



# The God of All Comfort

31 Days of Encouragement

Scott Gilchrist

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Day 1	The God of All Comfort .....	2 Cor 1:3-5
Day 2	Anxious Thoughts .....	Psalm 94:19
Day 3	Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled.....	John 14:1-3
Day 4	When I Am Afraid .....	Psalm 56:3-4
Day 5	Your Father Knows Your Needs.....	Matthew 6
Day 6	He Knows Those Who Take Refuge in Him, Part 1 ...	Nahum 1:7
Day 7	He Knows Those Who Take Refuge in Him, Part 2 ...	Nahum 1:7
Day 8	In the Day of Trouble.....	Psalm 146
Day 9	Certain Hope .....	Romans 15:13
Day 10	The Lord is Kind.....	Psalm 145:17-19
Day 11	Abandoned.....	Psalm 27:9-10
Day 12	Surrounded .....	Psalm 27:1-3
Day 13	Look at and Listen to the Birds of the Air .....	Matthew 6:26
Day 14	Take Courage.....	John 16:32-33
Day 15	Are You Feeling Inadequate? .....	2 Cor 3:5
Day 16	He Delivered Me from All My Fears.....	Psalm 34:4-7
Day 17	To Believe is to Trust, to Lean On.....	Proverbs 3:5-7
Day 18	None Who Take Refuge in Him Will Be Condemned .....	Psalm 34:22
Day 19	The Lord is a Great Savior.....	Exodus 2:23-25
Day 20	Trouble Sleeping? .....	Psalm 63:1-8
Day 21	May His Face Shine on You .....	Numbers 6:24-26
Day 22	Fret or Delight .....	Psalm 37:1-8
Day 23	I Cried – He Answered.....	Psalm 120:1
Day 24	The Rock.....	Isaiah 44:8
Day 25	The Lord Who Hears, Cares and Delivers .....	Psalm 34:15-18
Day 26	Don't Lose Heart.....	2 Cor 4:16
Day 27	In My Distress .....	Psalm 18:4-6
Day 28	An Emotional Restart.....	Psalm 94:19
Day 29	The Blessings of the First Psalm .....	Psalm 1:1-3
Day 30	Antidote to Anxiety .....	Matthew 6:28-30
Day 31	Take Refuge in the Lord.....	Psalm 16:1-2

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort.”*  
2 Corinthians 1:3-5

You can see the clear theme of this passage. Paul uses the term comfort nine times in four verses. God is the “God of all comfort,” encouragement, consolation. From the root of this word comes the very name of the Holy Spirit, “the Comforter,” the One who comes alongside and encourages and comforts us.

Let me exhort you. Have you experienced God’s comfort? Then you are to be an agent of comforting others. God “comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction.” Look for someone that you can comfort. Are you experiencing affliction? Notice, it reads God comforts us “in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort” others. God never wastes affliction. If you are under affliction, pressure or stress right now, look to God for comfort. And as He comforts you, you will have an opportunity to comfort someone else.

God comforts us so that we might be able to comfort others. We are very Christlike when we look for opportunities to comfort another brother or sister in Him. Let me encourage you with that today.

*"When my anxious thoughts multiply within me,  
Your consolations delight my soul."* Psalm 94:19

When the cares of my heart multiply within me - when my anxieties, my anxious thoughts, multiply within me – *"Your consolations delight my soul."* That is often the way it works for me, and I bet it does for you, too. Anxiety breeds anxiety. We say to ourselves, "What if ...?" and that leads to another "what if ..." and yet another. Anxious thoughts multiply within us. But the psalmist says when that happens - when our anxious thoughts multiply within us - His consolations, His comforts, His perfections give us peace. They delight our very souls.

This is a great anchor verse - a great truth that the psalmist knew and enjoyed. Those same terms ("Your consolations" and "Your comforts") are used in Isaiah, where it says a nursing baby is satisfied with his mother's comforting breasts (Isaiah 66:11). What a picture of the way the Lord, the Comforter, comes to us in our times of need.

We have a great God. He is indeed the *"God of all comfort"* (2 Cor. 1:3). He is *"the God of peace,"* (Romans 16:) and *"the God of hope"* (Romans 15:13). As we contemplate His attributes, we find our anxieties not multiplying, but dissipating.

When your anxious thoughts multiply within you, let me encourage you to focus your eyes on Him. Open your Bible and let the Holy Spirit, the Comforter Himself, speak peace to you. You will find that His consolations will delight your soul.

## Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled

Day 3

*“Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”* John 14:1-3

This morning when I woke up, I had the words of our Lord on my mind from John 14. Jesus is facing the crisis of His life – His crucifixion; the turning point of history, the crux of all eternity. Jesus came to give Himself for us. He knew what was ahead. Yet He was reaching out to comfort others - to give encouragement to you and me in times of trouble.

Time after time, these words have comforted my soul. I am sure many of you would say the same thing. Jesus did not think solely of Himself. He thought of others at a time of crisis. In fact, He spoke these comforting words on the very night that He knew He was facing death. Later that night He would pray, *“Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done”* (Luke 22:42).

What a High Priest we have! What a Savior! He has been tempted in all things, as we are, yet without sin. He can sympathize with our situations. In these turbulent times, many of us are tempted to be troubled and our hearts are discouraged, even fearful. But the Lord says, do not let *“your heart be troubled; believe in God; believe also in Me.”*

I am so thankful that our Lord was willing to say and act the way He did in the face of His crisis. He said that He will never leave or forsake us. He will be with us in our times of fear and discouragement. We can fully depend on Him.

I encourage you to read John 14 today. Take time in His word and let these words of comfort encourage your heart. The Lord will use it for good.

*“When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You.  
In God, whose word I praise;  
in God I have put my trust;  
I will not be afraid.  
What can mere man do to me?”  
Psalm 56:3-4*

David, the author of the 56th Psalm, knew a lot of trouble in his life. When we are tempted to fear or to be afraid, when we are more than tempted, when we are outright afraid, we can do what David did. We can put our trust in God. I love the way he puts it here in the Psalm, *“I will put my trust in You—in God whose word I praise.”* It was not a god of his imagination but rather the One and Only God who has spoken, the God whose Word David praised.

As if he wants to remind himself, David then repeats,

*“In the Lord, whose word I praise.  
In God I have put my trust. I shall not be afraid.  
What can man do to me?” Psalm 56:10-11*

David introduces the repetition of this great truth with this thought from verse 9, *“This I know, that God is for me.”* We can know that God is for us. The Apostle Paul puts it as a rhetorical question after he has explained how much God is for us. In Romans he writes, *“If God is for us, who is against us?”* (Romans 8:31) David states it this way, *“This I know that God is for me. In God whose word I praise”* (Psalm 56:9-10). You and I can know that God is for us. We can trust in Him.

Let me encourage you today. God is for you and His word is an anchor for your soul.

## Your Father Knows Your Needs

Day 5

Recently, my wife and I took advantage of a beautiful day to take a walk. We were walking through the woods enjoying the fresh air and the nature around us when I saw a little sparrow. He flitted ahead of us as we walked down the path and then disappeared into the forest. I thought of our Lord's words in Luke. *"Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God"* (Luke 12:6).

What a wonderful illustration the Lord gave of His care and His ability to keep track of everything. He goes on and says, *"Indeed the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; You are of more value than many sparrows"* (Luke 12:7).

The Lord came back to this kind of illustration often. He spoke these familiar words in the Sermon on the Mount:

*"Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ...*

*Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or, 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' For Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."*  
Matthew 6:26, 31-32

Are you tempted to be fearful and anxious? Maybe you're wondering if your job is secure? What about the business? Those kinds of questions go through our minds.

It is so good to know that the Lord Jesus said on many occasions, *"Do not be anxious."* Your heavenly Father knows your needs. You are worth much more than the birds of the air that He feeds and clothes and cares for. Enjoy this as you meditate on who our Lord is, and on the goodness of our heavenly Father.

*“The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble  
And He knows those who take refuge in Him.” Nahum 1:7*

I recently received a text from a good friend who wrote, “Sometimes verses just seem to jump off the page: Nahum 1:7.” I want to share it with you because sometimes verses do seem to do just that: jump off the page. The Lord IS good; He IS a stronghold, and you can find Him to be just that in the day of trouble. He knows those who take refuge in Him. In the Old Testament when it says the Lord “knows,” it speaks of an intimate knowledge of the love and care He has for us. If you know the Lord, if have you taken refuge in Him, He knows you intimately.

It is good to hear these words, yet it is important to look at their context. Nahum 1 is called “the oracle of Nineveh.” It is a prophecy of judgment. Verse 7 stands out against a dark backdrop. There is a judgment on either side of this comforting truth about our Lord. Nahum begins, *“The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries”* (Nahum 1:1). You cannot read the Bible without seeing that God is holy. He is a God of judgment. *“Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger?”* (Nahum 1:6) Verses 8 and 9 continue on with that judgment.

But, in verse 7, Nahum says, *“The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who take refuge in Him.”* You see the huge contrast between the one who has taken refuge in the Lord and the one who stands under His judgment. I picture it like a diamond on black velvet. When you go to a jeweler, they do not just show you a gem on the glass countertop, but rather he or she will lay it out on black velvet so that the gemstone – in contrast – will stand out all the more. Nahum 1:7 speaks so clearly of who our Lord is, and it speaks all the more clearly as we see it in context.

*“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). We deserve His judgment, but when we take refuge in Him, He knows us. We can bask in the truth that the *“Lord is good.”* He is *“a stronghold in the day of trouble.”*

## He Knows Those Who Take Refuge in Him, Part 2

Day 7

*“The Lord is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble  
And He knows those who take refuge in Him.” Nahum 1:7*

We have been looking at the verse that my friend texted me in Nahum 1:7. *“He knows those who take refuge in Him.”* I have noticed as I have traced this thought through Scripture, that the psalmists loved to rejoice in taking refuge in the Lord. In a world of storms, chaos and confusion, we also, can take refuge in the Lord.

Often a psalm of praise or thanksgiving to the Lord will close by admonishing us to take refuge in Him. For example, the 2nd Psalm closes by saying, *“how blessed are all who take refuge in Him!”* (Psalm 2:12) The 34th Psalm closes in a similar way: *“None of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned”* (Psalm 34:22). That is a guarantee. *“All.” “None.”*

Sometimes the psalmist begins with an exhortation to take refuge in the Him. You and I understand this all the more when we meditate on this phrase, *“to take refuge in Him.”* In Psalm 18 David says,

*“I love You, O Lord, my strength.  
The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,  
My God, my rock in whom I take refuge;  
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.  
I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised,  
And I am saved from my enemies.” Psalm 18:1-3*

Notice the personal language David uses, *“I love You, O Lord.”* You *“are my rock and my fortress and my deliverer”* in Whom I have taken refuge. In the 7th Psalm David begins, *“O Lord my God, in You I have taken refuge”* (Psalm 7:1). Can you say with David, in a very personal way, *“O Lord, my God, in you have I taken refuge”*?

No one who has taken refuge in Him will be condemned. We have God’s word on it. All who have taken refuge in Him will be blessed. We have a great Savior.

*“Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”*  
Nehemiah 8:10

Nehemiah and Ezra were contemporaries. They ministered in a time when people were tempted to be downhearted and troubled. That is probably true of people of every era. But certainly today, we live in a time when we might be tempted to be distressed and saddened. Nehemiah and Ezra encouraged and calmed the people, telling them, *“Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”*

Let me remind you of that today. If you are in a circumstance, and many of us are, where you are tempted to be fearful and discouraged - lift up your eyes. *“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”* The joy of the Lord comes from focusing on Him.

One of my favorite ways to have my joy restored is to turn to the Book of Psalms. Psalm 146 is one of those psalms - like so many of them - that focuses our attention back on the Lord. The joy of the Lord comes from the Holy Spirit, and I am confident that the Spirit, whose fruit is, *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness ...”* (Gal 5:22), can use a psalm like this:

*“Praise the Lord!  
Praise the Lord, O my soul!  
I will praise the Lord while I live;  
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.” ...*

*“The Lord opens the eyes of the blind;  
The Lord raises up those who are bowed down;  
The Lord loves the righteous;  
The Lord protects the strangers;  
He supports the fatherless and the widow;  
But he thwarts the way of the wicked.  
The Lord will reign forever,  
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.  
Praise the Lord!”* Psalm 146:1-2, 8-10

Read Psalm 146 and let it refocus your attention on the Author of this book, the Author of history, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord.

*“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*  
Romans 15:13

I would like to share a few thoughts on hope. We often use the word in an uncertain way, “I hope it doesn’t rain,” or “I hope my favorite team wins.” But when the Bible uses the word hope, it means absolute certainty.

The book of Hebrews has a great definition of hope. *“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us”* (Hebrews 6:19-20). Jesus is our ultimate hope. He has conquered sin and death and He is in the very presence of God. He is *“within the veil.”* Hope is something that we have as believers that we should never forget. We have a hope that is unshakable.

God is the God of hope. Paul writes in Romans, *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”* (Romans 15:13). I love that. We can abound in hope! We do not have to just survive, or cling to a small thread of hope, but we can abound in hope. We overflow with hope because our hope is in nothing less than the unchanging God of the universe. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

The hope that we have is supernatural. *“You may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* It is the Spirit’s ministry as we focus our eyes on Jesus. As we spend time in His Word, it is His supernatural ministry to give us hope. And not just a little hope, but we *“abound in hope”* by His power - the power of the Holy Spirit.

*“The Lord is righteous in all His ways  
And kind in all His deeds.  
The Lord is near to all who call upon Him,  
To all who call upon Him in truth.  
He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;  
He will also hear their cry and will save them.”*  
Psalm 145:17-19

Let me encourage you with six lines from Psalms 145, a psalm that underscores many attributes of our Lord. *“The Lord is righteous in all His ways.”* He always does right in all His ways. The Lord is *“kind in all His deeds.”* Kindness is an attribute of our Lord. *“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another”* (Eph 4:32). As we walk with Him, and as the Holy Spirit fills us, Ephesians says that we will be kind to one another, loving one another, forgiving one another *“just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”*

*“The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.”* Whatever your circumstances, if you will call upon the Lord, He will hear you. If you call upon the Lord in truth, you will not be disappointed. *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”* (Proverbs 9:10). And the psalmist says, *“He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him.”* He will also hear their cry and save them. If you will cry out to Him today, He will hear your cry and will save you.

We have a great God. Psalm 145:17-19—just three little couplets—six lines - are full of encouragement for us because the people who know their God will display strength and take action. Enjoy Him today.

*“Do not hide Your face from me,  
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;  
You have been my help;  
Do not abandon me nor forsake me,  
O God of my salvation!  
For my father and my mother have forsaken me,  
But the Lord will take me up.” Psalm 27:9-10*

Have you ever felt forsaken, let down, or betrayed? Every one of us has known that feeling, and it's not a good one. The let downs can be small: someone disappoints you, or you feel left out of the “in-group” in school or even church. But they can be more serious. There are times when you truly depended on someone in a business or personal relationship and they didn't come through for you. So many people today have felt forsaken at the deepest level of human relationships. Maybe your parents or a close friend has failed you. Maybe your spouse – the one you trusted your whole life to - has betrayed you. Maybe your child has turned away from you. Understandably, you may feel betrayed and forsaken. David touched upon that very issue in Psalm 27. *“My father and my mother have forsaken me. But the Lord will take me up.”* David knew a depth of commitment that the Lord had to him. David was sure of it.

Let me encourage you. Even if you have been forsaken at the deepest level of your being and have experienced abandonment, David assures you that the Lord will not desert you. He writes, *“The Lord will take me up.”* This is not just something David had a vague hope in. It is a promise the Bible gives to every one of His children. Hebrews 13 universalizes this principle, *“I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you”* (Hebrews 13:5). That is the Lord speaking. He will never desert you.

Enjoy that today. You will never be forsaken by the One who promised never to forsake you – God Himself.

*"The Lord is my light and my salvation;  
Whom should I fear?  
The Lord is the defense of my life;  
Whom should I dread?  
When evil doers 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 will be confident." Psalm 27:1-3*

Do you ever feel surrounded? Maybe that is the way you feel right now. When you look ahead to the day, it looks ominous. When you look back at yesterday, you feel overwhelmed or oppressed. When you turn to the left or to the right, everywhere you look there are challenges and obstacles. Being surrounded is not a good feeling. David was often in situations in life where he was surrounded. But he could say in Psalm 27, *"Though a host encamp against me ... in spite of this, I will be confident."* How could he say that? The same reason you and I can today, *"The Lord is my light and my salvation."*

No matter what you are facing, if you feel surrounded and everywhere you look you see insurmountable challenges, there is One who is on your side. You can be confident in spite of your circumstances because if *"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?"* If *"the Lord is the defense of my life,"* and He is, *"whom should I dread?"*

David wrote, in spite of being surrounded by trouble, *"I will be confident."* Each one of us can have that same confidence.

## Look and Listen to the Birds of the Air

Day 13

*“Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?”* Mathew 6:26

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke like no man ever spoke. His teaching is recognized worldwide as amazing in every sense of the word. He used simple thoughts and ideas to express profound spiritual truths. In probably His most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, He said, *“Look at the birds of the air.”* Observe them. He says later in Matthew that not one sparrow falls to the earth without the notice of your heavenly Father (See Matthew 10:29). Just look at the birds and you notice so much about our God.

Jesus said, *“Look at the birds.”* I would add listen to the birds! During these days of lockdown, I have noticed that things are quieter; there is less traffic. As we have gathered to pray, brothers and sisters in Christ have said, “I was listening to the birds this morning.” One morning I was out on my deck with my laptop and when I joined a Zoom prayer meeting, someone said, “Don’t turn your microphone off.” They were listening to the birds chirping in my backyard as I was sitting there quietly ready to pray.

Listen to the birds. They are not nervous. They are not worried. They are giving praise to God. I encourage you today to look at the birds. Your heavenly Father takes care of them and He will certainly take care of you. Listen to the birds. They trust Him. They do not bother storing up in barns and building great storehouses. No, your Father feeds them. Listen to them cheerfully sing. Why did He give them those varied voices I wonder? One reason is that we can hear their cheerful songs and realize that our Father is well worth trusting.

Praise Him today - look to His creation and learn from it and praise Him for the birds of the air.

*“Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.*

*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” John 16:32-33*

We can learn so much from our Lord in His time of real crisis. He took His disciples and spoke to them in the Gospel of John. *“Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end”* (John 13:1).

Jesus had a deep sense of His relationship with His Father. Because of that, even when He knew He was going to be abandoned by His closest friends, He could say to them, you are going *“to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone because the Father is with Me.”* Because of the certainty of His relationship with the Father, He could then minister to the very ones who were going to forsake Him. The next verse has been such a comfort to so many of us. *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”*

Because Jesus knew who He was, He could minister to others and say such great words of encouragement. How many of us have clung to that verse like an anchor in times of trouble? Yes, in the world we will have trials and tribulation. But cheer up, He says, *“I have overcome the world.”*

Jesus is saying these things in the midst of His own crisis, where He is going to be abandoned by those closest to Him and (it seemed) was going to be left alone. But He said, *“I am not alone. The Father is with Me.”* Jesus is a pattern for us in so many ways. In the same way, you and I are never alone. He has promised to never leave us. And the more we understand that we are never alone, the more we will be able to encourage and strengthen others around us.

The more you and I understand how much God is for us and that He will never leave us, the more we will be able to work from a reservoir of confidence to encourage others.

*“Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant.”*  
2 Corinthians 3:5

Have you ever felt inadequate? Maybe you are feeling that way right now. Maybe you are facing a daunting challenge and you realize you are not up to the task. Let me encourage you from Scripture. Don't do what we often do and simply say to yourself, “No, I am adequate.” We often try to prop ourselves – or one another – up by saying, “We've got this. We can do this. We can handle this.” Don't do that. Scripture says you and I are not adequate in and of ourselves.

2 Corinthians 3:5 is a verse that I have gone to time after time in my life when I feel overwhelmed by a circumstance or a task. *“Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves.”* It is a dead-end street to try to prop ourselves up in order to make ourselves feel up to the challenges we're facing. If you're feeling inadequate, confess it to the Lord. Jesus said, *“Apart from Me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5).

Actually, and I say this carefully, we **are** adequate. Our adequacy comes from God. The verse continues, *“not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.”* Through Christ, Paul wrote, *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:13). We cannot do anything of lasting value apart from Christ. But in Christ we have the omnipotent God alive and well in us through His Holy Spirit. Our adequacy comes from God.

Remember these two simple truths: You are not adequate; your adequacy comes from God. You are not adequate, God is. God lives within you. *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ [who] lives in me”* (Gal 2:20). No matter what challenge you are facing today, He is able.

# He Delivered Me from All My Fears

*"I sought the Lord, and He answered me,  
And delivered me from all my fears.  
They looked to Him and were radiant,  
And their faces will never be ashamed.  
This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him;  
And saved him out of all his troubles.  
The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him,  
And rescues them." Psalm 34:4-7*

One of the privileges of being a child of God is that you are part of a family. It has been a great help to my prayer life to be able to pray with others. A couple of mornings ago, I was praying with brothers and sisters in Christ and someone in the group quoted the 34th Psalm. It is a psalm that speaks to all of us. *"I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears."*

I have experienced that many times. I hope you have, too. When we seek the Lord, He delivers us from the anxieties, the fears, and the negative thinking that might be creeping in and getting a foothold in our lives. The psalmist then says, *"they looked to Him and were radiant."* Their faces were radiant, not just perked up, but radiant, because the Lord heard, answered and delivered them from all fears.

*"The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them."* What a beautiful picture. In the Old Testament, "the angel of the Lord" is another way of saying God Himself - God incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him. If you are in a battle and have the angel of the Lord encircling and camping around you, that is a good place to be. You can go to sleep and rest because there is One protecting you. There is One who looks out for you, who watches over you.

I hope the 34th Psalm speaks to you and resonates in your heart as it did mine that morning. Those words came off the page as my brother prayed them back to the Lord. It is a great benefit to pray with others and speaking to one another in psalms and hymns is a beautiful expression of how the Holy Spirit works in our lives.

## To Believe Is to Trust, to Lean On

Day 17

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
And do not lean on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He will make your paths straight.  
Do not be wise in your own eyes;  
Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.” Proverbs 3:5-7*

Faith – belief – is central to an understanding of our relationship with God. We are saved by grace through faith (see Ephesians 2:8). “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). But what does it mean to “believe”? The Bible speaks a lot about faith, over 90 times in the gospel of John. The noun form of belief or believing (faith) is used repeatedly in the book of Romans and other epistles. We lay hold of God through faith.

Real belief in Christ, trusting Him, is not merely intellectual assent. One of the best ways to see the truth of this is to use Biblical synonyms or words that are used in place of the word faith in other passages of Scripture. One of the most famous texts in all the Bible, in the Book of Wisdom, the Book of Proverbs, says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” In the Hebrew poetry in which the book of Proverbs is written, the writer often uses couplets of statements. Sometimes they are synonymous, saying the same thing twice. Other times they are antithetical, saying something differently. In these verses, the second line helps us understand the first line. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart.” That is stated in the positive. Then the writer states the negative. “Do not lean on your own understanding.” We might expect him to say, Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not trust in your own understanding. But instead he says, “Do not lean on your own understanding.”

To trust is to lean on, or lean into. We lean into a ladder and hope that it is firm and solid. We depend upon, we rely upon, something. That is what it means to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to trust Him. It is to lean on Him. It is the opposite of leaning on your own wisdom, your own understanding.

A text like this can help us see what it really means to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to walk daily, believing Him, walking by faith, trusting, leaning on Him at all times. I hope that helps you as it has helped me.

# None Who Take Refuge in Him Will Be Condemned

*"None of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned."  
Psalm 34:22*

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is to take refuge in Him. The 34th Psalm is a beloved psalm and it closes with this thought, *"None of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned."*

My mind quickly goes to the parallel passage in the New Testament, *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1). To be in Christ Jesus is to have believed in Him, to trust Him, to repent from your sins, and throw yourself wholly on His grace. As the psalmist says, *"take refuge in Him."* And, *"None of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned."* It is so reassuring to know that.

The other day, I listened to a preacher teach from Acts Chapter 2. He said almost 3000 people believed on the day of Pentecost. I am sure I have said that as well from the pulpit. But when I thought about it and looked at the text more carefully, on the day of Pentecost - the first big conversion of people to Christ - the new believers asked, "What should we do" when they were under conviction? Peter said, *"repent,"* and 3000 did repent. (See Acts 2:37-41)

To believe in Christ is to repent, to turn from your sin, and to take refuge in Christ. If you have fled for refuge to Jesus Christ, if your hope is built on nothing less than what Jesus Christ accomplished for you, then you are in Christ. *"And there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* Satan might come and accuse you. The world might try to condemn you. But you have an Advocate with the Father.

*“Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God saw the sons of Israel and God took notice of them.” Exodus 2:23-25*

The Bible is a timeless book and it reveals to us a timeless God, a God who is above time. He never changes, so everything you learn about Him in the Bible is still true today and will be true throughout eternity. Israel was in deep bondage, in slavery and persecution in Egypt. For nearly 400 years the Israelites suffered under Pharaoh's relentless persecution. They sighed, they cried out, they groaned and God heard their groaning, and remembered His word, His covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was aware and He took notice of them. He came down and revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush.

*“The Lord said, ‘I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters; for I am aware of their sufferings.’ ...*

*“Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.” Exodus 3:7, 9*

God knows your situation just as He knew the situation of the Israelites. He said to Moses, *“Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt”* (Exodus 3:10). The Lord said, I have heard, I have seen, I am aware, and I have come down to deliver my people. This is a picture of the ultimate deliverance. He was going to use a man, Moses, to deliver His people. But He said, *“I have come down to deliver them and I will use you, Moses.”* Moses is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. He saw us in our need. He heard our groaning and our cries. He is aware, and He sent His Son into this world to come down and deliver us.

He has not changed. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is a great Savior.

*“O God, You are my God; I will seek You earnestly;  
My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You,  
In a dry and weary land where there is no water.  
Thus I have beheld You in the Sanctuary,  
To see Your power and Your glory.  
Because your lovingkindness is better than life,  
My lips will praise You.  
So I will bless You as long as I live;  
I will lift up my hands in Your name.  
My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness.  
And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips;  
When I remember You on my bed.  
I meditate on You in the night watches,  
For You have been my help,  
And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.  
My soul clings to You;  
Your right hand upholds me.” Psalm 63:1-8*

Do you have trouble sleeping? Or maybe you get to sleep and then wake up and you can't get back to sleep. King David knew about that. He writes in the 63rd Psalm, *“When I remember You on my bed I meditate on You in the night watches.”* And when he did so, his very soul went from thirsting to satisfied to clinging.

The Psalm begins by saying, my soul thirsts like a man in a parched land where there is no water. But then David came into the presence of the Lord. He meditated on who the Lord is. When he focused on the Lord he says, *“Your lovingkindness is better than life. My lips will praise You.”* *“I will lift up my hands in Your name.”* David's soul went from thirsty to satisfied.

What a picture of comfort and protection. When David meditated on the Lord in the middle of the night, he saw himself under the very wings of his Lord and protected to where he could sing for joy. If you find your soul thirsty and are unable to sleep, focus your attention on the Lord. Meditate on Him, and as you do, you will find your “soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness.” What a great Savior we have.

*“The Lord bless you, and keep you;  
The Lord make His face shine on you,  
And be gracious to you;  
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,  
And give you peace.” Numbers 6:24-26*

I never get tired of hearing the words of this great blessing in Numbers 6. There is one aspect I want to underline today. *“The Lord make His face shine on you.”* What a picture of His blessing. David prayed in the 27th Psalm, *“Do not turn your face from me”* (Psalm 27:9). The opposite of the Lord’s blessing would be if the Lord turned His face from us. But the Lord will never forsake us. Quite the opposite, in fact. The Lord keeps His face towards us. This blessing resonates with every one of us. *“The Lord bless you and keep you, The Lord make His face shine on you.”* Pray that for your family, pray that for me, pray that for one another.

The pathway of blessing is basking in the care of our Lord, His face shining on us. The opposite of blessing is turning our face away from Him, or Him turning His face away from us. Thankfully, He will never turn His face away from you and me. But we should not turn our face away from Him. Maybe you are thinking, “I have been ignoring Him; I have been neglecting Him.” Turn your face back to Him and say with the Scripture, “O Lord, make your face shine on me.”

Be occupied with Him.

"Fret not yourselves because of evildoers,  
 Be not envious toward wrongdoers.  
 For they will wither quickly like the grass,  
 And fade like the green herb.  
 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.  
 And He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,  
 And your judgment as the noonday.  
 Rest in the Lord and 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, and forsake wrath;  
 Fret not yourselves, it leads only to evil doing." Psalm 37:1-8

David gives some great advice in Psalm 37: "Fret not yourselves," rather "delight yourself in the Lord." My 91-year-old mother has written the title over this Psalm, "Fret or Delight." You have a choice. When you get up in the morning, in the middle of the day, when you face situations, you can "fret or delight."

David surrounds his exhortation, "delight yourself in the Lord" in verse 4, with the idea of trust in verses 3 and 5. We could say, the opposite of trust is fretting. The opposite of fretting is trusting in the Lord; delighting yourself in the Lord.

Are you tempted to be anxious, fearful, fretting? You have a choice, fret or delight. Three times David says, "fret not yourselves." Do not fret "because of evildoers," or because of "him who prospers in his way." That "leads only to evil doing." Rather, "delight yourself in the Lord." "Commit your way to the Lord. Trust also in Him, and He will do it."

*"In my trouble I cried to the Lord, And He answered me."* Psalm 120:1

Paul wrote to the Romans *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."* Sometimes you might say, "It's not possible. I am for peace but they are for war." That is exactly the circumstance the psalmist found himself in. The short, but very instructive, Psalm 120 closes with that statement. After seven verses, it says at the end, *"I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war"* (Psalm 120:7).

Maybe you are in a circumstance like that at work or in your family. You just can't seem to make peace. I want to remind you that the Scripture says, *"If possible, so far as it depends on you."* But I also want you to read what the Psalmist said,

*"In my trouble I cried to the Lord,  
And He answered me.  
Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips  
[sometimes you are being lied about],  
From a deceitful tongue  
[there are those who are saying untrue things about you],  
What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you,  
You deceitful tongue?  
Sharp arrows of the warrior,  
With the burning coals of the broom tree.  
Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech,  
For I dwell among the tents of Kedar!  
Too long has my soul had its dwelling  
With those who hate peace.  
I am for peace, but when I speak,  
They are for war."* Psalm 120:1-7

That describes many situations in life. Maybe you have been in a situation like that for some time. Maybe you try to make peace, but they want war and you are being attacked. Maybe this psalm specifically applies to a situation you are in right now. Use the trouble you are in and cry to the Lord. He will answer you. If I were to summarize the psalm, I would say, "I cried – He answered." Can you say that? *"In my trouble I cried to the Lord, and He answered me."* It is a great place to be.

Even when you are in the day of trouble, He may not remove the troublesome circumstances, but He will answer your cry. We have God's Word on it.

*“And you are My witnesses.  
Is there any God besides Me?  
Or is there any other Rock?  
I know of none.” Isaiah 44:8*

At the end of his life, Moses spoke of the Lord to all of Israel. He said, I want to tell you about the Lord, the Rock. The Lord Himself says through Isaiah in chapter 44, *“Is there any God besides Me? Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.”*

Our Lord is a rock. He is the only Rock. He is the steadfast One. He is immovable. He is a place of security and safety. He is the only place of security. Moses describes this Rock, the Lord Himself, Yahweh, in Deuteronomy 32: *“For I proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just. A God of faithfulness and without injustice”* (Deut. 32:3-4). Every characteristic of Him, all of His ways, are just. He is completely faithful. *“Great is your faithfulness,”* Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations (Lam 3:23). Moses goes on and says, *“Righteous and upright is He”* (Deut. 32:4).

I am always interested in hearing what a man of God has to say at the end of his life. I would encourage you to read the whole “Song of Moses” in Deuteronomy 32. There is a lot to learn about our God. I love how Moses begins: I want to talk to you; I want to proclaim the name of the Yahweh, the name of the Lord, to *“ascribe greatness to our God, the Rock! His work is perfect. His ways are just.”* He is *“a God of faithfulness ...without injustice. Righteous and upright is He.”*

He is the only one you can fully trust. He is the only Rock.

## The Lord Who Hears, Cares and Delivers

Day 25

*“The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous,  
And His ears are open to their cry.  
The face of the Lord is against evildoers,  
To cut off the memory of them from the earth.  
The righteous cry and the Lord hears,  
And delivers them out of all their troubles.  
The Lord is near to the brokenhearted,  
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Psalm 34:15-18*

Our God is a great Savior. He does not change. He is timeless. What you learn about Him in this century will be true in the next century. It will be true throughout eternity. In Exodus, the Lord revealed Himself to Moses and said that He had heard the cries of Israel. He sent Moses, who is a picture of His Son, to deliver His people (Exodus 2:23-25). That was a narrative account and it is a picture of what God did for all of us when He sent His Son to this world.

I love it when the Bible states similar things that are declarative statements about our God. Psalm 34 is very parallel to the account in Exodus; He hears, He sees, He takes notice, and He acts. This is the message of the whole Bible - God is a God of deliverance. If you are stubborn and will not respond to Him, the psalmist says, *“the face of the Lord is against evildoers”* and *“He will cut off the memory of them from the earth”* (Psalm 34:16). But if you are brokenhearted about your sin and come to Him in repentance, *“He saves those who are crushed in spirit.”* *“His ears are open to their cry.”* If you know the Lord, you know this is true. As His child, you can cry out to Him at any time and His ears are open to your cry. *“The righteous cry and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles”* (Psalm 34:17).

No matter how deep the challenge is that you are facing, *“the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”* That is who He is. That is who He has always been - in Moses' day, in Jesus' day, and in our lives today. Do not ever let your circumstances separate you (in our own mind) from the Lord, because they can't. Nothing can separate you from the loving God who hears, cares and delivers.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, *"Therefore we do not lose heart"* (2 Cor 4:16). This is an amazing statement when we consider what he wrote later in the same letter:

*[I have been in many imprisonments], "beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches."* 2 Cor 11:23-28

What a model of a faithful shepherd Paul was. He was a man just like you and me. He had the same frailties, the same nature, but he had Jesus Christ as his Lord and Master. He could say, *"We do not lose heart."*

I do not know what you are facing today, but I doubt the list is as long as Paul's as he recounted some of the things he had been through. In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul writes,

*"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison."* 2 Cor 4:16-17

This is God's Word. Paul called that long list of his own sufferings as *"momentary, light affliction"* compared to the heavy *"eternal weight of glory"* that awaited him. Every one of us can claim that. I know that our burdens can seem heavy, but the Scripture says no matter how heavy, and how long they have drug on, they are light and temporary in comparison to the *"eternal weight of glory"* that God has waiting for us.

Enjoy that truth today and don't lose heart.

## In My Distress I Call Upon the Lord

Day 27

*“The cords of death encompassed me.  
And the torrents of ungodliness terrified me.  
The cords of Sheol surrounded me;  
The snares of death confronted me.  
In my distress I called upon the Lord.”* Psalm 18:4-6

Have you ever found yourself stressed or in real distress? David was often in those kinds of situations. That is one reason why we so love the songs that he penned under the inspiration of the Spirit in the Book of Psalms. He was in distress in Psalm 18. Are you anxious? Call upon the Lord. Call upon Yahweh as David did. *“In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God for help.”* He is not just “my God,” He is God; He is Yahweh, the Lord, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

In your distress, call upon the Lord. Call out to God the Creator of the heavens and the earth - the One who holds the universe in His hands. You can cry out to Him in your distress and He hears. *“He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry for help before Him came into His ears”* (Psalm 18:6). Aren't you glad that God hears and answers prayer?

Today, if you're facing stress, anxiety, or distress, cry out to the Lord. He is always waiting to hear from you. Your cry for help will come before His ears. He is a God who hears.

*"When my anxious thoughts multiply within me,  
Your consolations delight my soul."* Psalm 94:19

Do you ever feel overwhelmed? Anxious thoughts pile on, and the more they pile on, the more they multiply. *"My anxious thoughts multiply within me,"* the Psalmist says. Have you ever felt that way? I do not know much about electronics, but I do know that often just shutting down and starting over - a reboot - clears the deck, so to speak. Sometimes emotionally it may feel like we need that in our lives. I need it daily. I bet you do too.

Many times over the years of walking with the Lord I have gone to a verse, a truth, in the Psalms. Psalm 94 is a kind of restart for my emotions, my perspective. *"When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your consolations delight my soul."* The character of God, the consolations of Himself, *"delight my soul."* In other words, I take my mind off my anxious thoughts and burdens that are causing those anxieties, and I lift them upward to God. His very name is the Consoler, the Comforter, the Helper.

If you are feeling anxious today, let me encourage you to meditate on who the Lord is. Let the characteristics of God, His very attributes, the excellencies of the Lord, delight your soul. Even when you are feeling overwhelmed, His consolations can change that. His solace does not just pacify, it can actually delight your soul.

Let me encourage you to pause today and turn your eyes on the Consoler Himself, the Comforter, the Lord.

## The Blessings of the First Psalm

Day 29

*“How blessed is the man who does not walk  
in the council of the wicked,  
Nor stand in the path of sinners,  
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!  
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.  
And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,  
Which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither;  
And in whatever he does, he prospers.” Psalm 1:1-3*

I want to ask three questions from the first psalm in the song book God gave us, the Book of Psalms. Who blesses? The Lord. The Lord who made heaven and earth. God is a God of blessing.

Who is blessed? The psalmist tells us, *“The man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners.”* But how blessed is the man whose *“delight is in the law of the Lord,”* who delights in scripture, who meditates on it day and night. Do you want to be happy and blessed? Delight in God’s word. Meditate on it, savor it.

Then the third question: What is the blessing? There are many blessings. God *“has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”* (Eph 1:3). But this psalm describes two such blessings. There will be stability and deep-seated convictions that come from God. Instead of blowing here and there, the person who meditates on God’s word *“will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water.”* And there will be fruitfulness. The one who is blessed is like a tree that *“yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”*

In one sense, stability and a fruitfulness in life are temporal blessings. But the psalm goes on to say that these blessings are also eternal blessings. *“The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.” “For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish”* (Psalm 1:4,6).

This very first psalm reminds us that we are in this for eternity. God’s blessing is not just temporal in the sense of stability and fruitfulness right here and now, but also for eternity.

*“And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more so do for you, O men of little faith?”* Matthew 6:28-30

It is part of the human condition to be prone to anxiety, to be anxious. Many times, I have been tempted to anxiety, maybe even giving in to anxious thoughts. In those times, the Lord has used His words in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6 to be a comfort in my life.

Think about it. God *“arrays the grass of the field”* with wild flowers and beauty, even though He knows that it is going to sprout up, wither away and be burned. If He takes care to clothe the grass of the field, Jesus said, how much more will He do so for you, His blood-bought child. He cares for you, loves you and sent His Son to die for you. Jesus said this, *“Will He not much more do so for you?”*

Take God at His word. He said He will provide for you. He will meet your needs. The antidote to anxiety is often simply taking God at His word. Jesus continues,

*“Do not be anxious then, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or, ‘What shall we drink?’ or, ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”* Matthew 6:31-32

People who do not know the Lord worry and are anxious about these things. But Jesus tells us our Father knows that we need food and clothing. He knows about our job and situation at work. He knows about the bills you have to pay.

The statement, *“O men of little faith,”* is a reminder that it is a very small faith that becomes anxious about what we are going to eat or with what we are going to clothe ourselves. He says, I take care of the grass of the field; I will certainly take care of you. Trust Him today.

*“Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You.  
I said to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord;’  
I have no good besides You.”* Psalm 16:1-2

What does it mean to take refuge in the Lord? We have a picture of taking refuge in the Lord in Psalm 16. It is a psalm of David. David knew plenty about taking refuge in the Lord. It is also a messianic psalm. In the New Testament, both Peter on the Day of Pentecost, and Paul in his first recorded sermon in Acts 13, quoted this psalm and applied it to the Lord Jesus. We know that He, as a perfect man, perfectly took refuge in God. He perfectly trusted His Father.

A key aspect, maybe the central aspect, in taking refuge in the Lord is to realize, *“I have no good [except for] You.”* It is to forsake trusting in yourself, in your circumstances, and to take refuge, to trust completely, in the Lord. I take refuge in You. The psalmist says, *“I have no good besides You.”*

If you are experiencing loss right now, or circumstances that seem devastating, you can relate to this statement, *“I have no good except for the Lord.”* That is a good place to be. Sometimes God takes things out of our lives to teach us that we have no real good besides the Lord. That is when we will take refuge in Him.

Today, no matter what your circumstances, you really do have no good besides the Lord. He is all you need. You and I can take refuge in Him because He is our only hope, our only refuge, our only fortress, our only Rock, our only Redeemer. Take refuge in Him.



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