

# Through The Bible In One Year

## The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

## Daily Devotional Companion

### Week 34

**Day 232.** Read Esther 8.1-10.3; 1 Corinthians 12.27-13.13;  
Psalm 37.1-11; and Proverbs 21.23-24.

### Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Esther:** With the true enemy exposed, the tables turn totally. The king removes his signet ring from Haman and gives it to the faithful man he sought to destroy. Mordecai; but Esther's work is not done. She again risks her life by pleading with the king to end the plot Haman engineered against all the people of Israel. The king extends his golden scepter to her as a sign of his favor and commands that another royal order be written reversing the first one. The people of Israel in every city are granted the right to assemble and protect themselves, even to plunder and annihilate anyone who attacks them. Many people of foreign nationalities became Jews because fear had seized them. On the given day, the Jews struck down all their enemies, doing whatever they pleased to those who hated them, including the ten sons of Haman. The guilty have suffered for their crimes. The day became an annual celebration for all the Jews and everyone who joined them. It was a reminder of the destructiveness of blind, racial hatred and of God's unrelenting opposition to it. But retaliation and retribution did nothing to break the cycle of killing. Only God himself, dying on a cross the victim of hatred and violence, can break the cycle and bring the races together, through the forgiving love of God in Christ. **Questions:** 1. When someone wrongs me, how do I respond? By going the extra mile? By seeking justice or revenge? 2. What is the difference between not insisting on my own rights when I am wronged and actively protecting the rights of others when they are wronged? How am I called to respond as a Christian when others are being mistreated? 3. How can the annual remembrance of Christ's crucifixion be like Purim, a reminder of the dangers of hatred as well as a celebration of God's deliverance achieved through forgiveness not revenge?

**Corinthians:** The body of Christ! Believers are... the living body of Christ. Not just poetically, nor symbolically, but in actuality. Each person who believes is a part of that body. Different spiritual gifts are given to different people, so that all the gifts are present in the body. No one has all the gifts. No gift is present in everyone. There is an order of importance that grows from precedence. Apostles are first; because by using their gifts, new communities of believers are born. Then come prophets who proclaim God's word to the people, and then teachers who build believers up for ministry. Each gift and every

person contributes to the body: the workers of miracles, who by powerful displays of faith, attract and convince others, people with hearts for service that touch others with compassionate acts, even ones gifted in more mundane works of organization and administration who help the community work and live together—everyone plays a crucial role in Christ's body, as it lives and works here in the world. Paul urges everyone in the body: be discontented...always desiring more. Paul urges all to earnestly desire the higher gifts. It is good to desire the greater gifts God has to give. Just as a loving father or mother delights in giving good gifts to their children when they ask, so God, the Holy Spirit, delights when his people ask for the greater gifts. The Spirit gives gifts just as the Spirit chooses, for the Spirit knows best; but believers should desire greater gifts than they already have—ones that build up others or bring others to faith more. The Spirit delights whenever a believer asks for more... more capability and greater opportunity to help others grow with God. This very desire for more, this hunger, is the greatest gift of all. That which unites and empowers all the gifts in the body of Christ is the very love of God which believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things for the beloved. The desire for more and greater gifts is the hunger of love that longs to do more for the beloved. God's people follow a more excellent way: they live Christ's love for one another and for all around them. Without the love of Christ enlivening them, all the gifts achieve the opposite effects, like a cymbal crashing at the wrong moment in the music. **Questions:** 1. What higher spiritual gift(s) would it delight God for me to desire and ask for? How can I, with God's gifting and empowerment, serve better to build other believers up or bring others to Christ? 2. What keeps God's people from desiring and asking for higher gifts? What prevents me from desiring greater gifts? Fear of the new or of the changes to my lifestyle that new gifts would mean? A sense of unworthiness, or doubting that God would want to give greater gifts to someone like me? 3. Am I growing Christ-like in my love? Am I more like an offbeat cymbal in the orchestra or someone playing in tune with their partners?

**Prayer:** God, lead me farther along the still more, excellent way of love. If that means new gifts and stooping to serve new people in new way, bring them on. Fan the fire of desire in me, so I desire what you long to give. Make me burn for the greater gifts you want to give me; for your gifts transform me to be more like you, the Giver. Remove any doubt within me that you want to give me greater gifts than I can imagine or desire. As much as I love you, I know you love me more and long to give me greater gifts of your love. Let your will be done; and that will mean my longing shall grow as your gifts transform me more and more, until I am truly your image and likeness, the gift you want me not to have, but to be. Amen.

**Day 233.** Read Job 1.1-3.26; 1 Corinthians 14.1-7;  
Psalm 37.12-29; and Proverbs 21.25-26.

**Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:**

**Job:** Where have you come from Satan? From going here and there throughout the earth, Satan responds to God's question. It should not surprise us that God is on a first name basis with the evil one. He knows every particle and every person. And God permits every person, even Satan himself, freedom. Have you ever seen anyone like my servant Job, he asks Satan? Yeah, right! Wealthy, healthy, he's got it all. You surround him with your providence and protection; so, of course, he loves you. Take it away and watch him turn on you! Take away everything he has and watch him repudiate you. Okay, do it; only don't touch his life. Every possession he has is lost in a single day. And not just possession, important people in his life, too. His children all die in a disaster. And Job responded: 'May the name of the Lord be praised!' Where've you been, Satan. Here and there throughout the earth. How 'bout Job, huh? You were wrong. Yeah, right! Strike him with pain and disease and listen to him squeal—insults and curses on you! Okay, touch his flesh; but don't touch his life. From head to toe Job was afflicted with painful sores. His own wife urged him to curse God and die! Shall we accept good from God and not trouble? He cursed the day he was born, he wondered why he could not have died right then rather than suffer the losses he had. He wondered why there are those who long for death and yet it doesn't come. What I feared came on me, and what I dreaded has happened. Yet, in all his pain and painful questioning, Job trusted in God. **Questions:** 1. What havoc has Satan caused in my life and the lives of the people around me? 2. When difficulties or troubles come, how do I receive them? Faithfully? Fearfully? 3. Do I have the quality of faith to trust that God hears my heartfelt complaints and questions and still loves me? Do I speak to God with total honesty and transparency? If not, why not? 4. Who among the people I know would be my faithful supporters if trouble were to strike?

**Corinthians:** There are gifts... and then there are Gifts! Some are greater than others. In the body of Christ, the community of faith, she who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues. The one who prophesies builds up God's people because he proclaims God's Word to them, guiding and strengthening them. Speaking in tongues edifies only the individual who speaks in tongues. Good, but a lesser good, even for the individual herself. When praying in tongues, the spirit of the person is involved but not the mind, since the heavenly language is unintelligible, even to them. The way to follow - the way of love - means eagerly desiring the spiritual gifts that build up people. The way of love means seeking to excel in the God-given gifts that build up God's people and strengthen them to accomplish God's work. The higher way is to go out of yourself, stooping lower in service to lift the other one up. **Questions:** 1. What higher gifts am I desiring? 2. Do I seek to excel in gifts that build up the church and edify God's people? In what gift areas am I striving for excellence currently? 3. What tends to turn me inward to focus on myself or my own uplifting rather than on uplifting and edifying others?

**Prayer:** God, I am so often passive when I should act and active when I should rest contented in you. I am too often passive and complacent when I should be bugging you for greater gifts and yearning after excellence in building others up. I get in a huff and grumble when things go wrong, instead of receiving troubles and trials at your hand as opportunities to prove your faithfulness. Put me straight...straight out of the center.

Lead me into the higher way of love, love that looks to build others up more and more, which sees even in troubles only greater opportunities to uplift others...and give you glory. Amen

**Day 234.** Read Job 4.1-7.21; 1 Corinthians 14.18-40;  
Psalm 37.30-40; and Proverbs 21.27.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Job:** ‘I feel your pain,’ we say all too casually. Job’s friends gather commendably to support him when the bottom falls out of life—or so it seems to them. They bravely risk the fear that keeps most people on the sidelines when someone they know experiences tragedy or disaster: the fear of making matters worse. They did one thing right. For seven days and nights they kept vigil with him, sitting on the ground in mourning with him before even venturing a word. Eliphaz, most likely the oldest, is the first to speak. Intending to help, he gently confronts his friend. Job’s words have supported others who stumbled (perhaps even Eliphaz himself?); but when disaster comes upon him, Job is discouraged and dismayed. It’s as if he tells Job, ‘take your own medicine; find comfort in the words you used to help others....or was that only talk? Then Eliphaz raises the basic question of human existence, in a certain direction: why do people suffer? He gives the most common and most simplistic answer: they are being punished for their wrongdoing. ‘Who, being innocent, has ever been destroyed?’ he asks. ‘Who among mortals can be more righteous to God?’ he demands. ‘Human beings are born to trouble as sparks fly upward,’ he declares, saying that our very natures now lead us into trouble. God uses trouble to steer wayward people into the right course: ‘Blessed is the one whom the Almighty God corrects, so do not despise God’s discipline.’ Job responds simply ‘Show me where I have gone wrong and I will be quiet.’ ‘No’, Job replies, ‘the life of people on earth is hard, and the days fly as swiftly as a weaver’s shuttle. Life is but a breath. Why has God made me his target?’ If he has sinned and that is the cause of his suffering, why has God not forgiven him, since he has acknowledged God in all his ways? His suffering is as unsearchable and mysterious as God himself. **Questions:** 1. When someone I know is facing difficulty or trouble, do I take the initiative to seek them out or hang back for fear of making things worse? 2. When I go to help others, do I first make a point of supporting them by just being present and listening supportively, as Job’s friend did, wisely and compassionately? Or do I tend to offer words of explanation or solutions too easily? 3. When in my life have I suffered unjustly for being faithful to the Lord? When have I suffered justly as consequences of actions I was responsible for? How did I receive the suffering of both kinds? What’s the difference in the nature of the suffering?

**Corinthians:** Be like infants and like adults, Paul urges. Regarding evil, be like infants, not even aware of it. Be mature in your thinking. Better to speak five words in an intelligible language than ten thousand in the tongues of heaven, which are unintelligible in this world. Unbelievers, or young believers, might think you are out of your mind, if

you are speaking in heaven's tongues. But prophesying—speaking God's Word in a language that speaks to the mind and the heart of everyone, will help the hearer experience God's transforming power in her heart as well as mind. In prophesying—in the proclamation of the Gospel - the secrets of the heart are 'laid bare,' are literally opened to the light that transforms. As the faith community gathers then, everyone has a hymn, word of instruction, a revelation, or even a tongue as long as there is also an interpretation, so that individuals are built up and the community strengthened. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way, for the up-building of all. **Questions:** 1. How do I contribute to the up-building of other believers and the strengthening of my faith community? 2. Am I involved personally at a more intimate level—say in a small group for Bible study or service - than just the large-group worship, so that I can also contribute personally, using my gifts? 3. Am I balanced in seeking both personal edification and contributing to the edification of others in my faith community? Do I put too much emphasis on personal piety? Too little? Do I put too little emphasis on forming real, spiritual relationships with others or too little?

**Prayer:** Do I really have something to give others, something they truly need? Who am I to dare so? The truth is, I am your child; and you have gifted me for this very purpose. Lord, take away my fears that keep me on the sidelines. Let me not shy away from others who are hurting or in need, because I fear my own inadequacy to meet their needs with the right words and actions. I am inadequate, but you are not. You are all-sufficient for every need. Let me go in your strength and wisdom, not my own. Let me listen and learn, speak and act, as you do, from the selfless love that seeks the good of the other, before and above all considerations of self. Amen.

**Day 235.** Read Job 8.1-11-20; 1 Corinthians 15.1-28;  
Psalm 38.1-22; and Proverbs 21.28-29.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Job:** Does God pervert justice? The next 'friend,' Bildad, speaks, likening Job's words to a blustering wind. 'If you were pure,' he declares, 'God would rouse himself on your behalf.' Here are two half-truths that together don't make a truth: God does rouse himself for people in need, and God does not reject a blameless person.. Bildad concludes that Job deserves his troubles as punishment for wrongdoing. Job responds simply: tell me something I don't know. He knows no mortal can be righteous before God in all their thoughts and actions. In what neutral court could Job confront God? God is not a human being that Job could answer him. In his pain and confusion, Job cries out the heartfelt hope of all sufferers in a prophetic word that could have only come from the Spirit of God himself: "If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand on us both.' It will take a mediator to reconcile God and human beings. In his heart, Job is crying out blindly, prophetically, for God's Son to become a human being, which was God's plan to

address sin, suffering and death from the beginning. Job is a prophet of the incarnation and cross, by which God will bridge the impassable chasm between us. **Questions;** 1. How important is Jesus Christ's incarnation as the God-man and his cross in my thinking and acting? How do these deep, Biblical truths impact my attitude and actions? 2. When I pray, do I make all my thoughts, hopes, needs and desires known to God, praying them through his mediator Son, Jesus Christ, in unity with the Holy Spirit? Is my prayer truly Trinitarian, involving God in God's fullness?

**Corinthians:** By the Gospel you are saved. Anyone can be. Everyone is, who believes. And the Gospel is: Jesus died for our sins. Somehow, in the mysterious ways of God, we have been set right with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Gospel's truthfulness is attested historically by Jesus' appearing alive again after his crucifixion to many witnesses, including Paul himself. It's truthfulness is also attested spiritually by the transforming power of the Gospel itself. It changes lives fundamentally. Paul calls himself the 'least' of the apostles, because he persecuted the church. The very fact that the Crucified One graciously forgave and called him into his service commends him as one of the greatest apostles—one who embodies God's grace by his very being, just like Peter who denied Jesus three times before proclaiming him as his apostle. Christ has indeed risen—not just spiritually, as some might assert, but in reality. The proof is in the appearances...and the apostles transformed to be living witnesses of the Christ's transforming, living love. **Questions:** 1. How does the historical truth of the resurrection, proven by Christ's appearing to disciples who had earlier denied, deserted, or even persecuted him, strengthen your faith? Your sharing your faith with people who have questions or doubts? 2. Why is the fact that Jesus died for our sins and rose to eternal life important to me personally in my relationship with God? Why is it really Good News that my being reconciled to God has been accomplished by Christ, so I don't have to do it myself?

**Prayer:** He died for our sin. For my sins. He rose and lives forever...for me and for everyone. God, I really don't understand how all this works. How can his dying undo my own? How can someone die for another? How can one who died rise again? I cannot comprehend it, really; but I believe it is so. My sins are forgiven and I have life with you forever as a free gift, through his cross and empty tomb. I praise you and love you for doing what I could never do, and will never comprehend here. Make me an apostle of your Good News. Not only in my words and actions, but in my very being, let me reflect your transforming love that turns doubters and deniers into friends and followers. Amen.

**Day 236.** Read Job 12.1-15.35; 1 Corinthians 15.29-58;  
Psalm 39.1-13; and Proverbs 21.30-31.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Job:** Good things happen to bad people! Job desires to speak with the Almighty about this and argue his case with God. Job's comforters are failing. Their trite platitudes do nothing to address his deepest questions...and deepest desires for an encounter with God that will lay all questions and confusions to rest. Having been repeatedly accused of nameless sin and warned to repent, Job persists in saying there is no cause for this suffering that justifies it. Yet, in the midst of the turmoil and pain, Job trusts in God, nevertheless: "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him." Even to death, Job will be faithful and trust in him. As objects come gradually into clarity and focus with the growing light of dawn, Job believes, though he cannot understand how, 'this will turn out for my deliverance.' Eliphaz, his friend, accuses him of impiety; but Job will not be deflected from staring into the darkest reaches of the spirit. The last darkness lurks in the ultimate question of life that Job now names: "If a man dies, will he live again?" Is this life all there is? For now, there is but speculation. One day the darkness will dispelled when one who died walks away from his now empty tomb. **Questions:** 1. How does fear of death influence my thoughts, words, and actions? 2. How does the fact of the resurrection change my attitudes and actions in life? 3. How does the reality of resurrection—of God's power over sin and death—cause me to trust in him, even as death approaches?

**Corinthians:** 'If the dead are not raised,' Paul says, 'eat, drink and be merry is a good philosophy.' If there is only this life, then do whatever you want. Then there is no point to living one way or another. All paths are equally dead ends. Paul's being forced to fight wild beasts in the amphitheater at Ephesus because of proclaiming Christ would have been pointless, if that were the case. Not Paul. Some wonder, denying 'How can something mortal rise to life again,' disbelieving this most amazing miracle. Not Paul. He had met the resurrected Jesus. So he explains that, like a seed sown in the ground that grows into a different sort of being, so the physical, mortal body is sown in death to be raised as an immortal, spiritual body. By God's desire and decision, all people will be raised to eternal life, with believers in Christ to live victoriously with God forever. Flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God. Everyone must be transformed, as at the last day all shall rise imperishable...immortal...to live with God or away from God forever. So fight the wild beasts, Christ-followers, if called to. 'Give yourselves always to the work of the Lord,' Paul urges Christ-followers of Corinth and every age, knowing that your labor for God is not in vain. God gives us the victory over death through our Lord Jesus Christ! **Questions:** 1. How does the sure hope of the resurrection help me to live with both more patient endurance and with daring at the same time? 2. What 'wild beasts' (difficult tasks or even persecutions) is God calling me to endure for the sake of the Gospel? 3. Whom do I know who needs the hope of the resurrection to give their life meaning and joy? How can I help them discover courage and confidence for life now, through believing in Christ?

**Prayer:** God, this body is slipping away. There are subtle signs every day. A number forgotten, a hair grown gray, a wrinkle in the skin that once was taut and young. The eroding marks of time mount more and more to deface your masterpiece. This saddens

you more than me, though it sadden me much. You sent your Son to bear the same beating time bestows, to die the same death - the very same death as mine; because he died in my place, that I may live in his. What courage and confidence for living such selfless, godly love gives to a perishing person like me. Let me put my hand to work, untroubled with cares or worries, without a doubt that your work which I do will not be in vain. The victory is won already, all I am called to do is to share the spoils with all who can come to believe, and so spoil death's victory. Amen.

**Day 237.** Read Job 16.1-19.29; 1 Corinthians 16.1-24;  
Psalm 40.1-10; and Proverbs 22.1.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Job:** Almost out of nowhere, despite all the evidence to contrary, Job blurts out an amazing truth: 'Even now my advocate is on high, my intercessor who pleads to God for his friend.' The name Satan means 'accuser,' and that is why the fruitless words of his false comforters afflict him more. They aid Satan's own accusations, accusing him of nameless, unspecified sin. Bildad accuses Job of being like the wicked one whom 'terrors startle him on every side and dog all his steps.' 'Have pity, my friends, have pity!' pleads Job. 'Why do you pursue me as God does?' Human help has failed him, their accusations failing to console. But if there is an Accuser, could there not also be an Advocate? Could there not be someone to stand with me when I face God, finally? In the disquieting silence of God, amid the accusations of his own friends, Job confidently cries out, 'I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth; and that even after my body has been destroyed in death, I will see God with my own eyes.' Long before the actual cross and resurrection came in history, Job crossed the bridge from death to resurrection in faith, inspired by the Spirit of God to see the deeper spiritual reality: our Redeemer lives, and we will all see him face to face. **Questions:** 1. Do I 'know' that my Redeemer lives really? Does it show in my attitude and actions every day? How? 2. How does having an advocate with God—someone who stands beside me and takes my part, defending me—change the way I act toward others? Do I engage in intercessory prayer (advocating to God in prayer) for others? 3. Who needs my prayer most right now? What will I do to lift them in prayer persistently until God answers?

**Corinthians:** Give regularly and generously, just as God gives. Paul urges the Corinthian Christ-followers (and us) to set aside a sum of money every Sunday, in proportion to our income, so that people in need may be helped. Paul longs...and plans...to visit them personally and impart a blessing, but a new opportunity for effective work for God has been opened before him like a door. Until he comes, he bids them to be on their guard; stand firm in faith; be courageous and strong; and above all, do everything in love. Love is not a feeling but a decision and a deed. Paul imparts greetings from all the faith families in

Asia Minor, especially the husband and wife team that pastor the church in their home. As was his custom, Paul signed the letter he dictated with his own hand, just as one day he will seal his message with his very life. **Questions:** 1. How faithful and generous am I at supporting my faith community with my offerings? 2. What 'doors' for effective ministry is God opening for me—people I can serve or share my faith with—right now? 3. Am I part of a smaller, more intimate faith community like the 'house church' of Aquila and Priscilla—a small group, a Bible study, a spiritual-direction relationship, a spiritual friendship—for my own spiritual development and for building up others?

**Prayer:** Jesus, I know you are my Redeemer. I believe you stand beside the Father right now, interceding for me. What joy and confidence this gives me! What courage and excitement! Teach me to join in your intercessory work for others. Teach me to pray to the Father for my fellow workers, my family members and friends, my neighbors and community contacts. Let me lift them up to you, and let me walk through the open doors—the opportunities—you then provide to touch them with your love in service and inviting words. Amen.

**Day 238.** Read Job 20.1-22.30; 2 Corinthians 1.1-11;  
Psalm 40.11-17; and Proverbs 22.2-4.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Job:** All his friends recite the time tested reality. They tell the truth but not the 'whole truth and nothing but the truth.' Zophar reiterates that 'the mirth of the wicked is brief, the joy of the godless last but a moment.' It's true, if you consider that life is as brief as a moment, compared to eternity. He speaks truly of the one who provides for his own prosperity by oppressing others: he will have no respite from his craving for more and cannot save himself by the money he amasses. True, every bit of it. But Job stares unblinkingly into the mystery of unpunished evil, seeking the deeper truth. 'Why do the wicked live on to old age, secure and safe, increasing in power, without the rod of God to punish them?' They even thumb their noses at God in their prosperity, asking 'Who is the God that we should serve him, or what would we gain by praying to the Almighty?' They have everything they want. No need for God. Eliphaz urges the conventional wisdom on Job: 'Submit to God and prosperity will come to you. If you return to God, you will be restored, the Almighty will be your gold.' He, too, speaks the truth, understood from the vantage point of eternity, not time. And what he doesn't understand is that God already is Job's gold. In the midst of his pain and questioning, Job already believes God is the answer. **Questions:** 1. Why do timeless truths—as generalities—not provide much comfort to people who are suffering, particularly because of oppression? Why does a more personal and practical response always help more? 2. When have I seen someone do wrong and not suffer consequences from it? How did it affect my faith? How did it affect my relating

to them personally? 3. Am I longsuffering like God, tending toward compassion and forgiveness, or do I desire people to 'get what's coming to them?'

**Corinthians:** Paul praises the God of all compassion and comfort. The emphasis is on the word 'all.' He would know. The hardships he suffered in Asia Minor drove him to despair of life itself. The pressures upon him were so intense; it was far beyond his own abilities to endure them. In the midst of them he discovered that God is the God of all compassion and comfort. He delivered Paul from deadly peril and will do so always. And what is more, knowing the compassion and comfort of God empowers us to comfort others in their sufferings with the very compassion and comfort we received from God. The Corinthian Christians themselves extended that comfort to Paul in his adversity, even though...and because...they shared the same sufferings. They all relied, not on themselves...or focused not on themselves...but upon the God who raises the dead and the need to comfort others with this hope. Suffering is the seedbed of relationship with God; and relationship with God brings life, even in the face of death. **Questions:** 1. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being 'totally' and 1 being 'not at all,' how much do I rely on 'the God who raises the dead' for my confidence in life? 2. When and how have I comforted others with the comfort I have received from God? Who needs that comfort most right now? How can I provide it, so they come to trust totally in God as their true comfort?

**Prayer:** God, if I can speak plainly, it does bother me that people who wrong others seem to escape the consequences too often. I know, I have a double standard. I know I like it when I don't have to face the consequences of my wrong actions or hurtful words, but something inside me bristles when others don't. What? In thinking so, I accuse myself? You are the God of all compassion and comfort, and the greatest compassion and comfort you have given me is your promise that my sins are forgiven. You sealed that promise with the blood of your Son. The cross was the greatest injustice ever done—for it unjustly released me from what I deserved. Lord, let me never lose that sense of injustice; but let me insist on justice for others who cannot insist on it for themselves, not for me. Let me show compassion and extend comfort by standing with them as they suffer and by insisting on justice for them. But never for myself. Amen.

## Through The Bible In One Year: Week 34

### Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): Job 14.1-12

Psalm: 40.1-10

Second (New Testament) Lesson: 1 Corinthians 15.32-37, 42-44, 50-52

Theme: Fear or Freedom?

### **Sunday Scripture Selection and Theme Explanation, Week 34:**

The fear of death subtly erodes the joy and confidence we have for life now. For those who have no hope for life after this life, they may be driven to 'eat, drink and be merry'—the mindless pursuit of pleasure. Others may seek to preserve this life for as long as possible by taking no risks and end living a life that is cramped and joyless. Job, struggling with the disastrous losses and affliction he faced, spoke for all humankind when he questioned whether this life was all we had to hope for. Paul personally faced death many times...and finally did die a martyr's death...proclaiming Christ...crucified and resurrected. Because he had met the risen Lord Jesus Christ, his whole life...and way of facing death...was totally transformed. Victory replaced defeat; courage and confidence replaced fear; compassion replaced persecution, as relationship with the risen Lord replaced his religiosity. Everyone we know or will ever know, everyone we see or will ever see, will be raised to life eternal. The burning question is: will it be to live with...or without...God? Paul urges the Christ-followers of Corinth to give themselves freely and fully to God's work of helping others know new life through faith in Jesus Christ, knowing that their work will not be in vain. Far from being in vain, the fruits of a life lived laboring for Christ will endure for all eternity.