JANUARY 1

Daily Devotional

THE MEASURE OF TRUE SUCCESS

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:1).

God is more interested in your faithfulness than he is in your accomplishments.

Our society is success-oriented. We love success stories. We even have television programs that exalt the lifestyles of the rich and famous. But God's standard for success is quite different. Unimpressed by our status or wealth, he looks instead for faithfulness to his will.

Paul understood that principle and diligently pursued his calling as an apostle—one of those unique men who were foundational to the church and who were recipients, teachers, and writers of the New Testament.

That was a high calling, and yet, judging from Paul's lifestyle, most people would hardly call him successful—having suffered imprisonments, beatings, death threats, shipwrecks, robberies, hatred from his theological enemies, sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, and exposure to the elements (2 Cor. 11:23–27). But none of those things deterred him from obeying God's will. His final testimony was, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). That's true success!

Although we're not apostles, we're to follow Paul's example of faithfulness (1 Cor. 11:1). That's possible because, like the Ephesian believers, we are "saints [holy ones] . . . and are faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:1). By God's grace we've trusted in Christ as our Lord and Savior (Eph. 2:8–9) and have received his righteousness (Phil. 3:9) and his Spirit (Eph. 3:16) and every spiritual resource necessary for faithful, victorious Christian living (Eph. 1:3).

What remains is to cultivate greater love for Christ and more consistent obedience to his Word. Those are the hallmarks of a true disciple and God's measure of success. Make it your goal that your life today warrants the Lord's commendation: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21).

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER: Praise God for his wonderful grace, by which he granted you salvation and all the spiritual resources you need. — Thank him for his Word, through which you learn the principles of godly living. — Ask him for opportunities today to encourage the faithfulness of others.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: Read Ephesians 1:3–4; 2:10; Titus 2:11–12. — What is the goal of your salvation? — Are you living each day in light of that goal?

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR JANUARY 1

Genesis 1–2

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens
and the earth. 2 The earth was without form
and void, and darkness was over the face of the
deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over
the face of the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there
was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good.
And God separated the light from the darkness.
5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he
called Night. And there was evening and there
was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse[1] in
the midst of the waters, and let it separate the
waters from the waters." 7 And God made[2] the
expanse and separated the waters that were
under the expanse from the waters that were
above the expanse. And it was so. 8 And God
called the expanse Heaven.[3] And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let
the dry land appear." And it was so. 10 God called
the dry land Earth,[4] and the waters that were
gathered together he called Seas. And God saw
that it was good.

11 And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants[5] yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to
its kind, on the earth." And it was so. 12 The earth
brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed
according to their own kinds, and trees bearing
fruit in which is their seed, each according to
its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13 And
there was evening and there was morning, the
third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the
expanse of the heavens to separate the day from
the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons,[6] and for days and years, 15 and let them be
lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light
upon the earth." And it was so. 16 And God made
the two great lights—the greater light to rule
the day and the lesser light to rule the night—
and the stars. 17 And God set them in the expanse
of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 to rule
over the day and over the night, and to separate
the light from the darkness. And God saw that
it was good. 19 And there was evening and there
was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the waters swarm with
swarms of living creatures, and let birds[7] fly
above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." 21 So God created the great sea creatures and
every living creature that moves, with which
the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and
every winged bird according to its kind. And
God saw that it was good. 22 And God blessed
them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill
the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on
the earth." 23 And there was evening and there
was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth
living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the
earth according to their kinds." And it was so.
25 And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according
to their kinds, and everything that creeps on
the ground according to its kind. And God saw
that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make man[8] in our
image, after our likeness. And let them have
dominion over the fish of the sea and over the
birds of the heavens and over the livestock and
over all the earth and over every creeping thing
that creeps on the earth."

27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

28 And God blessed them. And God said to
them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth
and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish
of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and
over every living thing that moves on the earth."
29 And God said, "Behold, I have given you every
plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the
earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You
shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of
the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to
everything that creeps on the earth, everything
that has the breath of life, I have given every
green plant for food." And it was so. 31 And God
saw everything that he had made, and behold, it
was very good. And there was evening and there
was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the
seventh day God finished his work that he had
done, and he rested on the seventh day from
all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed
the seventh day and made it holy, because on it

[1] Or *a canopy*; also verses 7, 8, 14, 15, 17, 20 [2] Or *fashioned*; also verse 16 [3] Or *Sky*; also verses 9, 14, 15, 17, 20, 26, 28, 30; 2:1 [4] Or *Land*; also verses 11, 12, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30; 2:1 [5] Or *small plants*; also verses 12, 29 [6] Or *appointed times* [7] Or *flying things*; see Leviticus 11:19–20 [8] The Hebrew word for *man* (*adam*) is the generic term for mankind and becomes the proper name *Adam*

God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

4 These are the generations
of the heavens and the earth when they were created,
in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

5 When no bush of the field[1] was yet in the land[2] and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, 6 and a mist[3] was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— 7 then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. 8 And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. 14 And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat[4] of it you shall surely die."

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for[5] him." 19 Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed[6] every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam[7] there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made[8] into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."[9]

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Psalm 1

1 Blessed is the man[10]
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2 but his delight is in the law[11] of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
3 He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
4 The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Matthew 1–2

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.
2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram,[12] 4 and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, 5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by

[1] Or *open country* [2] Or *earth*; also verse 6 [3] Or *spring* [4] Or *when you eat* [5] Or *corresponding to*; also verse 20 [6] Or *And out of the ground the LORD God formed* [7] Or *the man* [8] Hebrew *built* [9] The Hebrew words for *woman* (*ishshah*) and *man* (*ish*) sound alike [10] The singular Hebrew word for *man* (*ish*) is used here to portray a representative example of a godly person; see Preface [11] Or *instruction* [12] Greek *Aram*; also verse 4

the wife of Uriah, 7 and Solomon the father of
Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
and Abijah the father of Asaph,[1] 8 and Asaph
the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat
the father of Joram, and Joram the father of
Uzziah, 9 and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and
Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father
of Hezekiah, 10 and Hezekiah the father of
Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos,[2]
and Amos the father of Josiah, 11 and Josiah the
father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time
of the deportation to Babylon.

12 And after the deportation to Babylon:
Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel,[3] and
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, 13 and
Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the
father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of
Azor, 14 and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok
the father of Achim, and Achim the father of
Eliud, 15 and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and
Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the
father of Jacob, 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph
the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born,
who is called Christ.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to
David were fourteen generations, and from
David to the deportation to Babylon four-
teen generations, and from the deportation to
Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ[4] took place
in this way. When his mother Mary had been
betrothed[5] to Joseph, before they came together
she was found to be with child from the Holy
Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a
just man and unwilling to put her to shame,
resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he
considered these things, behold, an angel of
the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying,
"Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary
as your wife, for that which is conceived in her
is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son,
and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will
save his people from their sins." 22 All this took
place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by
the prophet:

23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear
a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph
woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord
commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew
her not until she had given birth to a son. And
he called his name Jesus.

2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of
Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold,
wise men[6] from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 say-
ing, "Where is he who has been born king of the
Jews? For we saw his star when it rose[7] and have
come to worship him." 3 When Herod the king
heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem
with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests
and scribes of the people, he inquired of them
where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told
him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written
by the prophet:

6 "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers
of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly
and ascertained from them what time the star
had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem,
saying, "Go and search diligently for the child,
and when you have found him, bring me word,
that I too may come and worship him." 9 After
listening to the king, they went on their way.
And behold, the star that they had seen when it
rose went before them until it came to rest over
the place where the child was. 10 When they saw
the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.
11 And going into the house they saw the child
with Mary his mother, and they fell down and
worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures,
they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense
and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not
to return to Herod, they departed to their own
country by another way.

13 Now when they had departed, behold, an
angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream
and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother,
and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell
you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to
destroy him." 14 And he rose and took the child
and his mother by night and departed to Egypt
15 and remained there until the death of Herod.
This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken
by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he had been
tricked by the wise men, became furious, and
he sent and killed all the male children in
Bethlehem and in all that region who were two
years old or under, according to the time that
he had ascertained from the wise men. 17 Then
was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet
Jeremiah:

18 "A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and loud lamentation,

[1] *Asaph* is probably an alternate spelling of *Asa*; some manuscripts *Asa*; also verse 8 [2] *Amos* is probably an alternate spelling of *Amon*; some manuscripts *Amon*; twice in this verse [3] Greek *Salathiel*; twice in this verse [4] Some manuscripts *of the Christ* [5] That is, legally pledged to be married [6] Greek *magi*; also verses 7, 16 [7] Or *in the east*; also verse 9