowned king. A spiritual renewal began, led by a child king. Centuries later another child king, who first saw the world from a stable in Bethlehem, would be sought by a usurper king of Judea to put him to death. His revealing will be the salvation of everyone who follows him as their king and Lord. **Questions:** 1. How does the amazing way that God still gets his purposes accomplished in the world, despite all the politics and evil, give me courage and strength to face the troubles of life today? 2. Who is weak and vulnerable in faith that I need to protect and strengthen as the high priest did Joash? Whom is God calling me to mentor, and how can I accomplish it? 3. What spiritual influences are active in my relationships, life and environment to lead me away from God or weaken my relationship with God? How can I resist them and help protect others against them?

Romans: Will the real God please stand up?! How can God be both kind and severe? To be real, he must be both. God is 'severe' when, because of his holiness and purity, he can have nothing to do with evil. God has engineered an immutable universe that forever has consequences for all who go a different way than the way of life, than his way. It is his way or the highway...accident. How severe can you be? Yet, to be less severe is to be less than loving. God is kind. God is kind in showing love to all who turn to him. Hold onto a heavy weight under water and you will drown. Let it go and you will rise and breathe the breath of life again. The air is there for anyone who wants it. 'God has imprisoned all people in their disobedience,' Paul writes, 'JUST SO HE COULD HAVE MERCY ON EVERYONE!' The real God did stand up...and tall, too...on the cross where both the severity and the kindness of God met in the broken, breathless body of his Son...our Savior. **Questions:** 1. When have I chaffed and complained about God's severity toward me, struggling under the consequences of my choices and actions, or those of others

around me? 2. When have I most clearly experienced the lovingkindness of God toward me personally, and how? 3. How would I explain God's kindness to someone who is questioning the kindness of God? How would I explain the severity of God toward someone who presumes upon the loving kindness of God to approve of all their actions, even though they be contrary to God's will?

Prayer: God, I wish you would be kind when I want you to, and...well to tell the truth, I wish you would never be severe with me. I hate it when you check me or, worse, correct me through the pain of circumstances, even when I am their cause. When I wish that, I know that I am wishing you were not who you are...severely kind and kindly severe...and I am wishing what would be unmitigated disaster for myself. Then I am wishing that the world would dissolve in fire, just so I wouldn't experience any discomforting checks or corrections. Forget me when I wish that. Forgive me when I wish that. Keep being who you are. Keep being both severe and kind. You are the kind of God I need. You are the only God that is worthy of my devotion and love. You are the only God I want. Amen.

Day 210. Read 2 Chronicles 24.1-25.28; Romans 12.1-21;
Psalm 22.19-31; and Proverbs 20.8-10.

Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

Chronicles: The boy who became king grew into a man and ruled like one. The temple was falling into ruins, so he ordered the temple helpers to go throughout the land and collect an offering to repair it without delay. They didn't go. Instead they became a roadblock. The young king was more eager for the temple than the very ones entrusted with keeping it. He sidestepped them, ordering a chest with a hole in the top to be placed outside the main gate into the temple. He sent a royal proclamation through all Judah and Jerusalem, telling the people to bring the tax God had levied long ago in Moses' day for the care of his temple. A strange thing happened: all the people, and even the leaders, gladly brought their money and filled the chest with it. Is that not a miracle?! The people, and even the leaders, gladly paid...a tax?! Whenever the chest was full, it was carried and counted before the king's officials. The leader of the land had to take leadership in the spiritual affairs of the people...and did...but just for a time. Just during the lifetime of the high priest who had protected him when a child and hidden him in the temple to keep him alive. When the high priest died...at the age of 130...the king was persuaded by the leaders to abandon God. Once again idols were worshipped in the very courts of the temple. God sent prophet after prophet to persuade them to come back to him, but the people would not listen. One of the prophets, Zechariah, the son of the high priest who shielded Joash, was stoned to death in the very courtyard of the temple, with Joash's approval. As he died, he cursed them saying, 'May the Lord see and hold them

accountable! Was it the answer to his prayer, or just the natural consequence of their spiritual deadness? Shortly afterwards the Arameans attacked with only a small army, conquering Judah's much larger army. Joash, severely wounded, is assassinated because he killed the high priest's son. What goes around comes around. And what is more, it's not the size of the army, but the size of the Spirit in the army that matters. **Questions:** 1. What do I contribute to God's work in the world? How am I helping (or hindering) build God's kingdom and accomplish God's work with my time, talents, and financial resources? 2. What legacy will I leave behind me when I pass through death to stand before God? 3. Why is it that, when I am distant from God or not following his will, that I have no power or authority to my words or actions?

Romans: In response to Christ's sacrifice, I am not to die for him, but to live for him. A strange and wonderful thing happens when I live totally for him...then I do die. The old Self that was the center dies a dreadful death, drying up like a vine that has been severed from the source of its life. No longer conforming to the world, the person living for Christ is being transformed with a new mind to know and do the perfect will of God, which leads to life. We are called to be living sacrifices, using all our energy, gifts, experiences, and resources for God and the people God puts in our lives. Whatever gifts you have, God has given you. Use them as a living sacrifice. This is your spiritual worship. Not just words at worship one hour a week. That is not worship. Give yourself to God, all of yourself. But watch out! The problem with a living sacrifice, someone once said, is that it will try to crawl off the altar...again and again it needs to be returned to the altar. Watch what leads you away...and above all, remain steadfast in what keeps you on the altar of worship to God as a living sacrifice: love. Love genuinely. Honor one another. Help those in need. Practice hospitality. Love in action, not just words. Be a *living* sacrifice, as Christ himself was...is now...and ever will be. **Questions:** 1. How am I being a living sacrifice? 2. How am I (or can I be) using my spiritual gifts, abilities, energy, time, financial and other resources for God's glory as my spiritual worship? 3. How am I tempted to conform to the world? How am I being transformed by the renewing of my mind to know the good and perfect will of God? In what specific ways can I try to be sure I know and do God's will rather than my own?

Prayer: Lord, I don't like all this talk about sacrifice. I don't like the thought that you had to sacrifice yourself for me, because that makes me somehow beholding. I sure don't like the talk of presenting myself as a sacrifice. That means pain, that means dying, to myself. But it is all done and accomplished, your sacrifice for me. Now I have no choice but to offer myself for you or be lost again. I don't ever want to be lost again. Your finding me means I have life with purpose and meaning for the first time. No longer do I merely exist in a maddening, chaotic rush of circumstances, like a ball bearing careening through a pinball machine universe. I am a living sacrifice.. I need not be conformed to this world, but I can be...am being...transformed by the renewing of my mind to know...and do...what is your good and perfect will. Your will be done! In your sacrifice, that frees me, and in my free, living sacrifice in loving response. Take me. All of my time and treasure and talents, and use them as you will. Amen.

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 30

Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): 2 Chronicles 24.15-24

Psalm: Psalm 22.1-9, 16-18

Second (New Testament) Lesson: Romans 12. 1-10.

Theme: Transforming, Not Conforming

Sunday Scripture Selection and Theme Explanation, Week 30:

The only two courses possible for us are: conform, or be transformed. The world and our own Self-centeredness conspire to sever us from God, away from God's good and perfect will, which is the way of life itself. Christ's sacrifice on the cross (prophesied in Psalm 22 centuries before it actually occurred) opens the door to a new way. We can be transformed by the renewing of our minds—starting with our self-perception, our very way of thinking about ourselves and the world, and reaching through every aspect of our being and actions, we can literally be turned 'inside out.' No longer do we live for ourselves; we are now living sacrifices for God and for other people. No longer an isolated Self, seeking only to magnify ourselves, we now are freed by God's grace to use our gifts and resources with and for others, in a community that mirrors and reflects Christ's own nature and being. This is the only way to live, for this alone is living: dying every moment as a living sacrifice to God in response to...and extension of...Christ's sacrifice for us.