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# THE LORD IS...

30 Reflections on God's  
Amazing Character

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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 that Scripture verbalizes this. The point of this passage is that God had not forsaken his people, even as they would go into exile in Babylon, which was a shaming and damning experience full of hurt and bitterness for them.

Scripture allows us to express the depths of our emotions and to verbalize and pour out what we are feeling before the Lord. As my dad once said in 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 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." It is not about abandoning 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 feelings stirred up by trying times make the weight too hard to carry? In the hurt, you ask yourself, "Am I forgotten?" Consider what the Lord says.

For mothers, would you ever forget one of your babies when you are nursing them? Did you ever not have a tenderness for that child in your womb? God is sustaining us and caring for us with the same gentleness and compassion each moment of our lives. We draw life and breath from him. Just as he will not forget the number of the hairs on your head, how much more will he not forget you! He has a fatherly care and compassion deeper than the mother has for her nursing babe.

The Lord says, "Even they may forget but I will not forget." We recognize how near impossible it would be for a mother to forget, 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.

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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 this morning and rejoice. 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 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 think that God is distant and far away. But God hears his people and comes down to them. Heaven is the Lord's throne room and his throne over all things is a reminder of his control, rulership, and sovereignty over all things. He has made heaven and earth and it remains under his authority.

In our seasons of prayer, we look up to heaven and we can know that our help comes from the very throne room of God. This is a psalm of ascent. It was probably sung as God's people went up to the earthly temple, at that time the visible display of God's "house" and throne. The temple was a place to look and be reminded of God's authority. He anchors 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 God (Acts 17:28). This is the one who is over all things. We are forever to be looking up to him from where our help comes. How easily we get distracted from this 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 bodyguards must take breaks. They can grow weary on guard duty. They can get distracted, sleepy, or hungry. Not the Lord. The verse tells us plainly, "The LORD protects you." The Lord is "a shelter right by your side." It wouldn't take much to knock over your house: a hurricane, a tornado, or maybe a wind just a little stronger than the Big Bad Wolf can blow. The good blessing of your house is puny and weak compared to the might of your true shelter, the Lord himself.

Keep your hope in him during these times. Be thankful for the gifts through which he mediates his blessings (a family, home, etc.) but remember who has given the gifts. If I am safe in my home, I am ultimately safe because the LORD alone is keeping me. The sun and moon, the cold and the virus cannot strike you as 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. Events are serving his purposes.

It is the Lord alone who protects us from harm. The Lord protects our life. Think about this: the Lord gives you life, the Lord sustains your life, the Lord guides the course of your life, the Lord protects your life. My life is from start to finish a gift from him cuddled 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

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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 into eternity. 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 all of it or portions of it memorized. When I was a pastor, I always found that because this psalm was so familiar, the words were particularly helpful to people hurting. Hearing them in times of hurt and pain was like a gentle soothing balm to the soul. The mind clouded by grief didn't have to do the hard work of processing new words and thoughts; instead, the heart could soak them in.

If the Lord is our Shepherd, of course we are his sheep. Sheep are helpless animals who need careful care 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. With apologies for borrowing 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. Right now, perhaps we feel like we are in a valley of the shadow of death. For some of us, it is an emotional valley of fears and uncertainty. For others, it may be a very real valley of physical troubles. Still others may be having a spiritual crisis, wondering where the Lord is.

It is in this time 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 bringing us a Bible verse. Sometimes he shows his gracious care by sending a close friend to reach out. Other times, in our cries of desperation he sets upon our hearts an otherworldly peace. It is hard to explain, but you feel something come that calms, and you know that it is not from within yourself. 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 how that is an image of such care and closeness. Many of us have picked up a small child and wrapped them into our arms and 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 during this season. Find comfort in his Word, the Bible. Take a moment this morning to think about the care that God has given you over the years. Will he not care for you right now and for all of your 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 loved about the Psalms is that there is a psalm for every emotion you're feeling. Fear? There are psalms for that. Trouble trusting God? There are psalms for that. Anxious? Lonely? Betrayed? Angry? Doubting? Yes to all those. But the Psalms don't leave us wallowing in those emotions. They give us outlets of expression and help us turn our eyes heavenward to trust and praise.

Today, I thought we'd consider a few verses from Psalm 3, where God is described as our shield. It's an image used about twenty-one times in Scripture to describe God and his relationship to us. Just like a shield is used to protect a soldier, God is the one who protects his people. He is sure and steady; we can run to him. He holds us behind himself and stands between us and the storm or trial.

In Psalm 3, the psalmist looks to God, his shield, and cries. He is assured that God hears from his holy hill. Heaven is the throne room of God but it is not a far-off and distant hill. It is not as if we have to shout to be heard from far away or make sure our voices are loud enough to ascend. 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. He laid down to sleep. He awoke because God sustained him and protected him. The armies did not overrun him in the night because God was the shield. Enemies may set themselves against us, but who better to stand between us and the enemies than God? In hard times, I chuckle when I read verses like this because I say to myself "Welp, at least no one is trying to kill me." But many of us have probably had sleepless nights of worry. We have tossed and turned on our beds in 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 virus can get near you unless it is within the plan and purpose of God. Even then, he will sustain you and hold you in whatever he has called you to walk through.

Tonight, when you lay down to sleep, remember that the Lord is your shield. He will sustain you. He has sustained you 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 thoughts.

Psalm 115:11 says, "You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield."

And remember: whatever you're 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 starts out 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 this authority over everything he created. But now, he has been given this authority as the crowned human king. The one who steps 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 tells us in quoting Psalm 8, all things have been put under Jesus' feet in the rank he has as the human Messianic King.

Right now, we don't feel like all things are under Jesus' control. In fact, Hebrews tells us "We do not yet see everything in subjection to him." Isn't this so true with recent events?

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, "Aren't you in control? Jesus, aren't you the Lord over this? Make it stop." We want it to stop and when it doesn't then we feel like things aren't under Jesus' control or in subjection to him. But God wants us to know that this is to be expected: 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 go on, allowing creation to rebel, allowing a virus to run its course, serves the purposes of our Lord. He is not any less in control. And he is in control of your life. As a Christian, how much more during these dark times do we need to profess, "My life is in your hands. Lord, I trust you"? He will show us grace and mercy by walking with us through the trial, not exempting us from it.

We do see Jesus. We see the one who was crucified for us. He loved us so much he suffered and died for us to bring us to an eternal glory. Our hardship in this day is 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 all this is in subjection to his authority and he will use it to serve his purpose. Let us pray that Christ would be glorified in and through these hardships.



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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.”

### 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*

I don't know about you, but for me waiting is often hard. Waiting in silence is even harder. Our impulse is to want to do something. We want to solve the problem. We want to bring the wait to an end. Sometimes we just want to make ourselves busy so that we do not have to feel the waiting. Making noise is easier than being silent. But David waits in silence. He knows that no amount of activity will speed things up. His hope is in the Lord alone. His deliverance is from the Lord. It will come at the proper time.

So often in trials, we look for answers. We look for solutions. We say to ourselves, "If I had just done this, or if I could just fix this." But we are called to wait upon the Lord. We aren't sure exactly what David was waiting for, but it appears that he was being attacked in some fashion (v. 3), people were telling lies about him, and secretly cursing him (v. 4). He was waiting for the Lord to bring a resolution and judgment (v.12). So he fixed his eyes on the Lord and waited. There was nothing he could do but wait in silence.

I think that silence is even harder in our day. We are bombarded with noise all around us, from music to TV to internet. These things are not bad in themselves, but they can be distractions. We can rely on busyness as a means of covering and hiding fear. We can be afraid to stop, to rest, to be weak, to be alone. Our distractions can be a form of Novocain, numbing us to the need for stillness. Don't let busyness and distraction keep you from recognizing the true source of hope, peace, and calm in the midst of storms and trials.

The things that we need to settle our hearts and bring peace and security are found only in the Lord. "He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress." Sometimes our lives are so altered and shaken by the upheaval of everything, we are robbed of our distractions and our places of false security. Only in the Lord will we find that we are not shaken.

Maybe you are in a season where the normal things that give you rest, comfort, escape, and enjoyment are taken away. Going without them shows us how much more you really need the Lord. He 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 in him at all times as we are called to do? We all, at times, feel like a tiny boat caught in an ocean storm. We are about to flip over. We are looking for a Rock. We are looking for

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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 his goodness. Pour out your heart to the Lord. He hears our prayers and responds to our cries. God is a refuge for us. God is the only good, perfect, and true refuge. Truly, our hope is from 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 in difficult times. We want answers and resolutions. We want results. Stopping to “bless the Lord” can feel counterproductive. But it is precisely in the hard times we must not forget who the Lord is. Turning to the Lord is a way of remembering who he is and giving thanks to him on all occasions.

The first thing you can do in the hard times is be sure you are not forgetting the benefits of the Lord. The psalm goes on to list a number of benefits for us. Maybe you need to take some time right now and write down one or two benefits that we have from the Lord. Even when life doesn't feel good, the Lord is still good. His goodness does not change. His love and care are not removed from us.

Second, remember how the Lord forgives and heals. The Lord forgives our sins. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. He takes our sins and he removes them. He washes us and makes us clean. He is the one who redeems us. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, he purchases us back. If we were not redeemed by the Lord, we would go down into the grave and remain there. 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 is a Christian will never get sick or never succumb to a disease. But healing ultimately does come from the Lord. He has the power over disease.

Fourth, the Lord doesn't just redeem us and set things back to where they started. He gives us a crown of life. He places us in the company of royalty and gives us an inheritance in Christ. He lavishes on us steadfast love and mercy. This word for steadfast love is the Hebrew word *hesed*; it means something like loyal, steadfast, faithful love. It is the love of a covenant where the bond of commitment is kept. The Lord gives us mercy because of our sin but 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. The Lord crowns us with his attributes.

Finally, our true and lasting satisfaction comes only from the Lord. He brings good into our life. It is so easy in times of trial to see and focus on where we don't see the good. This or that life event has gone wrong. But the Lord brings a higher good and a purpose. He brings salvation and benefits of redemption unparalleled to anything in this life. But every good gift in this life is from the Lord.

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Let your thoughts dwell on the Lord that he might renew your strength. We all have days when we wake up weary. But the Lord is the one who renews our strength. God is faithful in all these 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 waiting on the Lord.

As Isaiah 40:31 promises, "They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

### 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 a plan is dependent upon the Lord's will (James 4:13-15). It is often wise to make a few plans. However, 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 the contingencies. We have thought of multiple possible future scenarios and how we will handle each one down to the minutia. Sometimes a backup plan is good. Invariably in every season of life, trying to track every possible contingency and possible outcome will unsettle our hearts and drive us mad. It breeds fear. Maybe you have felt your anxiety increase as you plan for something and realize the news just got worse. Or a new idea pops into your head and you feel the need to be prepared for that contingency as well. At some point, you are not trusting in 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 blasts our ears and we do not hear 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. God keeps us in perfect peace. What does it look like to stay your mind on him? It looks like trust.

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

Other plans are us trying to avoid every possible future. We want security in our control. These things we have to give to God. "God, I do not know the future. 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." There is no way we can plan for every distant and remote contingency.

Our minds are stayed when we trust. 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. We are not in control. We have to confess that and repent of it. We must trust that God is in control. We preach that to ourselves, rehearsing in our mind the truths we know. It is the Biblical form of

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meditation. We say “Yes, this is true. I believe it.” We confess it with our lips. We go to prayer and acknowledge the one who is in control. We have to worship. Worship drives out fear.

We are called to trust in the Lord forever. All of our eternity in the perfection of heaven will still be walking in trust with the Lord. We will commune with him. We will continue to confess faith in him. We will walk by sight at that point, but we will still worship and believe in him. The Lord is our Rock, and we will be anchored in him. Cling to that hope.

### 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 if we are rejoicing in our hope, we cannot rejoice in our sufferings. I am tempted to think that if I really have such a treasure ahead of me in God's glory, I wouldn't have my current suffering. The road to glory is paved with suffering. That's how it was for Christ's triumphal procession to exaltation. That is 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 stand in it. 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. We have peace with God. The work of Jesus Christ has perfectly removed God's wrath for my sin. Through faith I have come to participate in Christ and his work. What he did on the cross has now been applied to me.

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 just 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. We will experience the joyous presence of God. Nothing will compare to that. It is our hope. Furthermore, it is why missions are important. We want to proclaim the glory of God, announce the free offer of the forgiveness of sins, and watch others come to experience the peace of God in which we are partakers. We rejoice that we have access to God.

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



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Paul says our suffering builds endurance. A marathon runner doesn't wake up one day and decide "I'm going to run twenty-six miles." They work up to it. They train. They build endurance and form muscles to produce resilience. So it is with our spiritual lives. How is God using these 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 would lean on him and know that all that you need is found in him?

Your endurance produces character. Character is forged in fire. Your mettle gets tested. When you lean on Christ you find him building things in you that you know are not from you. 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, never come to the end of their rope. That is just false. Look at the psalms. The psalmist often goes down in the emotional depths, into despair, into Sheol (the grave) at the verge of physical and emotional death. Look at Jesus's 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 suffering (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 strong Christian. What matters most is who we rely on to pick us up out of it. Character is produced as we learn to trust the Lord. As we sing in the hymn, "Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him! How I've proved Him o'er and o'er." You only get that character through experiences and those experiences need to push us beyond ourselves. If it didn't push us beyond our limits, we could rely on ourselves to pick us up. But Christian character comes when we rely on Christ.

Finally, character produces hope. The Lord will bring us out of this. I have no idea when, or how, or what the future will look like. But the Lord will be faithful. He will either restore our lives, he will call us home, or he will return. Either way, 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 rejoice in sufferings not because we like going through them. Even Jesus did not "like" the experience of the cross. According to his human will, while he was sinless, he still desired the cross to be taken away from him, but only if that was the Father's will, so he submitted. But we don't see him "liking it." The joy set before him (Hebrews 12:2) wasn't the cross, it was the outcome. The joy set before us isn't the trial and the suffering; it is the outcomes from 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 at this time. Today, 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*

Sometimes we are in a season of holding fast, where all that we are experiencing is new and unprecedented. We are learning to be patient and wait. The future can be scary to us. But we do know the Lord Jesus who sits at the right hand of the Father and is in control of all these things.

As Christians, we need to hold fast to our confession in such times. We have Jesus, our great high priest who went up into heaven for us. Sometimes, when people think of Jesus returning to heaven in his ascension, we can 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, entering the womb of Mary and being born as truly human. But what we often do not carefully notice is that something new happened in the ascension. For the first time, Jesus went into heaven in a fully human resurrected body. In Jesus, human flesh and blood entered the presence of God. Consider how amazing that is.

Jesus goes up into heaven as our king and as our high priest. He is the Davidic Messiah entering God’s presence on behalf of his people. We need to hold fast to this confession that belongs to us. We don’t hold fast to the confession in an abstract sense. Our confession isn’t a box we check on a doctrinal quiz. We hold fast to the person of Jesus. This is who he is. This is what he has done. He did it for us and for our salvation. We are saying things and believing things about him as we wholly trust in him. Right now, and always, he is the only sure thing.

Have you ever shared something heartbreaking or hurtful with someone and they tell you that you just need to “toughen up and get over it”? I have. Thank goodness that 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 since Jesus is the Son of God in all his might and power, he is so far distant from our experiences. But Jesus also became truly man. This is a mystery because he was both God and man without compromising or minimizing what it means to be either. But that is our confession to which we hold fast. Jesus sympathizes with our weakness and our hurts. This is why he’s the best person to run to with our needs. He will never let us down. He will never leave us or forsake us. He is a gentle shepherd who stoops to where our needs are so that he can meet them.

This is why Hebrews calls us to have a confidence when we go to him. We come to *a throne*. We come to a throne *of grace*. We come to a throne of grace *in confidence*. We can enter into the presence of God because Jesus the Mediator has gone first on our behalf. John Calvin says that 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). The Father should judge our sins, but

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the Father sends the Son because of his love so that the Son serves as our mediator, standing as one from among us. 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 to wait patiently. We don't know how long certain periods will last. Sometimes we don't know the long-term effects. We just have to wait. We want relief. We want this to be over. The reality is we are going to have to endure more. God is stretching our patience muscle. Will we look to him as our hope and strength? Are we waiting for our circumstance or are we waiting ultimately for the Lord? Like Peter stepping out of the boat to walk on the water, now is a season to look at Jesus. We need a tunnel vision on him so that we do not worry about circumstances. Like Peter though, the temptation is to look at and fear the circumstances.

I am not saying we shouldn't be aware of what is going on. We should do our best to continue to plan and prepare for the unknown. We need to make changes in our daily lives and our work as long as the circumstances last. We do all this as we wait patiently on the Lord and ask for his daily guidance and sustenance.

The Lord will hear our cries. The Lord lifts us up out of despair and helplessness and plants our feet upon the rock. The Lord lifts us up by giving us a confidence and a steady strong spirit that is only from him. In these seasons, the believer realizes that peace was not from within themselves. True peace is from God. He will make our steps secure during this season.

During this time, the Lord can put a new song in our heart. There are moments when that feels impossible. But he fills us with a supernatural joy. Supernatural joy isn't naïve to the circumstances. We aren't oblivious to challenges and the hardships. We don't deny reality. However, we know the Lord of the circumstances. Like we sing in the hymn, "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." You have peace and safety in him. That is where it has always been.

The Lord will keep us in his salvation. Sing about that. Rejoice in the Lord. Take a moment and write a list of things that you are thankful for. Post on the refrigerator a list of blessings from the Lord. Make it a family affair if you have children. Ask your kids what they are grateful for. It is easier to think about what discourages us than to think about what we have to be thankful for. Stop and take a moment to think of what you have to sing about, even if you don't sing it out loud [and some of us will have family members thankful if we don't sing out loud].

Notice what happens when people see the Lord lift the believer out of their despair and put a new song in them: "Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD." We have no idea how God

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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 and bring people to worship him. But that is our goal. That has always been our goal. No matter what happens, those things are not thwarted. 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 before all and above all. Of course, when we think of Jesus the Son of God, we remember that at a point in time without setting aside any of his divinity and divine attributes, he took on the form of a servant and made himself of no account. He took on true humanity and everything that being human entails without the sin that currently plagues us (Heb. 2:14, 17).

If there is one thing that is true about Hebrews it is that the author loves to quote the Old Testament. In this one verse, we have two quotations from the Old Testament used here to refer to Jesus. The two quotes are from Isaiah 8:17 and 8:18. They are placed as the words of Jesus as he is bringing the ultimate fulfillment to this passage which was originally about Isaiah trusting the Lord.

Stop and think about this: in his earthly human life, God the eternal Son says concerning his heavenly Father: *"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 upholds the universe with the word of his mighty power (Hebrews 1:2-3), in his humanity 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, he says together with us: *"We trust in God."*

In times of crisis, we are all learning new depths to which we must trust God our heavenly Father. In those times, we are in the midst of circumstances we probably never imagined, let alone prepared for. How great a comfort is it that the eternal Son of God became human, and then he fulfilled this humanity perfectly. What is more human than to trust God? In his humanity, the Son learned obedience in suffering (Hebrews 5:8) and fully trusted in his heavenly Father through all his praying to the Father.

In fact, Hebrews tells us that in his humanity Jesus had weakness. It was weakness without sin, but it was human weakness of flesh and blood. Jesus had frailty, most evidenced in the way he was bloodied and brutalized on the road of 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 use it to exempt himself. No, he did something no human had ever done: he perfectly trusted his Father above. To be human demands that we look outside ourselves and trust God above. The Son, in his humanity, did that very thing.

Today, as his children, we are called to put our trust in our heavenly Father. God would not be our saving Father if it were not for our adoption as children into the family. Jesus is, in a sense, according to his humanity, our older brother. As our older brother, we can look up to him and see how he trusts God the Father just like we do.

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The fact that Jesus perfectly trusted the Father makes it beautiful as we contemplate how Jesus is our high priest. He understands our weaknesses and can sympathize with them. He has been tempted in every way just like us, yet without sin. 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 bring fear but to trust. When we struggle with trusting God, we can look to Jesus and ask for his help. He has been in the struggle and can help us because he didn't succumb to this very type of struggle.

My temptation in a trial is to think, "No one understands. No one gets it or has been where I am." Jesus has. Jesus won the day. Who better to turn to? Who better to give us the strength to trust the Father? Who knows how deep the need better than the one who went through all the human experiences? How great it is to turn to Jesus as our high priest and older brother and find mercy and grace in our times of greatest need. As you turn to him in this season, think on these things.

*Heb. 4:15-16 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.*

### 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 the creation in Romans 8 as being subjected to futility and in bondage to corruption (Romans 8:20-21). Creation is groaning in the pains of childbirth (Rom. 8:22).

What God has created will perish. Like clothes that get ragged, worn down, and start to shred, so also the creation breaks down. The creation will have to be changed one day into the new creation. That's the final hope. Until then, nothing in creation is certain except the chaos and uncertainty.

These verses are a quote about God from Psalm 102:25-27. The author of Hebrews takes these verses and frames them as something God the Father says to God the Son. It is the Word of God speaking not only about all the persons of the Godhead, but more specifically now about the Son.

The Son of God laid the foundations of the earth. If we know our Old Testament well, we recognize only God can create. Therefore, when we see the description of the Son's involvement in creation, we immediately are to recognize that is because he is truly God. The works of his hands are mighty. 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 our Rock. He is our refuge. In the Son, like each person of the Godhead, there is no shadow and shifting; there is no wavering and fragility. God is not thrown into turmoil, wavering in crisis by events or by things within creation. This is why he is safe to run to and trust in. Only the Lord remains. He alone is the unchanging one. He is firm and secure because he is over all and is the Lord of all.

In Hebrews 13:8 we see that 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 go on. We plan around and through the stability of those patterns. And then something like this upends all the patterns and almost all the stability. The stability was more of an illusion than we realized.

Only the Lord Jesus is the stable one. Even the reason behind the patterned consistency of the day turning to night and the night turning to day is only because he established it by a covenant



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(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). But it is the Lord who remains. He does not grow tired and weary. The Son is the same. He has no end to his years because he had no beginning. He was not bound by time but was the creator of it.

Turn to the Son. In him we have hope. We see God’s love in the work of the Son. He is the person in whom we put our faith and trust. He will not change as you trust in him. There is no better place to go in the chaos of change 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 and protects them and preserves them.

We live in a fallen world cursed with the effects of sin. It is important to remember that God is in control.

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, or to search for spiritual answers, or to think more about God and faith, or to pray more fervently.

But the Lord is good whether or not we can see good things that he is doing. It is easy to try and track his goodness by looking for the effects of that goodness. We quantify his goodness based upon what he did or didn't do. Unfortunately, when we think like that, we start to make ourselves the measure. Scripture gives us the measure: 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 of all his character are infinite goodness. We can walk through the storm because the Lord is with us and the Lord is good.

Because the Lord is good, he alone is the stronghold in the day of trouble. The trouble is around us but the Lord, the good One, stands next to us. He is the shield. He wraps his arms around us. He encircles us with wings like a mother hen encircles her chicks to protect them. He is a mighty fortress. His goodness stands like a high mountain castle against any stormy trouble that would assail us.

When you run and 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 the deep intimate covenant relationship where you are his and he is yours. It is like a spouse knows their partner. The Lord has known you this way before the foundation of the world. You are safe with him because he "gets" you; he understands and sees what "makes you tick." Those jumbled thoughts in your mind as it races are not jumbled to him. This is why we can find rest and solace in him. He knows you deeper and more personally than anyone else in the entire universe. He knows your fears, your hurts, your failures, your anxieties,

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your joys, your sorrows, and those things you wish were different about yourself. He knows you and he loves you unconditionally.

When you come to him as a refuge, you are coming to the loving arms of the Father. You can give him your tears, your joys, your fears, your delights. He embraces you and says, "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 asks the Father that we be sanctified in the truth. He wants 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. In the Word of God, He is revealing himself, his character, and his plan of redemption. 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 out with his full authority. Although God used human authors carried along by the Holy Spirit, in the Scriptures we are hearing the voice of God not just of men.

God desires the truth to be formed in us. His goal is not just to give us knowledge and information but to have us be transformed by the truth. Those who know and hear the Word should be marked by a transformation brought by the Holy Spirit using the Word of God in us. If we truly know God and worship him, we should be progressively being consecrated in our character to reflect him in our daily lives. The goal that God has 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. It is the same reason that the Son of God was sent into the world and became incarnate. God used the Word made flesh to bring the knowledge and glory of God into creation through the one who is himself truly God. While there is a distinction between the deity of the Son and those of us who as Christians and are clearly not divine, we have a similarity of mission. We are not the Savior, but we too are sent out into the world to bear the message of the Savior. As God works his transformation in us, he is also sending us out to be salt and light.

Verse 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 the disciples so that they can make disciples. The Son brought the Word of God and taught it to the disciples. Now the disciples are commissioned and sent out. We are not sent to be the Savior. Only Jesus can be the Savior. But like our Savior was sent, we too are sent out in order to testify to salvation, redemption, and the light of the world. The one who came as the Servant now sends out servants. The one who came to be the Testimony bearing witness to truth and teaching the word now sends out testimonies to bear witness to truth and teach the word.

Jesus is consecrating himself. He is set apart and holy as he goes to the cross. He is going to the cross as the pure and blameless sacrifice. The purpose of him coming as this consecrated suffering

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Servant and as the sacrificial Lamb of God is to win people to himself. He won for us on the cross our sanctification.

We can only be holy because the Holy One has died for us in our place. We can only be sanctified, cleansed, and washed because the blood of Christ covers us from all sin. But 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 one of progressive growth in holiness and righteous behavior. When the guilt is removed and we are set free, the mission God has for us is to grow to be transformed to look more like Jesus. The Spirit produces growth and fruit in you. It is character transformation. The remainder of your entire earthly life is to be one of continued progress in these things. Jesus longs for us to be sanctified in the truth of God's Word.

Finally, why do we spend time in the Word of God? For some of us, studying the Bible is easier than it is for others. But spending time in the Bible for reading and studying isn't ultimately for intellectual curiosity or to answer the great questions. The ultimate end of being in the Scriptures is so that we can be sanctified. We are sent into a hostile world; how do 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 Jesus wants us to be in the Word in such a way that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are being 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 came from far away and was sent into the world because of the Father’s love (John 3:16).

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

As he told Nicodemus, we are “born again,” or with the play of 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 someone who bears 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 of new birth imparted to us, we are “not of this world.”

The believer in the Lord is born again. This is the new birth that comes from above. It is the spiritual new birth where 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 you a new heart and put the Holy Spirit within you (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 itself. We are “not of this world.” The Holy Spirit’s transforming power is so radical that it takes us from being of the world, where this world and its sin is our master and enslaving power, and makes us born of God (1 John 5:1). We are children of God who have been born from God. 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 being born again, 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 a trial or struggle. How often have we just 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 where the struggle is just frustrating to the point

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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 is sent to us as the Comforter/Counselor. Jesus himself prays for protection upon us. He continues from the throne of heaven to intercede on our behalf. 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 and has put his protection over us. We bear his name. This makes us a target for the evil one. But this also makes us a protected one. The Holy Spirit is a seal within us. We have been stamped with the name of Jesus. We have been born again as a child of God. The Lord will not lose us but raise us up in the last day. Whatever happens from now until that day, we are protected by and kept in 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. It is part of his work of intercession. He comes before God the Father on behalf of the people he represents. When we sing in the hymn, “he shows his wounded hands and names us as his own” we are describing the concept of Christ’s intercession. The intercession on display in this prayer is the reason John 17 is sometimes called the high priestly prayer. Jesus is like an Old Testament high priest going and representing God’s people before God.

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. Jesus is a mediator for humans on behalf of God. He represents God to the people as God the Son and the revealer of the Father. But as the suffering servant, the high priest, and the sacrifice, he also represents God’s people to God. In verse 7, 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).

Jesus is not praying for the world in this passage. This does not contradict John 3:16 that God loves the world and all who believe will be saved. Rather, it focuses on the specific intercession that takes place when we have experienced the love of God.

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. The unbeliever does not have Christ being formed in them and they are not being glorified in Christ. Christ is praying for those the Father has given him who are coming to him by saving faith. And it is those who are saved who experience this special union and communion with the Father and the Son. If the Father and the Son did not care about the lost, they would not be drawing the lost out of the world. But once we are savingly united to Jesus, there is a special protection that is upon us. Jesus is our shepherd and the sheep know the shepherd’s voice.

In verse 10, 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. Jesus is being glorified in us.



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Jesus being glorified in his people continues to this day. 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 making the word of God fully known so that Christ can be formed in hearers. It is seeing and watching Jesus transform lives, as he has promised to do.

After his earthly ministry, Jesus returns to the Father just like he tells us in this prayer. He continues his heavenly ministry as our high priest and in sending the Holy Spirit. He is praying for the Father’s protection upon the children because the children belong to the Son and the Father. We are kept in the name of God, our salvation being 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. Jesus’s return to heaven does not leave us abandoned. Your union with Christ is a strong tether. Christ can no more cut you 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 he prays in confirmation and fulfillment of his work. When you hear this prayer be assured that you belong to Him. Find comfort that what he started, he will bring to completion (Phil. 1:6).

When Jesus finishes his earthly ministry, his ministry for us is not finished. 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 manners of trials, hurt, and pain may try to break you. Good Christians can suffer hard and long in seasons of 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 but if that isn’t enough for your heart on the rough days, remember the Son prays for you and intercedes. “Dear Father, keep this child that is yours and that you have given to me and I have brought him to you.”

You and I as a Christian 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 the Son and the Father. No matter what breaks you, the Father keeps you. Your heart and soul may be crushed, but the Father cares for you and the Son ministers to you and the Spirit is the 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 lining up favorably. It is perhaps more important that we give thanks in the seasons of lowliness, heartbreak, struggle, and pain.

By saying that we should give thanks in the season of hurt and hardship, I am not saying that we should pretend to ignore the difficult emotions that come in trying times. In fact, if there is one thing that the American evangelical church does not do well it is the Biblical concept of lamenting. So, when I say we need to give thanks in the hard times, I am not asking you to pretend that the hardship isn't hard or that the pain doesn't hurt. The Bible doesn't give us cliches. It doesn't 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 who trust the Lord the most go through the deepest sorrows.

As life has been difficult, you have become more aware of God's sustaining grace that carries you through day by day. Perhaps, it is against the backdrop of sorrow, illness, and uncertainty that the season of thanksgiving appears like a bright light.

First, we can always 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 attributes of God in the Old Testament. It is in this steadfast love that the Lord keeps his people. The Lord continually and unfailingly keeps his promises. In Exodus 34:6-7, the Lord announces his identity to Moses as the words are heard: "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 twenty-six 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 has changed, removed, or lessened the steadfast love of the Lord.

Second, the Lord is faithful. When the Psalmist tells us to declare the Lord's steadfast love in the morning and his faithfulness at night, 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 and only declare God's faithfulness in the evening. In fact, there is a semantic overlap in the meanings of steadfast love and faithfulness.

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God's faithfulness is shown in his steadfast love and covenant keeping. In 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, but the psalmist says, "Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God." The Lord has redeemed you and called you by name. Consider the depth of God's faithfulness even in our struggles and faithlessness to him at times in our sin: "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? 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 even simply that something bad wasn't even as bad as it could have been. Maybe you have seen highs, maybe you have seen lows, maybe some even lower than you would have imagined. Yet even more than what happened this year, consider the character of God. Even if not one single thing good happened to you, 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 that has gone away, the Lord is good. The Lord stands for you and 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 the prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper before he heads out to the garden of Gethsemane. The prayer is sometimes called Jesus's High Priestly Prayer because he is praying and interceding for those he is about to die for. I'd like to use this verse as a window into two points that are going on with the context John's gospel and God's purposes revealed in Scripture.

First, let's ask the question, what is God doing? What is God's purpose and mission within creation? For most of us, we would say God's mission and purpose in his creation is to spread the gospel and save people. This is true, but consider that this is a secondary purpose that flows from a greater purpose. God's saving people is consequent to the fall of humanity in sin. God's higher and ultimate purpose that extends back to the reason he created us is to bring glory to his name.

Jesus' first goal in his earthly life is to bring glory to his heavenly Father. The Father will in turn glorify the Son. Jesus prays, "glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you." This is why Jesus has to be about his Father's business, which includes his dying to save the people the Father has given him (17:2, 9-10, 20-21, 24; 6:35-40, 44; 10:26-29). Jesus is going to die and his death will win people from the whole world to himself (12:32-33). Yes, the Father sends the Son because he loves us. Jesus dies for us because he loves us. But the even higher purpose of the sending of the Son and the dying of the Son is the Father glorifying the Son and the Son glorifying the Father.

The chief end of God is to glorify God and enjoy himself forever. God isn't selfish in this. In fact, the persons of the Trinity love each other and glorify each other from all eternity past. God is supreme before all and over all. It is natural that he be all in all to himself. But now, having created, he plans and purposes to extend that glory into creation, so the 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 where we are in union and communion with the persons of the Trinity (17:10, 21).

The second thought is what it means to glorify God. Jesus is going to glorify the Father by going to the cross. Think about this: he is going to glorify the Father by being ground down into utter humiliation, shame, and suffering. He makes more of his Father by becoming lesser in his humiliation. The Father is glorified when the Son experiences this lowliness of death on the cross. This is the Son of God who has glory with the Father from all eternity (17:5). But when he is at his lowest in his earthly life, he is bringing the most glory to his Father.

There is no self-exaltation in the humanity of the Son. He does not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). His glory isn't in his greatness but in his

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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. Most 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? To glorify God and enjoy him forever. How is this accomplished? Not in self-exaltation and kingdom building for yourself but in lowliness and servanthood. Consider that maybe your season of being ground down is the season that brings the most glory to your heavenly Father.

What struggles are you facing today? What are those things that are wearing you down? Maybe there is something that is causing frustration, humiliation, and maybe even apparent failure? Maybe, like Jeremiah, you aren't seeing the fruit you want in the people to whom you minister. 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 on you. By every measure of the world, you are losing. But consider this: what if your being humbled and even humiliated 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 not for self-glorification. 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 where there are seasons of prosperity and we see tangible results of success. Praise God when they happen. But that is not my mission. My mission is to glorify God. If that means he uses me by making me less and lower, then I can rejoice that God is glorified. That is how Jesus Christ served the Father. God is glorified when I get out of his way and make less of myself. If my being made into a nobody in the eyes of others makes more of him, then isn't that enough to satisfy?

Don't fear the cross that God has called you to carry. Some of us may have seasons of heavy despair and successive failures. Maybe in life for every one step forward you take, you experience two steps backwards. It hurts. It stinks. Understand that your cross may beat you down so that all you have left is him. That's ok. He will glorify his name through you. He doesn't need to make you and me a big someone full of success to glorify his name through us. Often, he does just the opposite. Often, he glorifies himself by making you lower than you were previously. If that is how the Father is glorified in Christ how much more for 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. The Lord Jesus is king over all the earth. At his return, he will establish his kingdom over all things. The Lord will finally appear. 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). But the Lord has a holy habitation (v. 4). It is a safe city where the people of God dwell protected and unmoved by chaos around them (v. 5-7). The Lord protects his people. The Lord will establish his kingdom with justice, peace, and righteousness. The psalm ends reminding us that in exaltation the Lord will establish his justice over all the earth.

It is important that as believers, we should be people of justice, peace, and righteousness. This is both personal righteousness and peace as we pursue holiness and a personal walk with the Lord, but also righteousness in society. We should be concerned that there are just laws, fair treatment of all people, and a lack of partiality in how others are treated. Countless times in the Scriptures, the Lord rebukes leaders and those in power when they oppress others, treat others unfairly, and take advantage of the widows, fatherless, and orphans because they are weak and needy. Micah 6:8 reminds us what it means to be a human being obeying 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 bring to my heart a passion to share the gospel among the nations? Does this bring a passion for sharing the gospel to my neighbors so that Jesus can be proclaimed as king in my community? From a Biblical perspective, America is just as much "one of the nations" as any other country around 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 militaries and police. There will be no need for police. Kings, presidents, leaders, tyrants, generals, and police 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. The Lord 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 the sin with which human beings

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exercise it 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 it make us repentant and humble? Does it bring concern and compassion to our hearts when we see fellow humans in our nation and all around the world being oppressed? Does it create in us a desire to see godly leaders and godly police who both write and enforce fair, just, and unbiased laws?

Know the Lord's character by being an imitator of God as a beloved child (Ephesians 5:1). In our lives, are we concerned with repenting and bearing fruit in keeping with repentance? If we are still and know that the Lord is God, not only do we trust in him during chaotic times, but we are concerned with where we stand before him. Do I look at his coming judgment and ask myself, am I concerned with daily obeying the Lord in all areas of my life? We should not be asking if the Lord is on our side, but if we are on the Lord's side. While I live in the midst of earthly kingdoms, is my character being transformed to look like the Lord? How have I "done justice, and loved kindness, and walked humbly with my God"?

One day, the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ. 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 whatever earthly nation we find ourselves living in. 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 like 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 all of us have been there at some point. Maybe your sleep is restless because of health, and you wake up weary rather than energized. Maybe your mind can't slow down from all the cares that it carries during the day. It is so heavy that even laying it down on the pillow feels like a burden. Maybe it's a season of discouragement, despair, or even depression. We have all felt the days where our head hangs or, as Lamentations says, it is "bowed down within me." These are seasons of life common to all of us.

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 this morning are the goodness of the Lord in my life. The sun rising is because of God's covenant with it (Jeremiah 33:20). It is another sign of his goodness. Moreover, I have the riches of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing can separate me from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:38-39), least of all my burdens and emotional feelings. God's care and love for me really is new every morning, no matter the circumstances that I awake to face in the new day.

When I read the words "Great is your faithfulness," I can't help but think of the old hymn that many of us sing. In it, we sing the lines "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 doesn't change. Because God doesn't change, 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 shows us this most of all in the sending of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was the ultimate keeping 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



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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’s covenant with David will be kept. He is fulfilling it in Jesus Christ and he will bring the fulfillment of it to completion. People coming to worship the Messiah and bow before him is God keeping his Word. My personal salvation is God keeping his Word. God keeping his promises is as certain as the sun rising and setting because God has kept that happening every day for thousands of years.

The mercies of God are new every morning. And when you don’t feel like they are, who do think is the one who brought forth the morning? The Lord is our true portion and inheritance. Put your hope in him. 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 from when the Philistines seized him in Gath. When he is opposed by an enemy, he finds that the only place he can turn is to the Lord. He faced oppression and enemies that trampled 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 hell.

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 men. It is in that moment he seeks the Lord for his deliverance. If he were to look at the actions of those surrounding him, all the evidence was saying nothing can 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 says, "What can flesh do to me?"

Sinful people continue to do sinful things. Man tramples man. The proud attack the weak. It stirs up fear. But David reminds us, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you."

We are to be a people who trust in God. We give our praise to him. We 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, we should have a deep broken heart for those who experience and feel the burden of oppression. We do not 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 stir up strife. Yet he trusted the Lord.

Against the great and mighty God of the universe, what can man truly do? David is not afraid because he knows the Lord is in control. The Lord rules over all these things in life. Sin and wickedness will always for a season seem to have their day. Our best efforts often seem to have little effect against the way our society is headed. But it has been this way from the very 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 flesh do to us? What can society and individuals really do? What can happen that is ever outside the plan and purposes of God? This is not to say that we should not care. We are not to be detached from events and unemotional in the face of pain, suffering, and heartache. But it is to say that we lift our eyes up 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

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until the day when he returns to make it visible, we continue to call people to repent and be reconciled to God. We continue to hold out hope that the only solution to all of the personal sins and societal ills that plague us is the salvation offered in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our only hope in life and in death. Do not be afraid. He will never leave us or 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 is insufficient if Christ had not risen from the dead. If Jesus in his humanity remained dead, there would be no conquering of sin and death. But the triumph of the cross of Christ is demonstrated because death was unable to hold our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who bore our sins has exhausted the curse of sin.

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin famously says that the death and resurrection of Christ are synecdochic. By this, he means that when one is referenced there is a view to the whole. In effect, you can't have one without the other. The cross is an empty, meaningless death if Jesus Christ just died. As Paul explicitly states, if Christ is still dead and not raised from the dead, we are still in our sins. A dead man has conquered nothing and set us free from nothing. If all we have is the resurrection, there is no bearing of sin and paying the curse 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 is the perfect bearing of sin and exhausting the wrath of God for sin. We share in this death through our union with Christ and receive it through faith in Christ. In his resurrection life, we will come to share in the resurrection to an eternal glory of the New Heavens and New Earth. All who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will be made alive in Christ. First, new life is imparted to our hearts. Second, new life will be imparted to our body. The same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in the gospel as those dead in sins are being raised to spiritual life in their hearts. It will continue to work in us when the Lord returns and we are raised bodily from the dead.

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 (Isaiah 53:11). The Lord is the Righteous One. He perfectly paid for our sin. He is raised up in perfect righteousness. The verdict of the resurrection that the Father gives to the Son is "My Servant is righteous." The Son, in his humanity, is fully righteous. God declares in the resurrection that the one who bore our curse is the truly Righteous One. 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 the verdict of 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 is raised up for us so that we could be declared righteous before God.

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Consider how we see Jesus. We have come to know Him. To know Jesus is to know that he suffered and died for us. To know Jesus is to know that he rose again from the dead for us and for our salvation. The resurrection does as much to accomplish our salvation as the death of Christ does. You can't have one without the other. In his death and resurrection, we see 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, we are reminded that the incarnation of Jesus continues beyond his death. In his incarnation, Jesus had a human body and a human soul. His body died and was in the grave. In resurrection, his soul and body were united again. He continues to live now as a truly human being who has conquered sin and death for us. God has crowned as King within his creation the one who is eternally the Son of God over all creation. The 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 is a place of protection and shelter to his people. Going to the Lord for shelter brings us protection and safety. In the shadow of the almighty "the sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night" (Psalm 121:6). The imagery of being in the Lord's shadow conveys both a closeness to the Lord and a protection that comes from the Lord. 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 the Lord is a refuge, but it can bring an almost inexplicable comfort when we 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 things are not a mystical mantra, lifting up our heart and our voice to the Lord makes an appeal to his strength and protection. The effect can bring comfort and assurance to us.

In verse three, the psalm turns from the first person ("I will say," in verse 2) to the third person and second person (he will deliver you). The Psalmist does not say, "he will deliver me." Instead, he expands the focus. He is assuring that deliverance is for all who seek the Lord and affirm the personal confession in verse 2. The Word of God brings comfort here to all who are reading and affirming their trust in the Lord. The Lord saves us from those who seek to do us harm and from calamities that arise in a world suffering the effects of sin, like 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 primary flight feathers on a bird. It is essentially another word to describe the wing of a bird while focusing slightly more on the strong flight feathers, one of the primary components to the bird's ability to fly. Strong pinions push the air downward as a 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 these things are metaphors. 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 the raging

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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 for them. This faithfulness is a shield to us. The reference to a buckler 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 that would seek to destroy us and end 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 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 on the run from Saul and hiding in strongholds in a place called Horesh. During this time, the Ziphites reported back to Saul that David was hiding in the region. Ziph was a city in the region of Judah, which was also the tribe of David's family. David was being 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 from within the same tribe as David (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 ruthless and seeking his life.

In this Psalm, like many others, David knows desperate times. With all that is happening, David has only the Lord as his refuge. He pleads with the Lord to save him. He asks the Lord 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 the Lord's name (vv. 1-2); (2) he specifies his trial (v. 3); and (3) he affirms his trust in the Lord (vv. 4-7). In David's dire circumstances he knows that only the Lord is the one who upholds 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 it worse for him in prison (Philippians 1:17). Think of it: it wasn't enough that Paul was suffering in prison. These individuals were so bent on bitterness and making things miserable for Paul, they sought to drive the knife further into his back by preaching the gospel. The more they preached publicly the more he'd suffer in prison, so they preached with a zeal to see Paul's suffering increase. How hardened must a heart be that they would seek to use the good and true preaching of the gospel as a means of making life worse for a fellow minister?



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How often in the midst of life's hard circumstances do we feel forsaken? We make our plans as best we can, we pray, we dedicate them to the Lord, and then tragedy strikes. Maybe the tragedy is a bad turn of circumstances or an unexpected life event. Maybe the tragedy has a human element like when someone close betrays us. Maybe someone opposed to the gospel seeks 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. He draws us close to his bosom 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 entirely as his own. The Lord upholds our life even in the darkest of days. Like David, our vindication in trials and conflict 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 the precious saint home to heaven, he is persevering them eternally. The Lord will not allow death to permanently triumph over his beloved. With our bodies in the grave, the Lord does not forsake us. We 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 do horrible things. Betrayals rock us to the core of our being. Opponents are merciless in their slander of our character. Evil people engage in violence and the taking of life. And yet, God remains. And God remains faithful. With the magnitude of God's grace shown to us in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, 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 ever say to be lacking 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 say with a rhetorical flourish, "What can man do to me?" It is much harder to focus on the Lord's protection in a trial where we feel the weight of someone aligned against us. Man can do a lot. Again, God remains. He is completely faithful. He truly does not forsake us. Above all else, the Lord is trustworthy and keeps his Word.

Keep these truths always before you. Repeat it to yourself even in those moments where at first you don't feel like it's true. Believe his Word in the darkness and ask him to help your unbelief. The Lord is faithful and delivers his children from their trials and brings them into his eternal kingdom.

Psalms 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 few verses are part of the Servant Song of Isaiah 42, where the Lord God the Father is speaking of his Son, the coming Messiah. The Lord displays to us his sovereignty over all creation and his delight in bringing glory to his own name. All that exist 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, when Paul confronts the idols at the Areopagus in Athens, he says concerning God:

*"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 within an entire pantheon of gods. The Lord our God is one. It is the God of Israel who had not only raised up Israel as a unique son (Exodus 4:22-23) but created all peoples and established all the nations. The One who has made all humanity sends His eternal Son to save a people 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 and Messiah is not just the king over Israel, but he is raised up to be the Savior, Lord, and King of the entire world. The proclamation of the good news is something that God has always intended to go to 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 only hope of salvation for anyone anywhere in the world. He is the one who opens the eyes of the blind. We see this fulfilled in Jesus's earthly life as he physically heals the blind. But we also see this fulfilled in Scripture and today as the Lord opens the

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eyes of the spiritually blind. To be trapped in sin and idolatry is to be 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) and he transfers us to the kingdom of the Son, bringing us to have a share in the inheritance of the saints in light (Colossians 1:12-14).

*Let us consider how we might grow in humility because of our great need of Jesus our Savior. We need Jesus to be our light. We were trapped in darkness and by nature children of God's wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3). Sin was an enslaving power over us keeping us in bondage. As Charles Wesley writes in his hymn, "Long my imprisoned spirit lay; fast bound in sin and nature's night." Praise the Lord, he opened our blinded eyes.*

Even more, consider how our Christian 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 a child of "the nations" as anyone else. As a nation, America is, biblically speaking, no more chosen by God than any other nation that is not a physical descendant of Abraham. We need that light here in our communities precisely because we are a part of "the nations" that Scripture is describing. The West is not the Savior to the nations; Jesus Christ is. Missions and evangelism are needed across the street and across the entire globe because the entire world is under Christ's Lordship. He is the light of the nations to every nation, including our own.

As a covenant to the people, Christ is now the person to whom we become united. Our salvation entails union and communion with the sweetest of Saviors. When Christ unites us to himself, 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 and regional allegiances that we might have. In humility, especially as Americans, we need to consider others as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:1-5). The call of Christ to missions creates in the heart of believers 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 the servant humbly proclaims Christ, Christ will open the eyes of the blind. The covenant to the people will 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 are a prophecy that he gives through the Holy Spirit. You will remember that because he doubted the angel who appeared to him in the temple, he was unable to speak until John was born. When John was born, he was asked what the name of their son should be. After he had written the words “His name is John,” the gospel of Luke says, “Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed and he spoke, blessing God” (Luke 1:64). Having experienced months of silence, Zechariah’s first words are to give praise to God.

Like Zechariah, we have much to bless the Lord for. Hopefully, even after a difficult time, we are able to focus on joys and bless God like Zechariah did. In celebrating the coming of the Lord Jesus we are reminded that God has visited his people and redeemed them. There is perhaps a reminder here of the Exodus where God heard the cries of his people and came down to save them (Exodus 3:7-8).

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is fulfillment of God’s promises to save his people through the “house of his servant David.” The Old Testament had promised that the Messiah would come through the line of David and that it would be this descendant of David who saves us. God would use the house of David. He would be the heir to all the promises.

In the ancient world, one would blow a horn as a call to battle, so the Son of David is the horn of salvation. As Zechariah later says, his son John the Baptist “will go before the Lord to prepare his way.” The Lord himself is coming. He is coming to save and deliver. The promised salvation will come for all his people. It is for people from every tongue, tribe, and nation. Although the Davidic king in the Old Testament was the king of Israel, it was also promised that he 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 comes to deliver his people from their enemies. Our biggest enemy in the Scripture is the evil one, Satan. Equally, sin and death are also our enemies. Jesus comes to set us free from our captivity. In the triumph of Christ after his cross, God has “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 are put 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. These victories and fulfillments are impossible without the first Christmas.

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The Lord has delighted to show us mercy in Jesus Christ. When Zechariah speaks of “our fathers” here he is referring specifically to the Old Testament promises made to the forefathers of Israel—promises, in particular, that are 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 Jewish in our heritage come to receive blessings from knowing the Jewish Messiah. 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 Jesus Christ the Savior (Galatians 3:8-9). For those having faith in Jesus Christ, Abraham is our father (Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:29).

Let me encourage you to keep several meditations in your heart. First, God always keeps his promises. In one sense, the whole of redemption 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 we are tired of some trial and we just want it to end. Imagine how Zechariah felt. Think of Simeon waiting in the temple having been promised by the Lord years ago he would live to see the Messiah. Or consider Anna who had faithfully waited as a lonely longing widow. God kept his promise and sent the Son. God kept his seemingly smaller promises to allow Simeon and Anna to see the Son in their old age. There is tremendous joy in seeing the Son.

God has kept his promises to you. He has shown you the Savior Jesus Christ. He has given you all you need in Christ for life and godliness. 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. No matter how lost in the hardship we become, the Lord knows and draws near. His redemption reminds us that the Lord sees our plight, hears our cries, and comes down to us in our needs, most of all in our greatest need.

Second, God is fundamentally a God of mercy and love. God is motivated to make promises because of his mercy and love. He makes the promise and guarantees it by his own name because he is the only sure and unchanging one. God is the one who enters the covenant and keeps it for the sake of his name. How many times in life have we broken our word or failed to live up to true character or fulfill 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. Christmas is the reminder: God’s covenant is certain. Christ is the promise of the covenant. God’s love and mercy towards us do not fail. We may fail but he does not.

Bless the Lord that his Word is true. 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, took on true humanity becoming like us in all things without sin, and he stepped down to save his people. God 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 of passages in Isaiah that are called the “Servant Songs.” The Servant Songs are prophecies of Jesus Christ. The most familiar Servant Song is Isaiah 53, which is a prophecy of Jesus’s death. This earlier Servant Song in Isaiah 42 is just as important because it introduces us to several features regarding Jesus, his reign, and his care for the nations beyond just Israel.

The Lord Jesus is, of course, the Son of God. But in his coming, he is also the chosen Messiah. The Father sends the Son and designates him for his mission. With these words in Isaiah, we are reminded of the baptism of Jesus where he is anointed for his Messianic mission. At Jesus’s baptism, the Spirit descends like a dove and the Father proclaims, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). The Lord delights in his Son and the work that the Son will do.

One of the most comforting verses in all of Scripture is verse 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 bruised or bent over, it only takes the slightest bit of movement to snap the stalk. Even trying to straighten the bent reed can cause it to snap in two, since movement intended to straighten it can actually apply too much force on the delicate fibers. Similarly, think of how the smoldering wick of a candle with that last little glow of an ember can be easily snuffed out. The slightest movement of air and it is extinguished. If you have ever walked a birthday cake across a room with the candles lit, you know the flame can be snuffed out just from movement. Consider how much more quickly the smoldering wick is extinguished. This is how gentle Jesus is in his care and restoration of those who are needy, desperate, and even sinners before him. Oftentimes in our lives, he does not crush us with justice but heals and restores as the gentle Shepherd caring for his sheep.

First, we can take comfort in this 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 true humanity, the Son of God has been made fit to minister on our behalf. If you are weary in your heart and soul, there is no better place to run than to Christ. He restores. He will nurse you back to health and vitality in your soul in such a way that will not break you in your fragile estate. His heart is not calloused. His judgment is not crushing. Instead, he sympathizes with our weaknesses and ministers grace from his throne.

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Second, we can learn from this gentleness. So often in our zeal for evangelism and discipleship, I fear that we err too much in delighting in calling out sin and forcing conviction upon the sinner. We fail to see the individual as a bruised reed or a smoldering wick that can be easily crushed by our zeal. No doubt it is the work of the Spirit as part of the application of the Word of God to bring conviction. Yet, we need to be careful that we are not crushing the sinner under our own added pressure when they also need to see the life-giving restoration and salvation that comes from Christ. Simply put, ours is not a ministry of shaming sinners but of being ambassadors of Christ. We are ministering reconciliation with God.

While the 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 the ailing sinner and in our attention to a whole range of other physical, emotional, and spiritual needs that are right before us. There is immeasurable comfort found in Christ and, 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 in these things.

Finally, in the exercise of his kingship, the Lord will not grow weary. Jesus Christ 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 either by laws, biases, favoritism, or prejudices will feel over time like the broken reed and the smoldering wick. They need the salvation offered by Christ and perhaps a cup of water, warm blanket, or a caring hug offered in his name. We need to display love and care as the hands and feet of Jesus Christ.

The hope of the nations is a peace and justice that comes only from Jesus Christ. He will take to the ends of the earth not only the establishment of a kingdom over all the earth and the restoration in the New Heavens and New Earth, but in the New Covenant, he is, even now, writing his law in the hearts of individuals all over the globe and transforming lives. The Spirit is upon the Lord Jesus. In his resurrection and the exercise of his Messianic kingship, Jesus is giving the Spirit to individuals and peoples all around the world to bring them to his name and 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 freedoms and liberties as a country, 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 above the nations, including our nation. Whatever we make of our nation's history and the culmination of events, we also know that our God is sovereign and above all these things. His glory is higher than any glory we will find in cherished American values of liberty. During these times, we must remember where our hope is. What is your 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's kingdom and America's fate are not intertwined. God is above all the nations.

Consider how far above these things the Lord is. He sits above the heavens and looks down on them. It is a picture of a sovereign king ruling over all things. He will one day accomplish his perfect peace as his kingdom is made 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 under his feet (Hebrews 2:8). It is a difference of the objective and the subjective. Objectively, Jesus is king over all things. God "left nothing outside of his [the Son's] control" in the Son's exaltation. But subjectively, we do not always see this reality. Some days in our lives it does not feel like Jesus has conquered sin and death. Sometimes it is hard to see what we know to be true. But we need to cling to truth, not our feelings.

With the Lord's exaltation over all things, we are not to think that he is a distant and unconcerned God. He is not the God of deism where 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. Our psalm tells us he raises them up. The Lord has a particular compassion on those with great needs, including those in poverty. Countless places in Scripture, we are told 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.



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Consider Samuel's mother, Hannah. She was barren and desperate for a child. She wanted to experience the blessing of the Lord and have one who would inherit the riches of the blessings of God's promised land. The Lord answered her prayer. While the Lord doesn't answer every prayer exactly the same way, he still lavishes mercy and grace upon those who come before him in their seasons of trouble and trials. Hannah's own song is very similar to the words of Psalm 113. "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 and strength of nations. He is not honored by acts of violence. Nations and individuals who exalt themselves and take pride in their strength and power will find the Lord humbling them. God finds delight when our character mirrors him, when we are concerned for the poor, the lowly, and the needy like he is.

Sing praise to the Lord. Bless his name. We are to trust him above all else and walk humbly before God. Those who seize power, self-aggrandize, and exalt themselves will be humbled in the Lord's timing. Those who humble themselves in worship of God, 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. In 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.

The inheritance of the eternal kingdom and the New Heavens and the New Earth are things that have been won by the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the king of the kingdom as he sits upon the throne and rules over all creation. God has made us heirs, and in fact, co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). There are riches of mercy, love, and grace given to us in the kingdom. We have come to walk in the light as he is in the light (1 John 1:5, 7). God adopted you into his family, installed you in his kingdom, and granted you an eternal inheritance.

The first aspect of this great kingdom transfer is that he delivered us “from the domain of darkness.” As Charles Wesley writes, “Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature’s night.” Or as Ephesians says, 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). Darkness ruled us. We were in its domain and delighted in serving the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2) and 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.

It is the work of the Son to set the captive free. It is for this reason that he comes to earth and takes up the cross and is not granted the mantle of kingship. He is a liberator, a Savior. He looses the chains of sin and darkness. The Son comes “to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound” (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18,19). May these words be on our hearts continually.

The second aspect of this kingdom transfer is that in salvation we are put under the authority of a new and glorious king. The Father has put 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 puts a new heart in us, which brings new allegiances. We are granted a new citizenship in this kingdom. And we are stamped with a new seal as the Holy Spirit is given to us. We have all the rights and privileges as children of God; we can cry out “Abba, Father” in our prayers and communion with God.

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It is in the Son that we have redemption. He has paid the price for sins. The background of the term *redemption* is from the slave market where a slave is set free when the price has been paid. The price paid was the blood of Jesus Christ in the accomplishment of the forgiveness of sins. All of our guilt and condemnation has been washed away at the cross of Calvary.

We are now in the kingdom of the beloved Son. The Father has deep love and affection for the Son. 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 and has sent the Son. The Son has won the victory. Now the Father brings us into the kingdom of the Son in the application of salvation.

To quote Charles Wesley, again, describing 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 comes to set the captives free and be crowned within his creation in resurrection and ascension. His path of lowly humility is the path of triumph whereby he accomplishes our salvation. We know why the Son comes into the world. We understand what the Son has done for us. He is the one who sets the captives free. Praise be to the Father and the Son as the Father has brought us home to the Son's kingdom and Lordship.

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