

Saturday, April 11

2 Corinthians 4:16—5:10 *Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.* (v.6)

We're not there yet. This passage seems to be telling us two very important things. One: never give up. We will face hardship and troubles, but we have a hope that is real. We are not abandoned. Keep looking forward to what is coming. Two: our nature (our body) is only temporary. Therefore, we should make the most of our lives while we are here. Verse 9 tells us that we should "aim to please him always."

Looking forward is key. The apostle, in many of his letters, tells the reader to press on, keep running, and, in this passage, "remain confident." The point is that we are still on the journey. We must still keep "running the race" and not give up until we are finally home. In the midst of all the trouble we have in this temporary life, we have hope. Why? Because we "live by believing and not seeing" (v.7). Faith fuels our confidence and gives us the ability to journey on. Let our lives be focused on pleasing God (v.9) and let us remain confident of His faithfulness and love. Let us keep looking forward.

Exodus 13:17—14:4; Psalm 145; Mark 12:18-27

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PO Box 380, Winter Park, FL 32790
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Good News Daily

Volume XXVI

April 5-11, 2026

Number 14

Sunday, April 5

John 1:1-18 *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* (v.5 NIV)

Light is a powerful metaphor. It is a symbol for that which is true, good, and right. Darkness is the enemy of the light. Light and darkness battle frequently in our lives.

Imagine a beam of light splashing into a dark room. There is a place where the light begins to fade and the darkness begins to take over. That place is where the battle is fought most intensely. It is this imaginary place in our lives where the light of truth, hope, joy, and faith begin to "gray" into lies, despair, sorrow, and doubt. The ultimate expression of these is death. Death personifies and exhibits all of these qualities in the greatest degree.

In Easter we celebrate the final, complete, and most important of all victories—the victory of Christ over death. The darkness of despair, sorrow, hopelessness, and doubt are stripped off with the burial clothes. Christ has had the final word. Light has prevailed. The darkness has not overcome it.

There will be times when we are surrounded by darkness. But remember that the darkness is not the victor. It will not last forever. Light will prevail. Christ is risen!

Exodus 12:1-14; Psalm 148, 149, 150

Monday, April 6

Mark 16:1-8 *"But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"* (v.7)

Can you imagine what Peter must have felt as the three days passed after the crucifixion? I wonder how many times he replayed his words of denial the night Jesus was led into the court of Pilate. Peter seemed so strong, so proud, so loyal to Christ, but he cursed and emphatically denied he was one of the disciples.

Yet the messenger refers to Peter by name. No one else is mentioned by name, not even the ones to whom he is speaking. Perhaps it is because Jesus knew that along the timeline of history there would be millions of failures like Peter's. How many would profess to follow and then deny their Lord the same day!

Most of us have denied the one we love more than we would like to admit. At this climatic point in history, heaven is concerned with the self-inflicted broken heart of a follower. Peter has not been forgotten or cast out. He is wounded but not finished. When we forget our Lord, when we fail, remember Peter. He represents all the dedication we seek and all the weakness

we possess. Most of all though, he represents all the forgiveness we are offered.

Exodus 12:14-27; Psalms 93, 98; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Tuesday, April 7

Psalm 103 *Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.* (v.1)

What is praise? What is thanksgiving? Is there a difference between the two?

We thank God for things. We thank Him for the change of season, for the trees, for answered prayer, and for health. We thank Him for the needed check that came in the mail, for the hospital stay that was short, and for the advancement that finally came through.

However, we praise God for something completely different. We praise God for His character. While we thank God for what He has given, we praise God for who He is. The psalmist identified some of these characteristics of God: forgiveness (v.2), generosity (v.5), mercy (v.8), His sovereignty (v.19).

Thanksgiving and praise are completely different in their scope. Both are vital to a healthy understanding of God. When we pray, we need to acknowledge not only what we have been granted but the nature of the one who granted it. There is a liturgical prayer that says, “It is right to give him thanks and praise.” Yes. Indeed, it is right, “a good and joyful thing.”

Exodus 12:28-39; 1 Corinthians 15:12-28; Mark 16:9-20

Wednesday, April 8

Psalm 97 *The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice.* (v.1)

The other day I saw a bumper sticker on a passing car that read, “Relax, God’s in charge.” I first dismissed this as more “billboard theology.” It is one of hundreds of trite, cute phrases that have popped up in different places in the last several years.

But as I read these psalms that focus on the power and provision of God, I thought how good it is for us to rest in God’s provision. Often, we forget that God is with us. More often, we dismiss the notion that God is as concerned with the small details of life as He is with the large crises we face.

We decide to worry about the small things ourselves. We feel overwhelmed by the “details.” While we live in this world we will be stressed and busy, but let us remember that God is with us and cares about us. He is King! Let us rejoice in the loving Savior who, indeed, is in charge.

Exodus 12:40-51; Psalm 99; 1 Corinthians 15:29-41; Matthew 28:1-16

Thursday, April 9

Matthew 28:16-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* (v.19)

Go. Make disciples. Sounds simple, doesn’t it? It seems easy enough, but many Christians resist this, the Great Commission. Love God, love our neighbor, pray for our enemies—these commands are accepted and acted upon much more readily by many people. But when you mention the command to make more disciples feet shuffle, eyes shift, and voices grow quiet.

Some feel they don’t have the right personality, the right background, or the right knowledge. Others are afraid of rejection. “What if they say no?” they wonder. “What if they laugh?” Opening this very personal area of life is difficult for many. Maybe this is why Jesus followed this command with the following words, “And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Jesus gave this commandment to all the disciples, not just a few. He gave this commandment to us. You and I, with our limitations and shortcomings, are the hands, feet, and mouth of our Savior in this world. You may be laughed at or rejected. But maybe, just maybe, you’ll be the voice of life to a wandering, hurting heart.

Exodus 13:3-10; Psalms 146, 147; 1 Corinthians 15:41-50

Friday, April 10

Exodus 13:1-2, 11-16 *“In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ say to him, ‘With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.’”* (v.14)

Israel is told to remember the past and what the Lord has done for them. These people have just been through the first Passover, where the smearing of blood on their doorways had preserved their household from harm. They are commanded to remember who it was that saved them and let it serve as a reminder that their God is powerful and faithful.

The past is key to us as well. We too are called to spend a lot of time remembering what the Lord has done. This season of Easter is one of those times. We remember and acknowledge that God loves us, pursues us, gave His all for us, and even defeated the grave for us. Easter speaks of power. It whispers of compassion and it shouts of love. Let us never forget what God, through Christ, has done for us. For one day our children, like the Israelite children, will ask us, “What does all this mean?”

Psalm 136; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; Luke 24:1-12