

Words of Hope

Christ Will Not Forget You

Bob Roane

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"The LORD has forsaken and forgotten us."
But Christ replies,
"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast
and have no compassion on the child she has borne?
Though she may forget, I will not forget you!
See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands."
(Isaiah 49:14-16)

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Words of Hope: Christ Will Not Forget You (2nd Edition)

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I have received help from many sources over the years and have done my best to acknowledge all the ones I can remember.

Use of a source does not imply a complete endorsement of that person, but an appreciation for their insight on a particular point.

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“Where does your security lie? Is God your refuge, your hiding place, your stronghold, your shepherd, your counselor, your friend, your redeemer, your savior, your guide? If He is, you don't need to search any further for security.”
—Elisabeth Elliot

Contents

Introduction	4
1. Honest with God	7
2. Chosen by a Higher Love	14
3. Waiting on God	21
4. Engraved on His Hands	29
5. Wanted for Eternity	35
6. The Turn-Around King	42
7. Panic to Praise to Peace	50
8. The Missing Piece	58
About Words of Hope	66

“Jesus Christ is the great central fact of world history.
To Him everything looks forward or backward.
All the lines of history converge upon Jesus.
All God's great purposes climax in Him.”
—Charles Spurgeon

Introduction

This booklet is written to all who are weary and need rest, to all who mourn and long for comfort, to all who feel worthless and wonder if God even cares, to all who are weak and fail and desire strength, to all who sin and need a Savior. Look with me to Jesus Christ, the mighty Friend of sinners, the Pursuer of wanderers, the Justifier of those who have no excuses left.¹

God's Scriptures, with the blessing of the Spirit, revive our souls, make us wise, bring joy to our hearts, give light to our eyes, warn us, and show us how to receive the Lord's great rewards of grace. The Bible is more precious than much pure gold and sweeter than honey from the honeycomb.² I hope that these Bible meditations bless you and point you back to Jesus.

This content first appeared as blog posts on the Words of Hope website (WOHBM.org). The first 5 chapters started as a study of Isaiah 49:14-16, a passage that speaks powerfully to many people. The teaching here has been field-tested in classrooms, counseling, and prison ministry. These are bite-sized bits of Bible truth, illustrated and applied for Christian living.

I quote from older hymns and writers to remind us that we are not alone in our difficulties and to encourage us to go deeper in living authentically before the face of God.

I am sharing this booklet with people in prison and outside, and I hope you do, too. A digital version is available for free on our website. Chapters may be read in any order, and footnotes are included for those hungry to learn more.

John Piper said, “I’ve learned from years of serious reading that *sentences* change my life, not books. Some new glimpse of truth, some powerful challenge, or some answer to a dilemma usually comes concentrated in a sentence or two. I do not remember 99% of what I read, but if 1% of each book or article contains a life-changing insight, that’s wonderful and valuable.”³ With the Lord’s blessing, maybe some of the sentences here will help you, dear reader.

I am grateful to all the friends, prayer partners, encouragers, and supporters who have made my ministry possible since 1980. They truly have been co-laborers in the gospel with me, and I am thankful to God for each of them. Once again, Laura Arrazolo served as my talented editor. She provided tons of helpful feedback to improve this work. Felix Arrazolo formatted the manuscript and e-books and gave valuable suggestions and encouragement. Best of all, in the process, we have grown in our friendship and relationship with Christ.

Most of all, praise to the Son of God who took on human nature and became obedient to death on a cross for us! Therefore, God raised and exalted Christ to the place of highest honor and gave Him the Name above all others. Every knee should bow and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, so that in everything He might have the supremacy.⁴

Notes 1 Adapted from James Boice and Ray Ortlund (“This Church Opens Wide Her Doors,” dashhouse.com, Sep 9, 2014). 2 Ps 19:7-11. 3 My notes from his radio message. 4 Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:18.

“So long as Jesus Christ is in Heaven before God for us,
our salvation is secure.”
—Sinclair B. Ferguson

Psalm 146

- 1 Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, my soul.
- 2 I will praise the Lord all my life. I will sing praise to my God
as long as I live.
- 3 Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings,
who cannot save.
- 4 When their spirit departs, they return to the ground.
On that very day their plans come to nothing.
- 5 Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God.
- 6 He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and
everything in them. He remains faithful forever.
- 7 He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food
to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free,
- 8 The Lord gives sight to the blind, and He lifts up those
who are bowed down. The Lord loves the righteous.
- 9 The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the
fatherless and the widow, but He frustrates the
ways of the wicked.
- 10 The Lord reigns forever—your God, O Zion, for all
generations.

Psalm 146 draws from Isaiah 61, and Jesus does the same in Luke Chapter 4 when He describes many of the things He came to do for us.

1

Honest with God

God's people said, "The LORD has forsaken and forgotten us."
But Christ replies, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast
and have no compassion on the child she has borne?
Though she may forget, I will not forget you!
See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands."
(Isaiah 49:14-16)

Achingly Difficult

Author Vaneetha Risner shared, "Many times, I've thought life was finally getting better, only to find it was just the calm before the next devastating storm. I grew afraid to hope again. I wondered where God was when things kept getting worse."

She went on, "I buried my precious son when he was two months old because the doctors made a mistake." Six years later, Vaneetha was diagnosed with post-polio syndrome, requiring lifelong care. After another six years, her husband abandoned her and filed for divorce.

Vaneetha said, "Those years are a blur to me. Just as I was coming to terms with one calamity, the next one came raging through. I wondered how I could handle yet another blow."¹

Since the Lord is all loving, wise, and powerful, why doesn't He always rescue us from terrible things? Don't you wonder?

Unmet Expectations

Writer Philip Yancey said that atheists are not disappointed by God. They expect nothing and receive nothing. But Jesus' followers look for Him to *intervene*, as He did in Bible times and has many times since. So Christians often feel discouraged or depressed when our experiences don't match our expectations of the Lord.

Solomon counseled, "Enjoy prosperity while you can, but when hard times strike, realize that both come from God." Apart from Jesus, nothing is certain.²

Yancey explains, "We think that life should be fair because the Lord is fair. But *God is not life*. Many of us expect full health, success, problem-free relationships, happy-ever-after. But the Lord never promised these. God sent His Son as His remedy to our pain, to experience it and absorb it Himself."³

Jesus' Torn Heart

During his time on earth, Christ entered a town called Nain with a large crowd following Him. As Jesus neared the city gate, a funeral procession marched out. The deceased was a young man, the only son of his widowed mother. She was brokenhearted and broke. When the Lord saw her, Scripture tells us, *His heart went out to her*.⁴

The Greek word for Jesus' reaction is *spagchnizomai*. Christ was profoundly moved by the woman's crisis. Sometimes we say that a desperate situation "breaks my heart" or "makes me sick to my stomach." Ancient people believed that compassion, mercy, and love lived in the intestines or guts. So, when Dr. Luke used the verb *spagchnizomai*, he meant that Jesus felt as though something was splitting or tearing deep inside of Him. That's how strongly Christ felt for this widow. And that's how strongly He cares about us now!

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and
saves all those who are crushed in spirit.
(Psalm 34:18)

Not Forsaken, Not Forgotten

In Isaiah's day, God's people were never abandoned by Him, but they sometimes *felt* that way. When we read Old Testament history, we can see why. They cried, "The LORD has forsaken and forgotten us." But God never deserted His people in Isaiah's day, and He won't give up on us now.

Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He,
I am He who will sustain you.
I have made you and I will carry you.
I will sustain you and I will rescue you. (Isaiah 46:4)

God's *Hesed* Love

One Hebrew word God uses to express His devotion to us is *hesed* (khe-sed). It's the way God describes Himself in Exodus.⁵ It's used about 250 times in the Old Testament, and it means goodness, graciousness, kindness, and steadfastness. *Hesed* describes God's supernatural affection that is faithful and unfailing. It's similar to the New Testament words *love* and *mercy*. Thank God, our hope is based on *His* unchanging character, not on *our* wobbly situations, feelings, or efforts.

In Lamentations, God's people were mourning Jerusalem's destruction by enemies. They were overwhelmed with grief. But in the agony of their anguish, God sent Jeremiah to assure them of their eventual rescue and restoration:

Christ Will Not Forget You

Because of the LORD's great love (*hesed*)
we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail.
They are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness.
The LORD is good to the one whose hope is in Him,
the one who seeks Him. Though He brings grief,
He will show compassion,
so great is His unfailing love (*hesed*).
(Lamentations 3:22-23, 25-26, 32)

Proof of God's Love

Elisabeth Elliot's missionary husband Jim was violently murdered in Ecuador when she was 30, leaving her a widow with a one-year-old daughter. Years later, Elisabeth wrote:

"Why doesn't God do something about suffering?
The Lord did, He is, and He will."⁶

God's love for His people is best evidenced in His sending Jesus to carry our sins, griefs, and sufferings on the cross, so that we do not carry the burdens of life alone. Christ has walked the ultimate path of suffering, and He has won victory for us.

Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that He lays down His life for His friends." (John 15:13)

10 More Ways God Shows His Steadfast Love

The Lord's loving faithfulness is demonstrated in all the Scriptures and motivates us to love Him back.

1. God tells us the truth; He cannot lie. He keeps His promises; we can count on Him.⁷
2. The Lord *wants* to hear and *does* hear every one of our prayers. He answers in His own way and time.⁸
3. God is faithful to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.⁹
4. Christ protects us from evil and the evil one. He rescues us from tests or temptations that are too hard for us.¹⁰
5. The Lord leads, guides, and counsels us.¹¹
6. Jesus commits Himself to His followers forever.¹²
7. God refines us and comforts us at the same time.¹³
8. Jesus watches over, strengthens, and sustains us to the end. He will purify us completely when He returns.¹⁴
9. God will make all world leaders, good and bad, honor Jesus as Lord, and He will restore justice and peace.¹⁵
10. The Lord will bring the new heavens and new earth He has promised, a world filled with perfection and righteousness. He will wipe every tear from our eyes.^{16, 17}

Sometimes I fall to my knees and pray—
Come, Jesus, come! Let today be the day.
Sometimes I feel like I'm gonna break,
But I'm holding onto a hope that won't fade.

Come, Jesus, come! We've been waiting so long
For the day You return to heal every hurt
And right every wrong. We need You right now—
Come and turn this around. Deep down I know
This world isn't home, so come, Jesus, come.¹⁸

We Can't Ignore the Lord

Job was an Old Testament believer who had his children, possessions, and health all taken away by Satan. Job struggled painfully with doubt and disappointment with God.¹⁹ Job's book

teaches us to take all our anger, doubt, and bitterness to the Lord. He is glad for us to come to Him, and He can handle all our venting. The spiritual giants of the Bible wrestled with God, but they never shut Him out. We *can't* make our feelings disappear, but we *can* express them to Jesus and ask for His help. God will respond with grace. What the Lord won't tolerate is ignoring Him or acting as if He does not exist.²⁰

The fool says in their heart, there is no God.
(Psalm 14:1, 53:1)

Scripture tells us, “In their pride, wicked people do not seek God. In all their thoughts there is no room for the Lord.”²¹ Let's not be like that, dear ones. Let us honestly cast all our anxieties and burdens on Jesus because He cares so deeply for us.²² He has proven His love with His life, death, and resurrection.

Prayer

Lord, You created us, You laid down Your life on the cross for our sins, and You keep loving us. You are alive and reigning in Heaven, and we belong eternally to You! Help us to live in light of these life-giving truths today. We surrender all our sorrow, loneliness, anger, guilt, and fear to You. You are big enough to absorb it *all*. Please heal our hurts and help us forgive those who hurt us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.²³

Notes 1 Vaneetha Randall Risner, “Where is God When Things Keep Getting Worse?” *desiringgod.org*, Feb 15, 2017. 2 Ecc 7:14. 3 Philip Yancey, *Disappointment with God*, 1997. 4 Luke 7:11-17. 5 Exod 34:6-7. 6 Elisabeth Elliot, *Suffering is Never for Nothing*, 2019. 7 Num 23:19; Matt 24:35; Josh 23:14; 2 Cor 1:17-18; Heb 6:17-18.

Honest with God

8 Ps 3:4, 4:1, 13:3, 17:6; Isa 55:9; 1 John 5:14. 9 Mic 7:18-19; Eph 1:7-8; 1 John 1:8-10. 10 1 Cor 10:13; 2 Thes 3:3; 1 Pet 4:19. 11 Ps 23:3, 25:4-5, 32:8; John 14:26. 12 Hos 2:18-20; Isa 54:5; Jer 31:32; Mark 2:19-20; Eph 5:22-33; Rev 19:7-10. 13 Ps 119:75-76; Heb 12:5-10. 14 1 Cor 1:8-9; 1 Thes 5:23-24. 15 Ps 2; Is 49:7; Phil 2:9-11; Rev 21:24. 16 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21-22. 17 List adapted from Craig Brian Larson, "16 Ways God Is Faithful," Feb 11, 2019. 18 Steven McWhirter, et al, "Come, Jesus, Come," 2024, sung by CeCe Winans. 19. See Job Ch 3-37. 20 Yancey, *Disappointment with God*. 21 Ps 10:4. 22 1 Pet 5:7. 23 Prayer based on Eph 1:20-21; Luke 6:27-28; Rom 12:19; 1 Sam 12:24; Eph 4:32.

I will build my house, whether storm or drought
On the rock that does not move.
I will set my hope in Your love, O Lord
And Your faithfulness will prove
You are steadfast, steadfast.
In the moment of emptiness, all was fulfilled.
In the hour of darkness, Your light was revealed.
In the presence of death, Your life was affirmed.
In the absence of righteousness, You are still God.
You are steadfast, steadfast

(Sandra McCracken, "Steadfast")

2

Chosen by a Higher Love

This is what the LORD says—
He who created you, He who formed you:
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by name. You are Mine.”
(Isaiah 43:1)

A Caring Touch

In India, Dr. Paul Brand (1914-2003) pioneered the treatment of leprosy. One time, Brand laid his hand on a patient’s shoulder and, through a translator, explained the treatment that lay ahead. To his surprise, the leprous man began to shake with muffled sobs.

Dr. Brand asked his translator, “Have I done something wrong?” The translator reported, “No, doctor. He says he is crying because you put your hand on his shoulder. Until you came here, no one had touched him for many years!”¹

We all need the touch of human kindness because we were made to experience our Creator’s love through others.

We know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.
Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.
We love because the Lord first loved us. (1 John 4:16, 19)

What Could Be Stronger?

In the Scriptures, Jesus compares His extreme dedication to mother-love,² perhaps the strongest emotion among humans. Our mom carries us for nine months, gives birth in pain, and commits years of her life to raise us. A mother may also be someone who stepped in, stepped up, and stepped forward for a child who needed her.³ Either way, a mother puts the needs of her children first and does her best to train them right.

A mother's devotion lasts as long as she lives. She loves us before we are born; she adores us despite all our mistakes; and she will always be committed to us—because we are hers. Mothers often perform extraordinary acts (using “hysterical strength”) when children's lives are in danger.

- In Quebec, Lydia Angiyou was awarded a medal for fighting off a polar bear attacking her child and his friends.⁴
- In England, two moms, Donna McNamee and Abigail Sicolo, lifted a car off a boy to save his life.⁵

Some women have heartbreaking lives. If they have been mistreated or abused, their God-given motherly instinct may be damaged. That's tragic for those moms and their children.

But thank God, many mothers mirror God's heart. My mom died in 2023, and she was the best! When Christ says that His commitment is stronger than a mother's, He is telling us that His care for us is eternally and supernaturally more powerful.

Oh, the deep, deep love of Jesus
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free
Rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me

Christ Will Not Forget You

Underneath me, all around me is the current of His love Leading
onward, leading homeward
To His glorious rest above.⁶

God's Mother-Love

The Lord's people can feel forsaken and forgotten. But Christ assures us in Isaiah 49:14-16, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands."

Throughout the Bible, God swears an oath that He will forever protect and provide for His followers. He says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So, we can confidently say, "The Lord is my Helper. I will not fear. What can anyone do to me?"⁷ We are never forgotten. Never abandoned. Never left alone.

No Longer Orphans

In Psalm 27:10, God guarantees, "Even if your father and mother cast you aside, I will receive you." The Hebrew verb for "receive" is *asaph*, meaning "gathers in, welcomes, accepts." Even when others fail or hurt us, the Lord draws His followers to Himself and holds us close. One missionary said, "My father and mother abandoned me. I was like an orphan! But Jesus took me in and made me His."⁸ Being loved by Christ changes everything!

By God's act of free grace, all who repent and believe on Jesus are adopted as the Lord's sons and daughters with precious privileges that go on forever.⁹

“All those the Father gives Me will come to Me,
and whoever comes to Me I will never drive away...
I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you.”
(John 6:37, 14:18)

Whom Will the Father Choose?

In the 1970's, a woman named Hanh had an affair with an American soldier. The soldier returned to the U.S., unaware he had fathered a child. Hanh's baby girl, Linh, looked different from other Vietnamese children, with pink skin and curly, blonde hair. In that culture, mixed race kids were hated. Some moms killed their children to spare them the pain of rejection.

Hanh raised Linh the best she could until the shunning became too severe. Then she abandoned her young daughter. Linh was mocked by people who called her “alien devil,” and she came to hate herself. She didn't yet realize that she was precious to God, made in His image. For two years, Linh survived by begging in the streets until someone brought her to an orphanage.

One day, word spread through the orphanage that an American couple was coming to adopt a young boy. All the children got excited because one of them was getting a home. Linh, now nine, was given the job of cleaning up the little boys. She scrubbed them and combed their hair, wondering which lucky one the Americans would choose.

Soon the couple arrived, and Linh noticed that the husband had huge hands. He lifted every baby and kissed them, tears running down his face. Linh saw that this man loved every child as though they were his own flesh and blood.

Linh remembers: “Then the man saw me out of the corner of his eye. I was sickly and scrawny, with lice in my hair and scars all over. But the man put his huge hands around my face and jabbered away in English with a gigantic smile. The translator said, “*He wants you, Linh! He says you are the one for him.*”¹⁰

Spiritually Lost

This story reminds us how God affectionately chose *us* while we were spiritual orphans, unattractive in our sin.¹¹

What is sin? Jesus said the greatest *commandment* is to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. So, the greatest *sin* is not loving the Lord or others who need our help. “Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it sins.”¹²

Christ also forbids attitudes or actions that dishonor the laws He has given to direct our lives. This includes worshiping anyone or anything other than the Lord (including ourselves); murder, sexual wrongs, stealing, lying, and wrong desires. God’s commands flow out of His great love for His children.¹³

Sin is self-centered, not God-centered. When we rebel against the holy Lord who made us, we estrange ourselves from Him. Sin always brings pain to us and others.¹⁴

The Way Back to God

Praise the Lord, He cleanses us and brings us back to Himself. *Jesus took the initiative to save us!* Only this didn’t involve lifting a car. It required Him to lay His life down. Christ died 2,000 years ago on the cruel cross and rose from the dead so the Father could adopt you and me for Himself!

The Lord cancels all charges against us, nailing them to Jesus' cross. God tramples our sins and sends them to the bottom of the ocean where they will never be found. Jesus' holy blood washes our souls cleaner than fresh snow.¹⁵

"This is the new covenant I will make, promises the Lord. I will put My laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds. Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."¹⁶

The Father's Delight

Now Christ looks at His followers lovingly and says, "You are the apple of My eye, My chosen one, My royal child. I welcome you and will never abandon you. You are Mine forever!"¹⁷

How can it be that I should gain
Salvation through the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain,
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That You, my God, should die for me?¹⁸

Christians need to preach Jesus' good news to ourselves every day. Otherwise, we get spiritual amnesia and forget how gentle and gracious God really is. Scripture reminds us, "You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to You. You delight to show mercy. You answer us in our distress."¹⁹

Our New Identity

As Jesus' followers, we have *already* been rescued by God from the dominion of darkness and brought into Christ's kingdom of light. So, when we fall into sin, let's run back to God our Father and receive

fresh cleansing. Then let's remember, rest in, and live out our new identity in Jesus. His kindness turns us away from selfishness and toward serving Him and others.²⁰

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. But if we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8-9)

Prayer

Father, we praise You for Your all-powerful love! Thank You for choosing us, even at our worst, to be adopted into Your forever family. Help us remember that You are near, our caring and protecting Rescuer. Forgive us for forgetting about You or taking You for granted. Change us so we think, walk, and talk more like You, our Royal Heavenly Father, every day. Amen.

Notes 1 Jeff Kennon, *The Cross-Shaped Life*, 2021. 2 Deut 32:18; Isa 49:14-16, 66:13; Matt 23:37. See also John Sanderson, *Mirrors of Glory*, 1990. 3 See Jouré Rustemeyer, “Four Different Types of Love,” *helpmychildcpd.com*, Jul 15, 2023. 4 “Lydia Angiyou,” *Decorations for Bravery, Gov. General of Canada*, Feb 29, 2008. 5 “Mothers Lift Car Off Boy,” *Mirror UK*, June 5, 2009. 6 Samuel Trevor Francis, “O, the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus,” 1875. 7 Deut 31:6-8; Heb 13:5-6; Ps 118:6. 8 Gordon Churchyard. 9 See John 1:12-13; Rom 8:14-17; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 4:4-5; 1 John 3:1-3. 10 Adapted from a true story told by Lee Strobel. 11 Matt 9:12-13; 1 Tim 1:15-16. 12 Mark 12:29-31; James 4:17. 13 See Ex 20:1-17; Prov 6:16-19; Rom 3:23, 7:24-25; Gal 5:19-21; 2 Tim 3:1-5; James 1:14-16. 14 Rom 5:10; Col 1:21-22; 1 John 3:4. 15 Col 2:13-14; Micah 7:18-19; Eph 1:7; Isa 1:18; Ps 51:7. 16 Jer 31:33-34; Heb 10:16-17. 17 Deut 32:10; 1 Pet 2:9. 18 Charles Wesley, “And Can it Be,” 1738. 19 Ps 86:5-7. 20 Rom 2:4; 1 John 1:8-2:2; Ps 103:12, 130:3-4; Jer 50:20.

3

Waiting on God

I say to God my Rock, “Why have You forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning?”

My bones suffer agony as my foes ask,
“Where is your God?” Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.
(Psalm 42:9-11)

The Trouble with Waiting

Philip Roa, a marketing professional, hates waiting for two reasons. “First, the suspense leaves me confused. Am I supposed to do something while waiting, or just sit it out until the Lord intervenes?”

“Second, it seems a waste of time. If only things would happen sooner, I’d move on with my life. Waiting is a lot like stretching a rubber band and not knowing when to stop pulling. You anticipate the inevitable snap of the band or a strong resistance as the stretching continues.”

Roa realizes, “But when it seems like nothing is happening, waiting time gives me an opportunity to pray, to make an internal shift in perspective, and to grow in character.”¹ These are wise words from a younger Christian brother.

We can rejoice when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. This hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love. (Romans 5:3-5 NLT)

We're in Good Company

We can be overwhelmed at times and assume that God has forgotten us. The most stressful life events are the death of a loved one, divorce, marriage conflict, incarceration, major illness or injury, job loss, and moving.² In Bible times and now, God's people are not spared from these trials, or worse.

- Joseph and Daniel were two of the Lord's favorite people, wise and strong believers, but they were jailed unjustly. Joseph was in prison for 13 years.³
- Following God's leading, the Hebrews still ended up as slaves in Egypt. After centuries of groaning, God powerfully intervened and delivered them.⁴
- Martha and Mary were heartbroken that Christ delayed His visit to heal their sick brother Lazarus. They said, "Lord, if You had been here, he would not have died."⁵

Christian believers can feel forsaken by God, unimportant in His sight. Maybe we think we have sinned too often or too badly. Maybe we believe the lie that we are undeserving of God's attention—like a drop in the bucket to Him. Maybe this is what you are going through today! When everything seems to be going against us, let's remember

that we are seen, heard, and valued by the Lord. His help is often around the corner.

Even when I don't see it, You're working.
Even when I can't feel it, You're working.
You never stop, You never stop working.⁶

When We Can't Find the Words

The Holy Spirit guided people to write the Psalms in times of deep sorrow and anguish. Those believers asked God to come down and restore them after natural disasters, oppression by enemies, and their own failings. Sometimes the Lord answered fast, sometimes after many years. These Psalms are preserved in Scripture to train *us* to pray to God wisely and directly.

I never feel satisfied with my own made-up prayers. So, I often turn to the Psalms. They are my favorites. They roar and sing. They provide me with sustenance as they have for countless other believers through the ages. —Actress Helen Hayes

King David said that just as the smoke and fragrance of incense in the tabernacle floated up to God, so our prayers rise to the Lord to express our need for His help in everything. We are always 100% dependent on God. Apart from Christ we can do nothing, but we can do all the things He has called us to do through Jesus, who strengthens us.⁷ That is why we pray.

Praying Like Jesus

Christ prayed to His beloved Father on the cross, suffering from the crushing weight of *our* wrongs. He knows what it's like to feel far from God for a time. And He never forgets. Several Psalms echo Jesus' emotions and show us how to pray.

“Do not hide Your face from Me in anger. You have been
My Helper. Do not reject Me or forsake Me, God My Savior...
Arise, Lord! Lift up Your hand. Do not forget the helpless...
How long, Lord? Will you forget Me forever?”
(Psalm 27:9, 10:12, 13:1)

We can lift up these exact words to God or use our own words to pour out our hearts to Him. The Psalms had immediate meaning for David in times of intense suffering. They had a unique significance for Christ, the once-for-all Savior. And the Psalms have ongoing usefulness to Jesus' believers now.

Sovereign Timing

The Lord is never cold or callous. But Scripture teaches us that He usually has a slower way of working things out in His universe than we expect or want.

In His time, in His time
He makes all things beautiful in His time
Lord, please show me every day
As You're teaching me Your way
That You do just what You say in Your time⁸

While We Wait

Matthew Henry taught us 3 ways that God answers prayer:

- The Lord says “Yes” and gives us what we ask
- He says “No” and gives us something better
- or Christ says “Wait” and gives us His best later on⁹

Our Heavenly Father already knows exactly what we need, and His delays are not always denials.¹⁰ God is not a cosmic vending machine, but He is a loving Father. Often His answers to prayer are already on the way, and He wants us to trust Him and hang on. Meanwhile, He may have something to teach us that we will be glad about later.

Blessings in Three Stages

Believers want *all* the benefits Christ purchased for us right now. But that’s not realistic. Those blessings unfold in 3 phases:

- Partly in this life
- More when we die and our souls return to God
- Fully in the restored creation that Jesus will bring.¹¹

Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any other God who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him.
(Isaiah 64:4)

Elisabeth Elliot wrote, “Waiting on God requires the willingness to bear uncertainty, to carry within ourselves the unanswered questions, lifting our hearts to God whenever doubts intrude on our thoughts.” This is the hardest part of the Christian life.

Jesus Understands

Christ Will Not Forget You

Christ gets us. He was often hated, despised, and rejected. He experienced sorrow and terrible suffering. People turned their backs on Him and treated Him as a nobody.¹²

Christ was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. His punishment brought us peace, and by His wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:3-5)

Have you been tempted, lonely, betrayed? Jesus understands fully, totally, completely. There is no suffering, no pain, no sorrow that Christ can't comfort, because He knows exactly how you feel. Our Wounded Healer still bears His scars.¹³

Jesus is able to sympathize with our weakness, pain, and loss, so we can approach God's throne of grace with confidence to receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16)

He not only has sympathy (feeling for you). Christ also has empathy (feeling with you). The One who sits on the throne was once in the trenches just like us. He fully understands *from experience* what you are going through every moment!

Jesus is not visibly present with us now, but He is alive and powerfully working for us.¹⁴ By His Spirit, Christ lives in us and connects personally with each of us in everyday ways. We can *see* the Lord with eyes of faith. We can *hear* Him as we listen to His word, the Bible. And we can *talk* to Him in prayer, whether silently or aloud. When we live like this daily, Jesus is close to us through His Spirit at the deep level of a best Friend.

Cast your cares on the LORD and He will sustain you.
He will never let His people be shaken. (Psalm 55:22)

To our wounds only God's wounds can speak,
And no god has wounds but Christ alone.
(Edward Shillito, "Jesus of the Scars")

Unexpected Friendship

Musician Strahan Coleman was chronically sick for 3 years, with no energy to work or go out. Doctors couldn't cure his illness. Unable to provide for his children, Coleman felt worthless and experienced panic attacks. Yet he kept turning to Jesus, his only hope. He remembered the Scripture, "Lord, to whom shall we go? *You* have the words of eternal life."¹⁵

When Coleman prayed, he received no audible answer. Instead, he gained an unshakeable assurance of Christ's love. "This was the greatest gift of my life." Over time, Coleman moved from feeling terribly alone to never doubting God's presence for one second. "I experienced His arms around me in my deepest grief. And I moved from working *for* God to a friendship *with* Him."¹⁶

Jesus! What a Help in sorrow
While the billows over me roll.
Even when my heart is breaking,
He, my Comfort, helps my soul.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!
Hallelujah! What a Friend!
Saving, helping, keeping, loving,
He is with me to the end.

Jesus! I do now receive Him.
More than all in Him I find.
He has granted me forgiveness.
I am His, and He is mine.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!
Hallelujah! What a Friend!
Saving, helping, keeping, loving,
He is with me to the end.¹⁷

Prayer

Lord Jesus, our Wounded Healer who loves us to the end, You are worth waiting for! Thank You for enduring scorn, shame, and the heaviness of our sin to reconcile us to God. Forgive us for thinking that Your silence is indifference. Help us to see those painful times as faith-stretching. Strengthen our hearts to trust in Your unseen but real presence. Hear us, help us, and have mercy upon us. Amen.¹⁸

Notes 1 Philip Roa, “Waiting Well When Nothing is Happening,” *ymi.today*, Dec 8, 2022. 2 Sian Ferguson, “Top 10 Life-Stressors That Can Trigger Anxiety,” *psychcentral.com*, July 27, 2022. 3 Gen 39-40; Dan 6. 4 Exod 1:1-15. 5 John 11:1-35. 6 “Waymaker,” 2015, by Sinach. 7 Ps 141:2; John 15:5; Phil 4:13. 8 Ecc 3:13; Maranatha Singers, “In His Time,” 1980. 9 Matthew Henry, *A Method for Prayer*, 1710. 10 Matt 6:7-13, 25-33. 11 2 Pet 3:13, Rev 21:1-4. 12 Isa 53:3. See also Lam 1:12. 13 John 20:27. 14 Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25. 15 John 6:68. 16 Strahan Coleman, “When I Was Unwell,” Streams Studio #300, Mar 29, 2025. 17 J. Wilbur Chapman, “Jesus, What a Friend for Sinners,” 1910. Chapman (1859-1918), a widower who also lost an infant son, wrote this at age 51, after the death of his second wife. 18 See Isa 53, Ps 27:13-14, Isa 40:27-31.

4

Engraved on His Hands

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.
And when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned.
For I am the LORD your God.” (Isaiah 43:2-3)

Why is This Happening to Me?

God’s people often feel defeated because of our own sins, the wrongs committed against us, and painful events outside our control. But let’s never forget that we are still held in our Father’s loving hands, and He is preparing us for eternity.

The Lord has several names for His patient work of sanctifying us: disciplining, pruning, and refining.

My child, don’t make light of the Lord’s discipline,
and don’t give up when He corrects you. For the Lord
disciplines those He loves because we are His children. This
is not enjoyable while it is happening — it’s painful! But
afterward God will give a peaceful harvest of right living to
those who are trained in His way. (Hebrews 12:5-6, 13)

Our Savior doesn’t promise us an easy life, but He does promise to eventually turn our pain into joy and peace.

Christ Will Not Forget You

Jesus said, “I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Gardener. He prunes every branch that bears fruit to make it even more fruitful.” (John 15:1-2)

Because the Lord loves us, sometimes He shapes us through unpleasant experiences. He may take away good things that get in the way of better things. God does this for our good, never to harm us, but to help us resemble Jesus more. We must never lose heart. Our Father is always more concerned about our godly *character* than our short-term *comfort*.¹

Trial by Fire

Christ promises, “I will bring them through the fire
to refine them as silver and gold.
They shall call on My name, and I will hear them.
I will say, this is My people,
and they shall say, the Lord is my God.”
(Zechariah 13:9)

The Lord wants to separate the sin in us He hates from the saved-by-grace sinners He loves. Our souls are more precious than gold, so God sometimes turns up the heat. He reveals impurities in our hearts, minds, and lives to skim them off.²

Above all, God the Father desires to see the reflection of Jesus’ face in the character of each Christian. Christlikeness is God’s goal for all His children. —Kenneth Wuest

Written on Jesus' Hands

Our faith is tested and strengthened by the Lord's refining. When we are in pain, let's not doubt Him. Instead, let's remember His intense love for us. In Isaiah 49:16, Christ says, "See, I have engraved *you* on the palms of My hands."

God assures us, 'I'm committed to you. In everything that I'm doing, I'm caring for you. You are at the forefront of My mind and My heart.' We belong to the Lord and He gives us what we need for life and godliness, and grows us in our relationship with Him, so that we flourish for His glory and our joy. —David Platt³

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea:
A great high priest whose name is Love
Whoever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands.
My name is written on His heart!
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No one can cause me to depart.⁴

Triply Safe

We are super secure! Our grip on God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) may falter, but He won't lose His triple grip on us. Jesus pledged to never let go of His flock, His believers. All men, women, girls, and boys who trust and follow Jesus are cherished, guarded, and preserved in His wounded hands. In addition, we are held securely in the power of God our Heavenly Father.⁵

Christ Will Not Forget You

Jesus said, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one will snatch them out of My hand or My Father’s hand.” (John 10:28-29)

But keep going! Every single believer is marked in Jesus with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who guarantees our inheritance until Christ returns for us.⁶ Ranchers brand their cattle, loggers carve symbols on their trees, and people mark important papers with a wax seal. All these are signs of ownership and authenticity. The Spirit is God’s proof that we are His children.

God the Holy Trinity knows that His believers can go through extreme trials, so Christ piles up His promises to assure us that He will not let anyone or anything separate us from Him.

How marvelous, how wonderful! And my song shall ever be –
How marvelous, how wonderful is my Savior’s love for me!⁷

My soul clings to You.
Your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:8)

Scarred Hands Save Us

Christ’s hands were pierced by the nails of the cross as He died in our place. Even after Jesus’ resurrection, grieving Thomas insisted, “Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger there, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

Christ invited Thomas closer to see the evidence. “Peace be with you... Put your finger here. See My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe.”⁸

Because Jesus is fully God and fully human in one Person, His sacred wounds guarantee our forever healing.⁹

- His becoming human made the cross possible (since God can't die).¹⁰
- Christ's deity (His divine nature) makes His death infinitely powerful to redeem repenting sinners.¹¹
- In His death, Jesus saved a great multitude that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language.¹²
- Christ's resurrection proves that His sacrifice in our place was accepted by God the Father. It also guarantees the future physical resurrection of all His followers.¹³

With Jesus' two natures, He accomplished our salvation fully and finally. As we go through painful trials, let's remember that the One holding us has endured the ultimate trial and overcome. His victory carries us upward to God with Him. Christ's love and power are forever joined. This is why we worship Him with such affection. Jesus is not just a way-up-high God. The greatest superhero, the God-man, bears the scars of battling to reverse the curse of sin for us.

Nothing Can Block Jesus' Love

One of the most powerful chapters about God's love is Romans 8. The Apostle Paul says that because of Christ's doing, dying, and rising, and His irrevocable call on our lives, *nothing, even physical and spiritual enemies*, can ultimately defeat us! The Savior says to His followers, "You can face the trials of life with certainty that you are never alone. I will fight for you and lead you to victory. No matter what, You are held by My love."

“We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”¹⁴

My faith has found a resting place, not in device nor creed.
I trust the ever living One. His wounds for me shall plead.
Enough for me that Jesus saves. This ends my fear and doubt.
A sinful soul I come to Him. He'll never cast me out.
I need no other argument. I need no other plea.
It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me!¹⁵

Prayer

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thank You that we are written on Your hands, on Your heart, and in Your Book of Life! Thank You for Your protection, Your power, and Your peace. Lord, give us faith to trust You through every painful trial, knowing that we are held in the grip of Jesus' scarred hands. Strengthen us to keep on serving You with grateful hearts, clear minds, and loving lives. In Christ's Name we pray, Amen.¹⁶

Notes 1 See Rick Warren, “God’s Purpose in Your Pain,” *plough.com* 2023. 2 Paul Tautges, “The Refiner’s Fire,” *biblicalcounseling.com*, Sep 18, 2020. 3 *Pray the Word* podcast, Jan 16, 2018. 4 Charitie Smith Bancroft, “Before the Throne of God Above,” 1860. 5 Isa 41:10, 13, 46:4. 6 2 Cor 1:20-22; Eph 1:13-14, 4:30. 7 Charles Gabriel, “My Savior’s Love,” 1905. 8 John 20:24-29. See also Ps 35:23. 9 See Isa 53:4-6. See also Chs 3 and 7. 10 Heb 2:14. 11 2 Cor 5:21. 12 Rev 7:9. 13 Rom 6:4, 8:11. 14 Rom 8:37-39. 15 Lidie Edmunds, “My Faith Has Found a Resting Place,” 1891. 16 See Rev 3:5, 20:11-15, 21:7; Phil 3:14, 4:3.

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Wanted for Eternity

Jesus says, “Father, I want My followers, those You have given Me, to be with Me where I am and to see My glory, the glory You have given Me because You loved Me before the creation of the world... I will gather them. I will honor them. I will restore them and bring them home.” (John 17:24; Zephaniah 3:20)

Jesus Wants Us!

Christ was thinking and praying about us on the night before His crucifixion.¹ What amazing love! God (Father, Son, and Spirit) wants to know *us* and spend eternity with *us* as family members and close friends.² Pastor Bob Munger said, “Knowing that Christ wants my fellowship, loves me, and wants me to be with Him has transformed my relationship with God more than any other single fact.”³

Our Savior to the End

Christ desires for us to be with Him now and forever! This is why He opened the way to Himself and to Heaven.

- Jesus actively lived, righteous and loving, in our place.
- He took on Himself the death penalty we deserved.
- The Lord burst out of the grave to give us new life.
- Holy Spirit guarantees that we will see God face-to-face.

No guilt in life, no fear in death:
This is the power of Christ in me.

Christ Will Not Forget You

From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand,
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.⁴

Unafraid to Die

I recently thought of Willard Walden and the happy times we spent talking, laughing, and reading Scripture in his final weeks on earth. I reminded Willard of God's faithfulness to take him home to heaven after he died. I reminded him also that Jesus will swallow up death in victory when He returns. Even as his body wasted away, Willard was at peace about dying. He was also eager for his loved ones to share in the same salvation and hope that he had in Christ.⁵

Willard Walden trusted in Jesus' power both for this life and the next.
Are we doing the same?

Because Christ lives, I can face tomorrow.
Because He lives, all fear is gone.
Because I know He holds the future,
My life is worth the living, just because He lives.⁶

Our Promise Keeper

Jesus came to save His people from their sins and foretold His master plan: "I'll be murdered and raised in three days... I have the power to lay down My life and to take it up again."⁷ And Christ accomplished His mission!

How could we trust any of Jesus' promises if He had failed to rise? Now, *Christ's* resurrection guarantees *our* future resurrection and that He will perfectly keep *all His promises*.⁸

What benefits do believers have now?

- Christ saves us completely and forever if we come to God through Him.⁹
- Jesus gives us eternal comfort, hope, and peace.¹⁰
- We can follow Jesus' way of life mapped out in the Bible, trusting Him to bless us.¹¹
- He will be with us always, even to the end of the age.¹²

What promises remain to be fulfilled?

- One day, Christ will promote us to glory with Him.¹³
- He will call His people's bodies out of every grave, even the depths of the sea.¹⁴
- He will bring us home to Him in the *new heaven* and *new earth*, His restored creation.
- It will be even better than Eden!¹⁵

Our True Superhero

Since Christ was raised permanently from the dead,
He can never die again. Death no longer has mastery
over Him. The death He died, He died to sin once for all.

But the life He lives, He lives to God for us.

(Romans 6:9-10)

We love, serve, and pray to a living Lord, not a dead hero. Jesus is reigning now in Heaven until He puts all His enemies, including Satan, under His feet. Christ is the Lion of Judah, our conquering King who still fights for us. He bought His Church (every single

Christ Will Not Forget You

believer) with His own blood.¹⁶ Jesus clinched our everlasting salvation. Nothing can harm us now! (I never get tired of reminding us of that!)

Christ says: “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32)

Jesus is Calling

The Risen Lord invites, “Those I love, I rebuke and discipline. Therefore, be earnest and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with Me.” (Revelation 3:19-20)

Human history and destiny are fulfilled by Jesus and His kingdom (His eternal empire of grace and peace). His death and resurrection re-open the door to life with God. Don’t miss out, dear one. Christ’s invitation stands, but time is ebbing away. The Lord’s arms are still open!

It’s so sweet to trust in Jesus
Just to take Him at His Word
Just to rest upon His promise
Just to know, “So says the Lord.”
I’m so glad I learned to trust You
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend
And I know that You are with me
You’ll be with me to the end.¹⁷

Remembering the One Who Remembers Us

In Scripture, God calls us to *remember* Him and His faithfulness because He knows we often forget. If we take our eyes off Christ, we may stumble and our hearts may harden.

- Jesus has given us His *creation* to remind us of our *Maker*. The beauty of the earth, the glory of the skies, and all of nature's wonders should stir us to praise God.¹⁸
- Christ has given us *the Lord's Supper* (Communion) so that "whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim *the Lord's death* until *He returns*." Communion is a foretaste of the Lamb's wedding supper that Jesus' followers will enjoy with Him one day.¹⁹
- He's given us *the Lord's Day* (Sunday) to remember His *resurrection* with His people on the first day of each new week. Christ changed the calendar and the day of worship with His mighty victory over sin and death!

Our Powerful Hope

We have already looked at Isaiah 49:14-16: "God's people said, 'The LORD has forsaken and forgotten us.' Christ replies, 'Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! I have engraved you on the palms of My hands.'"

But we may *still* feel confused, lost, struck down, despairing, or alone. So, Jesus says: My child, I love you and laid down My life for you. I see you, I am praying for you, and I will help you all through life. And I want you so much that I will come back to bring you to live with Me. I am your blessed hope.²⁰

Do we believe our Savior's words today? If so, we can sing:

Christ Will Not Forget You

What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see
And I look upon His face
The One who saved me by His grace.
When He takes me by the hand
And leads me through the Promised Land
What a day, glorious day that will be!
There'll be no more sorrows there, no more burdens to bear
No more sickness, no more pain
No more parting over there
But forever I will be with the One who died for me
What a day, glorious day that will be!²¹

Tapping into Christ's Power Now

Until Jesus returns for us or we go home to Him, we need these *disciplines of grace* to press on and to grow spiritually.

- *Soak* in the Scriptures, asking the Spirit to help you remember, trust, and obey them. Don't just dip!
- Talk to God with A-C-T-S: Adoration (praise), Confession of sin, Thanksgiving, and Supplication (requests) all through the day. Bible meditation and prayer are like inhaling and exhaling to stay alive.²²
- Gather regularly with other Christians for worship, prayer, and encouragement.²³ Then go out to serve Christ in your family, workplace, and the wider world.

"Be united with other Christians. A wall with loose bricks is not good. The bricks must be cemented together."

— Corrie ten Boom

We need Christ's power, presence, and promises to fill our lives, not just on Sundays but every day. This transforms our decisions about

time, money and relationships. Then we come alive to God and become the real (God-honoring) human beings He intended! God gives us eternal meaning, purpose, and value! Now we can bless other people in eternal ways.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, help us to trust You today, for the first time or the millionth time. Where we have wandered, bring us back to submit ourselves to You. Thank You that You first loved us! Help us to love You back, speak to You in prayer, and share Your love with the people we meet today. Hang onto us and give us faith to hang on to You all our lives, until we see You face to face. We pray in Your name. Amen.²⁴

Notes 1 To get to know Jesus' heart for us more, see John 13 - 17.

2 Matt 12:46-50; Heb 2:13-14, 12:7; John 15:13-15. 3 Robert Munger, "My Heart, Christ's Home," 1954. 4 Stuart Townend, Keith Getty, "In Christ Alone," 2001. 5 Gen 48:15. 6 Bill and Gloria Gaither, "Because He Lives," 1971. 7 Matt 17:22-23. John 10:17-18. 8 John 11:25-26; 2 Cor 1:20. 9 Heb 7:25. 10 Matt 11:28-30; John 14:1-3, 27, 16:33; 2 Cor 1:1-3, 4:6-18. 11 Matt 5-7; Eph 5:1-2; Phil 4:8-9. 12 Matt 28:20. 13 See Rom 5:1-2; Eph 2:6-7. See "Does the Bible Really Speak about Us Having Glory Someday?" Randy Alcorn, Jan 30, 2023. 14 Rev 20:13. 15 Rev 21:1-4. See also Nancy Guthrie, *Even Better Than Eden*, 2018. 16 1 Cor 15:25; Rev 5:5; Acts 20:28. 17 Louisa Stead, "Tis so Sweet to Trust in Jesus," 1882. 18 Ecc 12:1; Folliott Pierpoint, "For the Beauty of the Earth," 1864. 19 1 Cor 11:23-34; Matt 22:1-14; Rev 19:6-10. 20 Titus 2:12-13. 21 Jim Hill, "What a Day That Will Be," 1955. 22 See "Knowing God through Prayer (A-C-T-S)," WOHBM.org. 23 Heb 10:23-25; Acts 2:42.

24 See 2 Cor 6:1-2; Matt 18:12; 1 John 4:19; Ps 63:8; 1 Cor 13:12.

6

The Turn-Around King

Whom have I in heaven but You? And earth has nothing I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion (inheritance) forever... As for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge. I will tell of all Your deeds. (Psalm 73:25-28)

When Christ is our hope, our lives are never the same. We may still encounter failure or crisis. We still might feel as if God has forgotten us or we have missed His path. But Scripture assures us that Christ, our turn-around Lord, is not done with His work or us! So, our efforts to serve Him are never in vain.

Lives on the Line

In 1952, Jim and Elisabeth Elliot and four other missionary couples took the good news of God's mercy and peace to a violent tribe in Ecuador who had never heard it. These missionaries sacrificed earthly riches and risked their lives to serve Christ. Yet in 1956, the five husbands were speared to death while attempting to befriend the Waorani people.¹

Those missionaries remind me of Stephen the Deacon, who was stoned to death in about 36 AD for boldly sharing Christ's gospel in Jerusalem. Stephen died without fear, looking up to Jesus, whom he saw *standing* in Heaven, actively present and instantly ready to take Stephen's soul up to paradise.²

A Christ-Centered Journey

Those young missionaries in Ecuador sang a hymn the night before they left to meet with the Waorani tribe, committing their lives and the outcome of this journey to Christ.

We rest on You, our Shield and our Defender.
We do not fight alone against the foe.
Strong in Your strength, safe in Your keeping tender,
We rest on You, and in Your Name we go.

Yes, in Your Name, O Captain of salvation,
In Your dear Name, all other names above.
Jesus our Righteousness, our sure Foundation,
our Prince of Glory, and our King of Love.

We go in faith, our own great weakness feeling,
And needing more each day Your grace to know.
Yet from our hearts a song of triumph ringing,
We rest on You, and in Your Name we go.

We rest on You, our Shield and Defender.
Yours is the battle, Yours shall be the praise.
When reigning in the Kingdom of Your splendor,
Victors, we rest with You, for endless days.³

We Struggle to Trust

Psalm 73 at the start of this chapter contains the same hopeful message as the hymn above. But Asaph, the psalm's author, writing 1,000 years before Christ, struggled to trust God. All around him, Asaph saw wicked people prospering and godly people suffering. He wondered if living for God made any difference. We can wonder the same thing today.

But then Asaph worshiped the Lord and got an attitude adjustment. He didn't just go to church; he really met with the Father, Son, and Spirit, and God raised Asaph to an eternal viewpoint. Asaph saw the emptiness of worldly wealth, status, and power. And he grasped the truth that the Lord is our true source of everlasting life and joy.

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

When Our Hearts Fail

We may trust Christ fully all for us to do.
They who trust Him wholly find Jesus wholly true.⁴

Remember, beloved, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.⁵ He keeps on strengthening our hearts with faith and hope. Psalm 73:26 calls the Lord *tsur lebabi* in Hebrew, literally *the rock of my heart*. God puts steel in our souls. He is the solid One we stand on. Jesus is our never-failing Refuge, our Captain and our King, who lifts us when our spirits sink.⁶

Christ is my firm foundation,
The Rock on which I stand.
When everything around me is shaken,
I've never been more glad
That I put my faith in Jesus.
He's never let me down.
He's faithful through generations,
So why would He fail now? He won't!⁷

The Richest Inheritance

The Hebrew word for portion in Psalm 73:26 is *cheleq*, meaning a *fortune* given to us. When we come to faith in Christ, God gives us His precious Self! We also become His children and receive an inheritance that is guarded in Heaven for us. Pastor Eugene Peterson says, “The Day is coming when we’ll have it all – lives healed and whole.”⁸

When God saves us, our “package deal” includes:

- Jesus as our new loving, living Lord and Master
- The Holy Spirit as our new Indweller, Comforter, Counselor, Guide, and Intercessor
- Regeneration: a new heart, mind, and life
- Justification: a new record (God’s pardon and acceptance)
- Adoption: a new family with God the Holy Trinity and Christ’s followers (His Church)
- Sanctification: God working in us to make us holy
- Faith and repentance: new closeness to God our Father
- Good works: new actions flowing out of new hearts
- Preservation: a new guarantee that God will finish what He started in us
- Assurance: new security of eternal salvation in Jesus
- Glorification: a new forever home with Christ in paradise (perfected people in a perfect place with our perfect Lord.)⁹

All this amazing stuff is accomplished by Holy Spirit, not by us!

No eye has seen, no ear has heard,
no mind has conceived all that God
has prepared for those who love Him.
(1 Corinthians 2:9)

God's salvation is an inexhaustible well of grace, strength, and joy that Jesus' believers can continually drink from. Christ is our Living Water. He gives us spiritual nourishment and encouragement, just as water refreshes a thirsty person.¹⁰

A Treasure Worth Seeking

Psalm 73 reminds me of two of Jesus' parables, the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price. Christ is *both* the precious treasure and the priceless pearl. In these parables, the searchers are so overjoyed to find the most valuable thing, they gladly sell everything else to get it.¹¹ For us, that doesn't mean paying anything to God but rather turning from our self-centeredness to seek and serve Him.

Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."¹²

Ordinary Life... Extraordinary Woman

Susanna Wesley (1669–1742) never preached a sermon or published a book. But she changed the world through her passion for Christ and loving service. Susanna and Samuel Wesley had 19 children. Nine of them died as infants. Susanna homeschooled their 10 children. Samuel mismanaged their money, and the family constantly struggled with poverty. Their house burned down twice. Susanna carried heavy burdens!

Susanna's Tent

Even during her busiest years, Susanna still spent time each day in fellowship with God. In her favorite chair with her Bible, she threw her long apron up over her head, forming a sort of tent amidst her

children. There she interceded for her family and others and studied God's Scriptures. This humble habit equipped Susanna with a deep knowledge of the Bible and a close walk with Christ, which she passed on to her children.¹³

Hope out of Heartbreak

It's easy to think that when our lives take a turn for the worse that God has forgotten us or has been defeated. Jesus' first disciples felt this way after He died on the cross. But when we follow Christ, He brings good out of tragedy. That's His specialty. And what God purposes and plans, He will always complete. Nothing can thwart Him!¹⁴

While Jim Elliot was living, he yearned for more Christians to volunteer for foreign missions to unreached people. After the murder of these 5 missionaries, thousands stepped forward to serve. A new chapter of gospel outreach took off!¹⁵

After the deaths of their husbands, Elisabeth Elliot and Rachel Saint stayed with the Waorani. They forgave the men who had murdered their husbands and translated the New Testament into their language. Many Waorani began to follow Christ.¹⁶

Our Unstoppable God

Stephen, a young Jewish preacher, explained to his people how Christ fulfills all the Old Testament.¹⁷ As a result, they stoned him to death. Saul, another young man, stood nearby and heartily approved of Stephen's killing by the crowd.

But God had bigger plans. When Stephen was murdered, the Lord took him home to heaven. Soon the Risen Jesus appeared to Saul, and he was born again to new life.¹⁸ Saul died to his selfish ways and

came to be known as Paul. The Lord raised up Paul to reach both Jews and Gentiles. He traveled over 15,000 miles, half of them on foot! The Holy Spirit also used Paul to write 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament. God is still using Paul's letters in Scripture to change lives today.

From a Spark to a Flame

Susanna Wesley's Christ-centered home life made a huge impact on future generations: she ignited a flame in her sons, John and Charles. They became ministers of Jesus' gospel on both sides of the Atlantic. John traveled 250,000 miles on horseback, wrote over 100 books, and preached thousands of sermons. Charles penned 6,500 hymns, which are still sung in many languages across the planet to worship the living God.

In each of these stories, God fulfilled His promise to work *all things*, even heartache or loss, together for good.¹⁹

When sorrow seems to surround you
When suffering hangs heavy o'er your head
Know that tomorrow brings wholeness and healing
God knows your need. Just believe what He said:
He gives beauty for ashes, strength for fear
Gladness for mourning, peace for despair.²⁰

The Lord Wants to Use Us

God not only uses missionaries and mothers from the past. He calls *each of us* to impact people's lives for Christ. Regardless of our positions, we are all called to be Jesus' ambassadors. Will you trust Him to use even the broken parts of your life for His glory? Offer it all up to Him – and watch what He will do!²¹

Give me, Father, a purpose deep
In joy or sorrow Your word to keep
Faithful and true whatever the strife
Pleasing You in my daily life.
And when at last, I hear the call (to Heaven)
I know I'll say, "It was worth it all."
Only one life – it will soon be past.
Only what's done for Christ will last.²²

Prayer

Heavenly Father, You are faithful over all generations. You never failed people in Bible times, or the Wesleys, or people in Ecuador, and you won't fail us now. You created us, You are providing for us, and You always come through! Help us to taste Your goodness afresh and to tell others about Your incredible love. Cause us to keep on turning toward You and away from everything that displeases You. In Jesus' name.²³

Notes 1 The Waorani were once called Auca, a term no longer used. 2 See Acts Ch 7. 3 Edith Cherry, "Our Shield and our Defender," 1895. 4 Frances Havergal, "Like a River Glorious," 1874. 5 Heb 13:8. 6 See Ch. 4 of *Christ Changes Everything*. 7 Chandler Moore, "Firm Foundation," 2022. 8 See 1 Pet 1:3-12. 9 *Westminster Confession*. 10 Isa 12:3-5; Jer 2:13, 17:13; Zec 14:8; John 4:10, 7:37-39; Rev 7:17. 11 Matt 13:44-46. See Phil 3:8-10. 12 See Luke 9:23-26. 13 Jackie Green, "The Praying Example of Susanna Wesley," faithgateway.com.

14 Luke 24:13-35; Isa 46:9-10. 15 See joshuaproject.net. 16 "Elisa- beth Elliot and Rachel Saint," thetravelingteam.org, 2015. 17 Acts Ch 7. 18 Acts 9:1-22, 22:6-21, 26:9-21; Gal 1:11-24. 19 Rom 8:28. 20 Isa 61:1-3; Crystal Lewis, "Beauty for Ashes," 1996. 21 2 Cor 5:20-21; Eph 2:10; 2 Cor 4:7-12; 1 Tim 1:15-16. 22 C.T. Studd, "Only One Life," 1885. 23 See Ps 119:90; Luke 1:37; Ps 34:8-14.

7

Panic to Praise to Peace

The Lord is your praise, your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things your eyes have seen...

Praise Him for His acts of power.

Praise Him for His surpassing greatness... Through Jesus, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise.

(Deuteronomy 10:21; Psalm 150:2; Hebrews 13:15)

Worshipping Despite War

In 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, and 150,000 Ukrainians fled to New York City as refugees under a special asylum program for Christians escaping Soviet religious persecution.

When Russia put its nuclear forces on high alert, Ukrainians in N.Y.C. marched to protest this aggression. More Jesus followers there gathered in churches to pray, lament, and sing to God. They called their praise songs “weapons of war.”

A Ukrainian leader in New York declared, “Our hope is in the Lord. No matter how things fall apart, God created His world, and He holds us in His hands.” The man led worship in tears. But he told his church family, “Even if a nuclear attack happens, we know that we will go home to Heaven. And we will be together with Jesus, *the One we know will help us.*”¹

Looking Up in Down Times

The Psalms were written by King David and others over a span of 900 years, from 1400 BC (Moses' time) to 500 BC (after the Israelites returned from Babylon). The Psalms have been read, sung, and chanted, reminding God's people that through our worst troubles, He is always on our side. The Book of Psalms ends with fireworks: 6 joyous songs, Psalms 145-150. They are full of *hallelujahs*, Hebrew for "Praise the Lord."

Likewise, the New Testament was written by and for the Lord's people in days of intense persecution. Throughout His word, God calls us to adore Him, remembering Jesus' victory over guilt, grief, and the grave. Praise helps us to see our present troubles in light of the future Christ guarantees for us.

Grace and peace to you from God the Father who is, and was, and is to come, and from the Holy Spirit, and from Jesus, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Praise to Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood. He has gathered us into His Kingdom. To Him be glory and power forever and ever! (Revelation 1:4-8)

Do it Again, Lord!

Max Lucado prays based on God's past work, and we can too:

"Lord, You rescued Joseph from the pit. Do the same for us. You protected the Hebrew children in Egypt. Protect our children, too. You took away Joshua's fears and answered Sarah's prayers. Do it again. You gave hope to the women at the tomb and resolved Thomas' doubts. Do it again, Lord!"²

The Reset Button

Worship is not an “ego trip” for God. He is all-sufficient in Himself and does not need anything from us.³ The Lord commands us to praise Him for *our* benefit: to help us trust in His wisdom, love, and power.

If the Lord had not been on our side,
our enemies would have swallowed us alive
when their anger flared against us.
The raging waters would have swept us away.
Praise the Lord,
who has not let us be torn by their teeth.
We have escaped like a bird from the fowler’s snare.
Our help is in the name of the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 124)⁴

Praise works like a reset button, turning our focus away from our problems and up to the Problem Solver Himself. God created us “to glorify Him and to enjoy Him forever.”⁵

Recalling the Lord’s kindness in the *past* stirs our confidence in Him *now*. So, we ask for His help, knowing that what God did once, He can do again. Nothing is impossible for Him!⁶

Water You turned into wine, opened the eyes of the blind.
Into the darkness You shine. Out of the ashes we rise.
There's no one like You, None like You.
Our God is greater; our God is stronger.
God, You are higher than any other.
Our God is healer, awesome in power, our God.⁷

What Can We Praise the Lord For?

Worshiping God also helps us love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.⁸ We are to sing to the Lord until the world's end, preparing to adore Him forever in the next life.⁹ Here is fuel for praise from Psalm 145.¹⁰ Even when we are agitated, alarmed, or anxious, Christ's followers can say:

- I will exalt You, my God the Holy King.
- Your greatness is beyond discovery!
- You are majestic and do wonderful works.
- You are gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in love, and good to all.
- Jesus, You are trustworthy in all You promise and do.
- You uphold all who fall and lift all who are bowed down.
- You open Your hand to satisfy our desires.
- Christ, You are near to all who call on You in truth.
- You hear our cry and save us!
- You watch over all who love You, but You destroy the wicked.
- Lord, I celebrate Your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of Your righteousness.
- Your kingdom is everlasting and endures forever.

Jesus' Prayer on the Cross

Psalm 22 is a prophetic psalm of David. It points ahead to Christ, the Son of God and Savior who laid down His life for our sins and rose again. I believe that Jesus had *all* of Psalm 22 in mind on the cross, and this Psalm ends on a joyful note.

Psalm 22 begins with Christ's feeling of abandonment.

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?
Why are You so far away?” (Psalm 22:1)¹¹

Christ Will Not Forget You

While Jesus is gasping for air on the cross, suffering public agony and humiliation, He says, “*My God.*” He still hangs on to His Father, and His Father still hangs on to Him.

During Jesus’ six hours on the cross, when His Father seemed silent, God the Son clung to His Father’s love and absolute control. No matter how alone Jesus *felt*, He *knew* that God was still present in His hour of greatest suffering. The Father was working out His sovereign plan of salvation for us, and Christ would soon rise from the grave. Jesus looked up to God amidst His anguish. He wants us to do the same!

Psalm 22: from Agony to Joy

Two thirds of the way through the Psalm, the mood changes dramatically. Christ’s agonized prayer turns to ardent praise!

I will declare Your name to My people. In the assembly I will praise You.
All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord and bow
down before Him. For dominion belongs to the Lord,
and He rules over the nations. (Psalm 22:22-28).

Jesus ends Psalm 22 by rejoicing in the future success of His Father’s plan. Christ’s believers share in His triumph. Our forsakenness, like His, will be swallowed up in joy!

Since the time of Pentecost, God has been bringing people around the world to love and worship Jesus. The gates of hell will never prevail against Christ’s people.¹² Our praise reminds us of our victory in Jesus and that the best is still to come!

Hallelujah! Praise the LORD, O my soul.
I will praise the LORD all my life. (Psalm 146:1)

The Same Hands

How does this relate to Isaiah 49:16? The same hands of God that we have talked about for the last 6 chapters were spread out on the cross for us to carry away our guilt and shame. This was Jesus' greatest expression of love.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins...and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.
(1 John 2:2, 4:10)

God has engraved us on Jesus' palms, and He will never forget us! Christ, who praised His Father despite His agony, joyfully receives our adoration now. Because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, He keeps on inviting us back to Himself.¹³

Christ opens His arms and says, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Jesus mentions a yoke twice because He calls us into a life of loving obedience to Him. He invites us to walk alongside Him. With His pierced hands, Christ carries the heavier load.

Precious Peace

Peace is rare in our troubled world, hectic lives, and anxious minds. Yet, Jesus' followers can have His deep assurance that surpasses all explanation. Our tranquility does not depend on circumstances or

moods, which rise and fall. Our inner refreshment comes from our connection to Christ.

Jesus promised: “The Comforter (Counselor, Intercessor, Strengtheners, Helper, Advocate), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you... Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid.” (John 14:26-27)

Christ, our Risen Lord, promises this to us now. Think how we would be changed if we believed this deep down in our hearts!

Practicing Peace Day to Day

Do not worry about anything. Instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done. Then God’s peace will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7 NLT)

Let’s pray big and worry small. Remember:

1. The Lord is still in charge of His universe (past, present, future). He’s got the whole world and us in His hands.
2. One day He will heal all wounds and right all wrongs.
3. Now is our opportunity to practice being God’s children in a fallen world, shining for Him and offering Jesus’ words of life to everyone, even in our struggles.¹⁴

Trusting Christ is more than a single prayer of commitment. It is ongoing. Step by step, day by day, we dedicate our thinking (head), being (heart), and doing (actions) to walking with Jesus. As we do that, however imperfectly, the Lord meets our needs and assures us that everything will be okay.

Prayer

Protect us, King Jesus! We run to You for safety. With all our hearts, we thank You that we are completely secure in You. Every good thing we have is a gift from You. You give us all we need in this life and the next. We praise You, Lord, our Guide. You will not abandon us to the world of the dead. You have shown us the path of life. You make us glad by Your presence. In Your mercy, keep us and our loved ones close to You. We pray in Your name. Amen.¹⁵

Notes 1 Emily Belz, “Ukrainian American Churches Deploy Praise as a Weapon,” *Christianity Today*, Feb 28, 2022. 2 “Do it Again, Lord,” maxlucado.com. 3 Acts 17:24-25; Ps 24:1-2, 50:9-12. 4 John Calvin began every worship service with Ps 124:8. 5 *Westminster Shorter Catechism* #1. 6 Luke 1:37. 7 Chris Tomlin, “Our God,” 2010. 8 Mark 12:30; Deut 6:5. 9 John Boys (1571–1625). 10 This is an acrostic Psalm. Each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. 11 Matt 27:45-46; Mark 15:33-34. 12 Matt 16:18. 13 Rom 10:13. See also Ps 145:18; Isa 45:22, 55:6-7; Joel 2:32; Zec 13:9; Matt 7:7-8; John 1:12, 3:16, 6:37, 14:13-14; Acts 2:21, 4:12; 10:42; 1 Tim 2:4-6. (Please look up some of these for encouragement.) 14 Phil 2:14-16. 15 See Prov 18:10; Nah 1:7; James 1:17; Ps 16:10-11.

"I am engraved on the palms of Jesus' hands. I am never out of His mind. All my knowledge of Him depends on His sustained initiative in knowing me. I know Him because He first knew me and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, One who loves me—and there is no moment when His eye is off me, or His attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when His care falters." (J. I. Packer, Carolyn Nystrom, *Knowing God Devotional Journal*, 2009)

8

The Missing Piece

The Old Testament prophets wrote about our gracious salvation in Jesus. The Spirit of Christ was in them and told in advance about Christ's suffering and His great glory afterward... These human authors spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
(1 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Peter 1:21, paraphrase)

Jesus the Center

H.G. Wells said, "I must confess, as a historian, that Jesus, this penniless preacher from Nazareth, is undoubtedly the very center, the most dominant figure, in all of history."

Jesus really is the Supreme One, the Cornerstone, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. Our hearts are restless until we find our rest in Christ.¹ As Sally Lloyd-Jones puts it:

All the Bible's stories tell one Big Story about God loving His children and rescuing us by sending Jesus Christ. It takes the whole Old and New Testament to communicate this Big Story. At the center is a baby, who becomes a man and the Savior of the world. Every story in the Bible points to Jesus. He is like the missing piece in the puzzle that makes all the other pieces fit together. When we focus on Christ, we can see God's beautiful picture of eternal salvation.²

The "Fifth Gospel"

Jesus' centrality is especially seen in Isaiah, which contains our theme verse for this book, Isaiah 49:14-16. Isaiah is so full of Jesus

that some people call it the “Fifth Gospel” (in addition to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). The New Testament contains 66 quotations from Isaiah and 348 allusions and verbal parallels to Isaiah.³ Jesus taught us to read and follow the Old Testament with all our focus on Him.⁴

The Man and His Message

Isaiah was a real, live person who served God about 740-680 BC. He wrote about God’s love, holiness, righteousness, and justice. Like all faithful prophets, Isaiah told people the *bad news*: the truth about their rebellion and wandering from God. At the same time, Isaiah told them the Lord’s *good news*. He invited them (and us) to turn from their (our) selfish ways and return to God for mercy. Isaiah’s whole book is full of God’s invitations. The Lord uses the word “come” over 100 times! God did not give up on people long ago, and He has not given up on us. He still calls us into closeness with Him.

While our place in history is different, God is the same. His call to leave our idols and care for needy people is the same. And His promises of love to those who seek Him are the same.

The Lord says: “Come now, let us talk this over together. Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool.” God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (Isaiah 1:18; 2 Peter 3:9)

Repentance involves:

- Regretting that we have been and done wrong
- Confessing our self-centeredness to God
- Turning from sin to follow Christ

- Repairing the damage we have caused by our wrong.⁵

Zacchaeus, the crooked tax collector in the 1st century, came to faith in Christ. God changed his heart. Then he repented, saying, “Look, Lord! Now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus’ love, mercy, and grace transformed him.⁶

Isaiah is All about Jesus!

After the fall of our ancestors in Eden, the Lord promised to send Jesus to crush the devil (the serpent) and all evil in us and in the world. Christ (which means Messiah or Anointed One) would right all wrongs and liberate His creation from all misery and death itself. Wow!⁷ Some famous Isaiah passages are powerful prophecies about Jesus’ coming.

In Isaiah 6, the prophet received a vision of God (Father, Son, and Spirit), high, exalted, and enthroned. The angels called, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of His glory.” In awe of God’s holiness but trusting in His mercy, Isaiah confessed aloud his sins and Israel’s wrongs. God reassured Isaiah that Jesus was coming to make atonement.⁸

Isaiah 7 promises the Son of God’s mind-blowing arrival on earth. The invisible Son of God would take on a human nature and body! C.S. Lewis called Jesus’ incarnation the Grand and Greatest Miracle. “Every other miracle prepares for this or results from this. It was the central event in the history of the Earth – the very thing that the whole story has been about.”⁹

The Missing Piece

Jesus' birth fulfilled what the Lord said through the prophet Isaiah: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel" (which means *God with us*). The angel said, "Name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." (Matt 1:21-22; Isaiah 7:14)

Isaiah 9 foretells that Christ will be God's King with 4 names: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Christ will establish His kingdom of justice, righteousness, and harmony that will endure forever. Jesus will reverse the curse which human sin unleashed.¹⁰

No merely human leader could ever accomplish this. Preacher Billy Sunday (1862-1935) counted 256 names in the Bible for the Lord. Musician David Crowder wrote about some of them. Jesus is infinitely beyond what any single name can express!¹¹

If you're troubled, heavy-hearted
Come to Jesus and find your peace.
If you're run down, empty-handed
Come to Jesus and find your strength.

He is hope for the hopeless, rest for the weary
Help for the hurting, He is
Mending the broken, bearing the burdens
All that you're needing, He is.

If you're wandering in the darkness
Come to Jesus and find your way.
If you want freedom, need forgiveness
Just come to Jesus and find His grace.
Comforter, Counselor, Prince of Peace
Author and Maker of everything
Defender, Deliverer, King of kings

Christ Will Not Forget You

Helper and Healer forevermore
Savior and Shelter through every storm
My Refuge, Redeemer, and Lord of lords

Child of Heaven and Son of Man
Provider, Protector, the great I AM
Alpha, Omega, Beginning and End, He Is.¹²

Isaiah 49 speaks of God's worldwide plan: "I will make Christ a light for the Gentiles, that He may bring My salvation to the ends of the earth." This is what Jesus came to accomplish. Now 2.4 billion people across the globe call themselves Christ-followers. All of God's promises are for every believer in Jesus!

Isaiah 53 is one of the most moving chapters in the whole Bible. 700 years in advance, Isaiah described Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection for us. The New Testament quotes and alludes to Isaiah 52-53 many times, in each case applying those prophecies to Jesus. If you doubt that Christ really was God's Messiah and can forgive all your wrongs, compare Chapter 53 to the New Testament accounts of His crucifixion, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you trust Christ as your Savior and Lord.¹³

Surely Jesus took up our pain and bore our suffering. He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on Christ, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to our own way. And the Lord has laid on Christ the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6)

The Missing Piece

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved... Everyone who calls on the Lord will be saved and unashamed. (Romans 10:9-13)

Isaiah Chapters 58-66 announces God’s glorious future for Jesus’ followers. This will be finalized when Christ comes back to earth. He will give relief to His troubled believers and punish those who reject and will not return to Him.¹⁴ With His loving warnings, God wants to wake us up before it is too late.

Jesus has already defeated sin and death, but soon, He will give us our resurrection bodies and put all His enemies under His feet. When He returns, Christ will unite heaven and earth, and there will be no separation between God and His people. All that has been wrong will be made right in Jesus.

“Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, a place of happiness, gladness, and joy. I will rejoice and delight in My people. I will take away their weeping and crying.”
(Isaiah 65:17-19)

Isaiah points us to the last pages of the Bible, reminding us that the best is yet to come for all who trust in Christ. Everything, everything, everything will be healed, restored, made new.

I saw a new heaven and a new earth...
Look! God Himself will dwell among His people and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. (Revelation 21:1-4)

The Bible tells the end of God's Big Story. Jesus is the hope and center of everything! He is our loving, wise, and powerful King, Comforter, and Overcomer who brings us into eternal joy and abundant life. He will restore to wholeness all that is broken. We will see Christ face to face and paradise will be restored.

I am so grateful that I know the end of the story! And I want to be a part of it: trusting Christ, walking with Him, and eagerly waiting for His return. Is there any better place to be?¹⁵

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank You that the whole Bible points us to You. Give us eyes to see You by faith. Open our ears to hear and believe Your Word. Empower us to follow You out of love and gratefulness. Heal us of all that is unhealthy in us, partly in this life and fully when You return. Until that happy Day when we see You face to face, protect us, provide for us, and give us Your peace, now and forevermore. Amen.

Notes 1 Augustine, *Confessions*, 397 AD. 2 Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, 2007. 3 See list in United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament*. 4 Luke 24:13-32. Handel's *Messiah* quotes often from Isaiah. See Is 9:6, 40:1-4, 53:5-6. 5 See Prov 28:13; Luke 19:1-10; *Westminster Shorter Catechism* #87. 6 Luke 19:1-9. 7 Gen 3:14-19; Rom 8:18-20; Gal 4:4-7. 8 In John 12:37-41, the Apostle John wrote, "Isaiah saw Jesus and spoke about Him." Jesus, the Son of God, is God Himself. 9 C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, 1960. 10 Gal 3:13-14. 11 See "Christ: His Wonderful Names," wohbm.org, Oct 21, 2024. 12 Crowder, Bentley, and Pardo, "He Is," 2021. 13 See Matt 26-27; Mark 15-16; Luke 22-23; John 18-19. 14 See Isa 66:22-24; Ps 1, 37:28, 145:20; Matt 25:31-46; 2 Thes 1:5-10, and many more. See also John Piper, "Jesus Said More about Hell Than Anyone in the Bible," crossway.org, Aug 21, 2023. 15 Jenny Pfister, "Knowing the End of the Story," brushstrokeministries.com, Aug 30, 2020.

Arise, My Soul, Arise

1. Arise, my soul, arise. Shake off your guilty fears.
The bleeding Sacrifice on my behalf appears.
Before the Throne my Surety stands.
My name is written on His hands.

2. Christ ever lives above for me to intercede,
His all-redeeming love, His precious blood to plead.
His blood atoned for every race
and sprinkles now the throne of grace.

3. Five bleeding wounds Christ bears, received on Calvary.
They pour effectual prayers. They strongly plead for me.
Forgive them, O forgive, they cry,
nor let that ransomed sinner die!

4. My God is reconciled. His pardoning voice I hear.
He owns me for His child. I can no longer fear.
With confidence I now draw nigh
and “Father, Abba, Father!” cry.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788) alluded to many Scriptures in this hymn, including Isaiah 49:16 and Hebrews 7:25, which says that Jesus is able to save completely, forever, and for eternity those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for us.

About Words of Hope

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

This inheritance is kept in heaven for you. (1 Peter 1:3-4)

Bob Roane

Bob has served in pastoral ministry since 1980, overlapping his seminary studies and work as a Certified Public Accountant. He is a Minister in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) and worships at Christ Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Houston, TX. He was brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ in 1976 through Bible reading and Christian radio. Out of his love for the Lord and His Scriptures, Bob is eager to help others follow Jesus so that they love God and their neighbors. At this stage of life and ministry, Bob has nothing to prove and everything to share.

Along with the rest of Christ's people, in humble reliance upon the Holy Spirit, Bob seeks to:

- Help people know Jesus as Lord and make Him known
- Bring Christ's unchanging Word to an ever-changing world
- Take the whole Gospel to whole persons, wherever they are
- Equip people to serve Christ in every area of life

Spending his life near the big cities of New York, Philadelphia, and Houston has helped Bob to care for, appreciate, and respect people from diverse social, cultural, political, and religious backgrounds. He has a burden for and experience working with people from all economic and educational levels.

Bob's current focus is on teaching, pastoral care and counseling, deeds of compassion, and evangelism. He goes wherever needed to meet people where they are. He has taught at Belhaven University, Star of Hope, River Pointe, Windsor Village Methodist, Veritas Christian Academy, Work Faith Connection, and several bilingual churches. He has served as a chaplain for the Houston Police Department and volunteers as a Mentor at the Jester III and Carol Vance prison units.

Bob and his wife Marilyn have been married since 1979 and have three adult children, three grandchildren, and a rescued Australian Shepherd.

Our Ministry

Words of Hope Bible Ministries began in 1989 as a teaching and radio ministry in New Hope, Pennsylvania to make and equip followers of Jesus Christ. In 1995, our radio program came to Houston, where it ran for some time. In 2007, we became a not-for-profit, donation-funded organization recognized by the IRS.

In 2018, we launched a website. We have over 400 free articles available. The address is WOHBM.org. Please visit us!

We reach out in Jesus' name to unloved, untaught, unsaved, and unchurched people who fall through the cracks and bring them Christ's hope through word and deed to:

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave,
Weep over the erring ones, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, mighty to save.
(Fanny Crosby, "Rescue the Perishing," 1869)

My Only Comfort

My only comfort in life and in death is that I am not my own, but
belong—body and soul, in life and in death—
to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.

He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall
from my head without the will of my Father in heaven.
In fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to Him, Christ, by His Holy Spirit, assures me of
eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly
willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

(The Heidelberg Catechism, written in 1563, translated in 2011)

This statement of faith alludes to these anchoring Scriptures:
Matt 10:29-31; Luke 21:16-18; John 6:39-40, 8:34-36, 10:27-30; Rom
8:1-17, 28, 14:7-9; 1 Cor 3:23, 6:19-20; 2 Cor 1:21-22; 5:5;
Eph 1:13-14; 2 Thes 3:3; Titus 2:14; Heb 2:14-15; 1 Pet 1:5, 18-19; 1
John 1:7-2:2, 3:1-11.

God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so much,
that even though we were spiritually dead because of our sins, He
gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead. (Ephesians 2:4-
5)