



Laying Hold of God's Encouragement

31 Days of Abiding in God's Word

Scott Gilchrist

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“And Jesus answered them, saying, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if any one serves Me, the Father will honor him. Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.”
John 12:23-28

I have been reading the Gospel of John. Throughout, Jesus is constantly saying, “My hour has not yet come” (see, e.g., John 2:4). Then in chapter twelve, it says, “Jesus answered them, saying, ‘The hour **has** come for the Son of Man to be glorified.’” The long-awaited hour of all history has come. The Son of Man is to be glorified.

Jesus goes on to say, “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.” He said those kinds of things regularly in His ministry. He came “to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28). In so doing, Jesus knew He was going to a cross, becoming sin on our behalf. The sinless One was to become sin and bear the curse of God. “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross” (1 Peter 2:24). No earthy trouble can compare to the anguish Jesus faced. Here is what He said, “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.”

What a pattern for us when we face times of trouble! But in comparison to what the Lord was facing, our troubles seem small. The Lord does not promise to save us from our times of distress, anxiety or fear. He promises to be with us through those times. That way we can say, as He Himself said, “Father, glorify Your name.”

I hope that it will be an encouragement to you today, as it has been to me, to realize that this is the approach for us to live by when we are tempted to be fearful or shrink back.

“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour.

Father, glorify Thy name.’ There came therefore a voice out of heaven: ‘I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.’ ... Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.’

But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. ... Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” John 12:27-33, 13:1

In times of uncertainty, it is good to look at Jesus’ response to His great crisis. The hour had come when He would lay down His life for us. In John 12 He said, *“What should I say, ‘Save Me from this hour, Father?’ No, for this reason I came to this hour. Glorify Your name.”* He goes on to teach His disciples, to feed them, and then to serve them in a remarkable way. It is a great scene where He takes the place of a servant and washes their feet. I believe that is a pattern for us.

Jesus said, *“Glorify Your name,”* and the Father said, *“I have glorified it, and will glorify it.”* Jesus then took the opportunity to teach His disciples about the cross. He said, *“Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I [am] lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”* John adds this comment, *“He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.”*

Then Jesus, in humble servitude, began to wash their feet (see John 13:5). What an amazing scene! And sandwiched right in the middle of it, John writes, *“Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”* Our Lord manifested that love for the world not only by giving His life for us, but also by teaching us the significance of it, and then by serving. He loved the disciples to the end, and then He got up and began to wash their feet.

This is a great pattern for us as we see people all around us who are fearful and in need. Let us look for opportunities to serve others.

“If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” John 13:14-17

John chapters 12 and 13 describe for us a perfect love and how it casts out fear. It is such a joy to be loved by the God of the universe. The Scripture says, *“Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end”* (John 13:1). That was manifested through Him both teaching us about the cross and serving. What a picture of that love – Him humbling Himself and washing the feet of His disciples. Nobody would think of the Master, the Rabbi, the Teacher, girding Himself and washing their feet. It shocked them, so much so that Peter said, “You can’t do that.” Jesus explained, “No, I must” (see John 13:8).

Jesus served His disciples in a time of real personal trial and anguish. But He told them, *“If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”* We know His will for us is that in times of fear and trouble - much like the kind of situation we are in today - we should look for opportunities to serve others. Look for people who are hurting or need help. Look for people who know the Lord but who are struggling to trust Him. Encourage them and serve them. By so doing, you will make it easier for them to trust the Lord. To trust the Lord is the fountainhead of all blessing (see Jeremiah 17:7).

Let me encourage you today – do not become self-occupied. Yes, we have our own situations to deal with and our own set of circumstances. Much is happening today that we must confront. But at the same time there are people all around us that we can serve. *“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13). The ultimate expression of that was the cross where Jesus laid His life down for us. But prior to the cross, during His lifetime, there were also many times where He surprisingly served others rather than Himself. Let us do likewise.

“Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:7-9

I want to encourage you from the book of Joshua. Joshua was a mighty military commander. He could be thought of as the general of the army. The Lord gave him a very specific command, *“Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed.”* Military men often say that they have struggled with fear just like anybody else. But the Lord said, *“I have commanded you. Don’t be fearful. Don’t be afraid. Be strong and courageous. Don’t tremble or be dismayed.”* Why? *“For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”* He promised Joshua, *“No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous”* (Joshua 1:5-6).

Joshua had a very specific responsibility – *“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”* It is a principle all the way through Scripture that those who meditate on His word, those who listen to it, those who abide in it, will be prosperous, in the sense that God will be with them; He will protect them and watch over them.

Let me encourage you to spend real time in His word. We are under the same specific responsibility as Joshua. *“If you will abide in Me and My words abide in you, you will bear much fruit,”* Jesus said (see John 15:5, 7). So be like Joshua; do not let God’s word *“depart from your mouth.”* Meditate on it and let it sink deep into your heart. This week, spend time with God every day in His word.

“Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law will not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night...” Joshua 1:7-8

Joshua was a mighty leader, but he needed comfort and encouragement. God said, *“I will be with you wherever you go. You just hang on to Me and let My word fill your heart. Let it not depart from your mouth, but meditate on it day and night”* (see Joshua 1:5-9). In the same way, Paul writes, *“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope”* (Romans 15:4).

I have found that one of the most tangible ways for me to lay hold of hope and lay hold of God’s encouragement is to spend time in His written word. There is something about spending time with God and meditating on His word that gives me perseverance and encouragement. The Holy Spirit’s very name is the Helper, the Encourager, and the Comforter. He gives that encouragement through His word. Paul goes on to say, *“Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement . . .”* (Romans 15:5). It is God who is the source of encouragement and perseverance. He gives it out and you and I lay hold of it through His word.

I hope you are cultivating time in God’s word. In difficult times, do not let the days slip away without spending time, each day, in His word, feeding your soul and asking for encouragement, comfort and, yes, perseverance.

*"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?
When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh,
My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.
Though a host encamp against me, my heart will not fear;
Though war arise against me, in spite of this I shall be confident.
One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.
For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle;
In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a
rock. And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around
me; And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord."* Psalm 27:1-6

Whom should you fear? What should you fear? David was a man who lived in a variety of situations that could have caused great fear, and he asked that very question in the 27th Psalm. *"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"* When the Lord is your "light and your salvation," you have no one to fear.

People all around us are living in fear and dread. Even we as Christians are tempted to be fearful and dread certain things. But the psalmist says, *"The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?"* What does it mean to have the Lord as your defense, your light and your refuge the way the psalmist so often declares? Listen to what David says; three times in verse five it says, *"God will."* In the day of trouble, *"He will conceal me, He will hide me, He will lift me up on a rock."* David says, *"He will lift me up"* and then continues, *"and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord"* (Psalm 27:6). This is a personal picture of Him hiding us in a secret place where we can have intimacy with Him.

Spend time with God. When you find yourself in trouble and you go to Him, He not only hides and protects you, He gives you boldness and shouts of joy. No matter what your circumstances, you can have that same joy. It is not our joy, it is the joy of the Lord. *"The joy of the Lord is your strength"* (Nehemiah 8:10).

Jesus' Advice on Whom to Fear

Day 7

"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!" Luke 12:4-5

Fear is normally something we do not think of as positive, but the Scripture says that *"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge"* (Prov. 1:7). Proverbs goes on to say, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"* (Prov. 9:10). No wonder Jesus said, *"I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"* Fear the Lord. It is the key to life. The Scripture says it over and over. Jesus said not to fear men. Men can kill you, but that is all. But there is One who - after He has killed you - can cast you into hell. That is a strong statement.

Often when I ask a group of people what brought them to Christ, there might be a variety of reasons, but fear of judgment is high on that list. I know when I came to Christ, I didn't want to suffer for my sin. I knew I was sinful and I was so grateful to hear that Jesus Christ died in my place. The fear of the Lord, knowing the Lord Jesus, is the beginning point of wisdom in life - understanding about how things work, why we live the way we do, and why we celebrate even in the times of trouble.

*“O Lord, my heart is not proud, or my eyes haughty;
Nor do I involve myself in great matters,
Or in things too difficult for me.
Surely I have composed and quieted my soul;
Like a weaned child rests against his mother,
My soul is like a weaned child within me.
O Israel, hope in the Lord
From this time forth and forever.”* Psalm 131:1-3

The 131st Psalm is a psalm of David. It is short and to the point but so packed with truth we can ponder and enjoy. David says *“my heart is not [so] proud, or my eyes [so] haughty”* to think I can figure things out. There are things beyond me – they are *“too difficult for me.”* He uses that same term in Psalm 139 when he thinks about the Lord’s sovereign care for him and says, *“such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high”* (Psalm 139:6). In the 131st Psalm David says, *“I don’t try to figure everything out; rather I have composed and quieted my soul ‘like a weaned child rests against his mother.’”*

I remember enjoying this Psalm when our kids were young and I pictured in my mind our little newborns hungry and then finding what they wanted snuggled tenderly against their mom’s breast, being filled with milk and being quiet and calm. But I realized later, that though that is a beautiful picture, it is not the one the psalmist draws. He says, *“I want my soul to be ‘like a weaned child against his mother.’”* I realized there comes a time in your growth in the Christian life when you do not try to figure everything out. You don’t say, *“I need my milk.”* Rather, you rest in the Lord just like a weaned child does not come to mom for what she can give him, but rather just because she is mom. He just rests in her, and that is even a more beautiful picture.

Today, do not strive and tell God you won’t rest until He answers your question or your circumstance. No, just rest in Him like a weaned child rests against his mother.

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." John 14:18

"This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world." James 1:27

I hope you are enjoying the Lord today. He is a good God. One of the things that I have noticed in the Scripture about Him is that there is a special place in His heart for widows and orphans, those who have been left alone, humanly speaking, through no fault of their own. In these days you might be feeling alone, but I want to encourage you—you are not alone. If you know the Lord Jesus Christ, He has promised to never leave you or forsake you (see Hebrews 13:5). In John 14 He says, *"I will not leave you as orphans."* I am going to ask the Father and He will give you another Comforter, just like Me, who will be with you forever (see John 14:16).

Enjoy that. He has not left you as an orphan and He never will. We might be alone. We might be isolated, but there is One who sticks closer than a brother, the true friend of sinners, the Lord Jesus Himself. His Holy Spirit came into your life the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ. You are not alone.

Thinking about how God has a special place in His heart for widows and orphans gives us an opportunity to be like Him in reaching out to those who are lonely or who feel alone. The book of James states it directly, *"This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world."* Today, why don't you think of someone who might be lonely, or maybe specifically a widow or an orphan, and reach out to them? Even if you are unable to visit them in person, pick up the phone and call them. Ask if they have any needs that you might be able to meet. There is nothing to keep us from picking up the phone and encouraging one another.

Let me encourage you that you are never more like your Savior than when you are manifesting His heart. Look for ways to serve those who are the most vulnerable.

"I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart; I will tell of all Thy wonders. I will be glad and exult in Thee; I will sing praise to Thy name, O Most High." Psalm 9:1-2

We don't have to feel thankful in order to praise the Lord. As an act of the will, we can give praise and thanks to God even when we don't feel like it. He is certainly praiseworthy and we ought to give thanks to Him, but we can do it whether we feel like it or not. And when we do, our emotions and our feelings come along.

In the ninth Psalm, David starts with four resolves. I do not know what David felt like when he started the Psalm. Perhaps he did not feel like praising and giving thanks. But I know what happens to me, to my soul, by the end of the four statements that David penned in Psalm 9:1, *"I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart."* Stop and think today of what you can give the Lord thanks for, and then do it. Don't just think about it. Give thanks. The Bible says, *"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* (1 Thess. 5:18).

David then says, *"I will tell of all Your wonders."* Speak forth, tell of His perfections, His wonders. If possible, tell someone else, but at least speak them out in the quietness of your own heart.

And then the third David says, *"I will be glad and exult in You."* It is hard, almost impossible, to stop and give thanks and tell of His wonders without being glad. He changes our hearts as we give Him praise. Lastly, he says, *"I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High."*

Resolve today to give thanks, to tell of His wonders, to be glad and exult in Him and to sing praise to His name, the Most High God, the name above every other name, the name of Jesus Christ.

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish.” John 10:27-28

Aren't you glad to know that? Maybe you have struggled with concern over the security of your salvation. I think most believers at some point in life have wondered about that.

I remember years ago working on a crew with a lot of different people. There was a woman in our office who was a believer in Christ. She had been brought up to believe that if you do not walk carefully, you could lose your salvation, and that belief plagued her. I tried to assure her that the Bible teaches that God gives eternal life. She wanted to believe that she had eternal life securely, but she just couldn't. She struggled with that and it affected her walk with the Lord. One day we were together and I shared these verses with her from the book of Colossians:

“And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” Colossians 2:13-14

She was riveted by these words from Scripture. I asked her, “How does it read to you?” I still remember what she said to me, “Why haven't you shared this with me before?” We had been talking about her salvation for months, but it was a lesson for me. The power and the clear statements of God's word are oftentimes much better than you or I trying to persuade someone using our own words. She was set free to know that all her sins were forgiven and that she would not lose her salvation when she stumbled.

We need to confess our sins when we sin as Christians, but we can be thankful that He has paid for them. He nailed our sins to the cross. He cancelled out *“the certificate of debt.”* Maybe there is someone in your life that you could read these verses to and help them enjoy the truth of what Christ accomplished for us at the cross.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits.”
Psalm 103:1-2

Psalm 103, a psalm of David, begins, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul.”* It closes twenty-two verses later the same way, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul!”* – (Psalm 103:22). David starts and ends praising the Lord!

Verse twenty reads: *“Bless the Lord, you His angels! ... Bless the Lord, all you His hosts ... Bless the Lord, all you works of His”* (Psalm 103:20). It is like David is saying, *“Everything bless the Lord!”* And finally, *“In all places of His dominion; bless the Lord!”* (Psalm 103:22). Bless the Lord, everything! Bless the Lord, everywhere!

Psalm 103 is similar to Psalm 150 where the psalmist says,

“Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty expanse. Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His excellent greatness. Praise Him with trumpet sound; praise Him with harp and lyre. Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. Praise Him with loud cymbals; praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!” (Psalm 150:1-6).

What a fitting close to the psalm. We who have the ability to sing and speak, should praise the Lord.

But it is not just everything that has breath that desires to praise the Lord. Creation itself wants to praise Him. When the disciples were praising the Lord of the universe, the Pharisees rebuked Him. Jesus said, *“I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!”* (Luke 19:40). In Romans Paul says, *“The whole creation groans,”* waiting for that day when praise will be universal (see Romans 8:19-22).

Today, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”* *“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!”*

The Great Proof of Your Salvation

Day 13

“... but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.” Romans 4:24-25

Easter is a great celebration of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Death is conquered. Hallelujah! Christ is risen from the grave. But every day is Easter for believers. We can celebrate His resurrection every day.

Perhaps you recently put your faith in Christ. You can be sure your sins are forgiven. *“The just [One died] for the unjust”* (1 Peter 3:18). *“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness”* (1 Peter 2:24). This is why we call it good news. At the same time, you can be sure that you will be attacked by the evil one. Satan will suggest to you that your sins are not really paid for, or that you are not good enough for God.

Jesus Christ bore our sins in His body on the cross. He became an accursed thing. He became sin. God then raised Him from the dead. That is the proof that God was satisfied with what His Son accomplished. When Jesus said, *“It is finished,”* it really was (John 19:30). The proof is that death could not hold Him. Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost fifty days later and declared, *“It was impossible for Him to be held in [the bonds of death]”* (Acts 2:24).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is your assurance as a believer that you will never see your sins again. That is why the Bible can say God has put them away *“as far as the east is from the west”* (Psalm 103:12). They have been paid for, paid in full. The receipt is that God raised Jesus from the dead. Paul says in Romans that it was not just written for Abraham’s sake that his faith was reckoned to him as righteousness, *“but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead”* (Romans 4:23-24).

Enjoy that today. You have complete forgiveness and complete acceptance with God because you are in the resurrected Savior.

“He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.” 1 John 5:12-13

The Scripture that got hold of my life was the simple, and maybe the most well-known verse in the Bible, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). This is a great truth. The moment you put your faith in Christ, you will not perish. Oh, you will die physically, unless the Lord comes first, but you will never perish - the second death. Death is a defeated foe. *“Death is swallowed up in victory”* (1 Cor. 15:54).

Can you really have assurance that you have eternal life? The answer is found in the gospel - the good news. Keeping the passage in 1 John 5 in context, the apostle is not speaking about just life on this earth, but eternal life. There are really just two kinds of people - those who have Jesus Christ and, therefore, have eternal life, and those who do not. *“He who has the Son [Christ] has [eternal] life; he who does not have the Son does not have [eternal] life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.”*

Sometimes when I am helping a young believer understand this truth, I show them this verse, but I intentionally misread it: *“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you **may hope** that you have eternal life.”* No, it doesn't say that! It reads, *“In order that you **may know** that you have eternal life.”*

As Christians, we have the assurance of eternal life because Jesus Christ has been accepted into the very throne room of God. He bore all our sins in His body. God was satisfied and raised Him from the dead. And because of that, if you have accepted Christ, you have, right now, eternal life. You do not have to wait until you die to get eternal life. You have it right now. Enjoy that truth today.

"But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray."
Luke 5:16

These days many of us have been forced to slow down and even be isolated a bit. We are never really alone, though; the Lord is with us. *"He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray."* He would often - it was His habit - to slip away to a lonely place, an abandoned place. That is how the word "wilderness" is often translated: a lonely place. He did not go to be alone, but to be with His Father and pray.

These days give us an opportunity to follow our Lord's example and slip away to a quiet place. The Lord has slowed us down. We do not have many of the distractions that clutter our lives on a regular basis. The Scripture says, *"Set your mind on the things above"* (Col. 3:2). Often we find our minds so cluttered and busy that we need that kind of exhortation. Let me encourage you to use these days to develop that habit.

The Lord Jesus would often slip away to the wilderness. I want to be like that. I want to be one who often slips away, not just to be by myself, but to be with my Lord. Sometimes it is good to be away from the activities and hustle and bustle. These days I am getting reacquainted with some parts of my neighborhood. There is a park where we walk that is an undeveloped area, just a trail through the woods. It is a great place that I had forgotten about. But now I walk through there every day. It is a good place for me to commune with my Lord.

Let me encourage you - in your own living room or taking a walk - to slip away to a quiet place where you can have real fellowship with the Lord. Do what He did. *"He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray."*

“But we, brethren, having been bereft of you for a short while – in person, not in spirit – were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.” 1 Thessalonians 2:17

It can be discouraging when we are unable to go to church and meet in person with our brothers and sisters in Christ. When we as elders sensed that we might not be able to get together again for a while, we met and one of the them read 1 Thessalonians 2:17, and it really spoke to me.

I am so thankful when we are able to gather in various other ways – livestream, Zoom, cell phones, texting, FaceTime, etc. There are many ways we are able to stay in touch. But during times when we are not able to gather in person, we can all relate to Paul’s words, *“We have been bereft of you for a short while – in person, not in spirit.”* We have not been able to be there, but we have not forgotten you in spirit. Because of that, we are *“all the more eager with great desire to see your face.”* One of the things I pray for during such times is that when we can get back together as we are accustomed to, it will be all the sweeter.

1 Thessalonians 2:17 is a verse that will remind me of this season in our lives for a long time. We should not take for granted the great joy of assembling ourselves together. It is a huge privilege to gather in person. Sometimes we are not able to, but the day will come when we can and that will be a great day indeed.

“Be appalled, O heavens, at this, and shudder, be very desolate,” declares the Lord. “For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” Jeremiah 2:12-13

Jeremiah, like all the Hebrew prophets, was a mouthpiece for God. The second chapter of Jeremiah begins, “Now the word of the Lord came to me saying . . .” (Jer. 2:1). He spoke for the Lord. In Chapter two, verse twelve there is a statement that always grips me. The Lord is appalled. He is grieved when He thinks of what has happened. “For My people have . . . forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”

The same things can happen in our lives. It is tragic when we turn away from the living water, the source of joy and life. We begin to dig cisterns for ourselves to hold water, but they do not even hold water - they leak out and it is a stale emptiness. People hew for themselves, dig little storage tanks, to hoard up things that will never satisfy.

“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life” (Prov. 4:23). Oh, beware of anything that would start to replace the Lord, Himself—where you would hew cisterns and maybe store up money or security or anything else rather than embracing the fullness of the Lord and enjoying the One who is the source of living waters. Jeremiah, speaking for the Lord, says, “I am appalled, I am desolate. I shudder at this thing. My people have not only forsaken Me, but they have forsaken Me for something that does not satisfy.”

Whenever we turn from the Lord, we turn to a lesser thing. What a joy it is to come back to Him and find Him to be the source of living water. If you have thought of some cisterns that you have been storing up water in that are getting stale and leaking, turn back to the fountain of living water, the Lord Himself. He said, If you drink from that water, you will get thirsty again. But if you drink from what I give you, you will have “a well of water springing up [in you] to eternal life” (John 4:14).

It is a joy to know Him, the source of life.

“Thus says the Lord, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the Lord.” Jeremiah 9:23-24

People talk a lot about their legacy, what they want to be known for. I wonder, what do you live for? What do you boast in? What do you really look toward?

There is an authoritative, *“Thus says the Lord”* statement in Jeremiah nine that definitively addresses this question. The Lord first says three things not to boast in. *“Let not a wise man boast in his wisdom.”* And here I think He is speaking of intellect and knowledge. *“And let not the mighty man boast of his might”* — strength, power, independence. And *“let not a rich man boast of his riches.”* Boasting of these things is a temptation to us all. In fact, these are things that many people strive for, even Christians. The Lord says, do not seek after these things. Rather, *“let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord [I am Yahweh] who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, declares the Lord.”* Notice, He does not say I prefer or I like these things. He says, *“I **delight** in these things.”*

Paul quotes Jeremiah in I Corinthians writing, *“Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord”* (I Cor. 1:31). And in Philippians, Paul makes those great statements of his own life, saying, *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Phil. 1:21). *“More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I might gain Christ ... That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings ... ”* (Phil. 3:8,10)

There is nothing better in life than to know the Lord, to know Jesus Christ. Make that the focus of your life.

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1

One of the great things about being a child of God is that the Scripture says you are actually *“in Christ.”* We live in this world and do not look much different than anybody else. But the moment you put your faith in Christ, you are born again by the Spirit of God, the Word of God. The Scripture says you are placed by the Holy Spirit **into** Christ. The Scripture regularly speaks of us as being *“in Christ.”* This is so encouraging to remember.

The first verse of that great chapter in Romans 8 states, *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* As a young Christian, I worried about this. Were my sins really forgiven? Could I stand before God *“blameless with great joy”*? (Jude 1:24). But I remember when a man who mentored me quoted this verse with authority, and it just hit home. He said, “nobody in the world can point a finger at you.” Yes, there is an accuser. Satan is called the accuser of the brethren. He will try to resurrect your old sins, your guilt and accuse you of not being acceptable to God. But God’s Word says He sees you *“in Christ.”* I still remember when he said that. I had read it before, I had heard it before, but the Holy Spirit brought it home to my soul that day.

I still love the eighth chapter of Romans, and I still love that first verse, *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* Doesn’t that make you want to *“rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory”*? (1 Peter 1:8)

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Romans 5:6-10

Who is it that God loves enough to send His Son for? Romans 5 gives a four-fold description of our lives and it is very valuable for us to see. We were **enemies** of His. We were **helpless, ungodly sinners**. And yet, He acted in love.

Take your place as a helpless, ungodly sinner, an enemy of God, and go to Romans 5 and claim God's word on it. That is who Christ died for. You do not have to get yourself up to a point where you qualify. Rather, you need to get yourself down on your knees, on your face before God, and confess that you are helpless to do anything about it. You are ungodly. You are a sinner. You are an enemy of God. And at that moment, when you look up to Christ, you will know that you are the one Christ died for.

He came to seek and to save the lost, helpless, ungodly, sinners. He came to seek and to save His enemies. That is why we love Him. That is why we can bask in His “*much more*” love. He loved us when we were in that condition. Now that we are His children, we can exult in His love for us.

"Your sins have been forgiven." Luke 7:48

One of the most beloved descriptions of our Lord is, "Friend of sinners." This was originally said as a harsh criticism. They grumbled and complained that Jesus was a friend of tax collectors and sinners. In Luke, they said, "He eats with them! He spends time with them! He receives them!" (see Luke 15:1-2). They could not fathom it. The self-righteousness of man! But once you realize that you are a sinner, once you understand your need, then you can rejoice that Jesus is indeed a friend of sinners!

Luke recounts how a sinful woman came to Jesus when He was reclining at the table having dinner with the Pharisees. As He did, a woman came in and wet His feet with her tears, wiped His feet with her hair, and washed and anointed Him. The Pharisee said to himself,

"If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner'." [Jesus answered Him], "Simon, I have something to say to you.' And he replied, 'Say it, Teacher.' 'A certain money-lender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?' [The Pharisee was forced to answer], "I suppose the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You have judged correctly.' And turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.' [Then Jesus turned to this woman and said], 'Your sins have been forgiven'" Luke 7:39-48

Are there any sweeter words in the English language? Praise God that our Lord was known as the friend of sinners. He came to seek out and save people like you and me; to forgive us our sins.

“Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless His name; proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.” Psalm 96:1-2

The 96th Psalm starts with a threefold exhortation, *“Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless His name”* (Psalm 96:1-2). The Lord loves to be sung to. We love to sing. We who have met the Lord and have experienced His redemption, love to daily proclaim good tidings of His salvation. Men, I particularly want to encourage you to sing to the Lord. Teach your kids to sing to the Lord. Teach them by example. I was raised by a father who sang out with gusto in church. He would often sing at other times throughout the day. It made me want to sing to the Lord. The Scripture says we ought to. There is something about singing to the Lord that lifts our heart and focuses us on the One who is praiseworthy and worthy of our songs.

The Bible repeatedly says, *“Sing to the Lord a new song!”* I love that new songs about Him are being written today. Wherever there is health in the church there is going to be a desire to sing praises to Him. I thrill at many of the great worship songs being written today.

But when the psalmist says, *“Sing to the Lord a new song,”* I am not sure he means that we have to write a new song every time. I learned a song when I was a child, *“It is the Lord Who died for me. It is the Lord Who set me free”* (*It is The Lord* by Benjamin A. Baur). It is an old song. But it is new every morning. When you begin to sing an old song, it becomes new when you are fresh in the Lord. When the psalmist says, *“Sing...a new song,”* you do not have to go find a new song. You can sing an old song with new joy and new freshness.

Sing to the Lord a new song today!

"Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and answer me; for I am afflicted and needy ...In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee, for Thou wilt answer me." Psalm 86:1,7

We tend to pray more when we are in need. In times of anxiety or loneliness or danger - when we sense our need - we call out to the Lord. In the 86th Psalm, David said, *"Incline Your ear, O Lord, and answer me; for I am afflicted and needy."*

I got a communiqué from a dear brother in India. They are dealing with the same difficult circumstances we are, and he wrote, "There is a revival of prayer sweeping across the nation here in India among the believers." I told him we were experiencing the same thing. There are many more gatherings of prayer. There is increased personal prayer as well. I think we all sense our dependence on the Lord. It is such a joy to know that He hears our prayer.

This morning at our elders meeting, one of the elders quoted Psalm 86 and he read verse seven, *"In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, for You will answer me."* The Psalms often talk about the "day of trouble." In Psalm 86, David talks about the day of "my trouble" - his personal trouble. The trouble might be health, finances, marital, or unexpected difficulties. *"In the day of my trouble I will call upon You."* That is the right response. David was a man after God's heart and he said, *"In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, for You will answer me."*

Isn't it good to know that the Lord hears our prayers? We are not just speaking into empty space. We are speaking to the Lord God Almighty. No wonder David says later in verse twelve, *"I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart."* It reminds me of the New Testament exhortation, *"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises"* (James 5:13).

No matter what your circumstances, go to the Lord with it. Are you suffering? Pray. Are you cheerful? Sing praises. Look at Psalm 86. It encourages us that in the day of our trouble, we can call upon Him.

“When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong; because the Lord is the One who holds his hand.” Psalm 37:24

One day I took my grandson for a walk. We started down the hill and he did what young toddlers often do. He ran ahead full speed and tripped and went down, flat on his face. Thankfully, he managed to catch himself with his hands. He began to cry, but it really was not a bad fall. When we got into the woods, he began to enjoy himself and forgot all about it.

I have been looking over the 37th Psalm. It is a great psalm. It starts,

“Fret not yourself because of evildoers ... Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it. ... Rest in the Lord...” Psalm 37:1;3-5;7

The Psalm contains many exhortations to rest in the Lord. *“Wait patiently for Him. Fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger...” (Psalm 37:7-8).*

The Psalm continues, *“The steps of a man are established by the Lord; and He delights in his way. When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong; because the Lord is the One who holds his hand” (Psalm 37:23-24).* When you are walking with the Lord and holding His hand, there are times you will fall. We all stumble in many ways. *“If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man” (James 3:2).* But when we are walking with the Lord, if we stumble, we do not fall headlong.

What a great picture of how the Lord takes care of us. We experience times in life when we stumble. David stumbled just as you and I do. But if the Lord has your hand, when you fall, you will not be hurled headlong. It is great to know our Savior and to know that He holds our hand.

“The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.” 1 Peter 4:7

These days of anxiety and trouble, with headlines constantly coming at us that can make us fearful, are a reminder that *“the end of all things is at hand.”* I am not setting dates when I say that. I am quoting the Scripture. Peter wrote this toward the end of his life—a long time ago by our measurement of time. But the Scripture nonetheless says, *“The end of all things is at hand.”*

When we who are created with eternity in our hearts see things two, three, four thousand years from now, we will see that the end of all things was, indeed, at hand. “When we’ve been there ten thousand years ... we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise, than when we first begun,” the old hymn says. I remember an “old timer” in our church when I was a kid, and when we would sing that song, he would always request, “Could we change ten thousand to ten million?” Well, yes, we can! “When we’ve been there ten million years, we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise.”

This drama we call history is coming to a close. Jesus said, *“I will be back.”* *“For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay”* (Hebrews 10:37). We can see that the end of all things is drawing near. Each day draws us one day closer to the day the Lord will come and end history as we know it (see Romans 13:11). What a day that will be. In the meantime, Peter does not say take it easy or hunker down. He says, *“therefore be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.”* If ever we needed to devote ourselves to prayer, it is now in these days when we can see the clouds on the horizon.

Pray today. Pray with zeal. Pray with joy. Pray with certainty that the One who promised to come back will come back.

“The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:7-10

Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes, *“The end of all things is at hand.”* The Lord is coming back. Oh, Lord, *“teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom”* (Psalm 90:12). A Biblically instructed Christian lives with the reality that we have a short while on this earth. Because of this, Peter says to pray, to love one another, and to serve one another.

I think it is very instructive for us when God puts things in a very simple way. He says, “Look, the end of all things is at hand: pray, be fervent in your love for one another, and serve one another.” Each of us has received a special gift. Every Christian is gifted. We have a spiritual gift and we are to employ it in serving, not ourselves, but one another. Pray, love, serve - this is a great three-point outline for our response to the truth that Jesus Christ is coming back soon.

“The end of all things is at hand.” Pray, *“devote yourselves to prayer”* (Col. 4:2). *“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another.”* And use the gift God has given you to serve His children, to serve one another. Pray, love, serve!

“Had it not been the Lord who was on our side,’ let Israel now say, ‘Had it not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; Then they would have swallowed us alive, when their anger was kindled against us.” Psalm 124:1-3

Psalm 124, a psalm of David, is a good place to turn in times of trouble. Do you ever feel like you are being swallowed up by your circumstances? Perhaps you are feeling overwhelmed. David felt that way on many occasions. He writes, *“The waters would have engulfed us ... then the raging waters would have swept over our soul”* (Psalm 124:4-5). He uses this kind of language and he repeats himself several times in this short psalm, because sometimes the pressures, the fears and the apprehensions of life just keep coming relentlessly. David said, *“Had it not been the Lord who was on our side,”* these things would have overwhelmed me. They would have swept over my very soul.

But there is a change in tone. Verse six says, *“Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us to be torn by their teeth”* (Psalm 124:6). It is as if David had seen animals torn apart by the teeth of a ravaging predator, and he says the Lord has not given us to be torn by their teeth. The Lord has a greater purpose than just protection against physical destruction when things come at us. The Lord is the Savior. *“Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper; the snare is broken and we have escaped”* (Psalm 124:7). What a beautiful picture he draws of a bird escaping the snare and breaking free. Oftentimes I have turned to Psalm 124 when feeling overwhelmed and feeling like I am going to be torn by the teeth of the circumstances around me, and I have been set free.

In the last verse David says, *“Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth”* (Psalm 124:8). The One who is for us, who is on our side, is the Lord who made heaven and earth. That changes everything. *“If God is for us, who is against us?”* (Romans 8:31). David is celebrating that same truth.

So today, I encourage you to read and reread—maybe even memorize – Psalm 124. It is very short, but it is so instructive.

*“Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget none of His benefits;
Who pardons all your iniquities.”* Psalm 103:1-3

In Psalm 103, David bursts into praise and he never turns back. The whole Psalm is a joyous expression of David's heart. He goes on to list so much of God's character and the ways He has blessed us. He says, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me!”* You can hear his heart. *“Everything in me wants to bless the Lord and praise His holy name!”*

Then David says, *“Forget none of His benefits.”* If you look through the Psalm there are many benefits. We are forgetful and we need to be reminded. The first thing he says is, He *“pardons all of your iniquities.”* If you get a pardon from the President or the Governor, though you were guilty, you are exonerated. The Lord pardons all your iniquities. Not just some of your sins. When Christ died, He died for all your sins. Do not forget that. *“Forget none of His benefits,”* but especially do not forget that He *“pardons all your iniquities.”* Meditate upon that. He pardons them and forgives them. He washes them away – all of them. Then he uses a term we do not use very often – iniquity. We like to say “mistakes” or “problems” or “issues.” We do not like to use the word “sin” very often. But the Bible calls it what it is: sin, wickedness, evil, iniquity. He *“pardons all your iniquities.”* What is the worst thing you have ever done? If you have come to Christ, it is under the blood. The psalm goes on to say in verse twelve, He *“removed our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west.”*

No wonder the Psalm closes again, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul!”* (Psalm 103:22). We have a great God. He has forgiven us all our iniquities. He pardoned us. He sees us in Christ - forgiven, clean, guiltless, blameless. Praise Him today!

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.” Colossians 4:2

One of the great privileges of the Christian life, and one of our great responsibilities, is prayer. Paul wrote to the Colossians, *“Devote yourselves to prayer.”* But, what does it mean to **“devote yourselves to prayer”**? Ten times the word devote is used in the New Testament, and six of them refer to prayer. While the apostles were waiting for Pentecost, they *“were continually devoting themselves to prayer”* (Acts 1:14). And again, after the Holy Spirit came, *“they were continually devoting themselves ... to prayer”* (Acts 2:42). The apostles made this their priority. In chapter six of Acts they said, we really shouldn't get involved in everything. *“But we will devote ourselves to prayer”* (Acts 6:4).

But just repeating the phrase does not help us understand it as much as seeing how it is used in other contexts. In chapter ten of Acts, Cornelius, a military man with one hundred men under his command, *“summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were in constant attendance upon him”* (Acts 10:7). He summoned one of his men who was in “constant attendance” — just ready to say, “Yes, sir” to him. That is the same word for “devoted to.” And in Mark, when the crowds were pressing in on Jesus so much so that He could barely get any space to address them, *“He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him [should be devoted to Him] because of the multitude, in order that they might not crowd Him”* (Mark 3:9). Jesus told them to have a boat stand ready for Him, ready to go, in case He needed to step onto it to speak to the crowd. These are great descriptions of what it means to be ready to pray at all times. Being devoted to prayer, means being in constant attendance and ready to salute the superior officer, standing ready to go as needed.

When the Scripture says to devote yourselves to prayer and when it describes people that way, it does not mean that they were constantly praying, rather that they never quit praying. They were always ready to go. Today, *“devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.”*

“For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. For, ‘All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord abides forever.’ And this is the word which was preached to you. Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.” 1 Peter 1:23 – 2:2

How thankful I am to have the encouragement of the Scripture during difficult days. If I asked you, “How were you born again?” you would say, “When I was reborn the second time, I was born of the Spirit.” Peter explained it this way: He said we were born again of the very word of God. There is no contradiction there. The Holy Spirit uses the word of God to open our eyes. You heard the very word of God and you believed. The Holy Spirit used His word to cause you to be born again to a living hope.

Then Peter says, as you might expect, *“Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word”* (1 Peter 2:2). I love that. We were born of God's word, and then he says, *“like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”* All else being equal, it seems that the only thing babies really need is milk. In a miraculous way God causes their growth. Every part of their body matures and grows as they get milk. They need it quite often. You get them all calmed down and then pretty soon they want more milk. Anyone who has ever been around a baby understands that. A newborn babe longs for that pure milk.

We are to be that way as believers. We have been born of God's word and we are to long for His word. Not just once a week, and maybe not even just once a day. We want to get in His word regularly and have it in our minds and meditate on it day and night. He says, *“that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”*

Get some time in God's word today and then maybe later tonight, and cultivate that hunger for God's word the way a newborn babe longs for milk.

"For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps." Psalm 135:5-6

God is sovereign. When David reminds himself, and us, to forget none of His benefits, he says, *"The Lord has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all"* (Psalm 103:19). The dictionary defines "sovereignty" as, "supreme power or authority." The God who created the universe, who sustains it, is sovereign. We praise Him for that. *"Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases"* (Psalm 115:3). He does whatever He wants! No contingencies! He is supremely powerful and He has supreme authority.

Psalm 135 says it in an even more picturesque way. *"I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps."* Praise the Lord because He is sovereign. His sovereignty is directly tied to our personal blessing. Or, turned around, our blessing is secured and directly tied to His sovereignty.

Ephesians perhaps says it in a better way than any other place in the Bible. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world..."* (Eph. 1:3-4). Paul goes on in a great statement of salvation, explaining and basking in all the blessings of being in Christ. He has blessed us with everything. He chose us before the foundation of the world. Our blessedness is tied to His absolute sovereignty. He *"predestined [us] according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will"* (Eph. 1:11). We have been predestined according to His eternal purpose, His eternal will, the counsel of His desire to redeem us and have us for His own.

Enjoy God's sovereignty! He does whatever He pleases! It pleased Him to send His Son to this world to rescue you and me. *"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world"* (Eph. 1:4).



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