

The background of the entire page is an abstract, expressive painting. It features thick, textured brushstrokes in various shades of blue, from deep navy to bright cerulean, and vibrant greens, ranging from lime to forest green. The strokes are layered and overlapping, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is dynamic and artistic.

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# Knowing the Lord

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30 Devotionals on the  
Character of God

Timothy Bertolet

Knowing the Lord: 30 Devotionals on the Character of God  
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## Day 1

# The Lord Is Compassionate

*Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me."*

*"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me. —Isaiah 49:13-16*

Have you ever felt the way the people of Zion felt? "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me." Pause for a moment and reflect on the fact that Scripture verbalizes their despair.

Scripture allows us to express the depths of our emotions and to pour out our feelings before the Lord. As my dad once said while encouraging me to express myself to the Lord, "He has big shoulders; he can handle it."

The point of expressing our feelings is not to wallow in them or to throw a tantrum at God. In our hurt and hardship, we are certainly not to follow the advice of Job's wife and just "curse God and die" (Job 2:9). We are not to give our feelings control or abandon our faith in God.

Our expression is being honest with where we are and what we are feeling so that we might learn to trust in the Lord. We will find that in the dark times he is right beside us, carrying us in ways we never would imagine.

Do you feel like the Lord isn't there? Do you feel like the Lord has abandoned you? Do you feel like this hardship—and all the emotions stirred up by trying times—make the weight too hard to

carry? In the hurt, do you ask yourself, “Am I forgotten?” Consider what the Lord says.

Would a mother ever forget one of her babies while she is nursing them? Would she abandon her tenderness for that child in her womb? God is sustaining us and caring for us with that same gentleness and compassion each moment of our lives. We draw our life and breath from him. If God will not forget the number of hairs upon your head (Luke 12:7), he will certainly never forget you! He has a care and compassion deeper than any mother has for her nursing babe.

The Lord says, “Even they may forget but I will not forget.” We recognize how nearly impossible it would be for a mother to forget her child, but in theory, it could happen. But the comparison is “how much more?” As hard as it would be for a mother to forget, it is even that much harder for God to forget. There are occasionally wicked mothers who do not have compassion on their children, but there is no wicked Lord. He will not forget. He has written us on the palm of his hands. Our names are hidden with him. Our whole being and identity is secure with him.

The point of this passage is that God had not forsaken his people—and never would—even as they would be carried into exile in Babylon, which was a shaming and damning experience, full of hurt and bitterness for them.

Return again to where this passage starts, “Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.” Sing for joy! Take a moment today and rejoice. Even the mountains sing because the Lord knows those who are his. He will comfort. He will have compassion. You and I may feel forgotten and left alone in our hardship, but nothing could be further from the truth.

## Day 2

# The Lord Is Your Keeper

*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. —Psalm 121:1-8*

Sometimes when we think about God being in heaven, we imagine that he is distant and far away. But the reality is that God hears his people and comes down to them. Heaven is the Lord's throne room, and his throne is a reminder of his control, rulership, and sovereignty over all things. He has created heaven and earth, and it remains under his authority.

In our seasons of prayer, we look up to heaven. We know that our help comes from the very throne room of God.

Psalm 121 is a psalm of ascent. It was probably sung as God's people walked up to the earthly temple, which at that time was the visible display of God's house and throne. The temple was a tangible reminder of God's authority. As this psalm reminds us, our powerful God helps and protects us, anchoring our feet in place.

How beautiful is it that God never sleeps? He sustains all things by the Word of his mighty power (Hebrews 1:3). Everything lives and moves and has its being in him (Acts 17:28). God is the one who is over all things. We are forever to be looking up to him, the source of our help (Psalm 121:1). How easily we get distracted from this truth in the day-to-day hustle and bustle of life.



The Lord keeps you. He watches over you in the night and in the day. Even the best human bodyguards must take breaks. They can grow weary on guard duty. They can get distracted, sleepy, or hungry. But not the Lord. These verses tell us plainly that the Lord protects you. He is “a shelter right by your side” (Psalm 121:5 CSB). It wouldn’t take much to knock over your house: a hurricane, a tornado, or maybe just a wind stronger than the Big Bad Wolf can blow. The good blessing of your house is weak compared to the might of your true shelter, the Lord himself.

Keep your hope in him. Be thankful for the gifts through which he mediates his blessings—including a family or a home—but remember who has given the gifts. If you are safe in your home, you are ultimately safe because the Lord alone is keeping you. The sun and moon, or any kind of evil, cannot strike you while the Lord keeps you. And if he allows something to touch you, like sickness was allowed to touch Job, remember that it is all under the restraining power of the hand of God. His authority is not failing. These events are serving his purposes.

It is the Lord alone who protects you from harm. The Lord protects your life. Think about this: the Lord gives you life, the Lord sustains your life, the Lord guides the course of your life, and the Lord protects your life.

What a comfort it is to remember that my life is, from start to finish, a gift from him, coddled and sustained entirely within his loving hands. I belong to him. He is my Lord, and I am his servant. I don’t sustain the Lord. Even my service to him doesn’t add value to him or increase his power, might, or effectiveness. I add nothing to God. But God, on the other hand, is my everything. He protects me. He alone keeps my comings and my goings—both now and forevermore.

How can we not worship and rest in him alone? Give thanks to him today.

## Day 3

# The Lord Is Our Shepherd

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. . . . He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. —Psalm 23:1, 3-4*

*He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. —Isaiah 40:11*

We are all familiar with Psalm 23. Many of us have this psalm, or portions of it, memorized. When I was a pastor, I always found that these familiar verses were particularly helpful to hurting people. Hearing these verses in times of pain or crisis was like a gentle, soothing balm to the soul. A mind clouded by grief didn't have to face the hard work of processing new words and thoughts; instead, the heart could soak them in.

If the Lord is our Shepherd, then we are his sheep. Sheep are helpless animals who need careful protection and attention. They are some of the most vulnerable creatures in the animal kingdom. That vulnerability is so true of us on both a spiritual and a physical level. The Scriptures remind us that we came from the dust, and we will return to the dust. There is a constant limit to our lives. We have weaknesses and fears. To borrow a line from a Star Trek movie, "Death is a hunter that stalks us; we are like prey."

But enter the Lord, our Shepherd. He cares for us in trials. Perhaps, right now, you feel like you are in a valley of the shadow of death. For some, this may be an emotional valley filled with fear and uncertainty. For others, it may be a deep valley of physical troubles. Still others may be engulfed in a spiritual crisis, wondering where the Lord is.



It is during these times that the Lord comes to us as a gentle Shepherd. He scoops us into his loving arms and carries us. Sometimes he does that by calling our attention to a specific Bible verse. Sometimes he shows his gracious care by sending a close friend to reach out. Other times, as we cry out in desperation, he sets upon our hearts an otherworldly peace. When he does this, we feel a sense of calm that we know did not come from within ourselves. The Lord is good like that. He restores our souls. Do not lose sight of the care and compassion that he offers you. Remember, he promises to never leave you or forsake you (Joshua 1:5; Hebrews 13:5).

The Lord as the Shepherd scoops us up into his arms. He carries us in his bosom. Think of the care and closeness that image demonstrates. Many of us have picked up a small child and wrapped them in our arms, against our chest, to comfort them as they cry. The Lord is a safe Father, with strong arms and a soft bosom. He delights in drawing us near into his safety as our gentle Shepherd.

Reach out to him in prayer. Find comfort in his Word, the Bible. Take a moment to think about how God has cared for you over the years. Will he not care for you right now—and throughout the future?

## Day 4

# The Lord Is a Shield

*But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah. I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. —Psalm 3:3-6*

Some time ago, I spent an extended season of time reading the Psalms. One thing that I love about the Psalms is that there is a psalm for every emotion you may be feeling. Are you fearful? There are psalms about that. Are you having trouble trusting God? There are psalms about that. Are you anxious? Lonely? Betrayed? Angry? Doubting? All of these appear in the Psalms. But the Psalms don't leave us wallowing in these emotions. They give us outlets of expression for our feelings and then help us turn our eyes heavenward to trust and praise.

Today, let's consider a few verses from Psalm 3, in which God is described as our shield. This is an image used about 21 times in Scripture to describe God and his relationship to us. Just like a shield protects a soldier in battle, God is the one who protects his people. He is sure and steady; we can run to him for defense. He holds us behind himself and stands between us and the storm or trial we are facing.

In Psalm 3, the psalmist cries out to God, his shield. He is assured that God hears from his holy hill. The throne room of God is in heaven, but it is not a far-off and distant hill. We do not have to shout to be heard from far away, or make sure our voices are loud enough to ascend to him. God is the Great One who hears his children. He is a caring Father who bends his ear downward in our time of need.

Consider the peace that this gave the psalmist. Even while fleeing for his life, he lay down to sleep. He awoke because God sustained him and protected him. The armies did not overrun him in the night because God was his shield.

Enemies may set themselves against us, but who better to stand between us and our enemies than God? In hard times, I chuckle when I read verses like this, because I say to myself, “Well, at least no one is trying to kill me.” But many of us have had sleepless nights of worry for other reasons. We have tossed and turned on our beds during seasons of uncertainty and fear.

Remember the Lord. Consider how he is a shield. There is no flaming arrow of the evil one that he cannot stop. Not one hair on your head can be touched unless the Lord allows it. Not one illness can get near you unless it is within the plan and purpose of God. And even then, he will sustain you and hold you as you travel whatever path he has called you to walk.

Tonight, when you lie down to sleep, remember that the Lord is your shield. He will sustain you. He has sustained you throughout this entire day, and he will continue to do so until he returns or until he calls you home. Let the Lord lift up your head with those truths.

Psalm 115:11 reminds us, “You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield.” And remember: whatever you are feeling, there’s a psalm for that. Go find it.



## Day 5

# The Lord Is in Control

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." —Matthew 28:18*

*"You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. — Hebrews 2:7-8*

The Great Commission begins with an announcement of Jesus' authority. He says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Of course, as the Son of God, he has always had power over everything he created. But now, he has been granted this authority as the risen human King. The one who stepped into creation in lowliness and utter humility is now exalted within it and over it. He is the King. He is the Messiah. He is the Ruler of all. As Hebrews 2 explains, while quoting Psalm 8, all things have been put under Jesus' feet, and he rules as the human Messianic King.

When we look at our world, we don't always feel like all things are under Jesus' control. In fact, Hebrews 2:8 tells us, "We do not yet see everything in subjection to him."

In dark times, we might be tempted to ask, "Why doesn't Jesus stop this? Isn't he in control?" If we wander too far down this path, our sinful inclination is to question God: "Are you really in control? Are you really the Lord over this? Make it stop."

We want our difficulties to cease, and when they don't, we feel like our situation has somehow escaped Jesus' control. But God wants us to know what to expect: we do not yet see everything in subjection to Jesus. Satan still roams around like a roaring lion.

Death can still take us. There are still principalities and powers—men and angels—that rebel against God. Creation groans daily waiting for redemption.

What is true, however, is not dependent upon what we see. All things have been put under Jesus' feet. To paraphrase Abraham Kuyper, there is not one square inch of creation that Jesus doesn't look at and proclaim, "Mine."

Somehow, allowing sin to continue, allowing creation to rebel, and allowing pandemics to run their course serves the purposes of our Lord. He is not any less in control. And he remains in control of our lives. As Christians, how much more do we need to profess during dark times, "My life is in your hands, Lord; I trust you"? He will show us grace and mercy by walking with us through trials, not exempting us from them.

We can see Jesus working. We know that he is the one who was crucified for us. He loved us so much that he suffered and died to bring us to an eternal glory. As Hebrews 2:9 says, "But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."

Our hardships are minor and inconsequential when compared to the hardship and suffering Christ bore for you and me to bring us to him. If he did that for us, how much more can we trust that our current situations are subject to his authority, and that he will use them to serve his purpose. Let us pray that Christ would be glorified in and through these hardships.

## Day 6

# The Lord Is Our Rock

*For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah. —Psalm 62:5–8*

If you're like me, waiting is often hard. Waiting in silence is even harder. Our natural impulse is to want to do something. We want to solve the problem. We want to know the end result. Sometimes, we just want to keep ourselves busy so that we do not have to feel the waiting.

Making noise is easier than being silent. But in this psalm, David waits in silence. He knows that no amount of activity will speed things up. His hope is in the Lord alone. His deliverance will come from the Lord, and it will arrive at the proper time.

We aren't sure exactly what David was waiting for, but it appears that he was being attacked (v. 3), people were telling lies about him, and they were secretly cursing him (v. 4). David was waiting for the Lord to bring resolution and judgment on his behalf (v.12). There was nothing David could do but wait in silence, with his eyes fixed on the Lord.

Waiting in silence is even harder in our day. We are constantly bombarded with noise, from music to TV to the internet. While these things are not inherently bad, they can be distractions.

We can rely on busyness as a means of hiding fear. We can be afraid to stop, to rest, to acknowledge our weakness, or to be alone. Our distractions can be a form of Novocain, numbing us to the need for stillness. Don't let busyness, noise, and distractions



keep you from recognizing the true source of hope, peace, and calm in the midst of storms and trials.

The peace and security that we need to settle our hearts are found only in the Lord. “He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress” (Psalm 62:2). Sometimes our lives are so altered and shaken by upheaval that we are robbed of our distractions and our places of false security. Only by fixing our eyes on the Lord will we find that we are not shaken.

Maybe you are in a season in which the normal things that give you rest, comfort, escape, and enjoyment have been taken away. Trying to navigate life without them shows how much you really need the Lord. He alone is our most basic and fundamental need. Our lives are to be built from the ground up upon him. He is our Rock.

Some seasons are going to stretch us and build muscles of dependence upon God. Can we honestly say that we trust him at all times as we are called to do? We all occasionally feel like a tiny boat caught in an ocean storm, about to capsize. We look for a rock—we look for the Lord our Rock. Some days we feel like he is right there; other days the sky seems dark, and the rain and waves obscure our vision. We wait in silence.

Remember your hope. Remember the Lord’s goodness. Pour out your heart to him. He hears our prayers and responds to our cries. God is a refuge for us—the only good, perfect, and true Refuge. Truly, our hope is in him.

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:25-26).

## Day 7

# The Lord Is Forgiver and Healer

*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. —Psalm 103:1-5*

It can be very hard to bless the Lord when life feels difficult. We want answers and resolutions. We want results. Stopping to bless the Lord can feel counterproductive. But in hard times, it is especially important to remember who the Lord is. Blessing him is a way of turning toward him, focusing on his attributes, and giving thanks to him on all occasions.

This psalm gives us five truths to remember during hard times. First, the Lord has generously poured out his benefits upon us. Verse two reminds us to “forget not all his benefits,” and goes on to list a number of those benefits. Maybe you need to take a few minutes right now and write down your own list of benefits that you have received from the Lord. Remember that even when life doesn't feel good, the Lord's character is still good. His goodness does not change. His love and care are never removed from us.

Second, remember how the Lord forgives. The Lord takes our sins and removes them. He washes us and makes us clean. He is the one who redeems us: he purchases us back through his blood. If we were not redeemed by the Lord, we would go down into the grave and face eternal separation from God. There would be no resurrection unto life if not for the redemption found in Jesus Christ. Is there anything better for which to bless the Lord?

Third, the Lord heals us. This doesn't mean that everyone who believes in Christ will never get sick or succumb to a disease. But our healing ultimately does come from the Lord. He has the power over disease.

Fourth, the Lord doesn't just redeem us; he gives us a crown of life. He places us in the company of royalty and gives us an inheritance in Christ. He lavishes upon us his steadfast love and mercy. The word for steadfast love used in this verse is the Hebrew word *hesed*; which refers to loyal, steadfast, faithful love. It is the love of a covenant with a strong bond of commitment. The Lord shows us mercy because of our sin, but he also binds himself to us in steadfast love because of his commitment and character. What then shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus? Nothing (Romans 8:35-39). The Lord crowns us with his attributes.

Finally, our true and lasting satisfaction comes only from the Lord. He brings good into our lives. It is so easy in times of trial to focus only on the areas in which we do not see any good. We fixate on the life events that have gone wrong. But the Lord brings a higher good and purpose. He brings salvation and benefits of redemption unparalleled to anything in this life. And every good gift in this life is from the Lord.

As James 1:17 tells us, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

We all have days when we wake up feeling weary and discouraged. On these days we can remember that the Lord has given us rich benefits out of his great love and mercy. He is faithful in all things, and we need to trust him in the hard times as well as in the good times. Instead of simply waiting on hard times to lift or for life to return to normal, let's turn our thoughts towards the Lord and spend some time blessing his name.



## Day 8

# The Lord Is the Prince of Peace

*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock. —Isaiah 26:3-4*

Peace of mind comes only from the Lord. The Lord is the one who keeps us in perfect peace. He comes to us and quiets our restless hearts the way a mother might hold a child who cannot fall asleep at night. There is safety in the Lord's arms.

In times of uncertainty, it is easy for our minds to run to and fro thinking through every scenario.

Some of us are planners by nature. We want a plan. There is safety in the plan. But every plan is dependent upon the Lord's will (James 4:13-15). While it is often wise to make plans, we get our hearts into trouble when we depend more upon the plan than upon the Lord.

Some of us are such planners that we game out all possible contingencies. We think of multiple scenarios and how we will handle each one, down to the minutia. Sometimes a backup plan is good. But trying to track every possible outcome will unsettle our hearts and drive us mad. It breeds fear. Maybe you have felt your anxiety increase as you think of possibilities involving potential disaster. At some point, you stop trusting the Lord. Your mind is stayed on trying to be ready for everything and fix everything. This restlessness cultivates more fear, worry, and anxiety. It is like a feedback loop that becomes so loud it drowns out the voice of the Lord.

God wants us to have perfect peace. Our minds need to turn from what we may or may not do and what may or may not happen. Our minds need to be stayed on him. What does it look like to keep your mind stayed on God? It looks like trust.

Take all of the plans and scenarios you are gaming out in your head and give them to God. Acknowledging that some plans are good, you can pray, "Lord, to the best of my ability, I am planning ahead for this, but I confess that the outcome is in your hands." You seek his wisdom in making the plan, do your part in planning, and then release the results to him: "It is not in my control but in yours."

If you realize you are making plans in order to avoid every possible unpleasant future, or to attempt to control your own security, give those concerns to God. Tell him, "God, I do not know the future. But I cannot keep worrying about every possible scenario, no matter how remote. I trust you. You will either keep me from it or walk me through it if it happens."

Our minds are stayed on God when we trust him. Fear often stems from a lack of trust. Fear is bred in our hearts by idolatry and selfishness. We want to be God, and we want to focus on ourselves and control our own lives. But we are not in control. We have to confess our idolatrous desires and repent of them. We must trust that God is in control, preaching to ourselves the truths we know and rehearsing them in our mind. This is the biblical form of meditation. We confess, "Yes, this is true. I believe it." We pray and acknowledge our God who retains all control. We worship. And our steadfast focus on the Prince of Peace drives out fear.

We are called to trust in the Lord forever. All of our eternity in the perfection of heaven will still involve walking in trust with the Lord. We will commune with him. We will continue to confess our faith in him. We will walk by sight as we see him face to face, but we will still worship him and believe in him. And all our worries will cease, and we will dwell in his perfect peace forever.

## Day 9

# The Lord Is Working in You

*Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. —Romans 5:2-5*

In this passage, God would have us rejoice in two things. First, we are to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Second, we are to rejoice in our sufferings. We often think that if we are rejoicing in our hope, we cannot rejoice in our sufferings. I am sometimes tempted to think that if I really have such a treasure ahead of me in God's glory, then he wouldn't allow my current suffering. But the road to glory is paved with suffering. That's how it was for Christ's triumphal procession from the cross to exaltation. And that's how it is for those of us who share in Christ and his inheritance (Romans 8:17).

Focus on what you have already obtained: you have access to the grace of God. You and I can stand close to God because of his grace. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We have all that we truly need. By faith in Jesus Christ, we have received the gift of righteousness. God is not the judge standing against us; he declares us to be righteous. His wrath for our sin is no longer against us—the work of Jesus Christ has perfectly removed it. We have peace with God. Through faith, we have come to participate in Christ and his work. What he did on the cross has now been applied to those who believe.



The worst thing that I could ever experience in my existence would be to stand before God and face the fair and just consequences for my sin. It would be a trial. It would lead to punishment and rightful suffering. I would get exactly what I deserve. I would have no hope. But thanks be to God for his grace! I will not face that trial and suffering. I have hope. I will see the glory of God—not in vengeance poured out upon my sin, but in love lavished upon me in Jesus Christ. I will experience the joyous presence of God. Nothing will compare to that. It is my hope.

Furthermore, Christ's work on the cross is the driving force for missions. We want to proclaim the glory of God, announce his offer of forgiveness for sins, and watch others come to experience the peace of God in which we partake.

But then, God wants us to rejoice in our suffering. We are to rejoice in the hardships we experience. I am sure you have had many frustrations, uncertainties, and anxieties. I know that I have had moments where anxiety seems to loom. It feels like a cat stalking its prey—and then pouncing upon it. But there is a good end to our suffering. Like working out a muscle at the gym, our faith is being stretched. The pressure put upon us is building spiritual muscles and godly resilience.

Paul says our suffering builds endurance. Marathon runners don't wake up one day and decide, "I'm going to run 26 miles." They work up to it. They train. They build endurance and form muscles to produce resilience. So it is with our spiritual lives. Take a moment to consider: How is God using difficult experiences to build endurance in you? Where is he stretching you? Where is he taking you just a little bit beyond yourself so that you will lean on him and know that all you need is found in him?

Your endurance produces character. Character is forged through fire as we are tested and as we respond by pursuing Christlikeness. When we lean on Christ, we find him building things in us that we know did not originate within ourselves.

In hard times, we tend to think, “If I were just a stronger Christian, I wouldn’t be in this mess.” We think that strong Christians never despair, never lose hope, and never come to the end of their rope. That is just false. Look at the psalms. The psalmist often descends into emotional depths, into despair, and into Sheol (the grave) at the verge of physical and emotional death. Look at Jesus’ despair on the cross. Who is more righteous than Jesus? Who should be more exempt than Jesus? But “although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8).

The Lord uses these experiences in our lives to build our character. It is not how far down we go that makes us a weak or a strong Christian. What matters most is who we rely on to pick us up out of it. We only gain character through experiences that push us beyond ourselves. If those experiences didn’t push us beyond our limits, we could rely on our own strength. But Christian character is produced when we learn to rely on Christ. We must take to heart the words of the hymn, “Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him! How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er.”

Godly character, in turn, produces hope. The Lord will bring us out of this. I have no idea when he will do it, or how, or what the future will look like. But the Lord will be faithful. He may restore our lives, he may call us home, or he may return. No matter what, we will win. We will find that our hope was not in vain. We have trusted in the Lord, and we will not be put to shame.

We can rejoice in sufferings knowing that God is using them to work within us. We rejoice for the outcome, not because we like going through trials. Even Jesus did not enjoy the experience of the cross: while he remained sinless, his human will still desired for the cross to be taken away from him. But he recognized that it was the Father’s will, so he submitted. The joy set before him (Hebrews 12:2) wasn’t the cross, it was the outcome. Likewise, the joy set before us isn’t the trial and the suffering; it is the outcome of the suffering. God is producing in us endurance, character, and hope. You will not be disappointed with what the Father is trying to do in your life. Are you willing to say, “Not my will but yours be done”?

## Day 10

# The Lord Is Our Mediator

*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. —Hebrews 4:14-16*

When we experience events in our lives that seem new and unprecedented, we have an opportunity to practice holding fast. We know that the Lord Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father and is in control of all things, so we learn to be patient and wait, keeping our focus on what we know to be true.

As Christians, we need to hold fast to our confession, no matter what is going on around us. We have Jesus, our great High Priest, who ascended into heaven for us.

Sometimes, when people think of Jesus' ascension to heaven after his earthly ministry, they casually assume, "Well, he just went back to where he came from." This is true; Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came down from heaven and entered the womb of Mary to be born as a human. But we often do not notice that something new happened during his ascension. For the first time, Jesus went into heaven in a fully human, resurrected body. In the person of Jesus, human flesh and blood entered the presence of God. Consider how amazing that is.

Jesus returned to heaven as our King and as our High Priest. He was the Davidic Messiah entering God's presence on behalf of his people.



We need to hold fast to this confession. We don't hold fast in an abstract form of knowledge; our confession isn't a box we check on a doctrinal quiz. We hold fast to the person of Jesus Christ. We hold fast to who he is and what he has done for us and for our salvation. We believe and verbally express these things about him as we wholly trust in him. Right now, and always, he is the only sure thing.

Have you ever shared a hurt or heartbreak with someone, only to have them tell you that you just need to "toughen up and get over it"? I have. Thankfully, the Lord Jesus is not like that when we come to him with our fears, hurts, and weaknesses. We might be tempted to think that he is too far removed from our experiences since he is the Son of God, with all his might and power. But Jesus was also fully man. This is a mystery because he was both God and man without compromising or minimizing what it means to be either one. Because he was human, Jesus sympathizes with our weakness and our hurts. Because he is God, he will never let us down. He will never leave us or forsake us. Therefore, he is the best person to run to with our needs. He is a gentle Shepherd who stoops to care for us.

This is why Hebrews calls us to have confidence when we approach him. We come before his throne of grace in confidence. We can enter into the presence of God because Jesus the Mediator has gone first on our behalf. As John Calvin wrote, Jesus Christ "comes forward as an intermediary, to change the throne of dreadful glory into the throne of grace" (Institutes of the Christian Religion, 3.20.17). Our sins deserve punishment, but the Father sent the Son into the world because of his love for us. The Son took our punishment, and now serves as our Mediator, standing as one from among us.

Hold fast to this confession, and go boldly before your heavenly Father in your prayers because the Son is already there on your behalf. You will, without fail, receive grace and mercy in your times of need.

## Day 11

# The Lord Is Trustworthy

*I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD. —Psalm 40:1-3*

One of the hardest things we have to do is wait patiently. We don't know how long difficult periods will last, or the long-term effects of different situations. We just have to wait. We want instant relief, but the reality is that we are going to have to endure more. God is stretching our patience muscle. We must ask ourselves, are we waiting for our circumstances, or are we waiting for the Lord? Will we trust him as our hope and strength?

Like Peter stepping out of the boat to walk on the water, we must look to Jesus and trust him to hold us steady above the waves. He is trustworthy, and he will prove it yet again. We must train our vision on him, letting go of our worry about our circumstances. Like Peter, though, our temptation is fear the circumstances and doubt the Lord's trustworthiness.

I am not saying that we shouldn't be aware of the storms raging around us; we should do our best to prepare for the unknown. But we do this as we trust the Lord to help and protect us, and we ask him for his daily guidance and sustenance.

The Lord will hear our cries. He will lift us up out of despair and helplessness and plant our feet upon the rock. The Lord lifts us up by giving us a confidence and a strong, steady spirit that only comes from him. In these seasons, we, as believers, realize that God is faithful to grant peace and make our steps secure.

As Psalm 40 declares, the Lord can put a new song in our hearts. There are moments when that feels impossible. But he fills us with a supernatural joy. Supernatural joy isn't naïve or oblivious to challenges and the hardships. We don't deny reality. However, we know the Lord of the circumstances. As we sing in the hymn "I Know Whom I Have Believed": "But I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day." We have peace and safety in him.

The Lord will keep us in his salvation. Sing about that. Rejoice in the Lord. Take a moment and write a list of things for which you are thankful. Post your list of blessings on the refrigerator. If you have children, make it a family activity. Ask your kids what they are grateful for. It is easier to think about what discourages us than to think about the blessings the Lord has given us. Consider what you have to sing about, even if you don't sing it out loud—for some of us, our families will be thankful if we don't sing aloud!

Notice what happens in this psalm when people see the Lord lift the believer out of his despair and give him a new song: "Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD." We have no idea how God may use the hardships in our lives to bring people to salvation and into his kingdom. We have no idea how he will bring glory to his name. But that is our goal. No matter what happens, the Lord's purposes will not be thwarted. The Lord is trustworthy. For that, we can rejoice.



## Day 12

# The Lord Is Our Example

*And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." —Hebrews 2:13*

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is before all things and above all things (Colossians 1:17). Of course, we remember that, at a point in time, and without setting aside any of his divinity and divine attributes, Jesus took on the form of a servant and made himself of no account (Philippians 2:5-11). He took on true humanity, and everything that being human entails, without the sin that currently plagues us (Hebrews 2:14, 17).

One distinctive feature of the book of Hebrews is that the author loves to quote the Old Testament. Within this one verse, we have two quotations from the Old Testament used to refer to Jesus. The two quotations are from Isaiah 8:17 and 8:18. They are placed in the text as the words of Jesus because he brought the ultimate fulfillment to this passage, which originally referred to Isaiah trusting the Lord.

Stop and think about this: during his earthly human life, God the eternal Son spoke about his heavenly Father, saying: "I will put my trust in him." The Son who made all things and sustains all things, who is the radiance of God's glory, the exact imprint of the divine nature, and the one who upholds the universe with the word of his mighty power (Hebrews 1:2-3), is saying, "I trust God the Father." And then he says it in union with us: "Behold, I and the children God has given me." In effect, Jesus joins his people in declaring: "We trust in God."

In our lives, we are constantly learning new depths to which we must trust God our heavenly Father. How great a comfort it is that the eternal Son of God became human, and that he fulfilled this humanity perfectly. What is more human than to trust God?

In his humanity, the Son learned obedience through suffering (Hebrews 5:8) and fully trusted in his heavenly Father, going to him often in prayer.

Hebrews tells us that in his humanity, Jesus had weakness. It was weakness without sin, but it was human weakness that we all experience. Jesus had frailty, most clearly evidenced in the way he was bloodied and brutalized on the road to Calvary. Yet what did Jesus do? He did not use his deity like a trump card or a “get out of jail free” card for his suffering. He did not exempt himself. No, he did something no human had ever achieved: he trusted his Father perfectly. Being human demands that we look outside ourselves and trust God. The Son, in his humanity, did that very thing.

Today, as his children, we are called to follow his example and put our trust in our heavenly Father. God is our saving Father because he has adopted us as children into his family. Jesus is, in a sense, our older brother. And as our older brother, we can look up to him and see how he trusts God the Father—just like we do.

The fact that Jesus perfectly trusted the Father becomes even more beautiful as we contemplate how Jesus is our High Priest. He understands our weaknesses and can sympathize with them. He knows what it is like to resist temptation. He knows what it is like to want to give up and throw in the towel. He knows what it is like to cry in desperation (Hebrews 5:7). He knows what it is like to face the hardships that cause fear, but choose to trust instead. When we struggle with trusting God, we can look to Jesus and ask for his help.

My temptation in a trial is to think, “No one understands. No one gets it or has been where I am.” But Jesus has. And Jesus won the day. How great it is that we have Jesus as our High Priest and older brother. As you turn to him, think on these things: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to

the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” Hebrews 4:15-16.



## Day 13

# The Lord Is Unchanging

*You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end. —Hebrews 1:10-12*

It is good to take a moment and remember how unlike us the Lord is. We are fragile. We are easily wearied. We are finite. Paul describes all of creation as subject to futility and in bondage to corruption (Romans 8:20-21). Creation groans in the pains of childbirth (Romans 8:22).

What God has created on earth will perish. Like clothes that get ragged, worn, and start to shred, so also creation breaks down. This earth, and everything in it, will one day have to be replaced with a new creation. That is the final hope. Until then, no part of creation is certain except chaos and uncertainty.

Hebrews 1:10-12 quotes a passage about God from Psalm 102:25-27. The author of Hebrews frames these verses as something God the Father says to God the Son. In this passage, the Word of God speaks about all three persons of the Godhead, but it is directed specifically toward the Son.

The Son of God laid the foundations of the earth (Hebrews 1:2; Colossians 1:16). If we know the Old Testament well, we recognize that only God can create. Therefore, when we see the description of the Son's involvement in creation, we are to immediately understand that it is because he is truly God. The works of his hands are mighty. Like the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Son is without beginning or end. He brings the creation into beginning, and he will usher it to its end and into the new creation.

The Son remains. He is unchanging. In the Son, like each person of the Godhead, there is no shadow and shifting (James 1:17); there is no wavering or fragility. God is not thrown into turmoil, wavering in crisis by events, elements of nature, or created beings. Therefore, he is safe to run to and to trust. He is firm and secure because he is the Lord of all. As Hebrews 13:8 articulates, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

In uncertain times, we need to remember that only God is certain and unchanging. We go through life counting on things to be regular and measured. We make plans based on expectations. We assume, without much thought, that tomorrow will be like yesterday, and patterns will continue. We plan around the stability of those patterns. And then something upends all our patterns and stability, and we realize the stability we had counted on was more of an illusion than we had thought.

Only the Lord Jesus is stable. Even the patterned consistency of the day turning to night, and the night turning to day, occurs only because he established it by a covenant (Jeremiah 33:20). This is why James instructs us to make plans with the preface, "if it is the Lord's will" (James 4:15). The Lord remains sovereign over his changing, unstable creation. He will reign forever: he has no end to his years because he had no beginning. He is not bound by time but is the Creator of it.

Turn to the Lord. He is faithful. There is no better place to go during the chaos of change in this world than to the Son, who never changes and will never change.

## Day 14

# The Lord Is Our Refuge

*The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. —Nahum 1:7*

The book of Nahum is an oracle of judgment against Nineveh. However, right in the middle of chapter one, we find these words. One of the reasons the Lord was going to act was because Nineveh, the capital of the kingdom of Assyria, had attacked his people. Thus, the words above assure God's people that he is for them, he will protect them, and he will preserve them.

We live in a fallen world cursed with the effects of sin. It is important to remember that God is in control, and he is still able to protect and preserve his people.

The Lord is good. Events and circumstances that arise in life do not take away from the goodness of the Lord. Think of all the ways that God uses times of trial for good. Perhaps hardship forces you to reevaluate what is most precious, to search for spiritual answers, to think more about God and faith, or to pray more fervently.

The Lord is good whether or not we can see good things that he is doing. It is easy to attempt to judge his goodness by looking for the visible effects of that goodness. We quantify his goodness based upon what he did or didn't do to meet our expectations. Unfortunately, when we think like that, we start to make ourselves the measure. Scripture gives us the true measure and verdict: the Lord is good. That's who he is. It is fundamental and basic to his being. The Lord is not the author of sin. His ways, purpose, and, most importantly, his character are infinitely good. We can walk through the storm because the Lord is with us, and the Lord is good.



The Lord's goodness forms the foundation of his role as refuge for his people. Because the Lord is good, he offers himself as a stronghold in the day of trouble. Trouble may rage around us, but the Lord stands next to us as a shield. He wraps his arms around us, encircling us like a mother hen nestles her chicks under her wings to protect them. The Lord is a mighty fortress. His goodness stands like a high mountain castle against any stormy trouble that would assail us.

When you take refuge in the fortress of the Lord, you enter his gates, and he knows you. The King greets you. As you run to him, he does not see you enter and say, "Oh, welcome, who are you? Could you introduce yourself?" His knowledge of you is not merely external; he does not simply know about you. He knows you in a deep, intimate, covenant relationship in which you are his and he is yours. It is like husbands and wives know their partner. The Lord has known you this way since before the foundation of the world. You are safe with him because he understands you completely. Those jumbled thoughts in your racing mind are not jumbled to him. He knows you deeper and more personally than anyone else in the universe. He knows your fears, your hurts, your failures, your anxieties, your joys, your sorrows, and those things you wish were different about yourself. He knows you, and he loves you unconditionally. This is why we can find rest and solace in him.

When you come to the Lord as a refuge, you are coming to the loving arms of the Father. You can give him your tears, your joys, your fears, and your delights. He will embrace you and say, "I know. I have always known. I know you, and you are my child."

## Day 15

# The Lord Is Truth

*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. — John 17:17-19*

In praying for our protection while we remain in the world, the Lord Jesus asked the Father to sanctify us in the truth. He desires for us to be set apart and holy. It is the truth that will set us apart from the world. It is the truth of the Word formed in us that makes the Christian different.

God has given us the Scriptures so that we might know him. They are his revelation to us. Through his Word, God reveals himself, his character, and his plan of redemption. Timothy tells us that the Scriptures are God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). When we read the Bible, we are hearing the very Word of God that he has spoken with his full authority. Although God used human authors carried along by the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures communicate the voice of God, not just the words of men.

God desires for the truth to be formed in us. His goal is not just to give us knowledge and information, but for our lives to be transformed by the truth. Those who know and hear the Word should be marked by a transformation brought by the Holy Spirit as he uses the Word of God within us. If we truly know God and worship him, our character should be in a process of progressive consecration so that we reflect him in our daily lives. God's goal for our lives is that we be shaped to look like Jesus and bear his image as his glory is reflected in us.

We are sent into the world to be image-bearers of God. This is the same reason that the Son of God was sent into the world and became incarnate. God used the Word made flesh—the Son who

himself is truly God—to bring the knowledge and glory of God into creation. While there is a distinction between the deity of the Son and those of us who, as Christians, are clearly not divine, we have a similar mission. We are not the Savior, but we are sent into the world to bear the message of the Savior. As God works his transformation in us, he also sends us out to be salt and light.

John 17:18 is the Johannine version of the Great Commission. The Son came into the world as the Light of the world. Now, the Son sends out his disciples so that they can make disciples. They are commissioned and sent out to teach the Word of God that they have been taught by the Son. They are sent out to testify to a lost world the message of salvation and redemption. The one who came as the Servant now sends out servants. The one who came to be the Testimony that bore witness to the truth now sends out testimonies to bear witness to the truth by teaching his Word.

In this passage, Jesus describes his consecration of himself. He was set apart and holy as he went to the cross. As the Son of God, he offered himself as a pure and blameless sacrifice. His purpose for coming as this consecrated, suffering Servant and the sacrificial Lamb of God was to win people to himself. On the cross, he provided for our sanctification.

We can only be holy because the Holy One has died in our place. We can only be sanctified, cleansed, and washed because the blood of Christ covers us from all sin. The cross is transformative. From the moment you are saved, the guilt of your sins is removed. You are declared in Christ to be righteous. Even more, your ongoing experience with the Lord is designed to be characterized by progressive growth in holiness and righteous behavior. When your guilt is removed and you are set free, God's plan is for you to grow to be transformed to look more like Jesus. The Spirit produces spiritual growth and fruit in you, transforming your character. For the remainder of your earthly life, you are to continually progress in these things. Jesus longs for you to be sanctified by the truth of God's Word.



Why do we spend time in God's Word? For some of us, studying the Bible is easier than it is for others. But the goal of spending time reading and studying the Bible isn't just for intellectual curiosity or to answer the great questions of life. The ultimate end of being in the Scriptures is that we may be sanctified.

We are sent into a hostile world; how can we protect ourselves against the attacks of the world? How can we experience the grace of God in our lives so that he might transform us? The simple truth is that we must daily spend time immersing ourselves in the truths of Scripture so that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be sanctified more and more every day.

## Day 16

# The Lord Is With Us

*I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. —John 17:14-16*

Being the eternal Son of God who created all things (John 1:1-3), Jesus is not of this world. When the Son became flesh, he came and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14). This is how Jesus is “not of this world.” He was sent from his eternal home in heaven to this world because of the Father’s great love for us (John 3:16).

How is it, though, that we are “not of the world”? You and I were very clearly born here as humans. We live in this world and had our origin in this world, which includes walking in sin, trespasses, and wickedness (Ephesians 2:1-3). Strictly speaking, our origin is no different than unbelievers in this world. So, what is Jesus talking about here?

As he told Nicodemus, we are “born again,” or with the play on words, “born from above” (John 3:3). We are made alive as children of God. With his voice, the Good Shepherd calls us to himself, regenerates us, and conforms us into people who bear his image. As his disciples, the Lord Jesus has given us his Word to sanctify us (John 17:17, 19), and now, with the life that the new birth brings imparted to us, we are “not of this world.”

The believer in Christ is born again. This is the spiritual new birth that comes from above, in which the Holy Spirit is given to us and we are washed with cleansing water from the Lord (John 3:5; Ezekiel 36:25-27). Jesus has given us a new heart and put the Holy Spirit within us (Ezekiel 36:26), which is the promise of the New Covenant. So while we are not eternal beings or divine, like

Jesus is, we do now have a new origin that is from heaven. We are “not of this world.” The Holy Spirit’s transforming power is so radical that it takes us from being of this world, where sin is our master and enslaving power, and causes us to be born of God (1 John 5:1). The Son of God who came down from heaven has taken us from among the world and made us new as children of God. What is in us as the product of our new birth is not from the sinful world.

Now that we belong to God and have a new spiritual origin, Jesus asks that we would be protected. We still live in this sinful world. Jesus does not ask that we be removed from the world, but kept free from its corruption. Satan would love nothing more than to see us destroyed. He is the roaming lion that seeks to devour. So, the Lord Jesus prays for protection upon us.

We often think that it would be so much easier if the Lord removed us from difficulties in this life. How often have we longed to go home to be with the Lord? This longing is not because we have a death wish, but because we all go through seasons in which the struggle is frustrating to the point of overwhelming us. We just want to be at home with Jesus in an eternal rest and peace. Yet, Jesus has sent us into the world like he was sent into the world (John 17:18).

We are not alone. The Holy Spirit was sent to us as the Comforter/Counselor. Jesus himself prays for protection upon us. He continues to intercede on our behalf from the throne of heaven. We remain in the world because we have been sent. But we are not at home in this world.

Take heart in knowing that the Lord stands with us; he is not absent from us. We bear his name. This makes us a target for the evil one. But this also means that we remain under the Lord’s protection. The Holy Spirit is a seal within us, stamping us with the name of Jesus. We have been born again as children of God. The Lord will not lose us but will raise us up in the last day. Whatever happens from now until that day, we will be protected by the arms of our Triune God.



## Day 17

# The Lord Is Interceding for You

*I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. —John 17:9-11*

What a great joy and comfort it is that Jesus prays for those who have believed upon his name. This is part of his work of intercession. He comes before God the Father on behalf of the people he represents. As the hymn “My Hope Is in the Lord” describes, “he shows his wounded hands and names us as his own.”

John 17 is sometimes called the high priestly prayer because Christ displays his intercession in this passage. Jesus fulfills the role of an Old Testament high priest who represented God’s people before him.

Follow the flow of the passage back to verse six. Jesus has manifested God’s name to the people whom God gave him out of the world. He stands as a mediator on behalf of God. As God the Son, he represents and reveals God to the people. But as the Suffering Servant, the High Priest, and the Sacrifice, he also represents God’s people to God. Verse seven explains that God’s people know God because the Son has made God known. The Son gave the people the Word of God, and they responded by believing that Jesus was from the Father (v. 8).

In this passage, Jesus is not praying for everyone in the world. This does not contradict the message in John 3:16 that God

loves the world and that all who believe will be saved. If the Father and the Son did not care about the lost, they would not be drawing the lost out of the world. Rather, these verses focus on the specific intercession that takes place for those who have experienced the love of God and chosen to believe.

Consider Romans 8:33-35: “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?”

The priestly intercession of Jesus is for those who are in union with Jesus. The world does not know the Son, and so the Son is not interceding for them. Christ is praying for those the Father has given him, those who have come to him by saving faith and now experience union and communion with the Father and the Son.

Verse 10 teaches that everyone who belongs to Jesus also belongs to the Father. You cannot have Jesus without also having the Father. When you come to saving faith in Jesus, you “know God.” You belong to both the Father and Son. They cherish you. And Jesus is glorified in us.

As Paul says, the mystery of the gospel is “Christ in us, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). Ministry and the missionary task are about making the Word of God fully known so that Christ can be formed in the hearers. It is seeing and watching Jesus transform lives, as he has promised to do.

After his earthly ministry, Jesus returned to the Father, just like he told us in this prayer. He continues his ministry in heaven as our High Priest, and he has sent us the Holy Spirit. He prays for the Father’s protection upon his children. We are kept in the name of God, and our salvation is secure because of the plan and purpose of the Father and the Son. What they planned from eternity past, they accomplish in the work of the Son and apply through the Holy Spirit.

The temptation is to think that we are all alone when we do not see or feel Jesus' presence. But his return to heaven did not leave us abandoned. Our union with Christ is a strong tether. Christ can no more cut us off than he could cut off his own arm. He prays to the Father, not because we are in danger of being lost by the Son or the Father, but as confirmation and fulfillment of his work. When you read his prayer in John 17, be assured that you belong to him. Find comfort in knowing that what he started, he will bring to completion (Philippians 1:6).

Although Jesus finished his earthly ministry, he did not end his ministry for us. Jesus always ministers on our behalf. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. The enemy, life, circumstances, death, and all manner of trials, hurt, and pain may try to break you. Good Christians can suffer hard and long in hardship and despair. But we are never less connected to Christ. While we may feel the force of the storm, we are protected from the crushing waves by Jesus, who is our unassailable breakwater. The Son keeps us. He prays for us. The Father loves us and is moved by the prayer of his Son, fulfilling his Word so that he keeps us. You can have every assurance that God keeps his Word and will not lose you. If that isn't enough for your heart on rough days, remember that the Son prays for you and intercedes for you with words like these: "Father, keep this child that is yours, whom you have given to me and I have brought to you."

You and I as Christians belong to the Son and the Father. The Holy Spirit, as well, dwells in us, unites us to Christ, and seals us for the day of redemption. No matter what happens, you belong to God. No matter what breaks you, the Father keeps you. Your heart and soul may be crushed, but the Father cares for you, the Son ministers to you, and the Spirit is your great Comforter.



## Day 18

# The Lord Is Good

*It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. —Psalm 92:1-3*

Giving thanks to the Lord is not just for when things are going well and circumstances are favorable. It is perhaps more important for us to give thanks in seasons of heartbreak, struggle, and pain.

By saying that we should give thanks during hurt and hardship, I am not suggesting that we should ignore the difficult emotions that arise in trying times. In fact, the American evangelical church could do much better at practicing the biblical concept of lament. The Bible does not ask us to pretend that hardship isn't hard or that pain doesn't hurt. It doesn't give us empty cliches or tell us to "just cheer up." It doesn't chastise those in sorrow, saying, "You just need more faith." Some of the most faithful people in Scripture went through the deepest sorrows.

When life is difficult, you may become more aware of God's sustaining grace that carries you through each day. Perhaps, it is against the backdrop of sorrow, illness, and uncertainty that the Lord's kind blessings appear like a bright light.

This psalm encourages us to give thanks to the Lord, and then reminds us of some of the Lord's attributes for which we can be thankful. First, we can give thanks because the steadfast love of the Lord does not cease. The attribute of God's "steadfast love" is one of the most important characteristics of God in the Old Testament. It is because of this steadfast love that the Lord preserves his people, regardless of their cycles of rebellion and repentance. The Lord continually and unfailingly

keeps his promises. In Exodus 34:6-7, the Lord announces his identity to Moses through these words: “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin . . .” Psalm 136 repeats for us 26 times that the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever.

We are to give thanks to the Lord for this steadfast love. How beautiful that the Lord does not abandon his children, that “neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:38-39). Nothing in the chaos and uncertainty of this world can change, remove, or lessen the steadfast love of the Lord.

Second, we can be thankful that the Lord is faithful. When the psalmist tells us to declare the Lord’s steadfast love in the morning and his faithfulness at night (92:2), he is using a poetic device to teach us to give thanks to the Lord for these attributes all day long. He does not expect us to only declare God’s steadfast love in the morning, and then switch to declaring God’s faithfulness in the evening. In fact, there is a semantic overlap in the meanings of the words “steadfast love” and “faithfulness.”

God shows his faithfulness through his steadfast love by keeping his covenants. Because of his steadfast love towards his children, God will always be faithful to them. God is the faithful God. “Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations” (Deuteronomy 7:9).

When plans don’t go our way, and hardships strike, it is tempting to look away from God’s faithfulness. The psalmist gives us an example of choosing to turn to him anyway: “Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God” (Psalm 31:5). The Lord has redeemed us and called us by name.

Consider the depth of God's faithfulness, despite our struggles, lack of faith, and sinfulness: "If we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

What are some ways the Lord has carried you through hardships? Take some time and think through specific ways you have seen the Lord's hand. There may be a specific blessing to thank God for, an act of protection, a provision, or maybe simply that something bad wasn't as bad as it could have been. Maybe you have seen highs, maybe you have seen lows—maybe some of those lows were even deeper than you could have imagined. Yet remember the character of God. Even if not one single good thing has happened to you this year, the Lord himself is still good. He has redeemed you and named you. He has made you his child.

Most of us can think of a number of things to be thankful for. Even if all of those are taken away, the Lord will remain good. He loves you with an enduring and unending love. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His steadfast love endures forever.



## Day 19

# The Lord Is Glorified

*When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you." —John 17:1*

These words begin Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper before he headed out to the garden of Gethsemane. This prayer is often called the high priestly prayer because Jesus interceded for those for whom he was about to die. I'd like to use this verse as a window into two points illuminating the context of John's gospel and God's purposes revealed throughout Scripture.

First, let's ask the question, what is God doing? What is God's purpose and mission within creation? Most of us would say that God's mission is to spread the gospel and save people. This is true, but consider that this is a secondary purpose flowing from a greater purpose. God's plan for salvation is consequent to the fall of humanity in sin. God's highest purpose—and the reason he created us—is to bring glory to his name.

Jesus' primary goal in his earthly life was to bring glory to his heavenly Father. The Father, in turn, glorifies the Son. Jesus prayed, "glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you" (John 17:1). This is why Jesus had to be "about his Father's business," which included dying to save the people the Father had given him (John 17:2, 9-10, 20-21, 24; 6:35-40, 44; 10:26-29). Jesus was going to die, and his death would win people from the whole world to himself (12:32-33).

Yes, the Father sent the Son because he loves us, and Jesus died for us because he loves us. But the ultimate purpose of the Father sending the Son, and the Son giving his life, is that the Father would glorify the Son, and the Son would glorify the Father.

The chief end of God is to glorify God and enjoy himself forever. God isn't selfish in this. In fact, the three persons of the Trinity have loved each other and glorified each other from eternity past. God is supreme: he is before all and over all. In creating this universe, he planned to extend his glory into creation, so that all of creation shares in it. This is why eternal life consists of knowing the Father and the Son (17:3). Eternal life is sharing in the glory of God through a relationship with God in which we enjoy union and communion with the persons of the Trinity (17:10, 21).

Therefore, the first point is that God's purpose for Jesus' life on earth—and his purpose for all of creation—is for God to be glorified. The second point concerns what it means to glorify God. Jesus glorified the Father by going to the cross. Think about this: the Son of God, who had glory with the Father from all eternity (17:5), glorified the Father by subjecting himself to utter humiliation, shame, and suffering. He made more of his Father by becoming less through the lowliness of death on the cross. But when he was at his lowest in his earthly life, he brought the most glory to his Father.

There is no self-exaltation in the humanity of the Son. He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). His glory isn't in his greatness but in his lowliness. Because of the Son's earthly obedience, the Father glorifies the Son at the cross and then beyond it. For Jesus, exaltation follows humiliation.

What does this say about our service to the Father as those who follow Jesus? God made us to glorify him. Like Jesus, our path in this life is to be one of humility and lowliness, not triumphant exaltation. Many times, God gets the most glory when we are at our lowest. Exaltation awaits, but now is not the season. Furthermore, our exaltation is never to be self-exaltation. Paul writes, "and if [we are] children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (Romans 8:17).

What is your personal mission? In the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, our purpose is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. How is this accomplished? Not by our own self-exaltation and kingdom building, but in lowliness and servanthood. Consider that maybe your seasons of lowliness are the seasons that bring the most glory to your heavenly Father.

What struggles are you facing today? What is wearing you down? What is causing frustration, humiliation, or even apparent failure? Maybe, like Jeremiah, you aren't seeing the fruit you desire in the people to whom you minister. Maybe your ministry isn't taking off like you dreamed. Maybe it seems like one big failure after another. Maybe life is heaping discouragement upon discouragement upon you, and by every measure of this world, you are losing. But consider this: What if your humbling and humiliation in the eyes of others is the very thing that God is using in you to bring glory to his name? He has called you to be a servant, as Jesus demonstrated. Your faithful obedience brings the most glory to God, even as you are being made lower and lower.

We all want to be successful; we all want breakthroughs in life and ministry, and we look for seasons of prosperity and tangible results of success. Praise God when they happen. But that is not our mission. Our mission is to glorify God. If that means he uses us by making us less, then we can rejoice that God is glorified. God is glorified when we get out of his way and make less of ourselves. If being a nobody in the eyes of others makes more of him, then isn't that enough to satisfy us?

Don't fear the cross that God has called you to carry. Even if your cross beats you down so that all you have left is him, it's ok. He will glorify his name through you. If that is how the Father is glorified in Christ, it is also how he will be glorified in those who follow Christ.



## Day 20

# The Lord Is King

*Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. — Psalm 46:8-11*

In chaotic times, it is hard to be still and know that the Lord is God. But despite the chaos, we must remember that the Lord is King over all the earth. At his return, he will establish his kingdom over all things. He will finally appear, and we will see him as he is, exalted over all the nations.

This psalm begins by telling us that the Lord is our ever-present help in times of trouble. Even when the earth trembles and moves, we do not have to fear: "Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea" (v. 2). The Lord has a holy habitation (v. 4), a safe city where the people of God dwell protected and unmoved by the chaos around them (v. 5-7). The Lord protects his people. He will establish his kingdom with justice, peace, and righteousness. As the end of the psalm reminds us, the Lord will be exalted, and he will establish his justice over all the earth.

It is important that, as believers, we should be people of justice, peace, and righteousness. This includes both personal righteousness as we pursue holiness in our own walk with the Lord, but also righteousness in society. We should be concerned about having just laws, fair treatment of all people, and a lack of partiality. Countless times in the Scriptures, the Lord rebukes those in power when they oppress others, treat others unfairly, or take advantage of the widows, orphans, and fatherless because

they are weak and needy. Micah 6:8 instructs us on how to obey the Lord: “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Be still and know that the Lord is God. Know that the Lord will establish himself among the nations. Does this passage bring to your heart a passion to share the gospel among the nations? Does this bring a passion for sharing the gospel to your neighbors so that Jesus can be proclaimed as King in your community? From a biblical perspective, America is just as much “one of the nations” as any other country in the world.

One day, the Lord will bring an end to violence and injustice everywhere. He will cause rioters to cease. He will remove the weapons of rebellious militaries. There will be no need for police. Kings, presidents, leaders, tyrants, and generals will all be removed from power. There will be no need for them in the Lord’s kingdom. At the same time, those who exercised their authority sinfully and unjustly will be judged. Those who abused their power and oppressed others will answer to the Lord. He will bring all things under his feet, and he will remove the feet of men from the necks they have oppressed. Power and authority will become rightly aligned as sin is brought under judgment. Be still for a moment and think about this. Know that God is a mighty King who judges this kind of behavior. Does this truth make us repentant and humble? Does it bring concern and compassion to our hearts when we see fellow humans in our nation and around the world being oppressed? Does it create in us a desire to see godly leaders who both write and enforce fair, just, and unbiased laws?

Know the Lord’s character and use it as an example, becoming an imitator of God as a beloved child (Ephesians 5:1). Ask yourself if you are concerned with repenting and bearing fruit in keeping with repentance (Matthew 3:8). If we are still and know that the Lord is God, not only do we trust in him, but we are concerned with where we stand before him. Do we look at his coming judgment and ask ourselves if we daily obey the Lord in all areas

of our lives? We should not be asking if the Lord is on our side, but if we are on the Lord's side. While we live in the midst of earthly kingdoms, we must examine if our character is being transformed to look like the Lord's. How have we done justice, loved kindness, and walked humbly with our God?

One day, the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our God. No human government will ever stand in the place of that kingdom. But until that time, we are to be a people who trust in the Lord, who pursue justice and righteousness, and who do our best to faithfully live in two kingdoms: the kingdom of Jesus, and the earthly nation in which we find ourselves living. But always remember that the kingdom of Jesus is higher, and he retains the ultimate authority. One day, we will see that power and authority manifest as all things are set right. Come, Lord Jesus.



## Day 21

# The Lord Is Faithful

*Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." —Lamentations 3:19–24*

I woke up one morning in a bit of a mood. I didn't feel in that moment that the Lord's mercies were new every morning or that his steadfast love never ceases. I needed these verses for myself as much as anything. In the first waking moments of my morning, it was easier to feel the weight of life than it was to feel the goodness of God.

I am sure that all of us have been there at some point. Maybe your sleep is restless because of health issues, and you wake up feeling weary rather than energized. Maybe your mind can't slow down from all the worries that it carries during the day. Maybe you are facing discouragement, despair, or depression, and your head feels so heavy that even laying it down on the pillow feels like a burden. We have all experienced days that cause our head to hang, or, as Lamentations describes, our soul is "bowed down within me." These are seasons of life common to us all.

The Lord is the only one who will ever have a love that never ceases or fails. Even in our darkest seasons, the steadfast love of the Lord does not end. There are so many ways that the Lord's mercies are new every morning. Acts tells us that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). The very acts of waking up and breathing in the morning show the goodness of the Lord in our lives. The sun rises because of God's good covenant with it (Jeremiah 33:20). Moreover, we have the riches

of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:38-39), least of all our burdens or difficult emotions. God's care and love for us really is new every morning, no matter the circumstances that we awake to face in the new day.

When I read the words "Great is your faithfulness," I can't help thinking of the old hymn that many of us sing. As its lines declare, "There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not; Thy compassions, they fail not. As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be."

The reason God's love doesn't change is because God himself doesn't change. Therefore, his promises do not change. He keeps his covenant and his steadfast love to the thousandth generation (Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 105:8). In fact, he showed us this most of all by sending the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the ultimate fulfillment of his covenant promises.

Jeremiah 33:20-22 says, "Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant, and the Levitical priests who minister to me."

God will keep his covenant with David. He is fulfilling it through Jesus Christ, and he will bring every word of it to completion. He keeps his Word as people come to worship the Messiah and bow before him. He keeps his Word through our personal salvation. God keeping his promises is as certain as the sun rising and setting, because God has sustained their motion every day for thousands of years.

The mercies of God are new every morning. When you don't feel like they are, remember that he is the one who brought forth the morning. You and I experience his sustaining grace every moment

of our existence, even when we don't feel it or realize it. It costs us nothing to look heavenward towards him, and he offers us everything to gain from it.

“The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him” (Lamentations 3:25).



## Day 22

# The Lord Is Great and Mighty

*Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me; all day long an attacker oppresses me; my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly. When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? — Psalm 56:1-4*

This is a psalm of David, written when the Philistines seized him in Gath. Every time David was opposed by his enemies, he found that the only place he could turn was to the Lord. David often faced enemies that sought to trample him. They had no shame in attacking him. There seemed to be no reprieve from the strife they stirred up against him. They made his life a miserable affliction.

You can imagine the fear in David's heart during this situation. You can imagine how overwhelmed and helpless he felt. He was at the mercy of the hands of evil men. But in that moment, he chooses to seek the Lord for his deliverance. If he were to look at the actions of those surrounding him, all the evidence would suggest that nothing could stop these wicked people from doing horrible things. They were oppressing him, and they could kill him. They had all the power. But as David looks to the Lord, he declares, "What can flesh do to me?"

Sinful people continue to do sinful things. Man tramples man. The proud attack the weak. The wickedness in our world can stir up fear. But David reminds us how to respond: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you."

We are to be people who trust in God. We praise and worship him because of how wonderfully magnificent he is. We cry out from

the depths of our neediness. Our God is the great God who is high and mighty. He cares about the poor, the needy, the oppressed, and the downtrodden.

Like the Lord, our hearts should be deeply broken for those who feel the burden of oppression. We cannot turn from injustice. But we also do not fear what man can do. David watched his opponents injure his cause “all day long” (v. 5). He saw them continually stir up strife. Yet he trusted the Lord.

Against the great and mighty God of the universe, what can man truly do? David was not afraid because he knew the Lord was in control. Sin and wickedness always seem to have their way for a season. It may seem that our best efforts have little effect on changing the direction of our society. But it has been this way since the fall of man. Remember, the Lord stands above all these things. He will deliver those who trust in him. He will bring forth justice and righteousness.

Do not be afraid. What can happen that is outside the plan and purposes of God? This does not mean that we should not care; we are not to be detached or unemotional in the face of pain, suffering, and heartache. But while we hurt, we lift our eyes to heaven and continue to believe in the Lord. We continue to see that Jesus Christ is seated on the throne. He will establish peace and justice. And until the day when he returns, we continue to call people to repent and be reconciled to God. We continue to offer hope that the only solution to the personal sins and societal ills that plague us is the salvation offered in Christ. He is our only hope in life and in death. Do not be afraid. He will never leave us nor forsake us. His kingdom will not fail.

## Day 23

# The Lord Is Risen From the Dead

*And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. . . . But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. —1 Corinthians 15:17, 20-23*

In and of itself, the death of Christ would have been insufficient if he had not risen from the dead. If Jesus, in his humanity, had remained dead, he would not have conquered sin and death. But the cross of Christ is a triumph because death was unable to hold our Lord. He who bore our sins has exhausted the curse of sin.

In his “Institutes of the Christian Religion,” John Calvin famously wrote that the death and resurrection of Christ are synecdochic. By this, he meant that when one part is referenced, it also includes the whole. In effect, you can’t have one without the other. The cross would be an empty, meaningless death if Jesus had just died. As Paul explicitly states in this passage, if Christ was still dead and not raised from the dead, we would still be in our sins. A dead man could conquer nothing and set us free from nothing. And if all we had is the resurrection, there would be no bearing of sin or paying the penalty for sin that God’s Law declared. We need a Savior who both died for us and now lives for us in his resurrected humanity.

Christ’s resurrection guarantees that you and I will share in the resurrection unto life. Christ is the representative of his people, both in his death and in his life. His death perfectly bore our sin



and satisfied the wrath of God for sin. We share in his death through our union with him, which we receive through faith in Christ. We share in his resurrection as all who believe in him are made alive in Christ. First, new life is imparted to our hearts. The same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is at work through the gospel, as those who were dead in sins are raised to spiritual life in their hearts. Second, new life will be imparted to our body. God's power will continue to work in us when the Lord returns and we are raised bodily from the dead. We will enter an eternal glory in the new heavens and new earth.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ proclaims to us his vindication and triumph over death. As Isaiah 53 tells us, God the Father sees the death of his Son and is satisfied (v. 11). The Son, even in his humanity, is the Righteous One who perfectly paid for our sin and is raised up in righteousness. God declares in the resurrection that the one who bore our curse is truly righteous. The good news of the gospel is that those who come to the Lord Jesus Christ receive the same verdict that God gave the Son. We are declared righteous, receiving as a free gift a good standing with God. The Bible says that Jesus "was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). He was raised up for us so that we could be declared righteous before God.

Consider how we see Jesus. To know Jesus is to know that he suffered and died for us, and that he rose again for us and for our salvation. The resurrection does as much to accomplish our salvation as the death of Christ does. We can't have one without the other. Both his death and resurrection show us our Savior. "But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9).

As you think about Jesus, remember that his incarnation continues beyond his death. In his incarnation, Jesus had a human body and a human soul. His body died and was buried in the grave. Through resurrection, his soul and body were united again. He continues to live now as a human who has conquered sin and

death for us. God has crowned him as King; he who is eternally the Son of God rules over creation. His death and resurrection give us every reason to worship our God and praise his name for the salvation he accomplished on our behalf.

## Day 24

# The Lord Is Our Shelter

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. — Psalm 91:1-6*

There is no greater place to go for shelter in times of trouble than to the Lord. God brings protection, shelter, and safety to his people. In the shadow of the Almighty, "the sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night" (Psalm 121:6). This imagery of being in the Lord's shadow conveys both a closeness to the Lord and a protection that comes from him. To be in his shadow means that his great and mighty presence dwarfs you, and you are under his care.

The psalmist thus makes his personal confession to the Lord: "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Like the psalmist, we sometimes need to verbalize our trust. Martin Lloyd-Jones described it as preaching truth to ourselves. We may know in our mind and heart that the Lord is a refuge, but it can bring an almost inexplicable comfort to repeat affirmingly out loud to ourselves, "The Lord is my refuge and fortress. He is my God. I put my trust in him." While these words are not a mystical mantra, meditating on them and lifting our heart and voice to the Lord in an appeal to his strength and protection can bring great comfort and assurance to us.

In verse three, the psalm turns from speaking in first person ("I will say," in 91:2) to the third person and second person ("he will



deliver you”). The psalmist does not say, “he will deliver me,” but expands his focus. He is assuring that deliverance is offered to all who seek the Lord and affirm the personal confession in verse two. The Word of God brings comfort to all who read it and affirm their trust in God. The Lord saves us from those who seek to do us harm, and from the calamities that arise in a world suffering the effects of sin, such as pestilence and plagues.

What a beautiful image that the Lord has wings to spread over his children for their protection. The pinions on a bird are the outermost and primary flight feathers. This is essentially another word to describe the wing of a bird while focusing slightly more on its strong flight feathers, one of the primary components that give a bird its ability to fly. Strong pinions push the air downward as the bird flaps its wings. Referring to both pinions and wings heightens the poetic imagery. It is these mighty wings of the Lord that are a great refuge.

Of course, we recognize that this is a metaphor. God is a spirit. Just as God does not have a physical body, so he does not have actual wings. But like a mother hen or a majestic eagle might spread her wings over the littlest birds to shelter and protect them from enemies or raging storms, so the Lord engulfs us under his protection. The Lord does not make a shelter for us; he is the shelter for us.

The Lord is faithful to his people because of the promises he made to them. This faithfulness is a shield for us. The reference to a “buckler” in verse four is not a belt buckle but a type of small, round shield often worn on the forearm. Again, the psalmist is using the poetry of nearly synonymous words to create a full picture. The Lord himself stands ready to be our refuge. His faithfulness to us stands as a shield from all who would seek to destroy us. With the Lord’s wings spread over us, the terrors of the storm at night are no threat. With the Lord’s faithfulness as a shield before us, the arrows that fly are truly no threat. Whatever evil and calamity may come by night or by day, we are safe in the arms of the Lord.

Listen then to the words of assurance that the Lord gives us at the end of the psalm: “Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation” (Psalm 91:14).

## Day 25

# The Lord Is Our Helper

*O God, save me by your name, and vindicate me by your might. O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers have risen against me; ruthless men seek my life; they do not set God before themselves. Selah. Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life. — Psalm 54:1-3*

*Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" —Hebrews 13:5-6*

Psalm 54 was written by David concerning the events in 1 Samuel 23:15-29. David was running for his life from Saul and hiding in the strongholds of a place called Horesh. While he was there, the Ziphites reported back to Saul that David was hiding in the area. Ziph was a city in the region assigned to the tribe of Judah, which was also the tribe of David's family. Thus David was betrayed by men he did not know from within his own tribe. Even Jonathan, Saul's own son, had shown more loyalty to David than the Ziphites did (1 Samuel 23:15-18).

Knowing this background, we can imagine the fear that David must have felt in this situation. Even strangers were not leaving him alone but seeking to destroy his life. These individuals were not merely doing their civic duty in reporting the location of an outlaw. Rather, as David describes, they were ruthlessly seeking his life.

In this situation, as in many others, David faced desperation. With his hiding place compromised and those around him turned against him, he had no one but the Lord as his refuge. David pleaded with the Lord to save him and to vindicate him. While the



wilderness should have been a safe place for David to hide, it was not. His only safety was in the Lord.

In this psalm, David does three things: (1) he appeals to the Lord and to the Lord's name (v. 1-2); (2) he specifies his trial (v. 3); and (3) he affirms his trust in the Lord (v. 4-7). In David's dire circumstances, he knows that only the Lord can uphold his life. He fears no evil because the Lord is his Shepherd. He is protected by the rod and staff of the Lord.

Trials often ambush us in ways we didn't see coming. Even Paul had opponents who preached the gospel out of an intense rivalry, just to try to make things worse for him in prison (Philippians 1:17). Think about it: it wasn't enough that Paul was suffering in prison. These individuals were so bent on bitterness and making life miserable for Paul that they sought to drive the knife deeper into his back by preaching the gospel. The more they preached publicly, the more they thought he would suffer, knowing that he was confined in prison, so they preached with zeal to see Paul's suffering increase. How hardened must a heart be to use the good and true preaching of the gospel as a means of making life worse for a fellow minister?

How often during life's hard circumstances do we feel forsaken? We make plans to the best of our ability, we pray, we dedicate our plans to the Lord, and then tragedy strikes. Maybe the tragedy is an unexpected life event. Maybe the tragedy has a human element, as when someone close betrays us. Maybe someone opposed to the gospel is attempting to thwart a faithful ministry.

In all the trials, betrayals, attacks, and rivalries we might face, there remains one constant. The Lord does not forsake us. The Lord hears our prayers and pleas. He is the Helper who is above all helpers. Our life is nestled securely in the palm of his hands, and he draws us close and brings us into sweet fellowship. And even when the Lord lifts the corners of his hands that cover us and allows the wind of a trial to blow in on us, he is still holding us as his own. The Lord upholds our life even in the darkest days.

Like David knew, our vindication does not come from our own ability or because of our own righteousness; vindication comes from the Lord.

With the Lord, even death does not defeat us. When he calls his precious saints home to heaven, he is not forsaking them, but preserving them eternally. The Lord will not allow death to permanently triumph over his beloved. With our bodies in the grave, we will wait in heaven with him for that glorious reunion of body and soul in the resurrection.

With this perspective, what can another human really do to us? Wicked people engage in violence and taking of life. Betrayals rock us to the core of our being. Opponents are merciless in slandering our character. And yet, God remains faithful. With the magnitude of his grace shown to us in the cross, what can man really do to us? With the love of God poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5), what can we lack, even in the midst of trials and tribulation? What can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:31-39)?

Let's not pretend these lessons are easy. It can be easy to announce with a rhetorical flourish, "What can man do to me?", but it is much harder to focus on the Lord's protection when we feel the weight of someone aligned against us. Man can do a lot. But again, God remains faithful. He truly does not forsake us. The Lord is trustworthy and keeps his Word.

Keep these truths always before you. Repeat them to yourself, even in those moments when you don't feel like they're true. Believe his Word in the darkness and ask him to help your unbelief. The Lord delivers his children from their trials and brings them into his eternal kingdom.

Psalm 54:6-7 says, "I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good. For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies."

## Day 26

# The Lord Is a Light to the Nations

*Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. —Isaiah 42:5-8*

These verses are part of the Servant Song of Isaiah 42, in which God the Father speaks of his Son, the coming Messiah. He displays to us his sovereignty over all creation and his delight in bringing glory to his own name. All that exists does so because of the Lord's creating and sustaining power. All people—from every tongue, tribe, and nation—are sustained by the Lord.

Similarly, Paul describes God's sovereignty over the peoples of the earth in his speech confronting the idols at the Areopagus in Athens: "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.' Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man" (Acts 17:26-29).



The entirety of Scripture proclaims that God has created all things and remains sovereign over all things. This is far different than the pagan concept of idols who ruled over different regions and were often considered in competition with each other among an entire pantheon of gods. The Lord our God is one. He is the God of Israel, who not only raised up Israel as a unique son (Exodus 4:22-23) but created all peoples and established all nations. He who made all humanity sent his eternal Son to save a people for himself from every tongue, tribe, and nation.

God the Father establishes God the Son as a covenant for the people and a light for the nations. The Son—the Messiah—is not just the King over Israel, but is raised up to be the Savior, Lord, and King of the entire world. God’s intention from the beginning was for his glory and his gospel to be proclaimed throughout the entire world. The promise given to Abraham is fulfilled in Christ through the gospel: “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3).

Galatians 3:8 adds, “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’”

Jesus is a light to the nations. He is the one who Isaiah prophesied would open the eyes of the blind (42:7). We see this fulfilled in Jesus’ earthly life as he physically healed the blind. But we also see this fulfilled as the Lord opens the eyes of the spiritually blind. Those without Christ are trapped in sin and idolatry, living in bondage to darkness (Ephesians 4:17-18; Colossians 1:13). Only the Lord can set us free as he causes the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ to shine in our hearts (2 Corinthians 4:6). He transfers us to his eternal kingdom, bringing us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (Colossians 1:12-14).

Let us always remember our great need for Jesus as Savior and allow it to create within us an attitude of humility. We could do nothing to save ourselves; we needed him to be our light. We were trapped in darkness and, by nature, children of God’s wrath

(Ephesians 2:1-3). Sin held an enslaving power over us, keeping us in bondage. As Charles Wesley described in his hymn, “And Can It Be”: “Long my imprisoned spirit lay; fast bound in sin and nature’s night.” Praise the Lord, he has opened our blinded eyes.

Furthermore, let us consider how this humility should shape the way we think about our national heritage. Most of us fall into the category of people from among the nations. Those of us who are from the United States are just as much children of the nations as anyone else. The United States is, biblically speaking, no more chosen by God than any other nation that is not physically descended from Abraham. We need the light of God in our communities precisely as Scripture describes. The West is not the Savior to the nations; Jesus Christ is. Missions and evangelism are needed across the street and across the globe because the entire world is under Christ’s Lordship. He is the Light of the nations for every nation, including our own.

As a covenant to his people, Christ unites us to himself through salvation. Through this bond, he also unites us to brothers and sisters from every tongue, tribe, and nation. The familial connection we have with these brothers and sisters transcends any national or regional allegiances that we might have. In humility, we—especially as Americans—need to consider others as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:1-5). The call of Christ to missions should inspire a humble servitude towards others, not an arrogant imperialism.

Jesus is the Light of the nations who is to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. We can rest assured that, as we humbly proclaim his gospel, Christ will open the eyes of the blind. He will keep his covenant and win people to himself.

## Day 27

# The Lord Is Our Deliverer

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant. —Luke 1:68-72*

These words are spoken by Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. They contain a prophecy that he delivered through the Holy Spirit. You will remember that an angel appeared to Zechariah in the temple to tell him that he would have a son in his old age. Because Zechariah doubted the angel's words, he was unable to speak until John was born. After John's birth, Zechariah was asked the name of his son. Zechariah wrote the words, "His name is John," in obedience to the angel's instructions, and the Gospel of Luke says, "Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed and he spoke, blessing God" (Luke 1:64). After experiencing months of silence, Zechariah's first words were to praise God.

Like Zechariah, we have much to bless the Lord for. Hopefully, we are able to focus on joy and bless God like Zechariah did, even during difficult times. Zechariah's story occurred immediately before the birth of the Lord Jesus, which brought our greatest blessing from God: he visited his people and redeemed them. There is perhaps a reminder here of the Exodus, in which God heard the cries of his people and came down to save them (Exodus 3:7-8).

The coming of the Lord Jesus fulfilled God's promises to save his people through the "house of his servant David." In the Old Testament, God had promised that the Messiah would come



through the line of David, and that this descendant of David would save us. He would be the heir to all the promises.

Zechariah's prophecy in Luke 1:69 refers to the Son of David as the "horn of salvation," recalling the ancient practice of blowing a horn as a call to battle. The Lord himself was coming to save and deliver his people.

Zechariah later announced that his son, John the Baptist, had been given the mission to "go before the Lord to prepare his way" (Luke 1:76). The Lord was enacting his plan to bring his promised salvation to all his people—those from every tongue, tribe, and nation. Although the Davidic king in the Old Testament was the king of Israel, it was also promised that the fulfillment of this position would be the highest of the kings of the earth (Psalm 89:27), and that the nations would come under his rule and authority (Psalm 2:8).

The Lord Jesus came to deliver his people from their enemies. Scripture explains that our biggest enemy is the evil one, Satan. Likewise, sin and death are our enemies. Jesus came to set us free from our captivity to sin and death. In the triumph of Christ after the cross, God "raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come" (Ephesians 1:20-21). Our enemies have been placed under the Lord's feet until the last enemy, death itself, is defeated in the triumph of the resurrection unto life for all believers in Jesus Christ.

The Lord has delighted to show us mercy in Jesus Christ. When Zechariah spoke of "our fathers" in verse 72, he was referring to the Old Testament promises made to the forefathers of Israel—specifically, the promises made to the patriarchs. God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to which all of Israel was an heir. But even those of us who are not of Jewish heritage receive blessings from knowing the Jewish Messiah. As Abraham was promised, "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). That blessing comes to us in the gospel

as everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus is saved through their trust in him as Savior (Galatians 3:8–9). For those who believe in Christ, Abraham is our father (Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:29).

After reading Zechariah’s expression of praise, let me encourage you to keep several meditations in your heart. First, God always keeps his promises. In one sense, the whole redemptive plan in Scripture can be summed up as: God promised and God fulfilled. Remember that “the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness” (2 Peter 3:9). Perhaps you are tired of some trial and just want it to end. Imagine how Zechariah felt. Think of Simeon waiting in the temple, having been promised by the Lord years before that he would live to see the Messiah. Or consider Anna, who had faithfully waited as a lonely, longing widow. God kept his promise to all of humanity and sent his Son. And God kept his seemingly smaller promises to Simeon and Anna by allowing them to see the Son. There is tremendous joy in seeing Christ.

God has kept his promises to you. He has shown you the Savior. He has given you all you need in Christ for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). He has not left you or abandoned you. He has triumphed over your sin and death. He continues to work in your life, even this very hour. His redemption reminds us all that the Lord sees our plight, hears our cries, and comes down to us in our needs—most of all, in our greatest need, salvation.

Second, God is fundamentally a God of mercy and love. He is motivated to make promises because of his mercy and love, and guarantees them by his own name because he is sure and unchanging. He keeps his covenants for the sake of his name. How many times in life have we broken our word, failed to live up to our character, or disappointed the expectations placed upon us? Sometimes our failures are simply human error or inability; other times our failures are sins. But God does not fail; his covenant is certain, and he will not abandon his love and mercy towards us.

Bless the Lord that he keeps his promises. Bless the Lord that our salvation does not depend upon us, but upon God alone. Bless

the Lord that he has come to you and will continue to meet you where you are. Rejoice that the eternal Son of God gave up the riches of heaven and came down to save his people. Rejoice that he will fulfill the promises that yet await us.



## Day 28

# The Lord Is Gentle

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.*  
—Isaiah 42:1

This passage of Scripture comes from a section in Isaiah called the Servant Songs. The Servant Songs are prophecies of Jesus Christ. The most familiar Servant Song is Isaiah 53, which predicts Jesus' death. The Servant Song in Isaiah 42 is just as important because it introduces us to several features of Jesus, his reign, and his care for the nations beyond Israel.

The Lord Jesus is, of course, the Son of God. But in his coming to earth, he is also the chosen Messiah. The Father designated him for this mission. As we read Isaiah's declaration, "Behold my servant," we are reminded of the baptism of Jesus, when he was anointed for his Messianic mission. At Jesus' baptism, the Spirit descended like a dove, and the Father proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). God delighted in his Son and in the work that the Son would do.

One of the most comforting verses in all of Scripture is Isaiah 42:3, "a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench." This is a powerful image. Think of a piece of reed or a stalk of long, straw-type grass. Once it is bent over, it only takes the slightest movement to snap the stalk. Even trying to straighten the bent reed can cause it to snap in two, since any movement can apply too much force on its delicate fibers. Similarly, the smoldering wick of a candle with one last

little glowing ember can be easily snuffed out. With the slightest movement of air, it will be extinguished. If you have ever carried a birthday cake across a room with the candles lit, you know how the flames can be snuffed out just from movement. Handling both bruised reeds and faintly burning wicks requires great care and gentleness.

This is how gentle Jesus is in his care and restoration of those who are needy and desperate before him. Many times in our lives, he does not crush us with justice, but heals and restores us as the gentle Shepherd caring for his sheep.

Isaiah's description of Jesus in this verse offers us three truths to remember. First, we can take comfort in the gentleness we find in Christ. The Lord delights when the sinner, the desperate, and the broken run to him. He is the merciful and faithful High Priest who is able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15-16). Having put on humanity, the Son of God has been made fit to minister on our behalf. If your heart and soul are weary, there is no better place to run than to Christ. He will nurse you back to health and restore vitality in your soul, taking care not to break you in your fragile state. His heart is not calloused. Instead, he sympathizes with our weaknesses and ministers grace from his throne.

Second, we can learn from his gentleness. So often in our zeal for evangelism and discipleship, we err too much in delighting to call out sin and force conviction upon the sinner. We fail to see the individual as a bruised reed or a smoldering wick that could easily be crushed by our zeal. No doubt, the Spirit works by applying the Word of God to bring conviction. Yet, we need to be careful that we do not crush sinners under the weight of our own pressure when they also need to see the life-giving restoration and salvation that come from Christ. Simply put, our ministry is not to shame sinners, but to be ambassadors for Christ. We minister reconciliation with God.

While a missionary or pastor, like a doctor, must faithfully diagnose the ailment, we do this in order to lift up the beauty

and magnificence of the cure—a cure which outshines, outlasts, and overcomes all the sin, wickedness, hurt, brokenness, and turmoil of this present age. Let us exhibit a Christlike gentleness in our care for ailing sinners, and in our attention to a range of other physical, emotional, and spiritual needs that are displayed before us. Christ offers immeasurable comfort, but, sadly, our lack of Christlike gentleness often does a poor job of ministering to the deepest hurts of others. Like the doctor bringing the cure, our bedside manner can make a difference. May the Lord grant us wisdom.

The final truth we should remember from Isaiah 42:1 is that the Lord will not grow weary in exercising his kingship. Jesus has not yet established justice over all creation. We still see injustice every day in the world around us. As Christians, we should be concerned about these things, as we know that Christ is the true King who will one day set all things right. Those under the weight of injustice, or the recipients of unfair treatment from laws, bias, favoritism, or prejudice will feel over time like a broken reed or a smoldering wick. They need the salvation offered by Christ and perhaps a cup of water, warm blanket, or caring hug offered in his name. We need to display gentleness, love, and care as the hands and feet of Jesus.

The peace and justice that comes from Christ offer hope to the nations. In the future, Christ will establish his kingdom over all the earth and restore creation in the new heavens and new earth. But even now, through the New Covenant, he is transforming lives and writing his law in the hearts of individuals all over the globe. As Isaiah declared, the Spirit is upon him. And through his resurrection and the exercise of his Messianic kingship, Jesus has given the Spirit to people around the world to bring them to his name and usher them before his throne.



## Day 29

# The Lord Is High Above All Things

*The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens! Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people. He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the LORD! —Psalm 113:4*

While we cherish our national freedoms and liberties, as Christians, we recognize that this world is not our home. Our hope is not here; it is in heaven from where the Lord Jesus Christ reigns.

The Lord is high above the nations, including our nation. Whatever we make of our country's history and culmination of events, we know that our God is sovereign and above all these things. His glory is higher than any glory we might find in cherished American values of liberty. We must always remember where our hope is and remind ourselves of our ultimate pursuit.

We are to worship the Lord, bless the Lord, and be driven by a passion for his glory. America may rise; America may fall; but God's glory will not waver. God's glory and the accomplishment of his purpose is not tied to our country's destiny. God is above all the nations.

Consider how far above the nations he is. As this verse describes, he sits above the heavens and looks down upon them. This is a picture of a sovereign King ruling over all things. He will one day accomplish his perfect peace as his kingdom is manifest over all the earth. Hebrews reminds us that the Lord Jesus reigns now with all things under his feet, even if we do not yet see all things in

subjection to him (Hebrews 2:8). It is a difference of objective and subjective reality. Objectively, Jesus is King over all things. God “left nothing outside of his [the Son’s] control” (Hebrews 2:8). But subjectively, we do not always see this reality. Sometimes in our lives, we may not feel like Jesus has conquered sin and death. Sometimes it is hard to see what we know to be true. But on those days, we must cling to truth, not our feelings.

While we know that the Lord is exalted over all things, we are not to think that he is a distant and unconcerned God. He is not the God of deism, which proposes that he is detached from his creation and uncaring. Isaiah 57:15 says, “For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.’” The Lord looks upon the lowly and the needy. Psalm 113 tells us that he raises them up. The Lord has a particular compassion on those with great needs, including those in poverty. In countless places throughout Scripture, we are told that God humbles the self-exalted and exalts the humble. He watches over orphans and widows, which in the ancient world were some of the most neglected and abandoned people in society.

Consider Samuel’s mother, Hannah. She was barren and desperate for a child. She wanted to experience the blessing of the Lord as a mother, and to have a child who would inherit the rich blessings of God’s promised land. The Lord answered her prayer. While the Lord doesn’t answer every prayer in the same way, he still lavishes mercy and grace upon those who come before him in their seasons of trouble. Hannah’s song of praise is very similar to the words of Psalm 113. She said, “The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, and on them he has set the world” (1 Samuel 2:7).

The Lord is not impressed by the size or strength of nations. He is not honored by acts of violence. As Hannah observed, God will

humble the nations and individuals who exalt themselves or take pride in their own strength and power. God finds delight when our character mirrors his—when we are concerned for the poor, the lowly, and the needy like he is.

Sing praise to the Lord. Bless his name. Trust him above all else and walk humbly before him. Those who seize power, self-aggrandize, and exalt themselves will be humbled in the Lord's timing. But those who humble themselves in worship, even if they are trampled by men, will find themselves lifted up to sing praises before the King of Kings.



## Day 30

# The Lord Is Savior and Redeemer

*Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. —Colossians 1:12*

We have many things for which to give thanks to the Lord. The most important thing we can thank him for is our salvation. Through salvation, we have been given something that we did not deserve. The “inheritance of the saints” was not ours by nature or by birthright. Instead, God our Father has qualified us to share in this inheritance.

Our inheritance of the eternal kingdom and the new heavens and new earth has been won by the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the King of this eternal kingdom as he sits upon the throne and rules over all creation. God has made us heirs—co-heirs, in fact, with Christ (Romans 8:17). He bestows upon us the riches of his mercy, love, and grace in his kingdom. Through Christ, he adopted us into his family, installed us in his kingdom, and granted us this eternal inheritance.

Let’s examine two aspects of our spiritual transfer into God’s kingdom. The first aspect of this great kingdom transfer is that God delivered us “from the domain of darkness.” As Charles Wesley wrote in his hymn, “And Can It Be,” “Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature’s night.” Or as Paul said in Ephesians, we “were dead in trespasses and sins . . . we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the

rest of mankind” (Ephesians 2:1, 3). We were ruled by darkness. We lived in its domain and delighted in serving the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), the god of this age who blinded us (2 Corinthians 4:4). The darkness in which we were enslaved was both our own sin and the darkness of the evil one who has been sinning since the beginning.

But the Son’s work is to set the captives free. It is for this reason that he came to earth, took up the cross, and is granted the mantle of kingship. He is a liberator, a Savior. He casts off the chains of sin and darkness. The Son came “to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound” (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18,19). Since he has liberated us from the darkness, we have come to “walk in the light, as he is in the light” (1 John 1:5, 7).

The second aspect of our transfer into his kingdom is that, through salvation, we are placed under the authority of a new and glorious King. The Father has brought us into the kingdom of the Son. This is why, at salvation, we confess that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God has raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9-10). The Lord gives us a new heart, which brings new allegiances. We are granted a new citizenship in his kingdom. And we are stamped with a new seal as we receive the Holy Spirit. We have all the rights and privileges of children of God; we can cry out “Abba, Father” in our prayers and communion with God.

The Son provided for our redemption by paying the price for our sins. The background of the term “redemption” comes from the slave market, where a slave was set free if the price was paid. For us to be redeemed and our sins forgiven, Jesus paid the price with his blood. All of our guilt and condemnation was washed away at the cross of Calvary.

We are now part of the kingdom of the beloved Son. The Father deeply loves the Son, and that love and affection has spilled over onto us as the Father is pleased with us through the work of the Son. The Father loved us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), and he demonstrated it by sending the Son. The

Son won the victory. Now the Father brings us into his kingdom as the application of salvation.

To quote Charles Wesley again, as he describes this liberation from darkness: “Thine eye diffused a quick’ning ray—I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.”

Jesus is the King who came to set the captives free and to be crowned within his creation through his resurrection and ascension. His path of lowly humility is the path of triumph whereby he accomplished our salvation. Praise be to the Father and the Son as the Father has brought us home to the Son’s eternal kingdom.



## DR. TIMOTHY BERTOLET

Dr. Timothy Bertolet is an initiative strategist for the ABWE global family of ministries. He served as a pastor for 16 years before shifting his career to missions. He is passionate about international theological education, pastoral training, and writing material that will help people grow in their faith.

Dr. Bertolet also serves as an adjunct professor in the Bible department at Lancaster Bible College. He has a Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from the University of Pretoria, where he wrote his thesis on Sonship and the ascension in the book of Hebrews. He is a missionary kid and the father of four daughters.

