

THE *Exodus* WAY

2026
COLLABORATIVE
JOURNAL



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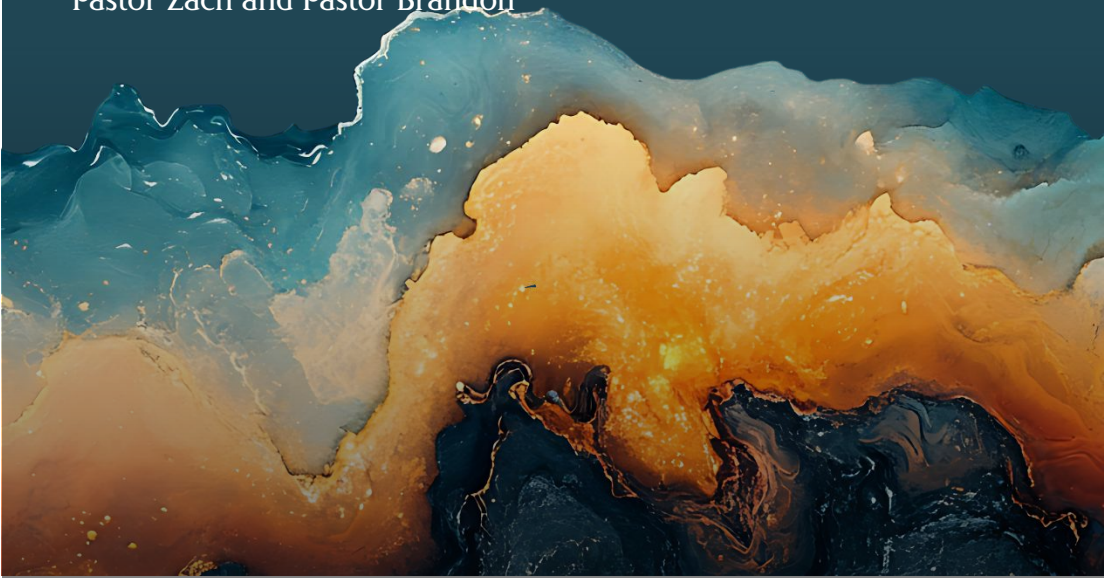
Dear ClearView family,

What you are holding in your hands is a companion to our sermon series, *The Exodus Way*. Its pages contain each week's sermon Scripture passage, space for you to take notes and journal, a writing or song lyric, a devotional, and an original piece of art created by an artist from within our church family.

Visual and written art can unpack the narratives and principles in Scripture for our hearts and minds in beautiful and profound ways, so we hope you will spend time in your weekly devotions to enjoy and listen to the songs, analyze and sit with the artwork and creative writings, and write out your own heart's response as we walk through the Exodus themes together. We encourage you to bring this journal back to church with you each week to use during Sunday services.

We hope and pray that God would meet each of us in unique and beautiful ways throughout this series.

Pastor Zach and Pastor Brandon



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Week 1

The Groaning of the Oppressed

Exodus 1:8-14, 2:23-25, 4:29-31

⁸Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹And he said to his people, “Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. ¹⁰Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” ¹¹Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹²But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. ¹³So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves ¹⁴and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.

²³During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. ²⁴And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob ²⁵God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

²⁹Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. ³⁰Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.

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Abide with Me

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, O abide with me

I need Thy presence every passing hour
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Though cloud and sunshine, O abide with me

I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if Thou abide with me

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee
In life, in death, O Lord abide with me

Henry F. Lyte and William H. Monk

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Tap to Listen

Opulence

Ron Reese

Precious metal lapidary

Before leaving Egypt, the Israelites *asked* for gold and silver. The Egyptians readily gave because “the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians” (Exodus 12:35). The opulence of Egypt, often obtained on the backs of Hebrew slaves, was used to fulfil the prophecy and foreshadowing of the Tabernacle’s wealth.

Earthly luxury and systems, based on self, lead to spiritual slavery.

These pieces, all precious metals, have been made into gifts with a heart of love that glorifies the Creator “of all that was made.” In Hebrews 11:19, Moses considered the reproach of Christ as greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.





Devotional

Debbie Dittrich

Joseph was dead and the Israelites had gone from being blessed and esteemed, eating at Pharaoh's table with Joseph, to being despised by a new Pharaoh, who loathed them because they had multiplied, according to God's promise, into a vast mob. They were nothing more than a useful commodity to accomplish Pharaoh's projects producing the labor he needed to build his kingdom. But, he also saw them as a threat to his kingdom's safety, whom he feared might join with his enemies to defeat him in battle one day. They were a necessary evil, nothing more than a means to an end, but they were an evil that had to be controlled.

With a ruthless heart as hard as rock and as cold as steel, Pharaoh decided to control the Israelites by appointing harsh taskmasters over them. The taskmasters were unrelenting, uncaring and inflicted unbearable pain on the Israelites, by forcing them into rigorous labor. The life of the Israelites was bitter and their never ending cries were met with more agony and more pain, with death being their only hope for relief.

It would be easy for the Israelites to believe that God didn't care about them. Or perhaps even hated them or even worse had forgotten His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But God cannot and did not forget. David Guzik says, "The principle of Isaiah 54:17 proved true. No weapon formed against you shall prosper. The wickedness of the Egyptians could hurt the children of Israel but could never defeat God's plan for them."

Not only did Pharaoh try to control the Israelites by inflicting harsh, back breaking labor upon them, but he also tried to control them by ordering that the midwives kill all the newborn boys. Hard labor is one thing, but a dead child in your arms is another! How do you face such agony?

One night a young, pregnant Hebrew woman writhed in bitter labor. As she screamed in pain, her blood soaked newborn son also screamed with new breath in his lungs. But neither she, nor her husband, feared the king's edict, but instead trusted God. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that he was a beautiful child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict." Hebrews 11:23

And surely it was also by faith that she placed her helpless, tiny boy in that basket and put it into the river, three months later. Faith is, after all, not a feeling, but it is a decision to trust the One who, in fact, does see and who does care and who does hear and who is concerned and who can rescue.

Indeed, God was at work and had a plan for that precious child to be rescued by Pharaoh's daughter, who raised him as her very own son. But how could there be anything good about that? But all the while God was watching, not only Moses, but the Israelites, as well. He planned not only to rescue Moses, but He planned, all along, to rescue the Israelites as well. And His plan was very good, indeed.

Moses had power and prestige and yet, like God, he was grieved by the great suffering of the Hebrews. One day his grief turned into murder as he stepped in to stop an argument between a Hebrew and an Egyptian. Pharaoh was enraged when he found out and instead of posting a "wanted dead or alive" sign for Moses, his sign had only two words, "wanted dead"!

Moses fled for his life. He must have felt his life was over. But the truth is Moses was right where God wanted him. God did want to use Moses to deliver the Israelites, but it would take forty years in the desert, tending sheep, to learn how to do his part, so that God could deliver the chosen people out of Egypt. And what did Moses learn in the desert? He learned, like his parents, to live by faith in God, who can always be trusted.

Hebrews 11:25-27 says, by faith, Moses chose "to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward."

Friend, are you suffering right now? Is your marriage falling apart? Are your dreams and plans crashing down around you? has depression left you hopeless? Is addiction a cruel "taskmaster", from whom you cannot seem to escape?

Do you wonder if God sees your pain and misery? Do you wonder if God cares or if He hears your cries and your groans? When the days are dark and help seems non-existent it is easy to believe that God isn't concerned; that He has turned away from you or is perhaps angry with you, or worse, is "done with you".

If you are hanging on by a thread, perhaps you need to remember that faith is not a feeling. Faith is a decision. Despite your feelings and fears and pain it is possible to choose to believe, that God sees you, and cares about you, and that He does have a plan to use your misery for your good and His glory.

That in fact, is what the Israelites did. Exodus 4:31 says, "So the people believed and when they heard that the Lord was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshipped."

How might you decide to trust God in your pain?

Week 2

A Way Through the Waters

Exodus 6:1-8, 14:19-25

¹But the Lord said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.” ²God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord. ³I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them. ⁴I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. ⁵Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. ⁶Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. ⁷I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.’”

¹⁹Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, ²⁰coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.

²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²²And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ²³The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic ²⁵clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.”

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I Will Not Be Moved

You are my rock and my salvation
My faith in You will not be shaken
My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus Christ, my righteousness
In every storm that comes my way
I will always say

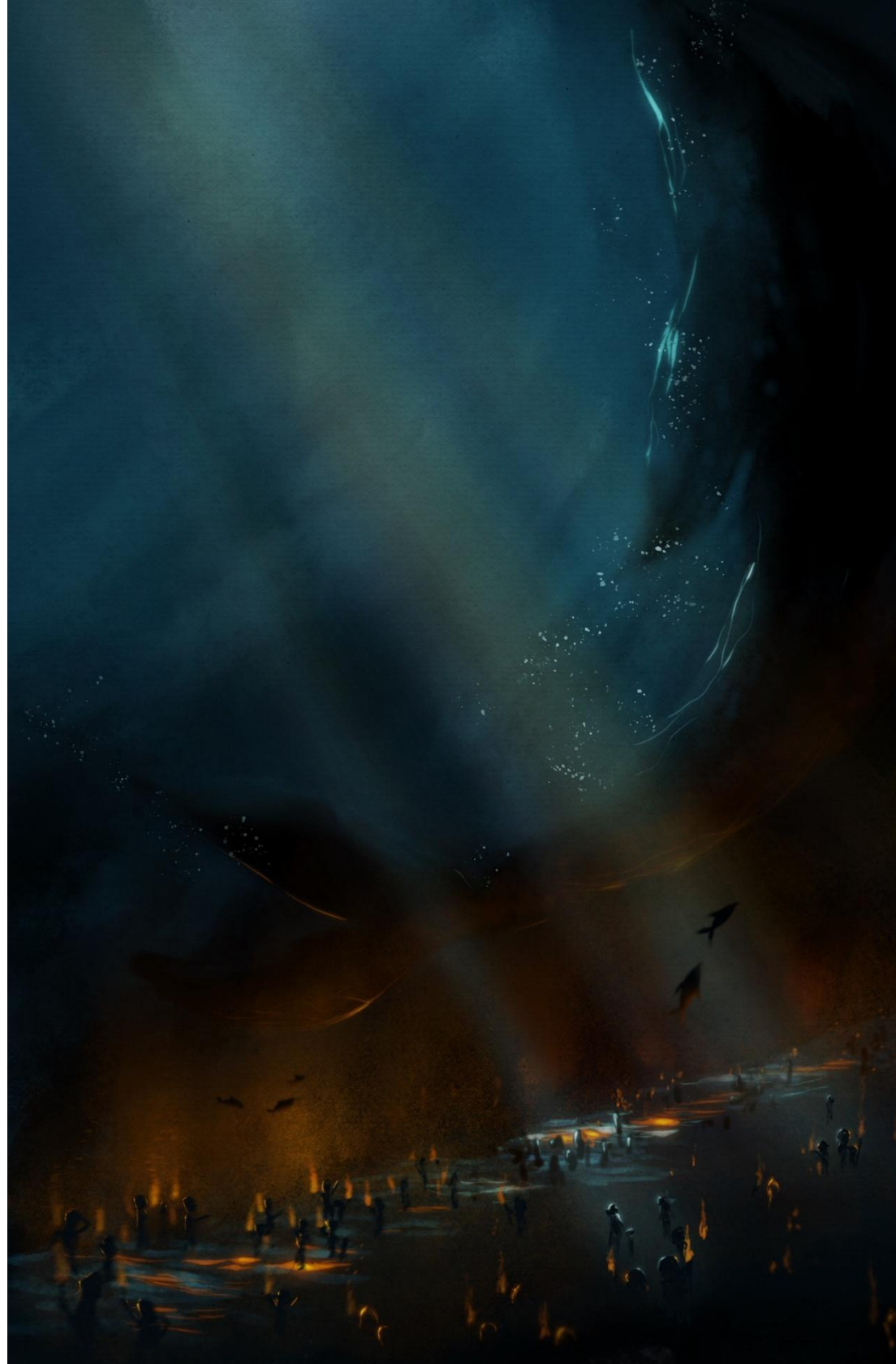
*I will not be moved; all my hope is in You
Like a tree planted by the water
I will not be moved
I know Your Word is true; I will trust in You
Like a tree planted by the water
I will not be moved*

I'm standing on a firm foundation
That's proven true for generations
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
The winds may blow, but still I know
I'm held within Your hand

My rock, my fortress, my strength, defender
I'm never forsaken, I will not be moved
My shield, defender, my hope and anchor
I'm never forsaken, I will not be moved

Carol Cymbala, Jammal Graham, and Pedro Viana
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Tap to Listen



In the Midst

Katie Goddard

Digital painting

This piece was created in the midst of a medical crisis with many scary unknowns. I felt a little like the Israelites might have, questioning, doubting and in fear of large, looming threats. On the other side now, I am so grateful for the “middle parts” between questions and answers—between the Egyptians and freedom, and the bravery He graciously gives us to walk through, one foot in front of the other. He is Sovereign over all things, mighty to save and present in our distress. He hides us beneath the pinions of His wings, His words are true, and He is a good Father.

Devotional

Debbie Dittrich

The Hebrews despaired of life in their cruel bondage. But the God who sees and hears and cares had a grand plan to deliver them.

While the plan was amazing, it was also confusing. It wasn't quick and it sure wasn't easy. It might have even seemed like certain failure would follow, when neither bloody water, nor leaping frogs, nor annoying gnats, nor buzzing flies, nor the putrid smell of dead livestock, nor excruciating boils, nor crop-crushing hail, nor a horde of locusts made Pharaoh budge. Not even a demonic darkness could penetrate Pharaoh's hard heart, nor bring him to repent and let God's chosen people go.

Was Moses confused when God didn't deliver his beloved, chosen people immediately? Did Moses wonder if he'd heard God correctly?

As the Hebrews slit the throat of a perfect little lamb, were they wondering how the thick, red, wet blood on their door post could save them?

But the blood did save them and finally delivered all twelve million Hebrews out of Egypt! How could blood be that powerful? Especially blood from a humble, seemingly weak little lamb. They must have marveled at God as each step led them further and further out of their harsh, four hundred and thirty-year bondage into freedom.

But their joy was short lived when the Red Sea rose up before them, bringing a decisive end to their victory march. What did they feel as they came to an abrupt halt? What terror engulfed them as they heard the sound of 600 lightning-fast chariots approaching from the rear? Surely, they knew death was inevitable.

Having witnessed God's great deliverance and power, did they cry out in faith, "Our God has brought us this far and we can trust Him to deliver us from this great peril?" No. The Israelites, as we shall see, were not known for their steadfast faith. In spite of the signs and wonders that God performed, the Israelites cried out, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians."

Has your sin or your addiction or your fears or your doubt or your anger been an impenetrable barrier between you and God like the Red Sea was for the Israelites? Has your sin and its consequences hunted you down as surely as the Egyptians pursued the Israelites? Mine sure did.

I grew up lonely, insecure and afraid, the only child of two alcoholic parents. My dad died when I was 11 and my mom died when I was 28. After spending most of my life looking for love in all the wrong places and two failed

marriages, I was convinced that finding love was impossible to obtain. With my broken heart as hard as Pharaoh's, I shook my little fist up to the heavens one day and through clinched teeth screamed to God, "I'm going to be happy if it is the last thing I do and there is nothing You can do to stop me!" I was, much like Pharaoh, my own god, determined to obtain what I wanted no matter what it might cost me or my children.

Like the Egyptians, I eventually descended into a total darkness of the soul and suicide seemed like my only hope for relief. I will never know how God enlightened me with the truth of the gospel that dark night as I wrote out my suicide note. But He did. Having never heard the gospel, I left that table knowing that the Lamb of God shed His blood for me on that cross and I passed from death to life on May 9, 1981. My journey to the throne of grace was not quick, and it certainly wasn't easy and it was often confusing, much like the plagues were for the Israelites. But His plan and His timing were indeed perfectly proving that He saw, He heard, He cared, and He definitely had a plan to deliver me from sin.

We were all in cruel bondage to sin with "no hope and were without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). But God baptized us into Christ, not through a Red Sea, but through baptism, symbolizing our death to sin, leading us into new freedom as the dearly beloved children of God.

I still struggle with sin, though; do you? My sin, my insecurities, and my fears are as deep and as wide and often times, as impassable as the Red Sea. Sin still crouches at my door like it did for Cain, but God still delivers over and over and over again, without fail. In fact, His power is made perfect in my weakness, for which I am so very thankful.

What are you in bondage to?

Are you trusting God to deliver you despite your prolonged pain?

When it seems as though God has forgotten you or has withdrawn His promised deliverance, do you trust Him or do you grumble and complain in doubt, like the Israelites? Do you believe God sees, hears, and cares about you?

Friend, let us never forget, there is still power in the blood, giving us power to overcome and escape every temptation, doubt, and fear. And the only way to remember that truth is to spend consistent time in His Word.

What will you do to spend time in His Word consistently?

Week 3

The Groaning of the Oppressed

Exodus 19:1-6, 24:3-8

¹On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ²They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

³Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do." ⁴And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. ⁶And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. ⁷Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." ⁸And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

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We Receive

Beautiful Savior, fullness of heaven
Though we have nothing, here we receive
Jesus, You call us now to remember
You were the offering for all who believe

*You laid Your life on the table
Broken like bread, poured out like wine
We sing, "What a wonderful Savior!"
Jesus our King, all that You give we receive*

Pardon and blessing, life everlasting
Mercy unmeasured; how can it be?
You are the giver, faithful forever
Help us to treasure all we've received

For the price You paid
We pour out our praises
For this feast of grace
We thank You, Jesus

Jonathan Althoff, Marc Willerton, and Nathan Stiff
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Tap to Listen

It is Finished

Brandon Chism

The Israelites had just been through a series of events that would forever shape their identity: relocation to a new land, enslavement, deliverance via massive miraculous works, and now they are spit out into a barren wilderness. Now what?

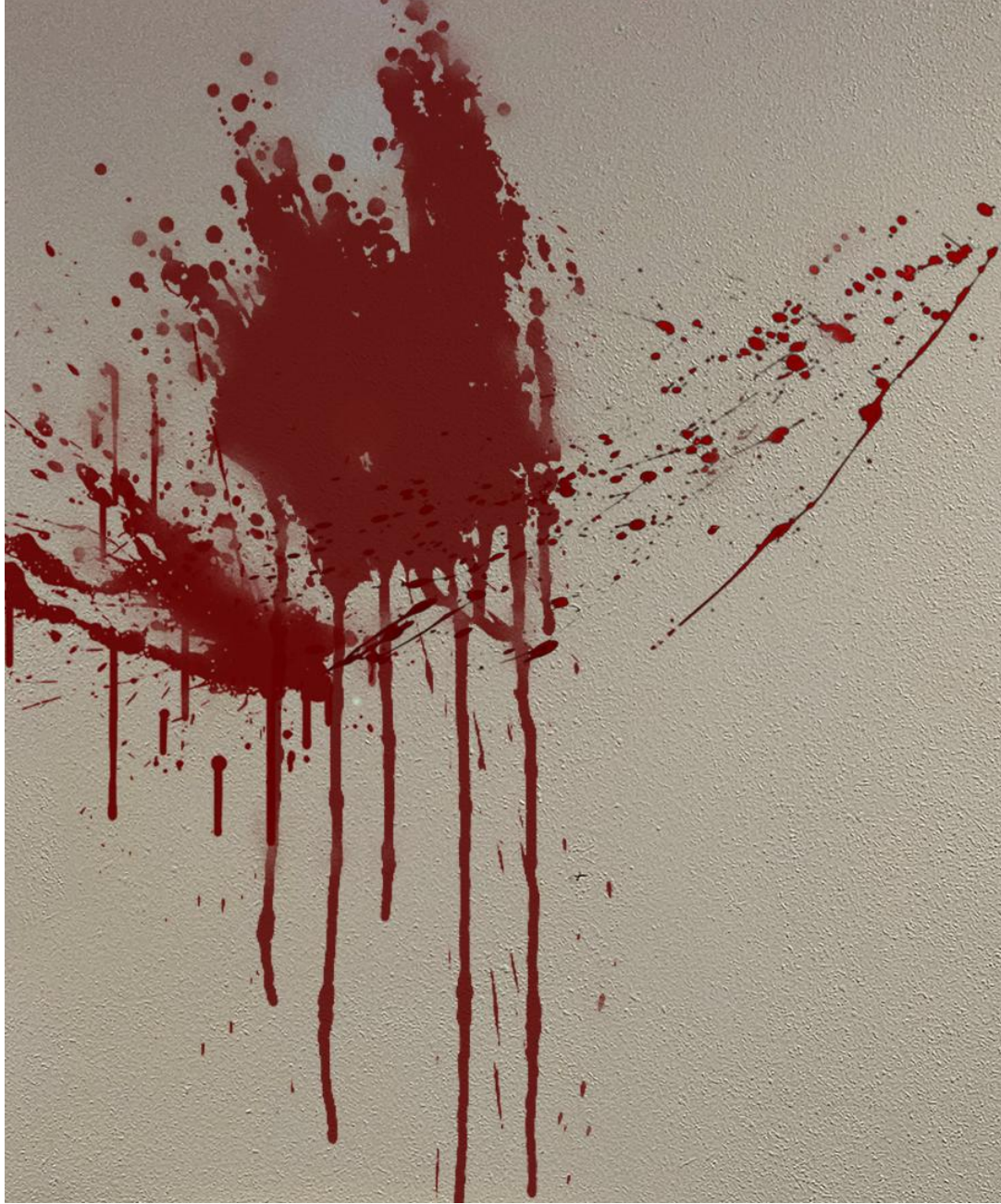
Covenant. God in His grace and love for His people entered, willingly, into a binding contract with this people which would not only bind them to obedience to Him but would also bind *Him* to commitment to His promises to the people; God meant business. The blood splattered on the people would be a visceral sign of this covenant.

At this point, perhaps the people (and even Moses himself) began to breathe a sigh of relief: “at last, it is finished.” The tabernacle is established with all its wonderful accoutrements, the priestly roles are being codified, and God is gifting them the law. All is well; all is at rest.

Until chapter 32. Perhaps the blood of the animals wasn’t as effective as Moses thought. Rebellion ensues, and things aren’t quite as finished as he thought. What will it take for atonement of sin to truly be finished?



משלים



Devotional: A Call to Covenant

Tom Dages

Read Exodus chapters 19 and 20.

The concept of covenant, while embedded throughout Scripture, is very unfamiliar to people in our culture. While covenant has similarities to a contract, it is vastly deeper and richer in meaning. Tim Keller says, “This unfamiliar word means his love is ‘locked onto us’ in unending commitment” (Keller, *The Songs of Jesus*, 330). The first covenant made in Scripture where God expressly makes His redemptive promises known to Israel was made with Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, and 17. This would include spiritual offspring who would embrace the Lord Jesus by faith (Galatians 3:28-29).

What is critical for us to see is that we enter into this covenant by faith the same way Abraham did. In Genesis 15:6 it says, “And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” Abraham believed the amazing promises God made about a son and multiplicity of offspring numbering the stars in the sky, and in response to his faith, God credited righteousness to Abraham as a gift. This theme of being credited righteousness by God’s grace through faith is carried into and through the New Testament (NT) (Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 3:9; Romans 1:16, 3:25; Titus 3:5-6). However, salvation in the NT deepens into a saving relationship with God in which we are enabled to know Him (John 17:3) by the presence of His indwelling Spirit (John 14:17).

The Jewish nation found themselves being introduced to YHWH (His personal name with covenant implications) as they journeyed out of Egypt to meet God at Mt. Sinai. The Jewish nation had witnessed God’s mighty power in the plagues and parting of the Red (or Reed) sea during their deliverance. They had been given a picture of redemption with a Passover lamb and the smeared blood on their doorposts. Now they would be given God’s holy law (the ten commandments) and again have it ratified with blood and confirmed with the people’s promises (24:5-8). God promised the nation blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience.

The principle of being saved by God’s grace through faith, as Abraham was, didn’t change, but the holy Law of God given in this Mosaic Covenant gave the Israelites a necessary ongoing tutorial written on tablets of stone to govern His people. God’s intentions for His people were greater than simply delivering them out of Egypt and giving them holy laws; they were to make them into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (19:6).

In the NT we see this holy priesthood to ultimate fulfilment through the New Covenant ratified by the blood of Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Read 1 Peter 2:4-11, then come back to this devotional.

What a privilege to have God's never-ending love "locked onto us" making us into His holy priesthood! Through the Covenant ratified by Jesus, we enter into a relationship with God by faith whereby we can know Him and make Him known throughout the world.

As holy priests we are empowered to "offer spiritual sacrifices" (v5) of prayers to God through Jesus. God, through these prayers, can alter the world and people's destinies. As a member of God's holy priesthood, is your prayer life going deeper in knowing God, greater in love passion, and wider in touching more and more people around you? What a privilege to meet God in prayer and to bring before Him the lives of broken and enslaved people.

As holy priests we are also empowered "to proclaim the excellencies" of the God who saved us (v9). Proclaiming God's excellencies can be done in both worship and evangelism. Do we realize the Spirit of God who lives within us also empowers us to engage wholeheartedly in worship and to see and seize open doors in evangelism? How much do you give yourself wholeheartedly to God in worship? How sensitive are you to sharing Christ's redeeming sacrifice to the lost around you?

Finally, as holy priests we are empowered "to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul" (v11). God's Spirit gives us the strength to resist the dark deeds which at first bring delight, but which slowly destroy the soul. The battle against temptation and sin doesn't end until heaven. However, the Spirit of God grants us wisdom, strength, and resolve to resist the flesh in its most stubborn areas.

Questions for Consideration

1. Why is salvation throughout the Bible seen in the context of a covenant relationship with God?
2. God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt "on eagle's wings" to bring them to Himself (v4). Why is worship of the true living God vital for finding freedom?
3. God does save us from the penalty and slavery of sin, but He also saves us for becoming a nation of holy priests. Why is it important to see both of these dimensions?
4. How does membership in this holy priesthood change our view of God, self, and others? What holy activities are we empowered for?
5. In our struggle to become holy priests in all our holy functions, why is it encouraging to know that God's love is "locked onto us?"

Week 4

The Gift of the Law

Exodus 20:1-21

¹And God spoke all these words, saying,

²"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³"You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

⁸"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹²"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

¹³"You shall not murder.

¹⁴"You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵"You shall not steal.

¹⁶"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

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Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer

Guide me, O my great Redeemer, pilgrim through this barren land
When I'm desperate and needy, Jesus, lead me by Your hand
Let Your Spirit, ever with me; be the compass on my way
I will trust You through the darkness; You will not lead me astray

*Christ before me; Christ behind me
Christ within me every day
Be my path and prize forever
Jesus, guide me all the way*

Like the fire and cloudy pillar, be my vision day and night
Like the manna in the morning, I will see Your love provide
Quench my thirst when I am fainting, Living Water, Fount of Life
Rock of Ages on this journey, only You can satisfy

Lead me onward into Zion to the home I've yet to see
Bring me to that better country where I'll finally be free
When I near the shores of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside
For I know Your hand will keep me 'til I'm safe on Canaan's side

Bob Kauflin, David Fournier, and Ryan Foglesong
Song #7241707

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Tap to Listen





Heavenly Tent

Laura Lee Schauffer

Acrylic on canvas

Deuteronomy chapter 6 speaks about how the Israelites were to know and then teach their children the commandments of the Lord so life would go well with them. The people looked to the skies day and night as a simple reminder of God's laws so that their lives would be pleasing to Him.

Psalms 19 describes how the Lord gave us the magnificent skies to cause us to constantly look up as a reminder of His commandments that refresh us and give us wisdom and joy.

King David really had a way with words, and his words were unmistakably God-inspired. The skies silently shout that God exists. He created the heavens that people all over the world can see and wonder at. No words are needed to reveal God the Creator's artistic beauty in the day and night skies. Who doesn't love the astounding beauty of a sunrise, a sunset, the moon, the stars, clouds, and rainbows? The sun soundlessly exits its heavenly tent in the morning, then runs across the sky like a champion giving light and warmth to everyone.

God prepared our world for our great delight, and it reminds us of Him. We should pause to notice His gift, and in return, give Him thanks and praise.

Embracing Sabbath: Finding Rest in a Busy World

Joe Chambers

“...The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work...For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day.” Exodus 20:9, 11

Maybe you are thinking, “Why does a God who is powerful enough to speak galaxies, suns, and field mice into existence need to take a rest? Is He tuckered out? What kind of all-powerful God is that?” Sabbath rest is not for God so much as it is for us. God wasn’t an old man who just worked in the yard and needed to come in, get some iced tea, sit in his big easy chair, and take a break. He rested to show us how to rest.

When I was a younger father and it was time for my boys to take a nap, I would send them to their rooms, maybe read a quick story to them, and leave them there. If they didn’t go to sleep right away, I would speak firmly to them. If that didn’t work, I would give them some Benadryl. (Kidding)

Now I have young grandchildren, and do you know how I get them to take a nap? I lie down on the bed, tell them a story, and we both take a nap together. You might call that old age, I’ll call it wisdom. I’m showing them how to rest. I show them what they need when they are unaware that they need it. That is precisely what God does for us. God shows us how to rest because He is a wise creator and a gracious Father who knows what we need.

What we see as we look at this garden picture is that when we burn the candle at both ends, we are not nearly as bright as we think we are. And when we work our fingers to the bone, we are not overachievers; we are self-destructive—we are inhuman. To refuse rest is to try to live against the grain of the Cosmos.

Why is it so hard to rest? I am disturbed by a quote I read recently by Gunner Gundersen, “When work becomes an idol, rest will feel like sin.”

Maybe you don’t know that the character for “busyness” in Chinese is a combination of the characters for “tearing” and “heart.” When our busyness gets the better of us, it does violence to our souls. One friend even told me that it can mean heart-death.

So, how can we welcome Sabbath into our “crazy busy” lives?

Rest

The word Sabbath is a Hebrew word with a relatively simple, non-religious meaning. It means, “Stop,” “Cease,” or “Quit.” Sabbath means that one day a week, you stop all your earning, producing, and accomplishing. Here is how

we might say Sabbath in our context: “Unplug.”

Go for a walk. Notice the veins in the leaves that process the energy from the sun. Feel the breeze on your face. Go for a walk in the rain.

Cook your family’s favorite meal from scratch, and race to see who can finish eating their meal last. Sit at the table and listen to your children’s stories. Listen to the tone of voice of your spouse. Maybe even listen to the silence between you and your spouse.

Have a meandering conversation with someone. There is no purpose to the discussion. Let silence linger between you if need be.

Re-Enter

When I was in high school, I worked on a cattle ranch every summer, and we cooked on a wood-burning stove. My girlfriend and I exchanged letters, and in one letter she said, “I love the smell of your letters. They smell like wood smoke.” When we enter into a rhythm of practicing Sabbath, we take that aroma into our work world so that others might say, “I love your life. It smells like rest.”

What would your regular Monday–Friday work life look like if it were shaped by Sabbath, shaped by deliberate rest?

Practice mini-Sabbaths during the day. Set an alarm on your phone to remind you to unplug for five minutes at the beginning, middle, and end of the day. Someone shaped by the Sabbath might change the expectations of those who work for them. Perhaps they make it a practice NOT to email employees after hours and encourage their employees to unplug after dinner. Maybe a person shaped by the Sabbath would approach each day at work with less anxiety about outcomes.

Worship

Sabbath isn’t “me” time. It is not the time to get a mani-pedi, do some maintenance on yourself, or go shopping. Sabbath is first and foremost about God. Sabbath grounds us in what God does for us in Jesus. And that means that the weekly rhythm of worship is the centerpiece of the Sabbath.

That is why we gather weekly at a place of faith to sing songs, pray prayers, take communion, and listen to the reading and teaching of the Word of God. Worship incrementally shapes and forms our Sabbath souls over a lifetime.

So, if you want real freedom—freedom to breathe deep the rest that is available to you—perhaps we take the words of Jesus seriously:

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
(Matthew 11:28)

Week 5

The Law Fulfilled in Christ

Exodus 32:1-10; Galatians 3:23-26

¹When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” ²So Aaron said to them, “Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” ³So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. ⁴And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” ⁵When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.” ⁶And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

⁷And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. ⁸They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” ⁹And the Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.”

²³Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]

I Set My Hope on Jesus (Hymn for a Deconstructing Friend)

When this life of trials tests my faith
I set my hope on Jesus
When the questions come and doubts remain
I set my hope on Jesus
For the deepest wounds that time won't heal
There's a joy that runs deeper still
There's a truth that's more than all I feel
I set my hope on Jesus

*I set my hope on Jesus, my Rock, my only trust
Who set His heart upon me first; I set my hope on Jesus*

Though I falter in this war with sin
I set my hope on Jesus
When I fail the fight and sink within
I set my hope on Jesus
Though the shame would drown me in its sea
And I dread the waves of justice
I will cast my life on Calvary
I set my hope on Jesus

Though the world calls me to leave my Lord
I set my hope on Jesus
Though it offers all its vain rewards
I set my hope on Jesus
Though this heart of mine is prone to stray
Give me grace enough to finish
Till I worship on that final day
I set my hope on Jesus

Keith Getty, Matt Boswell, and Matt Papa
CCLI #7223239
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Tap to Listen

Ragamuffin

Soli Deo Gloria

Oil on canvas

Based on the Brennan Manning quote:

"A ragamuffin knows he's only a beggar at the door of God's mercy."

"Two men went up into the temple [enclosure] to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee took his stand ostentatiously and began to pray thus before and with himself: God, I thank You that I am not like the rest of men—extortioners (robbers), swindlers [unrighteous in heart and life], adulterers—or even like this tax collector here. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I gain. But the tax collector, [merely] standing at a distance, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but kept striking his breast, saying, O God, be favorable (be gracious, be merciful) to me, the especially wicked sinner that I am! I tell you, this man went down to his home justified (forgiven and made upright and in right standing with God), rather than the other man; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 18:10-14





GOD'S MERCY

RAGAMUFFIN
HELP
IN NEED OF MERCY

Devotional

Julie Little

It starts with the waiting.

You're doing OK, following God, walking more or less in His ways, trying to stay faithful, even if you are in a wilderness, and even if you do grumble from time to time, you are making progress. At least you think you are.

Then comes the waiting. The restlessness. And that ever-present pull to worship calls out to you.

See, you're made to worship. Whether you realize it or not, you will always worship something. Your worship goes to the thing you hold most sacred in your heart. The thing you most adore. The thing you most cling to. When God shows up in your slavery and works wonders, worshipping Him is easy. When He leads you out with miracles, you think you will love and follow Him for the rest of your days. Until you get hungry, or thirsty, or weary. Then your worship turns inward. Your complaints sound much louder than your praise. But God keeps providing, keeps pointing the way back to Himself, and you stay on the path.

Now, though, you have been simply waiting for the longest time. In the waiting, fears grow loud. Enemies loom large. You grow restless for movement, for something to happen. You wonder what God is up to, why He doesn't explain.

If you let it, waiting leads to doubt, and doubt leads to idolatry. It becomes all too easy to take matters into your own hands, to fashion for yourself the thing you think will save you. God seems absent, and suddenly you are worshipping your own means of salvation, this thing you shaped from your lack. "This is for the Lord!" you might say as you dance around it, calling out to the shiny golden presence. It feels so good to have something to look at, something to touch, something you can carry and control! It feels good to feast, to sing, to let go of all the uncertainty.

All the while your God works in that cloud on the mountain, preparing for you the greatest gift. He's writing down the words of His promise, the covenant that binds Him to you forever.

On that dark mountain you have a God of power. The God who defeated the deities of Egypt. The God who toppled an empire to deliver you. The God who parted the sea so you could walk safe into his freedom. The God who rains food from heaven and sends water from the rock. The God who now shows Moses how He wants to dwell with you, to pull you to Himself, to make you His forever.

And what are you doing? You are bowing to a thing of your own creation, a thing that could never save you and certainly does not love you.

It has been our way since Eden. Our hearts pulled toward the lie. Our worship given to the created rather than the Creator. We are bent creatures, and it seems we always will be. God calls it stiff-necked. Stubborn. Unyielding.

But since the beginning God has known this. He made us for Himself, and He is not willing to give us up so easily. Since the beginning, God has been prepared. Even as Moses walks down the mountain and sees his people worshipping the golden calf, as his heart breaks and the tablets go flying from his hands to shatter into pieces, God is prepared. That covenant of stone we break immediately because we are broken ourselves. Without our God, we will always move toward idolatry.

Those shattered tablets expose us in our need. Words etched into stone cannot keep us on the way. We will ever be attempting to make our own salvation. The Law, meant to give shape to our life, only shows the hopelessness of our situation.

Turns out this is exactly what we need: to see our own brokenness, to see our useless idols and know our need. God does this not because He is cruel, but the opposite. He knows that without those broken tablets and the man standing weeping on the mountain, we will only ever see the golden calf.

If this were the end, we could indeed accuse God of being cruel. But He has something new in mind. The One who will come and fulfills the Law perfectly. He satisfies the covenant of the Law and writes a new one: a covenant of love.

While we are still dancing around our idol, Jesus lives and dies in perfect fulfillment of the Law we broke, bringing our transformation. When we stop, look up from our false worship, and see Him, receive Him, the Spirit comes down to us and etches the New Covenant right into our hearts. We are free, now defined by grace and not our failure.

What idols are you dancing around? What are you holding most important? If you know Him, His love is etched into your heart. Let His grace be your worship. This is why He came.

Week 6

The Wilderness Test

Numbers 14:26-35; 2 Peter 1:3-8

²⁶And the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ²⁷“How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me. ²⁸Say to them, ‘As I live, declares the Lord, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: ²⁹your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, ³⁰not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. ³¹But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected. ³²But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. ³³And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. ³⁴According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.’ ³⁵I, the Lord, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die.”

³His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[illegible]

[illegible]

Yet Not I, But Through Christ in Me

What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer
There is no more for heaven now to give
He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom
My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace
To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus
For my life is wholly bound to His
Oh how strange and divine; I can sing all is mine
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

The night is dark, but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Savior He will stay
I labor on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need His power is displayed
To this I hold: my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley He will lead
Oh the night has been won, and I shall overcome
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven
The future sure, the price it has been paid
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And He was raised to overthrow the grave
To this I hold: my sin has been defeated
Jesus now and ever is my plea
Oh the chains are released; I can sing, "I am free!"
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

With every breath I long to follow Jesus
For He has said that He will bring me home
And day by day, I know He will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne
To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat:
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

Jonny Robinson, Michael Farren, and Rich Thompson

Song #7121852

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Tap to Listen





Dancing Waters

Bob Lienemann

Photography

“Life is a grindstone. But whether it grinds us down or polishes us up depends on us.”

L. Thomas Holdcroft

It may appear as though this rock was tossed into the cascading waterfall, but it is actually attached, and the water is simply flowing into and around it, creating this delightful cup of water that catches your eye. The rock will of course eventually be swept away or ground down, thus the quote above matches nicely to a time of trial and testing described in 2 Peter 1:3.

Devotional

Debbie Dittrich

Apart from God's supernatural intervention, the wilderness was harsh for the Hebrews. And they faced every single hardship, not with faith, but with doubt, despite witnessing God's amazing miracles on their behalf.

During our lives here on earth we all face the wilderness. Not usually a literal desert with unrelenting heat, thirst, and starvation, but we certainly all face trials which bring emotional, mental, and even physical anguish.

To say that trials are confusing would be an understatement! How many times has a situation led you to wonder what God is doing or to ask if He truly sees or hears or cares about your plight or the plight of someone you love? In fact, my trials have often led me to believe God has made a mistake or that He no longer cares about me. I cannot count the number of times I wondered what purpose a trial could possibly serve in my life. And the worst part about seeing no purpose for your pain is that it leads to doubt and despair, which inevitably leads to grumbling and complaining.

But trials are not meant to destroy us. Trials are meant to transform us. James 1:1-3 tells us that if we endure trials, we will become perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. The word *complete* means to be whole in all your parts so that you can become who you were intended to be in Christ to serve your destined purpose.

When the Israelites faced trials in the wilderness, they constantly forgot that God is loving, kind, and faithful to name just a few of His attributes. Unfortunately, when we face trials, we are no different. Our greatest problem is that we are "forgetterers." We forget God is good. We forget He is faithful. We forget that He loves us and wants what is best for us. And we especially forget that trials are meant to transform us, not to destroy us.

Paul warns us in 1 Corinthians 10:10-11 not to be like the Israelites who grumbled. The word *grumble* means that you are not content and that you are complaining in an ill-tempered way. In fact, Paul says the Israelites were meant to be an example to us, instructing us what not to do.

Do trials, or a wilderness experience, make you grumble and complain, doubting God? Do you forget that God is good and faithful and loves you? Do you forget He sees you and hears you and cares about you? Do you assume that every trial is God's way of punishing you or depriving you of something you need or want?

If so, I encourage you to consider 2 Peter 1:3. Friend, this verse tells us that we have everything we need for life and godliness through the true knowledge of God. And where might we find true knowledge of God? Only in His word!

Additionally, verse 4 says that God has given us very great and precious promises so that we might partake of the divine nature. Or, you could say it like this: God has given us great promises so that we can endure trials and become who we were intended to be in Christ. And where can you find His very great and precious promises? Only in His word!

What are some of His very great and precious promises?

- To perfect His power in our weaknesses. The word *weakness* means to have an inability to understand things or to do great and glorious things or to restrain corrupt desires or to bear trials and troubles. (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- To strengthen us with all power according to His glorious might so that we can have endurance. (Colossians 1:11)
- To escape every temptation. The word *temptation* means not only the temptation to sin, but it also means trials. And why does He help us escape every temptation? Because He is faithful, even though we are not. (2 Corinthians 10:13)
- To be with us, to help us, to strengthen us, to uphold us with His righteous right hand, which always does what is right. (Isaiah 41:10)

Paul endured his own wilderness where trials threatened to destroy him. He tells us that he learned the secret of being content in all circumstances, which is that he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him. (Philippians 4:11-13.)

In one of my greatest wilderness experiences, I usually woke up crying every day from the pain and fear I was suffering. To keep myself from grumbling and complaining and to keep from forgetting God's very great and precious promises, I made myself tell myself the truth all day, every day.

When my feelings overwhelmed me and terrified me, I would cry out to God telling Him how I felt, but then I would make myself tell myself the truth, like this: "Lord, thank You that You see me and that You care about me. Thank You that You will help me and strengthen me. Thank You that even though this looks like it will destroy me and those I love, You have promised to use this to transform me, making me perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

The Israelites faced every trial with doubt and grumbling, and they were never transformed. How do you face your trials in the wilderness? Are you being transformed?

What will you do to remember that you have everything you need for life and godliness, and that you have been given very great and precious promises?

Week 7

The Kings as New Pharaohs

1 Kings 16:15, 19, 25-26, 29-30; 1 Peter 2:24-25

¹⁵In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah . . . ¹⁹because of his sins that he committed, doing evil in the sight of the Lord, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and for his sin which he committed, making Israel to sin.

²⁵Omri did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did more evil than all who were before him. ²⁶For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in the sins that he made Israel to sin, provoking the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols.

²⁹In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. ³⁰And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him.

²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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Lord, Have Mercy

In peace, we have come to pray
And to seek the Lord today
For salvation from His hand
For the healing of our land
Let us pray

*Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!
For we have placed all our hopes in Thee*

For our sin, we repent, O Lord
We believe Your holy Word
Have mercy, Lord, we pray
And take all our sins away
Kyrie Christe

If You would mark iniquity
O Lord, who could stand?
Mercy like a fountain
Flows from Your hand!

Dan Scott and Nathan Digesare
Arr. Jay Rouse and Camp Kirkland
© 1992 Up in the Mix Music

Tap to Listen

A detailed stained glass mosaic artwork. It features a prominent silver chain with a link pattern that curves across the composition. The mosaic is composed of numerous irregular pieces of glass in various colors: deep reds, vibrant oranges, bright yellows, rich blues, and earthy browns. The background of the mosaic is a deep, dark red. The overall effect is one of intricate craftsmanship and symbolic representation.

Cycles of Bondage and Freedom

Kim Heidemann

Stained glass mosaic

Jesus bore our sins and carried our sorrows,
and He was pierced for our transgressions
that we might die to sin and live to
righteousness. By His wounds we were
healed.

Through Israel's history of disobedience,
slavery, and rescues from kings and
Pharaohs, can we not relate to them in our
own lives of disobediences, idols, and
addictions? Jesus is our faithful Savior who
breaks our chains and releases us from
bondage. May we escape the cycles of sin
and live for Him, our righteous King, in His
beautiful freedom!



Devotional: Israel's Cycle of Sin

Tom Dages

Israel's Exodus from Egypt was intended by God to bring freedom from the slavery of Egyptian bondage. However, it was also intended to bring spiritual freedom as they met YHWH, the true God, and learned to trust, follow, and worship Him. In the progress of redemption seen throughout Scripture, this was the first step to knowing God and finding freedom true freedom.

Notice first God's faithfulness to His promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that their descendants would inherit the promised land. This found its first fulfillment when Joshua led the people into the promised land. The author goes to great length to highlight the faithfulness of God with Israel's occupying the land. The book of Joshua begins and ends with a reminder of God's faithfulness with Israel's entrance into the promised land.

Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. (Joshua 1:3)

Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. (Joshua 21:45)

And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed. (Joshua 23:14)

However, despite God's faithfulness to Israel, the nation became stuck in the pattern of doing evil by serving other gods (idolatry), falling under oppression (where sin always leads), crying out for help to God who raises up a judge to deliver them. This pattern is seen all throughout the book of judges. The pattern of Israel's covenant disobedience (especially idolatry) was matched by God's judgements and then by God's mercies in raising up deliverers. Yet these judges and kings often became taskmasters themselves.

This sin pattern is repeated in the books of 1 and 2 Kings. The people reject God as their King, and God gives them kings to lead them in the way of righteousness. However, even the rare, good kings are only faint shadows of leading in the ways of covenant obedience. In this progress of redemption God gives the promise of a truly righteous King whose throne would be established forever. While this promise would come through David's line, it would be seen increasingly in messianic terms (Isaiah 9:7, 11:1-5; Jeremiah 33:14-26; Micah 5:2-5).

Only Jesus could offer true and deep rest from the penalty and the cyclical power of sin and its consequences afflicting God's people. Jesus is David's greater Son who came to forgive God's people of their sin (Matthew 1:21) and

give true soul rest (Hebrews 4:8) that no fallen human figure can offer. No fallen human political or religious figure could bring the kind of deliverance only Jesus could bring—not Moses, Joshua, king David, nor any therapist today can touch and heal a soul like Jesus.

How do we find this total forgiveness and spiritual rest in Jesus? First, by learning to listen to the message of Christ coming through the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12). The Word of God is a double-edged sword. It cuts with conviction of sin when we read it under the power of the Spirit, but it also brings healing as its readers submit to its teaching about God, the soul, and salvation.

Second, by combining the message we hear with faith (Hebrews 4:1-3). Hebrews chapter 4 is all about finding the spiritual rest only Jesus offers. However, this rest offered by God was missed by many in the Old Testament and is missed by many people today. It is missed because they fail to combine the good news of Christ with faith. Do you believe Jesus died on the cross for your sins and was raised from the dead for your life? Have you ever confessed with your mouth that Jesus is Lord of your life (Romans 10:9)? Confession of Jesus as Lord is how faith in the heart is recognized.

Third, in your saving relationship with Jesus, let the Word of God cut deeply into your heart everyday as you read with the intent of listening and obeying what the Spirit reveals. Idols of the heart don't crack easily. These are the false gods we have been taught by the world, flesh, and devil which promise life (i.e. greed, sex, pride), but which bring a slow death. Confession of these idols and learning to find life in Jesus is a process God slowly teaches us, bringing healing, life, and transformation to our souls.

This transformation also comes as we allow God to reveal lies by which we have lived. These lies are often planted in our souls during the hurts and traumas of life. The Spirit of God wants to take us on a truth journey whereby these lies are exposed and replaced by the redemptive riches of Jesus. The best redemptive counselors are those led by the Spirit of truth to uncover the false gods and lies which are driving and twisting our souls into deep cycles of sin. And yes, Jesus is our only true Deliverer!

Isaiah 40:1-5

⁵And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

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This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines, text, or other markings on the page.

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Come, Thou long expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free
From our fears and sins release us
Let us find our rest in Thee
Israel's strength and consolation
Hope of all the earth Thou art
Dear desire of every nation
Joy of every longing heart

Born Thy people to deliver
Born a child and yet a King
Born to reign in us forever
Now Thy gracious Kingdom bring
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone
By Thine all sufficient merit
Raise us to Thy glorious throne

Charles Wesley, Rowland Hugh Prichard, and Ralph Vaughan Williams

HYFRYDOL: 8.7.8.7.

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1744

Tap to Listen





One True God and His Power

Valerie Clark

Mixed media

This painting represents various plagues of Egypt. The green layers near the bottom are the swarms of frogs. In the middle, the vibrant blue is the Nile River. The images and textures on the top half represent the swarms of flies.

There are spiritual lessons in this narrative that highlight the necessity of true repentance (not just temporary pleas for mercy!), humility, and recognizing God's subtle and overt work in our lives.

Devotional: The Promise of a New Exodus

Tom Dages

As we follow God's covenantal people and their disobedience to YHWH, we see the Northern tribes of Israel were defeated and taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 BC. We also see Judah and Jerusalem's fall and its captivity with three deportations of Jews climaxing in 587 BC. Throughout all of it, God is faithful to His covenant promises, both blessings and curses. Yet through all His dealings with His people, God would preserve a faithful remnant through whom He would bring forth His Messiah and His kingdom into the world. This Kingdom would be a spiritual Kingdom (John 18:36) and penetrate the entire world. (Matthew 13:31)

Isaiah is a powerful prophet who ministered from 740-701. He speaks to both Israel and Judah in their present circumstances, but he also references this coming kingdom which would begin with the arrival of King Jesus and blossom worldwide. (Matthew 28:18-20) This Kingdom is pictured by Isaiah powerfully in chapters 40-45. While astute evangelical theologians debate another millennial fulfillment after Christ's return, its first fulfillment clearly arrives with Jesus and His first advent.

Christ's arrival brings in His Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and Joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17) This is the new Exodus for God's people. God would lead His people through the wilderness onto a new highway to Christ, and through Christ working in His people, this Kingdom would blossom into a new global Kingdom. This gospel of the Kingdom of God entrusted to the church would bring Kingdom of God benefits of total forgiveness, life in the Spirit, Kingdom values, and freedom from the penalty and taskmaster of sin and spiritual death.

This freedom for God's people would come at two levels. The first kind of freedom is from the penalty of sin. This comes as people receive the Lord Jesus by faith as their Savior. Jesus took the law upon Himself on the cross and gives forgiveness and the gift of righteousness to all who believe. Righteousness cannot be earned by works but is given as a free gift to those who believe Christ for it! Paul says in Galatians 5:1-6—

⁵For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. ²Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. ³I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁴You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Yet there is a second kind of freedom given in our relationship with Christ. As we believe for this first level of freedom from condemnation, we must wrestle as disciples for freedom from the bondage of sin.

Let no one kid you: freedom from sinful pleasure propensities (pride, greed, lust, corrupted anger) involves wrestling against them. We don't wrestle in our strength, but we learn to wrestle in God's strength. This is not done *for* our justification (which comes by the free grace of God through faith) but *from* our justification as we learn to love God and others. Jesus talks about this wrestling with the truth in John 8:31-36—

³¹So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” ³³They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’”

³⁴Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Notice first that the Jews believed Jesus. There is your first level of freedom from condemnation! But then Jesus describes true discipleship as learning to abide in His word. Abiding is a beautiful Biblical blend of believing/knowing/obeying, and it is here that by God's grace freedom from sinful bondage occurs.

Have you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? Don't look for freedom from condemnation in the law, you will never find it. Freedom from condemnation comes as we look to Jesus by faith as our Lord and Savior.

Are you learning to abide in God's Word? Is God's Word leading you to deeper faith in Jesus? Is God's Word leading you to more consistent Spirit-filled dependency for obedience? Is God's Word leading you to deeper fellowship of knowing God? Abiding leads one into a deeper experience of believing/ knowing/obeying. This is where the truth begins to set us free.

Week 9

The Journey of Jesus

Mark 1:1-11; Matthew 4:1-11

¹The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,
“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,

³the voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”

⁴John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” ⁴But he answered, “It is written,

“Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

“He will command his angels concerning you,”

“On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

“You shall worship the Lord your God
and him only shall you serve.”

"Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

O Magnum Mysterium

<i>O magnum mysterium,</i>	O great mystery,
<i>et admirabile sacramentum,</i>	and wonderful sacrament,
<i>ut animalia viderent Dominum</i> <i>natum,</i>	that animals should see the newborn Lord,
<i>iacentem in praesepio!</i>	lying in a manger!
<i>Beata virgo, cujus viscera</i> <i>meruerunt portare</i>	Blessed is the virgin whose womb was worthy to bear
<i>Dominum Iesum Christum.</i>	the Lord Jesus Christ.
<i>Alleluia!</i>	Alleluia!

Late 16th century chant
Recording below:
Setting by Morten Lauridsen, 1994

Tap to Listen

Light Comes to Darkness

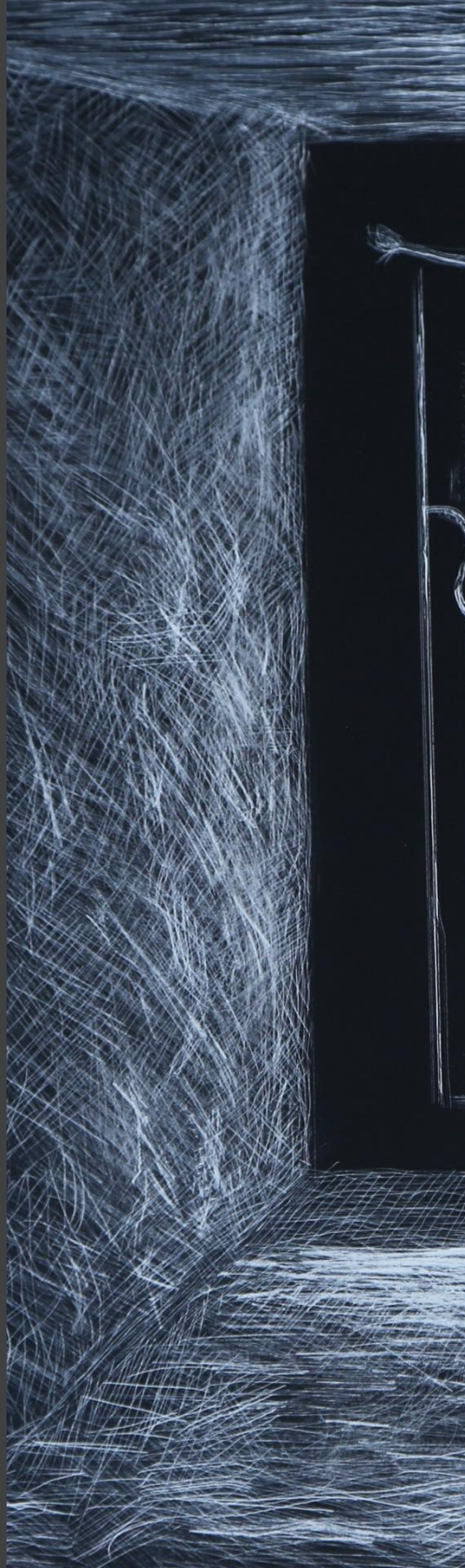
Susy Ritch

Scratchboard

In the Exodus story, the Israelites failed one test after another. Sins of unbelief, grumbling, and rebellion undermined their efforts to follow God. Where was hope of change? What was impossible for sinful mankind was made possible through the Son of God, Jesus. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by the devil, He overcame each temptation in obedience to God. Jesus made a way for all who believe in Him to live a life pleasing to God, Thank you, Jesus!

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one Man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Romans 5:19





SUSY HOLL

Devotional

Julie Little

It's time.

God's people, once delivered, saved from certain death, led through the wilderness, given a law and a land and a kingdom. All this, and still they walk in darkness. Time and again they have fallen into idolatry. Their enemies have taken them, over and over. They go into exile. They suffer. They come back to God only to go wandering again.

Their law has not saved them. It has been four hundred years since anyone has heard from God or any prophet has spoken. Much like the four hundred years they spent as slaves in Egypt. Now, as then, under the rule of a strong, pagan nation, God's people cry out for deliverance. They wait, and they wonder.

Those who walk in darkness have seen a great light.

Once again, a baby is born and is hidden. He must flee for His safety, like Moses of old. A king kills in a failed effort to find Him. He grows up and comes to be among His people, leaving a place of power and privilege, just as Moses did. His exodus begins in the baptism of the Jordan, like the people crossing the Red Sea. As the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years, Jesus spends forty days in the wilderness alone, facing temptation, need, and desire. The people failed their test repeatedly, but Jesus prevails in perfect obedience. He makes the way through the desert.

"I have not come to replace the Law," He says, "but to fulfill it." He takes the Law of Moses to a new level, speaks of a new way. He shows the true Law goes deeper than outward obedience to a righteousness of the heart, a response of sacrificial love where the poor in spirit are blessed and the persecuted rejoice. He himself lives this law in its fullness, showing us how all along it has pointed to love, to oneness and relationship with the Father. His words point us beyond earthly government to the kingdom of heaven. On Sinai, with Moses and Elijah, He is revealed: the new Lawgiver, bringer of the New Covenant.

In every way, He passes the tests that Israel failed. As God led His people away from slavery to Egypt, Jesus leads us to the end of slavery forever, the final defeat of sin and death. His exodus journey prepares Him to be the perfect Passover Lamb.

God delivered the Israelites from slavery and called them to follow Him through the wilderness, to trust Him through the years of wandering. This is Jesus' call to us. The first question you must ask yourself is this: Am I still a slave? Have I accepted deliverance? If not, you know where you must begin.

Your deliverance starts with trust and acceptance of His sacrifice.

If you know yourself delivered, you must go. You must walk with Jesus through the waters of your slavery, your death, and come out on the other side. Into the wilderness. If you find yourself in the desert, do not despair. You are on the right path, and Jesus walks this way with you. He feeds you with strength from heaven, He gives you water from the Rock, and He goes always before and behind you. You will be tempted, hungry, tired, and lonely, but remember that Jesus has already made the way. You will want to give up. You will want to be like the people all around you. You will be seduced by idols. But you can pass the test because the Spirit has written His love onto your heart. You are His, and His grace covers you.

This is the story God has been writing since the beginning of time. He knew what path in the desert would be yours, and He sent Jesus ahead of you. He gave you the Spirit who goes with you now. Moses sent twelve spies into the Promised Land, and Jesus sent twelve apostles into the world to proclaim the true Promised Land, the place of His presence. This is your heritage.

Our exodus holds so much hope, because we follow the way of the New Moses. The Savior. The way may seem long, and there will be a cross to bear. Take heart. On the other side a Promised Land awaits.

Week 10

The Way Through the Cross

Luke 23:26-49

²⁶And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. ²⁸But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' ³⁰Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' ³¹For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

³²Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. ³⁵And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴²And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

⁴⁴It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. ⁴⁷Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" ⁴⁸And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned

home beating their breasts. ⁴⁹And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Blank lined paper for writing.

Thy Will Be Done

Our cup was filled with darkness
Our cup was filled with death
Christ took our cup and drank it
And gave us life, and gave us hope
Gave us Himself

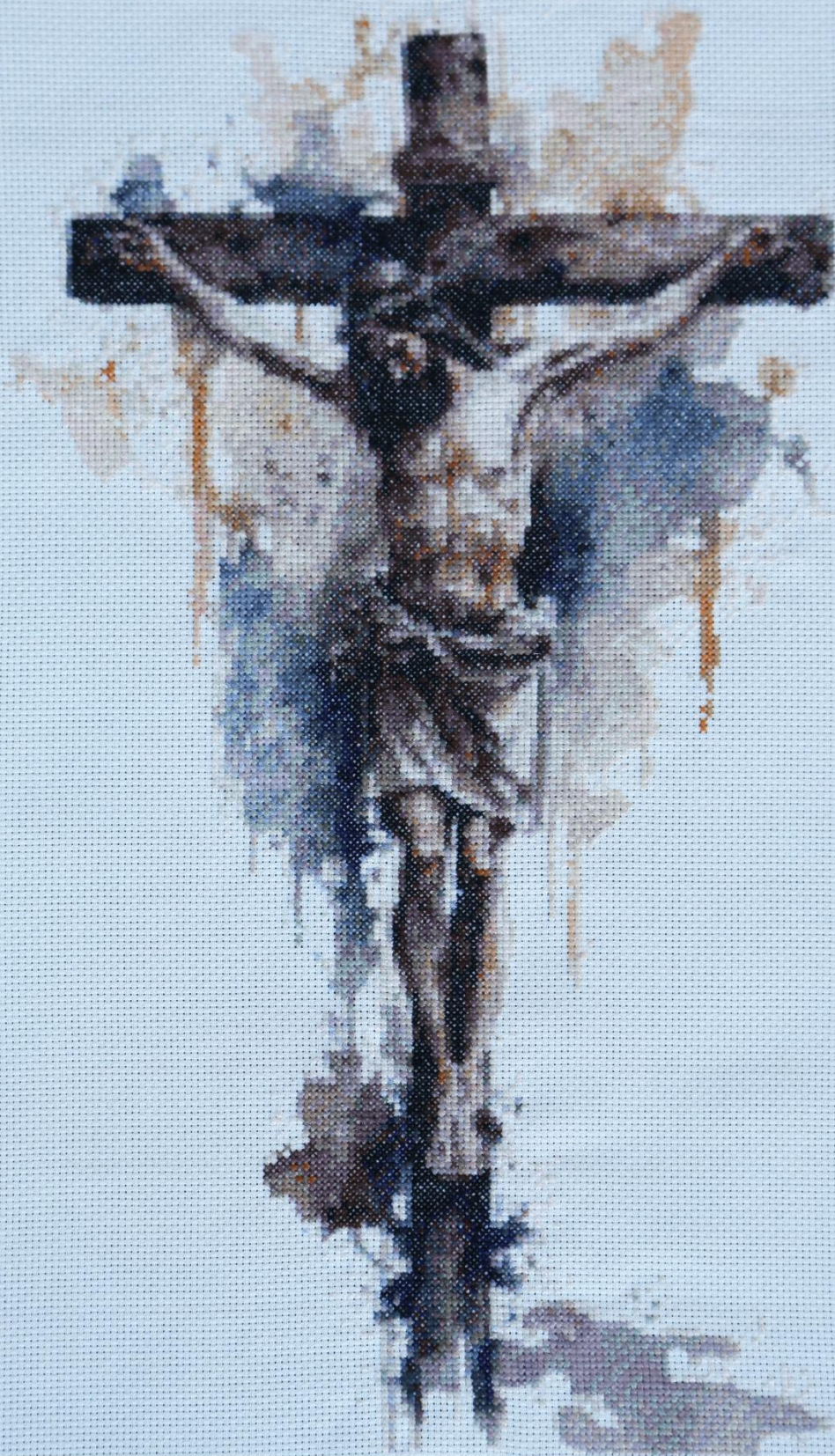
*“My Father, let this cup pass from me
Yet not my will, O Lord, but Thine be done”*

In blackest night we hear Him
In dark Gethsemane
Pleading with the Father
For one more way, for one more hope
For one more day

Then they took our Savior
And led Him to a tree
And there they broke His body
Poured out His life, put Him to death
To rise again!

Craig Courtney
© 1985 Beckenhorst Press

Tap to Listen



Behold, the Lamb of God!

Rebecca Hahn

Embroidery and cross-stitch

Christ is the unblemished Passover Lamb, the perfect sacrifice to take away the sins of the world. The details of Christ's journey to the cross and His death can be found in the four Gospels:

Matthew 26-27

Mark 14-15

Luke 22-23

John 13-19

The Silence of Calvary: Embracing the Darkness of God's Love

Joe Chambers

“When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” Mark 15:33-34

In some profound way, God may have shrouded the scene of His Son's death in darkness—perhaps to obscure the deep spiritual exchange occurring between the Father and the Son.

It reminds me of the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament when the High Priest would enter the Most Holy Place, a shadowy sanctuary where the divine presence dwelled. He could not perceive the sacred events taking place on the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant, as it was too holy for mere mortals to see. The Talmud teaches that if the High Priest had glimpsed what occurred in that moment, he would not have survived.

This also reminds me of the first Passover in Egypt, which struck at midnight, and the experience at the foot of Mt. Sinai during the Exodus. This was the Israelites' first true encounter with God, marked by Moses receiving the Ten Commandments while the people trembled in fear, too afraid to approach Him. Exodus 20:21 states, “So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.”

In that moment on Sinai, God was present in the darkness with Moses, but on another mountain—Calvary—God withdrew from Jesus.

I've explored the Marble Caves in Westcliffe, Colorado, several times. When you switch off your headlamps, the darkness is so intense it feels heavier than midnight; you cannot see your hand in front of your face. You can't see forward, so you don't know where you are going. You have no direction. You can't even see yourself; you don't know what you look like. You may as well have no identity. And you can't tell whether there is anyone around you, friend or foe. You are isolated.

Physical darkness brings disorientation, but according to the Bible, so does spiritual darkness. Spiritual darkness comes when we turn away from God, our true light, and make something else the center of our lives.

The sun serves as our source of visual truth, allowing us to perceive the world, and it provides the biological life essential for existence. Similarly, the Bible teaches that God is the source of all truth and life.

Centering our lives around God brings us truth and vitality; we dwell in light. However, if our focus shifts to anything else—be it a career, a relationship, or

family—as our source of warmth and hope, we plunge into spiritual darkness. We turn away from truth and life, heading toward a void.

In spiritual darkness, one might feel assured they are heading in the right direction, yet they are profoundly disoriented. Relying on anything but God leads to a fragile, insecure identity shaped by external validation—performance and approval. In such darkness, self-awareness diminishes, causing feelings of isolation and unworthiness.

Through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and my covenant relationship with Him, I become the beloved of God, a love grounded not in performance but in the Creator's unconditional love through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Brennan Manning, an author and speaker, shares a powerful story about his name. Growing up, his best friend was Ray, and they shared countless experiences—from buying a car and double-dating to enlisting in the Army and fighting side by side. One fateful night, while they were in a foxhole, a live grenade landed nearby. Ray looked at Brennan, smiled, dropped his chocolate bar, and selflessly threw himself on the grenade to save Brennan's life, sacrificing his own.

When Brennan became a priest, he chose the name of his friend, Ray Brennan. Years later, after visiting Ray's mother in Brooklyn, he asked her, "Do you think Ray loved me?" Mrs. Brennan, with emotion, exclaimed, "What more could he have done for you?!"

In that moment, Brennan had a revelation. He envisioned himself at the foot of the cross, questioning God's love: Does He truly love me? In his mind, Mary, the mother of Jesus, pointed to her Son, asking, "What more could He have done for you?"

The cross of Jesus stands as the ultimate testament to God's love and sacrifice for us. Yet, we often find ourselves still questioning, "Does God really love me? Am I significant to Him?" And Mary's answer rings clear: "Jesus Christ—What more could He have done for you?"

Week 11

The Way of “The Way”

Acts 11:19-26, 19:24-28; Philippians 3:7-11

¹⁹Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. ²²The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, ²⁴for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. ²⁵So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

²⁴Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Your Way's Better

When I'm overwhelmed within
From the weight of all my sin
I need a friend to call my own
I need a house to call my home
When I'm broken down inside
And there's nowhere else to hide
I need a place where I feel known
Can someone help me?

Then I hear You reply
Bringing teardrops to my eyes
Saying I'm not alone

*Oh Lord, I need You now more than ever
Would You put my heart back together?
I searched the world 'til my head hurt
Just to find out Your way's better*

Lord, I'm so thankful
For the ways that You blessed me
Everything You say making waves like a jet ski
You love every part of me even when I was messy
Now I see the art in Your beauty
So I can finally sing out
Jehovah Jireh, Provider
Your way always gets me higher
Even on my darkest days, You're my lighter
My Messiah

Forrest Frank and Pera Krstajic
CCLI #7271513
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Tap to Listen

The Way

Heather Inge

Acrylic on canvas

When I think about *The Way of "The Way"* and the 30+ year journey I've been on following this Way, I can see it started with the Word (Jesus) drawing me through His Word (the Bible), onto a winding and narrow path. This path has been full of hilltops, valleys, shrouded future trials, times of great fellowship, and friends who walk alongside for parts of the journey. All these ups and downs point to Jesus, and the horizon line where we step into glory and get to forever see His face.





Devotional

Julie Little

They called themselves the people of “The Way.” These early Christ-followers connected themselves with Jesus as the new people of God. All the stories pointed here, led to this—the mystery the prophets had longed to understand.

We are still the people of The Way. The New Testament describes our beginning and gives us the roadmap of our exodus. Where do you land in the story? Let’s review:

You begin as a slave. Born into bondage to sin and death, you awaken to your lack, to the emptiness and the suffering of your life. You walk in darkness, serving a master who demands everything and gives nothing.

To find freedom, you must cry out for deliverance. He will come, but you must choose to enter your Passover moment and see the sacrifice. You must stand under the blood and know that death has passed you over. Jesus paid the price. You are free.

A freed slave does not stay in the place of bondage. You must go. How is Christ with you in the cloud and in the fire? How do you see Him? How does He protect you? His Spirit is within you, as surely as the cloud of His presence was with the Israelites.

What bitter waters must you drink? What fears assault you? How do you doubt? What enemies threaten? These things do not mean God has left you. Like any good parent, he wants to grow you up, strengthen you, mature you in your faith.

At some point (at least once) you come to a standstill, waiting for a cloud that doesn’t move. You fall into idolatry. You turn your worship away from the God who has delivered you, cared for you, and loved you. You shatter His covenant and stand condemned under your failure and your shame.

But God did not deliver you only to abandon you in the wilderness, no matter what you do. He is after your heart. So, He comes to you, fills you with His Spirit, and etches His covenant onto your very being. “You are mine,” He says, “and I am yours forever.” You are the tabernacle He sanctifies and fills. You are His dwelling place.

Don’t cheat the wilderness of its power to shape you. The wilderness is your place of transformation. He loves you as you are, but He knows all you can become, and He wants this for you. Now the way will become more difficult, but it’s the way to the fullness of joy. Your enemies will increase, and your sufferings will multiply. But God will fight for you, protect you, and lead you. And sooner than you think, you will stand at the banks of the Jordan.

Before your wilderness, you were not ready for this moment. Now you know Him, and you can walk to the fortress and march around it, waiting for your God. When you lift your shout of praise to the God who has led you, your transformed life will shine with His glory. The walls of the fortress will topple, and your enemies will see God's power.

At the end of it all is the Promised Land. It's full of giants and battles waiting to be fought. It's vast and maybe a bit terrifying. But the wilderness has shaped you, and His Spirit has refined you. You are ready.

What if we all believed this story? What if we trusted enough to keep going in the wilderness, to keep waiting, to let ourselves be shaped by The Way? We might join the cloud of witnesses who had faith in the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1) We might draw near to God in our belief and know that He rewards those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Maybe we could join the ranks of those who “through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. . . Some were tortured . . . others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. . . destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” (Heb. 11:33-38) For all of these, and for us, “God has something better”: not the terror of Sinai, but “to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God . . . and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.” (Hebrews 12:22,24)

This is The Way to which He has called us. It is the way of Christ, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2)

Look to the joy set before you. The Promised Land awaits.

Week 12

The Renewed Creation

Revelation 21:1-8; 1 John 3:1-3

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

⁵And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

¹See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines, text, or other markings on the page.

Is He Worthy?

Do you feel the world is broken? *We do*
Do you feel the shadows deepen? *We do*
But do you know that all the dark
Won't stop the light from getting through? *We do*
Do you wish that you could see it all made new? *We do*

Is all creation groaning? *It is*
Is a new creation coming? *It is*
Is the glory of the Lord to be the light within our midst? *It is*
Is it good that we remind ourselves of this? *It is*

Is anyone worthy? Is anyone whole?
Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll?
The Lion of Judah who conquered the grave
He is David's root and the Lamb who died to ransom the slave
From every people and tribe, every nation and tongue
He has made us a kingdom and priests to God
To reign with the Son
Is He worthy of all blessing and honor and glory?
He is!

Does the Father truly love us? *He does*
Does the Spirit move among us? *He does*
And does Jesus, our Messiah
Hold forever those He loves? *He does*
Does our God intend to dwell again with us? *He does*

Andrew Peterson and Ben Shive
CCLI #7108951
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Tap to Listen



A Creation Restored

Kristina Sargent

Acrylic on restored scrap wood

Will we have a chance to say goodbye to the sun and the moon and all the things that matter in our earthy lives? Would we even want to? It's hard to imagine what it would look like to be liberated from death and decay because we often orbit around the avoidance of them in our lives. Our instincts, survival mechanisms, and trauma histories often become the roadmaps we use to navigate what is important to us. Most of the things we do are to (temporarily) avoid aging and dying. But the ultimate restoration would be untethering from survival instincts and rejoicing as heaven and earth are finally unified in the state God always intended creation to exist.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Romans 8:18-21

The Promise of Heaven: A Journey Beyond the Veil

Joe Chambers

“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.” (Revelation 21:10, NIV)

When talking about heaven, many people focus on living conditions and the environment. In films, heaven is often depicted as a cloud-filled paradise, akin to a fog bank. Naturally, questions arise about animals. My grandchildren have asked if dogs will be in heaven, to which I reply, “I don’t know.” When they follow up with, “What about cats?” I respond, “No.”

People often envision heaven as a place with golden streets and pearly gates. However, the essence of where we live hinges not on the scenery but on the communities we form.

What truly makes heaven special is not the streets or gates, but the relationships we cultivate and the transformation we undergo. But what do we know for sure about heaven?

You Will Experience Profound Joy

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes.” (Revelation 21:4, NIV)

Psychologists affirm that one hallmark of a healthy individual is the ability to find self-comfort amidst adversity. Children inherently seek comfort. A friend once shared that, from a very young age, his daughter would respond to her mother’s soothing words, “Honey, honey, honey” or “I know, I know, I know.” These phrases became so ingrained that, instead of crying like a typical baby, she’d softly repeat those words when upset.

As we grow older, we inevitably realize that some wounds may never heal in this life. Many of you may carry such burdens right now. You can seek comfort in various ways—reading about grief, attending support groups, or adopting a positive outlook. Yet, some aches persist, potentially remaining with you until the end of your days.

The biblical perspective does not promise a pain-free existence upon becoming a Christian. Instead, it assures us that we can trust God today. You can bring your broken heart to Him and remain obedient, knowing that one day, God will wipe away every tear and embrace you as His beloved child, assuring you, “Honey, honey, I know, I know.” Although the method remains a mystery, He will set everything right.

Heaven is where everything sad will come untrue, and every aching heart will find wholeness, every emotional wound will be healed, and the need for tears

will vanish because God will restore all things. You will experience an everlasting joy that resonates to the depths of your being.

You Will Be Astoundingly Productive

“For the Lord will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 22:5)

We were designed to be co-regents with God. **Every one of us has this need to grow and learn, to contribute and produce.** And that need will not be frustrated in heaven. It’s going to finally be fully expressed there.

Will heaven merely resemble an eternal retirement community where singing is the primary activity? While I enjoy singing, I imagine that after billions of years, even I would crave variety. I used to envision myself sitting on a throne, waiting for action, but that’s not the essence of heaven. Heaven is about redeeming and restoring the purpose for which we were created. In the beginning, God made us in His image to have dominion over creation. We were designed to work, grow, and be fruitful as co-regents with Him.

I imagine Jesus asking, “Joe, what shall we do?” With creativity and insight, I might respond, “How about writing a great novel?” And maybe Jesus says, “That’s a wonderful idea—why not do that? I’ll write the foreword.”

I love what Dallas Willard wrote, “You will know fullness of function; the unending creativity involved in a cosmos-wide, cooperative pursuit of a created order that continuously approaches, but never reaches, the limitless, goodness, and greatness of the triune personality of God.”

So, hone your talents and develop your abilities in this life because you won’t be entering a retirement village when you get to heaven; you will be stepping into the role for which you were truly created.

You Will Be Morally Flawless

Many of us feel a growing awareness of our shortcomings as we age, realizing how much remains to be transformed. However, there will be a day when darkness ceases to exist, and we will have nothing left to hide.

In that moment:

- Your character will be perfected. God proclaims, “I am making all things new,” which includes you.
- You will possess a new heart, effortlessly loving Jesus and those around you.
- You will have a new mind, with thoughts characterized by nobility and goodness.

- You will speak only words of beauty and truth.

The Bible describes precious stones worn on the high priest's breastplate, symbolizing that he bore the people of Israel on his heart as he approached God. In heaven, however, you will be held in the heart of God—the true treasure of heaven is not gold or gems, but His redeemed community. Your character will shine like pure gold, radiant and flawless.

You Will Be Completely Fulfilled

“He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.’” (Revelation 21:6, NIV)

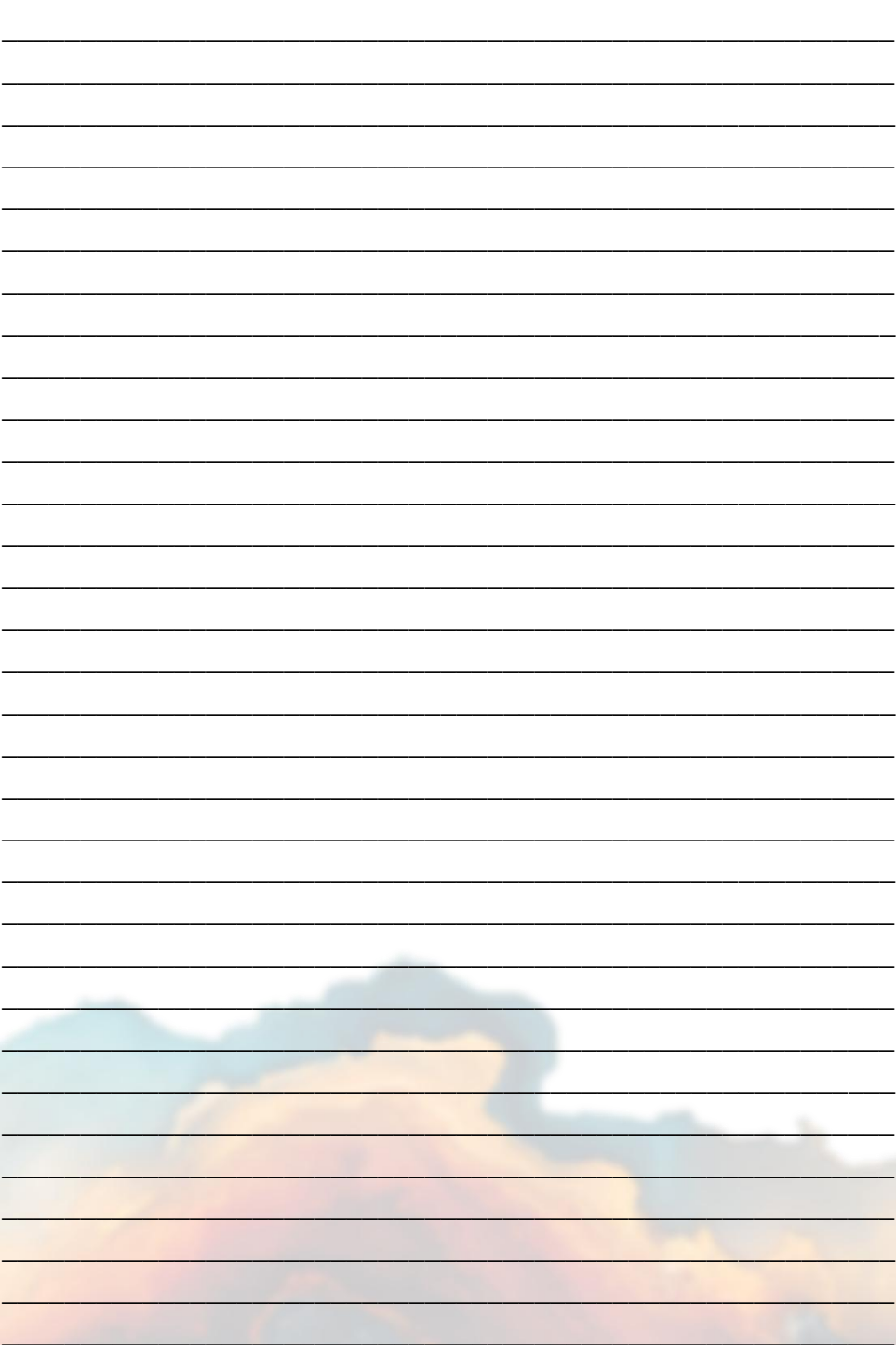
In this world, we often experience a curse—our desires remain unfulfilled, dreams elude us, and our constant pursuit of satisfaction never quite achieves contentment. In heaven, however, you will experience the absolute satisfaction that eludes us now.

C. S. Lewis, in his series *The Chronicles of Narnia*, writes about the spiritual quest of human beings. At the end of it, as he's trying to capture what heaven is about, this is what he writes:

The things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us, this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all live happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story.

All their life in this world had only been the cover and the title page. And now, at last, they were beginning chapter one of the great story which no one on earth has read, which goes on forever, in which every chapter is better than the one before.

Heaven is going to be the adventure of all adventures, and these 80 or 90 years of earth life are only the first steps in that joyful journey.



Resources

The following is a brief list of biblical resources for your daily worship and study. This is not a comprehensive list but a guide or starting point to surround yourself with reliable and relatable Scripture-based content on your walk with Jesus.

STUDY BIBLES:

The ESV Study Bible, Crossway Bibles

The ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible, Crossway Bibles

The NASB Ryrie Study Bible, Moody Publishers

Alabaster Bibles: Scripture with visual imagery and thoughtful design

DAILY DEVOTIONALS:

New Morning Mercies by Paul David Tripp, Crossway

Strength for the Journey by Joe Stowell, Moody Publishers

COMMENTARIES AND TEXTS FOR DEEPER STUDY:

The Moody Bible Commentary Moody Publishers

Christian Theology by Millard Erickson, Baker Academic

Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem, Zondervan

DEEPER STUDY IN EXODUS:

Exodus: A 12-Week Study by Matthew Newkirk, Crossway

Echoes of Exodus by Alistair Roberts and Andrew Wilson, Crossway

Words from the Fire by Albert Mohler, Moody Publishers

BOOKS ON WORSHIP ARTS:

Doxology & Theology by Matt Boswell, B.H. Publishing Group

Sing! by Keith and Kristyn Getty, B.H. Publishing Group

Art and the Bible by Francis Schaeffer, IVP Books

Exploring the Worship Spectrum (six views), Zondervan

The Worship Architect by Constance Cherry, Baker Academic

SCRIPTURE-BASED WORSHIP MUSIC WRITERS & PUBLISHERS:

Sovereign Grace Music (worship choruses), sovereigngracemusic.org

CityAlight (modern hymns), cityalight.com

Keith & Kristyn Getty (hymns and choruses), gettymusic.com

Fred Hammond (African American gospel), realfredhammond.com

Jadon Lavik (folk rock songs and hymn remixes), jadonlavik.com

Matt Boswell (folk & modern hymns), messengerhymns.com

The Worship Initiative (several artists), theworshipinitiative.com

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Andrea Morgan

457 Rodeo Rd, Buena Vista, CO 81211
(719) 395-3120

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info@clearviewcommunity.org
www.clearviewcommunity.org
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