Daily Meditations on the Glory of Jesus

VOLUME II

A Thirty-day Devotional

© 2024 by Aaron Osowski

Published by

Aaron Osowski

P.O Box 311063

Independence, OH 44131-4854

brightandmorningstarcom.wordpress.com

Volume 2 of 12

ISBN: 9798334159068

This work may be freely copied, distributed, or used without restrictions. This work is intended to be distributed for free, or at cost value, so that no profit is made. A full online version, with minor differences, can be found at brightandmorningstarcom.wordpress.com.

Scripture taken from The King James Version. Where the text differs, a more literal translation was substituted from the below sources.

The Authorized Version or King James Version (KJV), 1611, 1769.

Outside of the United Kingdom, the KJV is in the public domain. Within the United Kingdom, the rights to the KJV are vested in the Crown.

Gesenius, Wilhelm, et al. *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures: With Additions and Corrections from the Author's Thesaurus and Other Works*. Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957.

"Bible Hub: Search, Read, Study the Bible in Many Languages."

Biblehub.com, 2019, biblehub.com.

Strong, James. The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. Nashville, Tn, Thomas Nelson, 2010.

"Bible Search and Study Tools - Blue Letter Bible." Www.blueletterbible.org, blueletterbible.org.

"LSJ." Lsj.gr, lsj.gr/wiki.

Webster, Noah. Websters Dictionary 1828,
MasonSoft Technology Ltd, 1 Jan.
2022, webstersdictionary1828.com/

Table of Contents

Preface 1

Day 1 – The Peace, Relief, and Light of Christ's Work 5

Day 2 – The Deep & Endless Knowledge of The Cross 13

Day 3 – Part 1: Gloriously and Wonderfully Free 18

Day 4 – Part 2: The Empty Cup 23

Day 5 – Our Loving Groom's Desire 27

Day 6 – An Everlasting Rope, Our Everlasting Hope 33

Day 7 – Our Long Awaited And Glorious End 37

Day 8 – God's Gift of a New Name 42

Day 9 – The Multiplying Power of the Messiah 48

Day 10 – Utterly Forgiven 53

Day 11 – Our Unmoving, Ever-present High Priest 59

Day 12 – Jesus' Infinitely Loving Heart 67
Day 13 – The Healing Power of God's Word 74
Day 14 – The Overflowing Abundance of God.....78
Day 15 – An Eternal and Unbreakable Hope 82
Day 16 – Secure in God's Everlasting Work of Grace 85
Day 17 – God the Father's Intimate Care.93
Day 18 – The Longsuffering & Faith of Christ.....100
Day 19 – Drawing Near Without Fear 105
Day 20 – Faithfully and Righteously Hearing.....111
Day 21 – God's Infinite Understanding and Boundless Love.....118
Day 22 – The Poor and Humble Messiah123
Day 23 – Christ, The Faithful and Glorious Builder of Our Souls 128
Day 24 – Unending, Unconditional Grace 136

Day 25 – The Joy of The Lord's New Covenant Dwelling 142
Day 26 – The Bravery & Boldness of Christ 149
Day 27 – Christ, Our Excellent and Wise King 157
Day 28 – Jesus' Overwhelming Victory...167
Day 29 – The Ever-reigning Light of Christ 172
Day 30 – The Steady, Unending Intercession of The Messiah.....177

Preface

In John's gospel Jesus tells us,

> "*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*" [Jn 17:3]

We often think of eternal life as life unending or of immortality. However, the Bible does not describe it as such, for all men shall live forever. In Daniel The LORD says, "*and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting abhorrence*." [Dan 12:2] We understand from this that even those who have rejected Christ shall be raised up and live forever. The difference being, those poor souls who have forfeited their acceptance of God's blessed propitiation shall not live unending with Christ, but "*shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of The Lord, and from the glory of His power*." [2 Th 1:9]

But those blessed men and women, called of God and precious, "*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people for His own possession*," [1 Pe 2:9] have not only been promised a bodily resurrection, (for Jesus promised, "*I will raise him up at the last day*" [Jn 6:40]), but also a resurrection of their hearts through the knowledge of Jesus' glory; for "*God, who commanded the light to*

shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." [2 Cor 4:6] It is this knowledge which transforms a man and gives true, unending life, that life which goes beyond mere immortality and reaches down into the heart and soul of a man, lifting Him up in unspeakable joy and glory forevermore. This pursuit not just provides one with internal and everlasting life, but also changes a man: for he who determines by faith to pursue the glory of Christ embarks upon a divine journey which will forever alter his being. Paul writes, in proof of this,

> "*But we all, with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*." [2 Cor 3:18]

The "*mirror*" into which we look, which Paul references, is God's word, which displays to us who Jesus, "*The Word of God*," [Rev 19:13] is; for He said through the Psalmist, "*in the volume of the book it is written of me*." [Heb 10:7] And again, speaking of Moses, Jesus says, "*he wrote of me*." [Jn 5:46] But though the glories and lovely nature of God which is revealed to us in Scripture are so profound and so thrilling, yet these are but a small glimpse of their full picture, but a dim reflection. For Paul writes regarding Christ's pure love which "*constraineth us*," "*for now we see through a mirror,*

as in an enigma; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." [2 Cor 5:14, 1 Cor 13:12]

May this truth spur us on to a more devoted zeal in our pursuit of Jesus' glory; that is, in the pursuit of Him, His character, His very person: for His glory is simply who He is and what He is like. Let us no longer abide in the darkness but pursue Christ, the one who is "*a great light*;" for "*if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth*." [Isa 9:2, Col 3:1-2] Let us take the admonition of John the Baptist, who cried out to all who would hear, "*behold the Lamb of God*!" [Jn 1:36] Yes, behold Him! Gaze upon His beauty and be thus transformed! Gaze upon Him and find endurance for another day; for we see that Moses, because of His sight of God, endured – Moses, "*by faith…forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible*." [Heb 11:27]

And having pursued Him thoroughly, seeing and enjoying His beauty, as many saints before us have likewise done, let us speak of it. Let us, as it is written, "*declare His glory among the heathen*," [1 Ch 16:24] for we have been made into The Lord Jesus' personal possession, "*that [we] should proclaim the glories of Him who hath called [us] out of darkness into His marvellous light*." [1 Pe 2:9] May we join that

heavenly and eternal conversation, for in heaven,
"*in His temple[,] doth every one speak of His glory*,"
and, "*the glory of The LORD shall endure for ever*."
[Psa 29:9; 104:31]

Day 1 – The Peace, Relief, and Light of Christ's Work

Psalms 38:3-4, 10 – There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me…My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it is also gone from me.

The effects of sin upon mankind are varied and troublesome; they often plague us with burdensome consequences, just as the thorns do the gardener, which are ever the reminder of our transgression against God and when He pronounced, regarding the earth, "*thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee*." [Gen 3:18] In the Psalms, David speaks of some of these effects; He says,

> "*There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I*

am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart…My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me." [Psa 38:3-8, 10]

In all these distressing results of sinfulness, as David said, "*because of my sin*," and again, "*because of my foolishness*," we can see something of God's glorious character and salvation; for, it is evident for us that Jesus Christ came to earth not just "*to save sinners*," but also to, "*save his people from their sins*." [1 Tim 1:15] We see then, not only a grievous mark upon the forehead of cursed man, but also the red stain of Jesus' precious blood, "*as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*," [1 Pe 1:19] which blots out the effect and power of the curse. For in these ailments caused by David's own sin, we see in each case a glorious contrast for the man who has tasted of our Messiah's meal, who has come to enjoy the bread and the wine of the New Covenant, of which Jesus says, is "*in my blood*." [Lk 22:20]

Let us take and observe three aspects of the effects of sin, found here in Psalms thirty-eight: one, that through Christ Jesus we are hidden from God's wrath and given peace; two, that we may

experience freedom from our heavy burden; and three, that we might acquire a blessed light of refreshment and life through Christ's work.

Firstly then, we see the man who is living in sin has no soundness, no peace, nor does he have any "*rest in [his] bones*." Truly, this is purely logical, because it has been written, "*but the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*." [Isa 57:20-21] Sinfulness never leads to rest or peace, but only causes more disruption in our hearts and minds; for one, its pleasure only last "*for a season*," [Heb 11:25] and two, because God is hateful and angry toward sin; for He says,

> "F*or in the hand of The LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them*." [Psa 75:8]

There is no rest to the sinful man, who loves his sin and remains in it, because "*the wrath of God abideth on him*," he is a child "*of the devil*," and "*by nature [a child] of wrath*." [Jn 3:36, 1 Jn 3:10, Eph 2:3] But praise be to Jesus Christ that, "*when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*," and, "*…while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*." [Rom 5:6, 8] Yes, when we were in the dastardly state of rebellion and under

Satan's domain, as his children, from that pit Christ dug us out and pulled us up; "*by the blood of [the coming King's] covenant*" God has sent us forth from "*the pit wherein is no water*," [Zech 9:9, 11] saving us from sin and from a restless lack of peace. And so let us praise Him; we are no longer children of wrath, bearing upon our heads the righteous, lead weight of God's wrath, for, "*being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him,*" [Rom 5:9] and again, The Father "*hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His Dear Son*," so that we no longer belong to Satan, having been "*redeemed…to God by [Jesus'] blood.*" [Col 1:13, Rev 5:9] And seeing that we no longer are under such condemnation, we may have peace and joy, for, "*…none of them that trust in [The LORD] shall suffer the punishment due [for their sins].*" [Psa 34:22]

What a wonderful truth to behold, and peace to experience, that we may at present, because of Jesus, find rest in our bones and peace in our flesh. Because it is through Jesus that we have been completely forgiven and reconciled unto God, it is through Jesus wherein God imparts to us the very same favor given to Him, as when He said to Him, "*thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;*" [Mk 1:11] for we have been "*made objects of grace in the beloved [Son].*" [Eph 1:6] If this was not precious enough, if this has not touched our

hearts deeply, planting good seed within them that shall surely sprout, there is yet more to behold of Jesus' glory in these verses.

We find that David also said, which is the main cause for his lack of rest, "*mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me*." [Psa 38:4] David's sin had yet another scourge upon his soul: they were as it were an exceeding burden, too heavy for even "*a mighty valiant man*" such as David. [1 Sam 16:18] They were to him even as the law, a burden and yoke, "*which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear*." [Acts 15:10] Much like the Pharisees, those religious elitists, who, as Jesus condemned, "*bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders*," so too David's sins burdened him; and similar to the religious men, who would "*not move them with one of their fingers*," so too it was and is with sin, which, "*at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder*," and does no help at all but only adds to our burdens. [Mat 23:4, Prov 23:32]

Sin is burdensome; it lays upon the one who practices it or is bound by it, much grief. One of its chief passions is to bind men with a heavy burden: a burden which so tugs upon their soul, that they seem to sink down into the lowest depths, even into the pit. Sin has a way in this state, of condemning men so that they dare not look up to

Christ or to God. David lamented in another Psalm, saying,

> "*For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me*." [Psa 40:12]

And Ezra likewise,

> "*O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens*." [Ezr 9:6]

However, as Christ always does, He shall have the last say and reign triumphant. For because of His glorious work on the cross, He did what no animal or no man could ever accomplish, and through His blood cleansed us of this shame, burden, and guilt. This was accomplished on the cross, regarding which event The Father promised, "*[Christ, My Servant] shall bear their iniquities*," for even as in times past, when the offerors would "*lay his hand upon the head of the goat*" and kill it for their sins, "*The LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all*." [Isa 53:6, 11, Lev 4:24] The burden of our sin was placed upon Jesus' shoulders as He hung upon the cross, dying for our sins. Peter writes, "*who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed*." [1 Pe 2:24] Though

our sins were once a heavy burden, which we could never survive underneath, yet Jesus Christ has given us rest and freedom. He Himself promises us,

> "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*" [Mat 11:28-30]

Jesus has freed us from the burden of sin which was formerly bound upon our souls as a millstone, and did what "*the blood of bulls and of goats*" could never do, in that He, "*through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, [that He might] purge [our] conscience[s] from dead works to serve the Living God.*" [Heb 9:12-14]

We come now to our third encouragement, which is bound up in what David despaired of when He said, "*my heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it is also gone from me.*" [Psa 38:10] Because of his sin, David's strength failed and he had no light in his eyes; that is, he had lost all refreshment and joy. That light of the eye, by which we see the world in a particular fashion, had been transformed from that of hope and joy to that of despair and grief, and the light of David's eyes, because of his sin, was also departed. But through Christ that light is restored, even as when God

created the Sun; in Corinthians we read of this comparison, when Paul said, "*because it is God, having said 'from out of darkness light will shine,' who hath shined in our hearts, to give illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*." [2 Cor 4:6] In the salvation that Jesus offers, the light is restored, as David says, "*for with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light*;" [Psa 36:9] and again, "*for thou art my lamp, O LORD: and The LORD will lighten my darkness*." [2 Sam 22:29] Though sin has triumphed in our lives for a season, making us feeble and weak and draining us of strength, yet through Jesus all is restored and strength is given once again, so that though our "*flesh and [our] heart[s] faileth: [yet] God is the strength of [our] heart[s], and [our] portion for ever*." [Psa 73:26]

May we take David's laments here in Psalms thirty-eight, regarding his sin, as both a warning and an encouragement. A warning, that we may not make a mock at sin and turn God's grace into unrestrained and indulgent living, and an encouragement, that through Jesus and His blood, we may experience victory over sin and enjoy peace, rest, freedom, and strength.

Day 2 – The Deep & Endless Knowledge of The Cross

Psalms 9:16a – The LORD is known by the judgment which He executeth…

In the gospel of John, we are told of Jesus, "*and this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*." [Jn 17:3] Through Jesus' words, we come to learn that eternal life is not just immortality beyond the grave, but is more specifically, to know God; and this, mainly, is through an intimate relationship with Jesus, whereby we may come to know who God is and what His characteristics are; for Jesus said, "*he that hath seen me hath seen The Father*," and we are told Jesus is, "*the exact representation of [The Father's] substance*." [Jn 14:9, Heb 1:3] So then, by coming to know Jesus, we shall come to know God, and therein is contained eternal life. We see then, a fuller definition of what God originally told Adam in Eve in Genesis, when He warned them of the forbidden tree, saying, "*in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*." [Gen 2:17] And to more readily see this, we will look briefly to Daniel.

The prophet Daniel tell us by the word of The LORD, speaking of that final day, "*many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting abhorrence*." [Dan 12:3] Therefore, it is revealed to us that all men shall live forever: none shall simply cease to exist – either a man shall hear Jesus' voice and awake to those dreadful words, "*I never knew you*," [Mt 7:23] or a man shall awake "*satisfied*," rising up to receive a new body "*with [God's] likeness*" and in His presence, "*present with The LORD*." [Psa 17:15, 2 Cor 5:6-8] Jesus confirmed this for us when He said, "*the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*." [Jn 5:28-29] Therefore, because we are in no uncertain terms told all men shall be resurrected, the death God spoke of as punishment for sin goes far beyond just the death of the body; it speaks chiefly of the death of the spirit and soul, and it is through this death that man is barred from acquiring knowledge of God, for Paul tells us, "*but the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*." [1 Cor 2:14]

It is this death which is far greater than any physical pain; it is the death which Jesus our Lord

had to endure, a pain so cruel and wicked, in which God forsook His Son making Him an abhorrence and casting Him from His presence in those three, dark hours upon the cross. If we do not see how cursed a death it is, to be forbidden from knowing or drawing near to God, let us remember what is spoken of Satan, who shall soon be crushed and thrust into "*everlasting fire, [which was] prepared [him],*" [Mt 25:41] where he shall be "*as a carcase trodden under [foot],*" covered in devouring maggots. [Isa 14:11, 19] If this is the physical torments belonging to those in hell, no doubt their spiritual torments, wherein they lack the knowledge and light of Christ, shall be equally dismal. Truly, though, it is through Jesus, and through the regeneration of our spirits and hearts, (for we have been promised "*a new heart and a new spirit*"), wherein we are granted the ability to know God, and therein is found life: for God has said, "*seek ye me, and ye shall live*." [Ezek 18:31, Amo 5:4]

Now that we have seen how sweet it is to know God, seeing that therein is found unending life – it being as a deep well, pure spring, or flowing river – we can better appreciate and understand what is said in today's verse, which again says, "*The LORD is known by the judgment which He executeth*." The purest form of this knowledge of God is found in "*the judgment which He executeth*." Notice the definite article, "*the*." Truly, The LORD has

executed many judgments since the world began; many of them are written down for us. And in addition to these, more judgments may be yet added, finding their climax in The Day of The LORD. However, because we find the definite article here, The Spirit would direct our attention to one judgment in particular. If we were to suppose which judgment of God's would be described as *the* judgment, which one would surpass all others, being the pinnacle of His righteous judgments, we should frankly conclude it is the judgment The LORD executed upon Christ Jesus, His Son. In all of time and in all of the world, there has never been such a judgment enacted of God as the one upon His own Son. And it was indeed The LORD, God The Father, who was judging His Son for all of mankind's sin; for we read in Isaiah that Christ was, "*stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted*;" and, "*the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all*;" and again, "*it pleased the LORD to crush Him; he hath put him to grief*." [Isa 53:3, 6, 10]

It is upon the cross where, "*mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other;*" [Psa 85:10] for it was upon the cross where God's righteous and fiery judgment was poured forth on Christ, but also where His mercy was in that same moment poured out upon sinful man, creating a way for reconciliation and peace to all who would come to believe in His Son. It is upon

the cross, in the judgment which The Father executed upon His Son, where the fullest knowledge of God is imparted to us, where we can discern more of "*the breadth, and length, and depth, and height*" of Jesus' Christ's love, "*which is surpassing knowledge, that [we] might be filled with all the fulness of God*;" [Eph 3:18-19] for, "*by this we perceive love, because [Jesus Christ] laid down His life for us*." [1 Jn 3:16]

The cross is the pinnacle and climax of all of history – the absolute most important event ever to unfold upon the earth; and through the study of it, we come to know more of the one, true God and of Jesus, which, as Jesus says, is eternal life. So then, let us not look down upon the cross, as though we have already discerned all of the intricacies held in its grains and in it shape, as if we have studied it thoroughly enough to fully comprehend the words, "*He hath made Him to be sin for us*," or as though we have weighed the beam which Christ bore upon His bloody back and found it wanting – nay, let us not be so foolish or so ignorant; let us not esteem the cross and what happened there as trivial or childish and low-level doctrine: for therein, in that glorious and high mystery, we shall know God. May this devotion urge you to pursue this knowledge on your own; may these feeble words prick your ears up and spark your heart toward a more focused pursuit of what Jesus has done.

Day 3 – Part 1: Gloriously and Wonderfully Free

Psalms 116:12-13 – What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.

If we were to take a moment and ponder what Jesus has done for us, if we were to be still and "*muse on the work of [Christ's] hands*," [Psa 143:5] to think of when they were pierced for our sakes in that glorious work of the cross, of that beautiful and "*unspeakable gift*" [2 Cor 9:15] given to us from heaven – yes, if we were to think upon it for any length of time in silent meditation, we would surely confess as Peter did, "*depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord*," or even as Isaiah, who exclaimed, "*Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts*." [Lk 5:8, Isa 6:5] We may even be tempted, as we sometimes are, with an urge to repay Jesus for all that He has done. For when we meditate upon His work, and then upon our own sinfulness and unworthiness of such a gift, the man who has tasted God's grace in truth will

surely come away most times humbled and repentant, knowing within himself that he should be doing more for the sake of Christ. Have we not all felt this way at some time? God has done so much for us, and we have given Him in return so little, even nothing in comparison; for Jesus is as the man in the parable, who when He saw that goodly pearl, "*went and sold all that he had, and bought it*;" yea, it is Christ who "*emptied Himself*" in order that He might save us, and we have hardly given a dime. [Mt 13:46, Phil 2:7] And in comparison, we, for all our wretchedness and sin, are as the servant who was freed from his debt of "*ten thousand talents*," because "*the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt*." [Mt 18:24, 27]

If the Kingdom of God was as the kingdoms of this earth, surely God would require of us some form of repayment; however, the glorious truth of the matter is that Christ demands nothing in return for what He has done. As God tells us in Isaiah,

> "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and*

come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." [Isa 55:1-3]

The LORD offers us salvation freely; He offers us refreshment and life in His Son without price. What a wonderful and gracious God we serve, what a privilege it is to be found in Christ, that it might be truly said of us, "*by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast*." [Eph 2:8-9] Yea, though in Christ we have been blessed "*with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places*," and though we have been "*born again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*;" yes and further, though we are "*joint-heirs with Christ*" and "*shall inherit all things*," yet still even then, despite all of God's overflowing and lavish grace, He requires nothing from us in return. [Eph 1:3, 1 Pe 1:3-4, Rom 8:17, Rev 21:7] May these truths bring us to our knees in gratitude, even as Jacob, who said truthfully, "*I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant*." [Gen 32:10]

God alone deserves the title, Awesome, who would willingly and freely show mercy to all those who "*call upon him in truth*," [Psa 145:18] He being "*good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy*

unto all them that call upon [Him]." [Psa 86:5] He alone does this; He alone has such thoughts. Continuing in Isaiah we read,

> "*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*." [Isa 55:6-9]

If we were not careful to see it before, let us see it now, and notice the word "*for*," in the famous passage above, where God proclaimed, and still proclaims today, "*for my thoughts are not your thoughts…*" Notice that the "*for*" is connected to the fact that God "*will have mercy*" upon the man who forsakes his ways and turns to God, and "*He will abundantly pardon*." This is the motivation for God's words to us, when He reminds us that His thoughts and ways are far above our own. And this indeed is true, for who else would do what God has done? Who else would so freely forgive? Surely, our God is worthy of all "*power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing*." [Rev 5:12] But now we must come to

today's passage and examine it; for the truth contained in it, though small, shall be exceeding precious to our spirits and souls.

We read again David's question: "*what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?*" and His answer, "*I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.*" What does The LORD require of us? He does not require works nor service, nor does He require money; but The LORD desires for us to "*take the cup of salvation*" and call upon His name. For all of God's wondrous benefits, for all of His glorious mercy, grace, forgiveness, truth, and promises; yes, for all of those: let us not repay God with money nor works, but simply with this – that we might continue to call upon His name. Praise be to God who is so thoroughly wonderful! There is not another in existence who is so great as our God. Truly, it is Jesus Christ who deserves all of our adoration and devotion, all of our praise, for again, He does not require, for all of His work, any form of repayment, but He requires only our devotion and clinging, our continued calling upon His name. As He says again, not requiring sacrifice, but that we, "*offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*" [Psa 50:14-15]

Day 4 – Part 2: The Empty Cup

Psalms 116:12-13 – What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.

Today, we will look again at the above passage: there is still yet one beautiful jewel for us to dig from out of this verse, so that we might behold with awe at the way it shines and glows in the light of Christ's glory. For this, we turn our attention particularly to the phrase, "*I will take the cup of salvation*." What is this cup, how may we take it, and why?

We would do well to remember Jesus' words in the garden of Gethsemane, which means "oil press." Luke writes,

> "*And when he was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.*

> *And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground*." [Lk 22:40-44]

It was there in the garden, in the "oil press" as it were, where Jesus was pressed as an olive, where His soul began to be crushed by The Father's very own hand, and where The Holy Spirit, that precious "*golden oil*" [Zech 4:12] began to issue forth from the heart of Christ. It was there where the fulness of what He had to endure was revealed to Him, where the waves and billows began to crash against His soul, so that He uttered to His friends and disciples, "*my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me*." [Mt 26:38] But even though Jesus was being subjected to much torment, He never gave up; in fact, when faced with the reality of this situation and the torment of being forsaken by God upon the cross, He did not give up or relax but "*being in agony He prayed more earnestly*." The Greek word for "*being in agony*," can also mean to struggle for victory; and so it was, that Jesus, unlike Hagar who sat a bow's shot away from her child, saying, "*let me not see the death of the child*," Jesus sat a stone's cast away that He might struggle in prayer to obtain glorious victory for us, and for His disciples who were sitting nearby. It is written truthfully in the book of Hebrews regarding us, that "*ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving*

against sin," but the glorious truth of the matter, is that Christ did resist – even unto blood; for in that garden Jesus resisted and found victory over anxiety, over fear, over discouragement, over all sinful attitudes and feelings and, "*for the joy being set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame*," [Gen 21:6, Heb 12:2, 4] and He so struggled there against sin that "*His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground*."

There in the garden, our precious Lord did strive with zeal and passion unto victory. This was always His attitude. Before this moment, but not so far removed, Jesus said, "*Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour[?]: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name…*" [Jn 12:27-28] We can see that it was never in Jesus' thoughts or desires to flee from this battle; it was not His desire in any wise to avoid that which The Father had for Him, for He said, "*nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done*." Jesus was willing to drink the cup The Father had given Him. And praise God for this, for this is the cup that was destined for us, who were enemies of God and wicked sinners, but that which Christ gladly drank for us, His beloved bride and inheritance. It is written, regarding this cup, in the Psalms, saying,

> "*For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and*

> *setteth up another. For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.*" [Psa 75:6-8]

That dreadful cup, whose dark wine swirled in God's hand, ever ready to be dumped upon our heads (for the wrath of God abode upon us [Jn 3:36]), was always destined for "*the wicked of the earth*;" and as Paul says, "*and such were some of you*." But thanks be to God, for we "*are washed, but [we] are sanctified, but [we] are justified in the name of The Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*." [1 Cor 6:11] Yes, a thousand praises be to our God and His Son Jesus, for we have been gloriously saved; for Christ our King and Messiah has drunk every last drop of that cup, leaving it bone dry; so that we might "*take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord*," so that we might lift up that dreadful chalice and show our Father its emptiness, thus gaining His mercy for the sake of what Jesus has done for us in drinking it. So then, let us take the cup of salvation and call upon His name, seeking to obtain His mercy in Jesus Christ; for our God "*taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy*." [Psa 147:11]

Day 5 – Our Loving Groom's Desire

John 17:24 – Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

In the first chapter of John, we are told concerning Jesus,

> "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made… And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth*." [Jn 1:1-3, 14]

From this passage, we discover that Jesus is, as Revelation also states, "*The Word of God*," who, "*took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men*." [Rev 19:13, Phil 2:7] We know from other passages that this was, for at least one reason, in order to condemn sin in the flesh, "*that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in*

us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." [Rom 8:3-4] What a glorious Savior we have; for here John also shows us that "*The Word*," who was so zealously inclined to save us from our sins by taking them upon Himself, was from the very beginning, even before time, as Micah states, "*from of old, from everlasting*;" [Mic 5:2] and that He, from before the world was created, was existing alongside God as a perfect equal and loved by The Father, being the means through which God The Father, Yahweh, created all things, and also the sole purpose for which all was created. [Col 1:16] The fact that Jesus would come to earth in the first place is astonishing, for He enjoyed such a state of glory, being above all, being the very center of all the universe, celebrated by all, even as the heavens, which "*declare the glory of God*," are as a "*tabernacle for the sun*," celebrating its brightness and glory. [Psa 19:1-5]

Each time we come to this truth, that "*God was manifest in the flesh*," [1 Tim 3:16] we should be struck with awe at the glory of Christ, "*The Bright and Morning Star*," who would so willingly "*empty Himself*" and humble Himself to such a low degree in order that He might save us. [Rev 22:16, Phil 2:7, Psa 113:6] Truly, to see Jesus' life in the flesh would have been, and will be for us, a very beautiful thing. John writes that the disciples and he, "*beheld His glory*," and in his epistle he likewise says, "*that which was from the beginning, which we*

have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning The Word of Life…that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you…" [1 Jn 1:1, 3] The glory which they continually beheld while Jesus, The Word of Life, was on earth, was not the exceeding wonderful lights or manifest brightness, which is displayed by Him in the heavenly realm, but it was the tangible life of Jesus: it was His character, which He so wondrously displayed upon earth through His actions and words, and is that which shines exceeding bright. Jesus' life was glorious, much like Solomon's temple: "*exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries*;" [1 Ch 22:5] but though this is true, yet the glory which Christ has inherited from His work of salvation, which continues to grow as more come to know Him and be converted, is even above this. In Philippians it says,

> "*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*." [Phil 2:9-11]

If we look up to the heavens, David would tell us, "*the heavens declare the glory of God*." And truly, they do: to every language they speak as it were,

showing off their brightness and colors and beauty. [Psa 19:1-5] And so, imagine if all the beauty were to be combined, from every star and galaxy and breathtaking nebulae; yes, and from every sunset and sunrise and blue sky – if all of this were to be gathered and focused onto a single point – this would perhaps begin to give us a dim and blurry glimpse of what the manifestation of Jesus' physical glory is truly like, for it is beyond what our eyes can presently see. John tells us it is not until we receive our new and glorified bodies that we will be able to truly see all of what Jesus is like. He says, "*when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*." [1 Jn 3:2] John says we shall be like Jesus; that is, we will receive new bodies as He did, but the reason he gives, indicating this with the word "*for*," is that "*we shall see Him as He is*." Meaning, if we are beholding Jesus' physical body as it truly is, it implies we have bodies that are similar to His own, for it will take a body which enjoys more dimensional freedom than our present bodies allow, to be able to behold the fulness of His physical nature and glory.

If we now gather these facts together, we can more fully enjoy what Jesus is saying in our verse for today. Jesus said,

> "*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given*

me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. " [Jn 17:24]

Jesus implores His Father based on The Father's eternal love for Him, saying, "*for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world*." Why does Jesus make such a strong request; what does Jesus so desire that He would offer supplication to God in this manner? He desires that we, His bride, the ones who have been given to Him of the Father, be with Him where He is that we might behold His glory. All of the beauty and wonder and awe, which even before Christ's resurrected body, was far too brilliant for even seraphim to behold, (for Isaiah says of their wings, "*with twain he covered his face*" [Isa 6:2]), we shall freely gaze upon and enjoy. The glory which would kill mortal man, and which angels fear to and are forbidden from viewing in its fullest extent, this glory Jesus joyfully and freely allows us to see. What a privilege it will be, and what a promise for us to hope in! And what a precious thing it is that Jesus desires us to see this; like a husband loves for his wife to behold him and offer up praise, so too, but in a much grander way, Jesus desires His bride to behold the beauty of His resurrected body and of His eternal glory. We see Jesus' heart for us here, in that He also says "*I will that they also…be with me where I am*." Our Heavenly Groom, for whom we eagerly await to return from heaven and gather us to Himself, desires to see us and be with us,

perhaps even more-so that we desire of Him. For in Zephaniah we are told, "*He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in his love, He will joy over thee with singing*." [Zeph 3:17] In that day, when Christ returns to scoop up His bride into His loving arms, He shall rejoice with joy and sing over us, even as Adam exclaimed and sung over His bride, Eve, "*this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh[!]*" [Gen 2:23] Yes, our Lord desires for us to be with Him for He loves us deeply; therefore, as He does, let us also rejoice in this fact, for Jesus promises us, "*and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also*." [Jn 14:3]

Day 6 – An Everlasting Rope, Our Everlasting Hope

Psalms 62:5 – My soul, be silent only for God; for my expectation is from Him.

Often, through the Psalms, David affords us a great deal of strength and hope by his gracious words, which often mimic our soul's own feelings. No doubt, this is because He, "*being a prophet*," spoke as God, "*for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*." [Acts 2:30, 2 Pe 1:21] One of these such places, which gives our souls strength and focus, a steady and unmoving light as in a dark place, which we would do well to take heed to, is found in Psalms 62. Here David writes, regarding The LORD,

> "*Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation. He only is my Rock and my Salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved… My soul, be silent only for God; for my hope is from Him. He only is my Rock and my Salvation: He is my Defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation*

and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God." [Psa 62:1-2, 5-7]

When the waves of life crash above our heads, we may lift our head, wet and heavy, toward the shore, toward our "*desired haven*," and find there hope in that which is to come; for when the storm subsides, it shall come to pass even as it was written, "*joy cometh in the morning*." [Psa 107:30; 30:5] Or when the black of midnight creeps forth and we find that we "*walketh in darkness, and hath no light*," [Isa 50:10] we may look up toward the moon's faint light which "*rule[s] the night*," [Gen 1:16] and trust that "*the Sunrise from on High*" shall soon exult above the horizon and shower the night with bright day, for by the moon's very presence we know of a truth the Sun yet shines, seeing that it reflects the sun's light. [Lk 1:78] Or further yet, when we find ourselves deep within the "*valley of weeping*," we may turn our gaze toward "*the hills, from whence cometh [our] help*" and find there atop the hill, our precious Shepherd who "*ever liveth to make intercession for [us]*." [Psa 84:6; 121:1, Heb 7:25] We are reminded here in David's Psalm, that during all points of our various afflictions, God alone is our hope, God alone is our Rock, God alone is our Salvation, and our Defense. Today, it is to the word "*hope*," rendered "expectation" in the King James, to which we turn our attention.

The Hebrew word David uses here for hope/expectation has a secondary meaning; it is

also used to mean rope or cord. Any man who has ventured to repel down a cliff, has multiple choices for rope in order that he might safely descend. A rational man would surely desire one that could withstand his weight: a rope which would hold him to the very last without strain or breaking. For the Christian, this rope is Jesus Christ. He only, as the Psalm says, is our hope. Jesus alone retains the strength to hold us, and He will never break, just as Solomon says, "*a threefold cord is not quickly broken*." [Ecc 4:12] Our God, three persons in one: Father, Son, and Spirit, will never be broken, for all strength and might belong to Him. Regarding this truth it is written, "*God hath spoken once; twice I have heard this; that strength belongeth unto God*." [Psa 62:11] And again, "*trust ye in The LORD for ever: for in The LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength*." [Isa 26:4]

Yes, it is to God alone that we must look. He only is our rope. The only rope, the only hope, which we can cling to, and be utterly confident that it shall not break. He shall be able to hold us; "*blessed be The Lord, who daily bears us up, even the God of our salvation. Selah*." [Psa 68:19] And praise God that He is able; for it is Jesus Christ, our "*forerunner*," having entered into the Holy of Holies, into God's very presence, who is to us a strong hope, even "*as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil*." [Heb 6:19-20] And just as an anchor

always has a rope attached to it, so too our Savior Jesus; for He has entered into God's presence on our behalf, "*into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*," [Heb 9:24] and we do fiercely cling to Him, who is the "*King of Glory…mighty in battle*," who has boldly said, "*open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise The LORD*." [Psa 24:8; 118:19]

This is a great encouragement to us, who are disciples and friends of Jesus Christ. For we have a glorious and sinless High Priest, Jesus Christ, who is "*fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens*." [Heb 7:26] And it is He who has entered the Holy Place for us, never to die again, who ever lives to make intercession for us and who tends to our flame, just as the priest in Moses' day tended to the lampstand's flame that it be not quenched.

What a glorious and beautiful thought for us to meditate on, who are Christ's; for we belong to an enduringly wonderful High Priest and King, to whom we may lovingly cling in full assurance of our hope, never doubting that He shall be able to hold us.

Day 7 – Our Long Awaited And Glorious End

Ecclesiastes 7:8 – Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

Those moments when the sun peaks above the skyline, "*as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber*," [Psa 19:5] upsetting the night and reflecting all manner of colored light; and then when some hours later that same sun, still strong and brilliant, descends back from whence it came, leaving in spectacular fashion – with purples and pinks and reds – that it might "*declare the glory of God*" [Psa 19:1] somewhere else in the world, are the two most beautiful parts of the day. The glory which the sun paints across the sky, a language which is not hidden from any ear upon the earth, (for "*there is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard*." [Psa 19:3]), is an event which continuously occurs across the globe. In a similar way, God's glory, which we see in the face of Jesus Christ, who is "*the radiance of His glory*," is that which "*shall endure for ever*." [Heb 1:3, Psa 104:31] His glory shall never cease; ever since the world began, since eyes were created to behold it, and hearts were

created to cherish it, and minds created to remember it – yes, for all of eternity, from beginning to end, God's glory has been and will continue to shine.

Our verse for today reminds us of God's ever increasing and eternal glory. Though it may not be readily apparent at first, yet once we plunge beneath the surface, we shall see if The Spirit grants, as in the great waters, color and beauty that speaks of our Lord.

Let us first remember how Christianity began. It was at that moment of Jesus' resurrection, when His body burst forth from the grave, "*because it was not possible that he should be holden of [death]*." [Acts 2:24] It was at that moment when The Father spoke to His most blessed and unique Son, "*thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*." [f.f., Acts 13:33] Yes, in that moment, "*The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle*," rose out from among the dead, "*having spoiled principalities and powers*," making "*a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in [His cross]*." [Psa 24:8, Col 2:15] In that very moment, the foundation for Christianity as we know it was laid, that is, "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*." [Col 1:27] Certainly, it would not be until Jesus poured out His Holy Spirit upon the Apostles that the true power necessary to proclaim Jesus' life and glory and work would be possible, but all the necessary groundwork had been laid. Christ was alive; yea, is alive! And as Paul says, "*if*

Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." [1 Cor 15:17] After Jesus died and rose, God exalted Him, granting one of His last prayers, when He said, "*and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*." [Jn 17:5] Because of Jesus' work,

> "*God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth*." [Phil 2:9-10]

At that moment, Jesus received from The Father all of the glory of God Himself. All the glory that Jesus enjoyed before His incarnation, before He took upon Himself a lowly body in the likeness of sinful flesh, He received. As Hebrews says,

> "…*When He had by Himself purged our sins, [He then] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath be inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they*." [Heb 1:3-4]

Truly, we see that the beginning of Christianity had an immeasurable amount of glory. As the sun begins its ascent to noonday, bringing with its emergence incredible beauty, so too Jesus, "*The Bright and Morning Star*," [Rev 22:16] brought with His resurrection much glory when this day of

God's favor and grace began, when The Father spoke to The Son, "*this day have I begotten thee*." [Psa 2:7]

Let us likewise proclaim, as it says in the Psalms regarding this event, "*this is the day which The LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it*;" [Psa 118:24] for it is through Jesus' resurrection that we can claim any of God's promises at all. However, though this is glorious and well, let us remember the latter portion of our text for today, which says, "*better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof*." Logically, if the beginning of our faith was so blessed and grand, the consummation of it shall be that much greater.

If we have not thought on this before, we may quickly realize the truth of this; for there is hardly a Christian among us who is not now presently, "*looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*." [Titus 2:13] With great affection we await our Groom to return, that we might see His blessed face; for we are promised, "*and they shall see His face*." [Rev 22:4] What a treasure it is to await these things which are bound to be so beautiful, so glorious, so tremendous, that none of our bodily senses could quite well describe it. The end will be better than the beginning, and Jesus, who is "*Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending*," [Rev 1:8] shall soon come to rescue us from this world, for He promised us,

> "*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. 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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*." [Jn 14:1-3]

So then, as Peter says, we would do well to take heed to God's prophecies and promises, "*as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day Star arise in your hearts*;" [2 Pe 1:19] for, "*the night is far spent, the day is at hand*," [Rom 13:12] and our redemption draws near. May we ever yearn and look forward to that blessed and glorious day when Jesus returns: "*the restitution of all things*," as it is called, for it is "*unto them that look for Him [that] He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation*." [Acts 3:21, Heb 9:28] That day will be a celestial and eternal display, far greater than even the glory revealed unto us at Jesus' resurrection – a day when "*God shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*." [Rev 21:4]

Day 8 – God's Gift of a New Name

Jeremiah 31:4 – Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel, thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.

In the Law, The LORD told Israel they were not to "*offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring*," [Lev 17:7] but were instead to offer their sacrifices exclusively to Himself. He made it clear that when they offered to other gods, it was akin to adultery, calling it whoredom. The LORD warned them far in advance through Moses that they would eventually "*go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land…and will forsake me*." [Deut 31:16] In Hosea, a prophet we often remember for marrying a harlot named Gomer as a picture of Israel and God's relationship, writes under the influence of The Holy Spirit,

> "*Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts*." [Hos 2:2]

And,

> "*My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.*" [Hos 4:12]

Israel, like an unfaithful wife, had "*played the harlot with many lovers*:" [Jer 3:1] they had dealt treacherously with God, departing from Him and trusting in other gods, other nations, and even "*after [their] own heart and [their] own eyes*," another form of the same spiritual infidelity. [Num 15:39] Again and again the people rejected God in favor of other lesser and inferior gods, and because of this, the One, True God would destroy them, and even still yet plans to judge them; for it is written, "*thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee*." [Psa 73:27]

But though Israel persisted in spiritual fornication with The LORD, their first husband, and in fact still do, God promises to restore them. He says,

> "*For thy Maker is thine husband; The LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called…For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee,*

saith The LORD thy Redeemer." [Isa 54:5, 7-8]

Even though Israel has been unfaithful, yet God still desires them as His wife. Though they have departed from Him many times, engaging in what is the spiritual equivalent of sexual unfaithfulness, God yet loves them and desires to restore them and build them up. This should be immeasurably comforting to us, for it shows us The LORD's incredible mercy and forgiveness. We, as Gentiles, are not immune from this type of infidelity; sadly, even we have at times departed from God and played the harlot. This is most certainly not the ideal, but as it is with Israel, so too with us, our Beloved and Glorious Father and our Groom, Jesus Christ, draw us back again and again. As He says to them, and to us, "T*he LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee*." [Jer 31:3]

In the passage for today, we see a beautiful glimpse of this everlasting mercy which God alone possesses. Notice the title The LORD uses for His people, when He says, "*O virgin of Israel*." Here in Jeremiah, our Father is speaking in context of the "*New Covenant*;" [Jer 31:31] a covenant far better than the one set up with Moses, which was merely "*a shadow of good things to come*." [Heb 10:1] For in this covenant, The LORD promises,

> "*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith The Lord…I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more*." [Heb 8:10, 12]

God promises in the New Covenant, which is written as it were "*in [Jesus'] blood*," [Lk 22:20] and which is not just for Israel but for Gentiles as well, that He will no longer remember our sins. Because of Jesus' glorious work upon the cross and because of His resurrection, The LORD chooses to forget all of our rebellions and sins and whoredoms: He blots them all out in the deep, red, precious blood of Christ. Praise God! Indeed, as David also exults, "*Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered[!] Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin[!]*" [Rom 4:7-8] Is it not such a blessed and encouraging truth that God forgets our sins? That God truly "*is love*," [1 Jn 4:8] for love "*does not take evil into account*" when dealing with us, [1 Cor 13:5] is proved here when, through the New Covenant's lofty promises, He forgets all our sin. And how much more when we see what God says to Israel, and to us, when He softly calls them, "*virgin of Israel*!" For we see in this, that though Israel was a flagrant spiritual prostitute in their past; though she was a whore and a gross, spiritual adulteress; yet God, in all His tender love and mercy, calls her a virgin!

Truly, our God is serious when He says He will "*remember no more*" our iniquities and sins. Whatsoever we were in our past – whatever adultery or wickedness or uncleanness clung fast to our souls – yes, no matter what it was: now, in Christ Jesus our Lord, we are "*a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*," [2 Cor 5:17] and that old name by which we were called in time past is no longer, for Christ our Groom promises, "*to Him that overcometh will I give…him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written*." [Rev 2:17]

In Jesus Christ, we are brand new, and we are beloved of The Father – no longer rebels or prostitutes or drunkards, but new and beloved, forgiven of all sin. Again, in Jeremiah, we are promised,

> "*I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth…*" [Jer 33:8-9]

May we always and sweetly remember this truth; for God's word "*abideth for ever*," [1 Pe 1:23] and we are forever made new according to that same word. Though we were once living in sin, as carnal men and women: "*children of disobedience*" and

"*children of wrath, even as others*," [Eph 2:2, 3] yet now in Christ we "*have been washed, [and we] have been sanctified, [and we] have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*." [1 Cor 6:9-11] And because we have received such glorious forgiveness from God for the sake of Christ's blood shed for us, may we extend that to others, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Let us no longer view our brethren after the flesh but after the spirit; as Paul writes,

> "*For the love of Christ urges/compels us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.* ***Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh***…" [2 Cor 5:14-16]

Day 9 – The Multiplying Power of the Messiah

Matthew 14:16-18 – But Jesus said unto them, they need not depart; give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, we have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, bring them hither to me.

If we are truly honest with ourselves, we might all say as Gideon did to God, "*I am the least in my father's house*;" [Jdg 6:15] for Paul tells us, "*for ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things…and God hath chosen the weak things…*" [1 Cor 1:26-27] If we do not yet see our weakness and unprofitableness, thinking in ourselves we are "*some great one*," [Acts 8:9] then we soon shall, for "*God resisteth the proud*" and "*whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased*." [Jam 4:6, Lk 14:11] We must all come to the "*lowliness of mind*" [Phil 2:3] to which we are called, and see very clearly the truth that Paul also confessed,

> "*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God*." [2 Cor 3:5]

To be sufficient is to be adequate; the word means "qualification for any purpose; competence; adequate substance or means; supply equal to wants." [Webster] Everything we have, any capability or intelligence or wisdom; yes, anything we possess, has all been gifted to us from above; for we read rhetorically, "*what hast thou that thou didst not receive?*" and again it is written, "*a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven*." [1 Cor 4:7, Jn 3:27] In and of ourselves, no matter if wealthy or poor, bond or free, we are nothing. Jesus says, "*without me ye can do nothing*." [Jn 15:5] So we see that we do not, according to the very definition of sufficiency, possess in ourselves any worthy qualification or competence. If we find ourselves possessing any wisdom, strength, skill, or wealth at all, we must frankly conclude that it came from God Himself and was not at all inborn; for again, "*every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights*." [Jam 1:17]

Seeing then that we are incapable and insufficient in our own power or resources, let us come to today's verse, wherein Jesus said to His disciples, who only had "*but five loaves, and two fishes*," "*give ye them to eat*." In John's gospel, he records that Jesus said this specifically to Philip, and it was because He wanted "*to prove him: for He himself knew what He would do*." [Jn 6:5-6] Notice two things. One, that the disciples most assuredly had

far less than what was required to do the task Jesus had commanded; and two, that Jesus knew they could not do it in their own strength but asked nevertheless. The general consensus among the disciples, after discerning the loaves and fishes available to them was, "*but what are they among so many?*" [Jn 6:9] In Mark's account we are told, "*and they say unto him, shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?*" [Mk 6:37] Amongst the disciples, but not so with Christ, there was doubt; and perhaps deservedly, for which man thinking in the flesh and seeing with the eyes, would logically conclude that this small portion of food was sufficient for the large crowd, which contained "*five thousand men, beside women and children?*" [Mt 14:21] This is exactly the point.

Jesus led His disciples into a situation, as He often did, where there was no logical solution. The disciples would not find sufficiency or strength in their own resources: they needed Jesus' power. This brings us to perhaps the most important thing Jesus says in this discourse regarding the food: "*bring them hither to me*." The same is true for whatever we may possess – we must bring that thing or those things to Christ. For without Him we are powerless, and those resources will remain unused, or at the very least, very underwhelmingly used. However, when we bring whatsoever we may have to Jesus, He makes those things or that thing

useful. It is through Jesus, that we find fruitfulness and progress. For in Matthew, after the disciples submitted what they had to Christ, we read,

> "*And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.*" [Mt 14:19-21]

Apart from Jesus, the five loaves and two fishes would have remained just that: five loaves and two fishes. But through Christ our Lord, they became multiplied to an exceeding abundant amount, just as we are told God,

> "*…is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us…*" [Eph 3:20]

The same is true in our lives. Instead of complaining that we are weak or do not have enough resources, let us lay down that which we do have at our Lord's feet, being confident that He can multiply it and make it useful. Whatever we have today, let us lay it down at Jesus' lovely and precious feet; as He said then, so too He says today regarding our possessions/resources, "*bring them*

hither to me." Let us not make excuse as Moses did or as Gideon or as Jeremiah; let us remember that, "*it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture*," [Psa 100:3] and so therefore we can trust in Him and not in ourselves, for "*power belongeth unto God*" and not unto us, [Psa 62:11] and "*[we] can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth [us]*," [Phil 4:13] but apart from Him we can do nothing.

Day 10 – Utterly Forgiven

Psalms 65:3 – Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.

Paul tells us of the simple gospel when he writes to the Corinthians; we read, taking note of the bold text,

> "*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are being saved, if ye continue to hold fast to what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received,* ***how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures***." [1 Cor 15:1-4]

It is perhaps the most blessed thing in the world to know that our sins are forgiven, that all of our wickedness, rebellions, misdeeds, and wrongdoings are covered under the blood of Jesus, which washes us utterly clean of our sins. As David says, "*blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins*

are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." [Rom 4:6-7] What a blessed truth indeed that our evil sins are no longer imputed to us; that is, God does not view us as having committed them if we be in Christ; for God, "*hath made [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*." [2 Cor 5:21] And Jesus has, "*condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*." [Rom 8:3-4]

Jesus Christ had all of our sins laid upon Him. They were transferred to Him, imputed to His account instead of our own. Similar to how the high priest on the Day of Atonement was to "*lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel…putting them upon the head of the goat*," [Lev 16:21] so too our sins were laid on Jesus. And further, as the high priest was to "*send [the goat] away by the hand of a suitable/convenient man into the wilderness*," [Lev 16:21] so too our sins, laid on Christ, have been sent away, never to be seen again, so that as it is written, "*as far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us*." [Psa 103:12]

May it never become a bland truth that our sins have been forgiven, that, "*though [our] sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*." [Isa 1:18] No,

but let this truth always comfort us, even till death, that God has graciously and mercifully, according to "*the kindness and love of God our Savior*," said, "*I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*." [Titus 3:4, Jer 31:34] The plague and curse of sin which once separated us from God, no longer stands in the gap; now, praise God, Christ Jesus stands in the gap on our behalf, "*that [The LORD] should not destroy [us]*." [Ezek 22:30] Now, through Jesus we have peace with God and we have been brought near through His blood; as we are told: "*being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ…[and] being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from [God's] wrath through Him*." [Rom 5:1]

What Adam and Eve lost is restored to us in Jesus. He is our atoning lamb, our propitiation – that sacrifice which appeases the wrath of God and removes the guilt of sin. As The Spirit tells us, Jesus "*is the propitiation for our sins*," and again, "*herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*." [1 Jn 2:2; 4:10] The word propitiation means, "the act of appeasing wrath and conciliating the favor of an offended person." [Webster] Through faith in Jesus' blood this propitiation is granted to us. Because Jesus paid our debt, God's wrath is appeased and done away with; instead of wrath, we now obtain God's favor: His kind and tender

disposition, and we are now promised that "*in the ages to come [God will] shew the exceeding riches of his grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*." [Eph 2:7]

This fact being established, that Christ has forgiven us, let us look at another place which speaks of this blessed truth. In Psalms sixty-five, we are first confronted with David's words, "*iniquities prevail against me*." [Psa 65:3] We can all attest to this truth. Before Jesus regenerated our hearts, we were "*dead in sins*" [Eph 2:5] and unable to save ourselves. Paul reminds us,

> "*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*." [Rom 5:6]

We were without strength, unable to save ourselves, but God saw our afflictions and stooped down to help us. In the Psalms we read of this great act of humiliation. The Spirit says,

> "*Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people*." [Psa 113:5-8]

Indeed, when we were sinners in the world, iniquities and sins prevailed against us, conquering

us, having dominion over us. It was not until we were born again from God's Spirit that we could lay hold of the promise, "*for sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace;*" [Rom 6:14] for, "*the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*." [Jn 1:17] We see then the truth of David's statement. But what of the latter portion of the verse?

Despite David's weakness to overcome the law, not yet having the grace of Christ accessible to him as we do today, he says, "*as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away*." What is of particular note here is the word "*purge*." The word literally means to cover. It can also mean to atone or to remove by expiation. The word expiation means, "to atone for; to make satisfaction for; to extinguish the guilt of a crime by subsequent acts of piety or worship, by which the obligation to punish the crime is canceled." [Webster] As with the other verses listed, this one is equally as beautiful and encouraging; for through it we see that Jesus, The Messiah, has made expiation for all our rebellions. Through His sacrifice, Jesus has extinguished all guilt of our sin; He has completely obliterated any obligation on our part to repay the debt to God. Jesus has utterly blotted out our sins; as the servant was forgiven by the master of a debt of ten thousand talents, so too we have been forgiven of our massive debt. Praise God who shows us such mercy and grace! Praise

God again for Jesus, who joyfully and willingly went to the cross to accomplish these things for us. Let us therefore offer forgiveness to others, because God promises, "*if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*." [Mt 6:15]

Day 11 – Our Unmoving, Ever-present High Priest

Leviticus 21:12 – Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the LORD.

In Leviticus, The LORD gave commands to the Levites, the priests, as well as the high priest, with respect to His standard of holiness. Various laws were given to the priests, which were to separate them from the priests of false gods and from the other Israelites; as God said, "*they shall be holy unto their God*." [Lev 21:6] Specifically, regarding the high priest, God said, "*he shall be holy unto thee: for I the LORD, which sanctify you, am holy*." [Lev 21:8] Earlier in Leviticus, God had said to all Israel, "*and ye shall be holy unto me: for I The LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine*." [Lev 20:26] It is God's desire that all those who are His be holy; for He Himself is holy, that is, set apart, and therefore so should His followers, so should His children. From the very beginning, it is "*in the image of God*" which we were created; [Gen 1:27] and even as it is said in the New Testament, one of our chief purposes in

life is to "*be conformed to the image of [God's] Son*," Jesus Christ and to, "*exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God*." [Rom 8:29, 2 Cor 6:4] There should be little surprise then when we are confronted with high standards of holiness, the degree to which we must separate ourselves from worldly things and cling to Christ and His character – whether that is for the priests in the Old Testament, or for us in the New, who are called, "*a royal priesthood*" and "*kings and priests*." [1 Pe 2:9, Rev 5:10] In regard to the high priest, there were many standards God required; a few of them, which are in the context of funerals and dealing with familial deaths, are where we draw our focus today. We read from Leviticus,

> "*And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; Neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother; Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the LORD*." [Lev 21:10-12]

Take note of the command, "*neither shall he go out of the sanctuary*," which was drastically and emphatically lived out in Aaron, the first high priest, when his presumably drunken sons "*offered*

strange fire before The LORD" and were thus "*devoured*" by The LORD's fire, "*and they died before The LORD*." [Lev 10:1-2] For after they had done this, The Spirit records,

> "*And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people…And ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: for the anointing oil of the LORD is upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses*." [Lev 10:6-7]

Here, we can see the stark reality of God's command carried out. It is a stunning image of the grave responsibility which came with being high priest and is no doubt at least one reason why it is written of this position, "*no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron*." [Heb 5:4] In a sense, it is very similar to our calling. We too, as true Christians, are called to an unending devotion to Jesus, one that far exceeds even that of familial love. As Jesus said, "*if any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*." [Lk 14:26] For us, however, the true encouragement and strength comes not from meditating on the awesome race which is "*being set before us*," [Heb 12:1] and to which Christ says, "*no*

man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God;" [Lk 9:62] but it comes from fixing our gaze upon Jesus Christ who is our true High Priest. Just as the earthly high priests were called into the position, as noted earlier, so too Jesus. And just as the high priest was to place his position and responsibility in God's house as supreme, so too does Jesus – although, to a much higher degree. In Hebrews we are told,

> "*So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec*." [Heb 5:5-6]

And,

> "*Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest is fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens*." [Heb 7:25-26]

It is a great encouragement for us to see Jesus as our high priest; and further, for us to see what was required of the earthly high priests, and to then compare or contrast it with our Lord. Here, we are comforted by contrasting the earthly high priest with Christ, but first, we must remember a concept

which was laid out for us by Jesus which shall make the contrast all the more precious. He says, regarding anger, "*ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment…*" [Mt 5:21-22] Notice here that Jesus takes the law: "*thou shalt not kill*," and increases its standard. In the New Testament, in this era of grace, the law is no longer simply "*thou shalt not kill*," but it has been exponentially increased, in so much that now those who are "*angry with [their] brother without a cause*" will even be in danger of the judgment required of the law – which punishment was death. Jesus goes on to do the same with adultery, showing to us the standard has dramatically increased far beyond the physical action to, "*whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*." [Mt 5:28]

Christ came not just to fulfill the superficial image of the law, but the heart of the law as well. Jesus came not just to live a life free of murder, but to live a life free from undue anger. Moreover, our Lord did not just live a life free of fornication but lived a life completely devoid of any lustful emotion or thought. Truly, as it is said, God's "*righteousness is like the great mountains*," [Psa 36:6] rising far beyond the scope of what we would

normally view as acceptable living. And let us remember what Jesus said regarding His fulfilment of the law. He said, even before bolstering our definition of murder and adultery, "*verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*." [Mt 5:18] Therefore, when we contemplate the law regarding the high priest, that he was not to "*go out of the sanctuary*" even for a family death, (which ordinance was just a "*shadow of things to come*" [Col 2:17]), we come to the conclusion that Jesus' fulfilment of such a law must be to a higher degree, going beyond the outward form to the inward desire and motive.

To those of us who belong to Christ, the Mediator and High Priest of the New Covenant in His blood, this is an excellent thing. For we see by this that Jesus' heart is to always minister on our behalf. After all, as Hebrews says, "*He ever liveth to make intercession for [us]*." And again,

> "*For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*." [Heb 9:24]

Jesus continually and always appears in God's presence on our behalf. For He is our "*advocate with the Father*." [1 Jn 2:1] The God who "*shall neither slumber nor sleep…is [our] keeper*;" [Psa 121:4-5] He is our eternal an unfading

representative who always mediates on our behalf, who is always ready to hear our cries or comfort us in our time of need. Not as those earthly high priests who were sinful and who took vacations and who departed from the sanctuary to their families when all the duties for the day were complete. No, but our true High Priest, Jesus Christ, never departs from God's right hand, ever-seated in the Heavenlies and ever-present on our behalf, who does always "*present [us] holy and unblameable and unreproveable in [The Father's] sight: if [we] continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not being dislodged from the hope of the gospel*." [Col 1:22-23]

Praise God who has offered us and ordained for us such an High Priest; one who is eternal and sinless, yea, one who is always in The Father's house working on our behalf to present us as beautiful and blameless to Him on that blessed day when we shall see His face. So then, because we have such an High Priest, always available for us and to us, let us take the exhortation in Hebrews to heart,

> "*Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus The Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto*

the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in the opportune time."
[Heb 4:14-16]

Day 12 – Jesus' Infinitely Loving Heart

2 Corinthians 6:11 – O ye Corinthians, our mouth has been opened unto you, our heart has been made large.

God tells us in Corinthians, regarding love, that it "*seeketh not her own*." [1 Cor 13:5] That is, one mark of God's true and eternal love, which type of love only finds its source in Him – for "*God is love*" [1 Jn 4:8] – is that it is not seeking that which concerns itself. Primarily, God's love seeks out the benefit, the status, of others. By its very nature, and thus by God's very nature, it seeks others before itself. Paul, speaking to the Philippian believers, says, "*for I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's*." [Phil 2:20-21] Notice that here we are shown implicitly that "*the things which are Jesus Christ's*" include "*naturally*" caring for the physical, emotional, and spiritual "*state*" of others. Earlier in the same chapter of this epistle, Paul exhorts,

> "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God did not count equality with God a prize to be*

grasped: but emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." [Phil 2:5-8]

In the best example ever to be recorded or experienced, Christ Jesus God's Son, being equal with God in perfect union and coexistence, (as John says, "*in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*." [Jn 1:1]), did not cling to that position in heaven, but rather emptied Himself for our sakes that He might come to earth and die upon the cross for our sins. And Jesus did not do this with grandeur or with parade, but in lowliness and meekness, as God prophesied in Zechariah, "*behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass*." [Zech 9:9] And moreover, He did not give up all that glory in heaven and take upon Himself a lowly body with grumbling; no, but Jesus came and endured upon earth with joy, as we are told, "*for the joy being set before Him, [He] endured the cross*." [Heb 12:2]

Truly, Jesus' example is stunning. His love is beyond compare; there is hardly a ruler upon earth who would willingly submit Himself to such a degree of humiliation, but Jesus willingly and gladly did it for our sakes. As it is written, so too

let us exult in agreement, "*who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth*!" [Psa 113:5-6]

We are thus reminded through these verses that Christ gave up all for us. He humbled Himself greatly, not seeking His own, in love's true fashion. Let us contrast this to the Pharisees. Jesus says of them, one of the first of many other rebukes,

> "*But all their works they do for to be seen of men; they make their phylacteries large, and enlarge the borders of their garments*." [Mt 23:5]

Jesus boldly reveals to the many people gathered in the temple the stark truth of the Pharisees' motivation: everything they did was not for God, nor for the benefit of others, but it was solely that they might be seen of men and receive honor, praise, and glory from them. And according as Jesus said much earlier in His ministry, so it is true with all they do, "*verily I say unto you, they are receiving their reward in full*," and thus not in heaven nor from God. [Mt 6:2] Let us take particular note that the Pharisees, "*enlarge[d] the borders of their garments*." They made the borders, or the hem of their garments, large. However false it was, they did this to appear more spiritual, more powerful. From Jesus' words, though, we can see

the hypocrisy of their actions. Though they had large borders on their garments, they were not more spiritual, and certainly not more loving. In contrast to these self-involved religious men, we should, as Paul indicates in the verse for today, desire not for larger garments but for larger hearts. We ought to fervently desire a large heart: one that is full of love and compassion. Instead of a larger ministry; larger church; more influence, visibility, or reach; or whatever else may be contrived in order to deem oneself "spiritual," we ought to desire and seek after a larger heart: one capable of receiving and bestowing more love and tender mercy upon others. This is the heart which Christ has. Paul prays for the Ephesians, saying,

> "*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which is surpassing knowledge, so that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*" [Eph 3:17-19]

We see here the deep, endless, boundless, love of Jesus Christ. It should also be our desire, as Paul desired for the church at Ephesus, to know this love and to also imitate it in our lives. In fact, we must imitate it; or rather, more technically and correctly, we must receive this love from God, the only source of it, and as pure and free-flowing

vessels, allow that love to pour out of us onto others. We are reminded of the vital importance of love in another of Paul's epistles when he said,

> "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.*" [1 Cor 13:1-2]

The Pharisees certainly had knowledge, being very well-versed in scripture; but they were not loving. They were hypocritical and void of any real life. Jesus said to them, "*woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness*." [Mt 23:27] Though they had all the outward flash of a righteous and powerful man, they had nothing of power within. Utterly destitute of God's transforming love, they were just as life giving as a grave with a rotting corpse inside.

But Christ was far unlike the Pharisees: He was love incarnate, the very essence and power and practice of love. Jesus Christ was love and still is love today. And so, when we, as Paul implicitly

admonished, obtain large hearts, we should see a more abounding love.

We see in Isaiah a description of the border/hem of Christ's garment in heaven, as He rules over all things. Isaiah writes, "*in the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the flowing skirt/hem of His garment filled the temple*." [Isa 6:1] We see here a glorious picture and contrast: the hem of Jesus' garment is not for show. It is not merely outward, as the Pharisees; no, but the breadth and size of His garment is extraordinarily appropriate, for Jesus' love knows no bound or limit even as that heavenly realm beyond our physical universe. What comfort we may draw from this truth when we realize the vast infinity which is Jesus' love; and further, that it is accessible to us. For remember that in the spirit we have been raised up together with Jesus, having been given new life, and God has "*made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus*;" and so we, like the "*four and twenty elders*," are seated "*round about the throne [of God]*," round about Christ. [Eph 2:6, Rev 4:4] Since then the hem of His garment fills the heavenly temple, and we are by God's own Word seated there, see then and take courage, for Jesus' hem is never out of reach. His love is never further than arm's length, and His power is always present and available for us to lay hold of for ourselves and also so that we might bless others by reason of it.

May our garments as it were be like Christ's. May they not be for show, but for tangible application. May our hearts be made large; may our compassion and love for others be as Jesus' is for us; yes, again, may our hearts be made large, and may we no longer focus on the outward appearances, which are temporary, but the inner, which are eternal.

Day 13 – The Healing Power of God's Word

Psalms 107:20 – He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

In Luke, the angel Gabriel tells Mary an encouraging truth, reminding her, and us, of an eternal consolation. He says, using a literal interpretation, "*for no spoken word of God shall be impossible*." [Lk 1:37] There is not one word God has ever spoken, nor will ever speak, that shall be impossible. Each and every living syllable ever uttered from the lips of God have all been wholly and completely true; yea, further, not just in that moment but for all of history, for God's word shall never fail, never be impossible. We are told, "*the word of The Lord endureth forever*," and, "*for ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven*." [1 Pe 1:25, Psa 119:89] God's word is forever secure and worthy to be leaned upon. Everything God says will be completed; even as Jesus told us,

> "*For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*." [Mt 5:18]

Surely, God's word is strong; as The LORD Himself is a rock and fortress, a castle in the mountains, and a sanctuary from the enemy, so too is His Word, which perfectly represents His character. David says, "*thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word*." [Psa 119:114] Because of its strength, security, and faithfulness, we can steadily lean our full weight upon God's word, hoping in it; as David prayed, "*remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath given me life*." [Psa 119:49-50]

It is by this very word, which God speaks into our life. He, through the Holy Spirit, as "*a cup of cold water only*," [Mt 10:42] gives to us of His word, drawing from that fountain of life to provide us with a drink. We can see this in that Jesus, who says through Isaiah, "*The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary*," told us, "*[the Holy Spirit] shall take of mine, and shew it unto you*." [Isa 50:4, Jn 16:15] We therefore find much comfort in this, for we see that Christ our "*Counsellor*" [Isa 9:6] has a word for us in every season, which He gives to us through His Spirit dwelling in our hearts. As a cup of cold, refreshing water, so too Jesus brings to us a word of refreshment regarding our specific situations. Jesus always being near to us and available, we are never

without opportunity to receive His word. It is through this word we are healed and delivered.

Reading from our verse today,

> "*He sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions*." [Psa 107:20]

It only takes our King one, single word to grant us deliverance or healing. One word is all He needs to unleash whatsoever power is necessary to conquer our fears or release us from bondage or to even grant us literal healing. Let us believe this, behaving as the Centurion who confessed to Jesus, "*speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed*." [Mt 8:8] Jesus said to that man who so believed in the power of His word, "*go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour*." [Mt 8:13] As it was with the Centurion and his sick servant, so too it is with us. We need but only one word from our Lord Jesus: one single crumb from the bread of His word. His word contains such power that when God The Father said through Christ, "*let there be light*," that immediately, "*there was light*." [Gen 1:3] What magnificent power our loving King holds; His word is exceedingly able. Though men's words are not powerful nor lasting, God's are. We read,

> "*The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the*

LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." [Psa 30:10-11]

God's word, and God's thoughts, are age-enduring and powerful. Again, reading in Hebrews, The Spirit says, "*the word of God is living, and productive*." [Heb 4:12] Because God's word is so, let us frankly believe it. Let us doubt no longer, but cry out to Him for His word and seek it out as treasure; let it be to us as "*better…than thousands of gold and silver*," [Psa 119:72] for it is infinitely more valuable than any medicine or any thing which may deliver the men of this world: it is the Word of God which abides and endures forever and which can quickly heal and deliver us from any ailment and every destruction.

Day 14 – The Overflowing Abundance of God

1 Timothy 1:14 – And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

For those of us who are "*saved through faith [by grace],*" [Eph 2:8] we may all confidently look back upon our salvation which God wrought and proclaim, "*The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.*" [Psa 126:3] Our salvation is such a precious thing, that is, it was expensive – we were not "*redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold…but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*." [1 Pe 1:18-19] The blood of Jesus was so efficient, so effective, so overflowingly powerful, that a few liters of it did in one instant what millions upon millions of gallons of animal blood could never possibly hope to do: "*for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins*," [Heb 10:4] but it was exceedingly possible for Christ's blood to purge us, and indeed, He has "*washed us from our sins in his own blood.*" [Rev 1:5]

In similar fashion to the blood, it being abundantly sufficient, for though not all will accept His gift, yet Jesus "*is the propitiation…for the sins of the whole world*," [1 Jn 2:2] so too is His grace. For it is written, "*the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*." We see here that God's grace was not just sufficient, not just barely enough to save each and every soul who would accept Him; neither did His grace, faith, and love rise up just enough to cover over the sins of those who are saved – no, but they are "*exceeding abundant…in Christ Jesus*," yes, both at our point of regeneration and presently.

That which is available in God for us to lay hold of is beyond comprehension. For if our God is "*from everlasting to everlasting*," and "*The Eternal God*," [Psa 90:2, Deut 33:27] then certainly every aspect of His nature is such. So then, when we read that "*The LORD is gracious and full of compassion*;" [Psa 111:4] or that our God is "*the God of Peace*;" [Rom 15:33] or that, "*The LORD thy God, He is God, the Faithful God*;" [Deut 7:9] or that finally, "*God is love*," [1 Jn 4:8] then we must conclude that the loveliness and blessedness of their realities are just as incomprehensible as God Himself. As Job's friend said rightly, "*canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? [He] is as high as heaven…*" [Job 11:7-8]

Our understanding of God's grace, faith, and love becomes all the more sweet when we realize there is no end to them. They are as a never-fading fruit tree, as the "*tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month*." [Rev 22:2] We can be confident they shall not one day run out, nor shall we come to find that the full comprehension of them has been reached, for they are as God: eternal. Consider now another verse regarding God's grace, found in Ephesians. Paul writes,

> "*[God] hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*." [Eph 2:6-7]

Notice one reason in particular why God has saved us by grace, having raised us up with Christ and having seated us in the heavenlies as it were. "*That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*." If God's grace in His salvation of us was "*exceeding abundant*," how much more in the ages to come when He will display to us "*the exceeding riches*" of them! If today His grace, love, and faith have been overflowing, how much more in eternity when this promise shall be fulfilled! Let this comfort and wash over the soul and mind, for if we have seen a magnificent portion of God's

character in this life, we have not even begun to experience the fulness of it.

Day 15 – An Eternal and Unbreakable Hope

Proverbs 24:14 – So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

In Colossians we are told, "*in [Christ and The Father] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*." [Col 2:3] And again, in Proverbs we are exhorted to seek from The LORD's mouth, wisdom and understanding "*as silver*" and "*as for hid treasure*," for, "*The LORD giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding*." [Prov 2:6] In Isaiah, the first characteristic given of "*the Spirit of The LORD*" which rested upon Christ is "*the Spirit of wisdom*." [Isa 11:1]

No doubt, we see that the acquisition of wisdom is found solely in God and in His Son, Jesus. Therefore, it is through the pursuit of Him that we may find more of it; for it is written, "*the fear of The LORD is the beginning of wisdom*" and also those who "*fear Him*," who "*seek The LORD, shall not want any good thing*." [Psa 111:10, Psa 34:9-10] Thus we see that in the pursuit of God, in the fear of God, wisdom is found, even like Jehoshaphat,

who after hearing of the enemy, "*feared, and set himself to seek the LORD*." [2 Ch 20:3]

With understanding that wisdom is found only at God's mouth, (for "*there is no wisdom…against The LORD*" [Prov 21:30]), let us read again our passage for today,

> "*My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off*." [Prov 24:13-14]

The Spirit shows us here that wisdom is like sweet honey to our souls, and that having found wisdom, we shall surely find reward. There is an assured profit from God's wisdom, and those who have found themselves hoping in that provided knowledge or wisdom of God shall not lose their expectation, that is, their hope. In Psalms, David prays, "*remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope*." [Psa 119:49] Has The Lord given a word? Have we, like those in time past, "*wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*" [Lk 4:22] and found them, however unlike those unbelievers in Jesus' time, of great profit? If we have found comfort, hope, strength, or life in God's word, then let us not lose hope. Let us not cast away our confidence therein; for "*there shall be a reward, and thy*

expectation shall not be cut off." God's word is certain, and the hope it generates is pure and good, even as the words themselves, which "*are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times*." [Psa 12:6] There is no unfavorable part of God's scripture – there is no dross. If we have found ourselves encouraged in time past by His word, be encouraged again today. If we have found ourselves hoping in it, hope again today. For again, "*there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off*."

Day 16 – Secure in God's Everlasting Work of Grace

Romans 4:2-3 – For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

When Jesus became "*the propitiation…for the sins of the whole world*," [1 Jn 2:2] to whomsoever should believe in and confess His Name, placing their "*faith in His blood*," [Rom 3:25] it was not just a momentary thing. Though in His afflictions, which like ours was "*but for a moment*," [2 Cor 4:17] and though on the third day His resurrection was instantaneous – for "*it was not possible that [Jesus] should be holden of [death]*" [Acts 2:24] – yet, the effects are everlasting and shall never fade away. For we read in Isaiah,

> "*Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my*

> *righteousness shall not be abolished*." [Isa 51:6]

Praise God that His salvation, wrought for us in Christ two-thousand years ago, is still current today. Though all those men who harmed our Lord no longer walk to-and-fro upon the earth, and though all those physical witnesses of His blessed resurrection have since fallen asleep and are now ever with The Lord, never to be separated from His presence, yet still today His salvation is present. Still today Jesus is saving souls and presenting Himself to those who trust in His name, revealing to them His glory and showing them the holes in His hands and feet as it were; still today, men and women are led of God's Spirit to the tomb as those precious women of old, and are likewise encouraged, "*come, see the place where the Lord had been lying*." [Mt 28:6] Praise God that even still today, His salvation is fresh and living, for as God said toward Israel, so too He says regarding us, who by God's great and glorious saving work has made us "*an holy nation, [and] a people for His own possession*," [1 Pe 2:9]

> "*Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of Hosts is His name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith The LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall*

cease from being a nation before me for ever." [Jer 31:35-36]

That work that Christ wrought on our behalf and for the glory of God's Great Name is age-enduring. It shall never cease from its efficacy, nor shall it ever become outdated. My brethren! May this truth be as the "*balm in Gilead*" upon our souls; may it be fresh water flowing from "*the snow of Lebanon*" of which we bend our knee and lap; may it be "*like the precious ointment upon [our] head;*" may it be as the "*wine that maketh glad the heart of man*" and as "*bread which strengtheneth man's heart*." [Jer 8:22; 18:14, c.f., Jdg 7:5, Psa 133:2; 104:15] If this truth has become dull to you, today may you set out "*hot bread*" [1 Sam 21:6] as upon the sabbath, for Christ our Sabbath Rest is alive and beckons us again to come to this well and drink to the full, "*without money and without price*" [Isa 55:1]; yes, He urges us to "*draw water out of the wells of salvation*" "*with joy*." [Isa 12:3]

The Lord Jesus is "*the author of Eternal Salvation unto all them that obey Him*." [Heb 5:9] Through His own blood He has "*obtained eternal redemption for us*," and an "*eternal inheritance*," which is "*incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*." [Heb 9:12, 15, 1 Pe 1:4] Through this work of Jesus, we have been given an "*everlasting consolation and good hope through grace*." [2 Th 2:16] The word consolation means, "comfort; alleviation of misery, or distress

of mind; refreshment of mind or spirits…" [Webster] Today, let us review and remind ourselves of the everlasting salvation of Jesus – of that which produces for us an eternal refreshment and alleviation of mind and spirit, which things are always and immediately available in Christ to those that genuinely approach Him for them.

We now turn our gaze to a familiar truth. A truth which though common to our ears, is eternally significant and glorious; a truth which gives God much honor and fame, and which is forever changing those who lay hold of it in their hearts. Mainly, that this blessed salvation we have spoken of is obtained not of works, but is a free gift of God's grace. Continuing in Romans from the passage for today, we read,

> "*Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, 'blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom The Lord will not impute sin.'*" [Rom 4:4-8]

If Abraham had been saved of his own accord, of his own works or righteousness, then he would

have something to boast of; surely, if that were true, Abraham, like the men and athletes of this world, could boast of his own ability and goodness, that he was good enough to lay hold of salvation and obtain God's forgiveness as if it were a trophy to be competed for. However, that is certainly not the case. For we read, "*his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith*." [Hab 2:4] And again, "*but God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive together with Christ…for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast*." [Eph 2:4-5a, 8-9] Surely, we have not one single thing to boast of. We may not boast of our belief or faith, for The Spirit shows us here in Ephesians that too was a gift from God; nor may we boast that we found God, for Jesus says, "*no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him…*" [Jn 6:44a] As Paul said, "*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ…*" [Gal 6:14a]

This is a most encouraging truth, and, let us be reminded again: an eternal truth. We find much blessedness in this foundational principle of God, for through it we may draw near to Him; through it we may serve Him; and through it we may know Him. Apart from the blood of Christ, by which we are saved and may draw near, we shall be without, as a dog in the streets, waiting not for salvation

nor rescue, but for the destroyer to come and smite us as he did many thousands of years ago in Egypt to those who refused to apply the blood of the lamb upon their door. Only through Jesus' blood, which we may freely receive and believe upon, can we experience God's salvation; because it is Jesus alone who has "*washed us from our sins in His own blood*." [Rev 1:5; 7:14] It is from Him alone that "*a fountain [has been] opened…for sin and for uncleanness*." [Zech 13:1] So let us exult in Christ our Victor and King, because He has freely granted us this salvation, and it is fully secured in His work, in His character, and in His righteousness, for He is "*THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*." [Jer 23:6]

Praise be to our God who has chosen to bless us with this indescribable gift. The LORD has "*delivered [our] soul[s] from the lowest hell*" [Psa 86:13] – purely and freely and apart from every work! He has not required of us anything in return except our love and devotion. Our salvation is not contingent upon our merit but Christ's, for through grace we are saved and not of works. And let us note as well that The Spirit says that if, for the sake of argument, Abraham "*were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God*." Even if we, or Abraham, could somehow manage to be justified by works, we would still have no spot before God to boast, for the work of Christ exceeds every single other work.

As wonderful as this is, there is yet one more aspect we should consider. It is that our salvation is eternal. This free gift from God is unfading and everlasting. And so too is God's expectation of us – not that we would work and labor to continue being saved, striving to be good enough, but that we would rest in Christ Jesus The Sabbath Rest of God, ceasing from our own works as God did from His on the seventh day. "*For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His*." [Heb 4:10] There may be temptation to depart from this truth, to once again attempt to obtain acceptance of God and righteousness through our own works; but let us merrily remember Paul's words to the Galatians, ceasing from this pursuit and instead resting upon Christ's bosom,

> "*This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*" [Gal 3:2-3]

It is too glorious a truth for us to neglect or forget: Christ Jesus died for us and has paid our debt. He rose again for us on the third day, and by His blood we are freely and beautifully saved: not for any work of our own, but all because of Him – our salvation is utterly dependent not on us, but on Him, on Jesus' eternal and flawless merit. And so let us be exhorted and edified through this,

because if we have been initially saved by grace, we shall continue to be kept by grace. "*Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*" [Jude 1:24-25]

Day 17 – God the Father's Intimate Care

Luke 12:6-7 – Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

It says in Job, that in God's "*hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind*." [Job 12:10] From this, we conclude God is the sole provider and sustainer of life; as The Spirit says through Paul, "*He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things*." [Acts 17:25] God alone holds every living soul. If something is alive, God is the one-and-only sustainer of that life; though many things take part in a life, yet God is the true source for all, seeing that He has invented and created all things. And it is The LORD who holds the power to kill and to make alive, to create and to destroy. For we read again regarding men and beasts in the Psalms, wherein the Psalmist says, "*thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust*;" and again, "*The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up*." [Psa 104:29, 1 Sam 2:6] And once more,

> "*See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever*." [Deut 32:39-40]

Clearly, it is our great and awesome God who uniquely takes responsibility for not just the creation of life but also its continued existence. It may bring us great joy then to meditate upon the fact that we who are reading this are still alive. We yet have consciousness in our bodies; we yet have breath in our lungs; we have been granted life for another day. And why? So that we, as Revelation makes clear, might give Jesus Christ, for whom all things were created, [Col 1:16] pleasure. "*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they continue to exist and were created*." [Rev 4:11] Yes, "*for of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen*." [Rom 11:36]

So let us rejoice that God has found it pleasing in His sight to allow us another day; He has pitied us once again, allowing His sun to rise upon our faces and bless us with its warmth; for yet another day we may feel the breeze upon our cheeks and experience the pleasures of taste, and color, and smell. Praise be to God, who has not left us alone, but who in His great and tender mercies, has

blessed us with life and with the gracious revelation of His Son, Jesus Christ.

We do see that the life of man is precious; for it is written, "*God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them*." [Gen 1:27] But not only is the life of man precious; remember that God also has created animals, though not in His image, and upholds them as well. And we see in our verse today that even though sparrows, for example, are of little worth, yet God knows each and every one of them, and not one of them perish without His knowledge or approval. The sparrow spoken of here is most likely the common house sparrow or passer domesticus, the most common bird in Israel.[1] This is a very small and common bird, one of the most common types around the world. When we read Jesus' words, we can understand this, as the bird did not fetch a very high price at all, being the equivalent of roughly one dollar at the price of "*two farthings*" per five birds.[2] If we assume a population of 1.6 billion house sparrows in the entire world and divide this by a recent

---

[1] Feliks, Jehudia. "." Encyclopaedia Judaica. . Encyclopedia.Com. 18 Mar. 2024 ." *Encyclopedia.Com*, Encyclopedia.com, 5 May 2018, www.encyclopedia.com/plants-and-animals/animals/vertebrate-zoology/sparrow.

[2] https://testamentpress.com/ancient-money-calculator.html

figure calculating the world's net worth, we calculate that these tiny birds encapsulate a meager 0.00038 percent of the world's wealth.[3]

But even though these birds are of little value, yet God thinks upon them and takes care for them, for Jesus says, "*not one of them is forgotten before God*," and, "*one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father*." [Mt 10:29] If we may ponder upon this fact for a little while longer, we may fill our minds with that which, as Paul says is worthy to think of, those "*things [which] are lovely*." [Phil 4:8] For remember in Psalms what is written regarding our redemption price: that not one rich man upon earth has enough wealth to redeem his brother. God says, "*none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)*." [Psa 49:7-8] There is no amount of gold, silver, or any other precious metal upon earth, no, not even in the universe, which would be able to satisfy the price required for our salvation. For we "*were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold…but with the precious blood of Christ*." [1 Pe 1:18-19] The only price which is satisfactory was Jesus' blood, a substance of such precious value that even if all the wealth of the world were

[3] If 1 dollar is equivalent to 0.37 'As,' then one house sparrow costs 1.08 dollars. If there is a population of 1.6 billion, that is 1.7 billion dollars. If we divide by a total net worth of 454.4 trillion dollars, that is .0003807 percent.

continuously duplicated and supplied in payment to God, would fall vastly short.

When we remember that Christ Jesus is God's only Son, "*The Son of His Love*," [Col 1:13] and that "*The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand*," [Jn 3:35] we come to a startling and glorious conclusion regarding God's character. Jesus Christ, whom The Father loves above all, shed His precious blood, a thing which is beyond price, at The Father's will and hand. Since this is true, if God takes such thought and care for birds, who are magnificently and tremendously smaller in value compared to Christ's blood, then how much more thought and care must He take for Christ His Son? And thus, we conclude, for us, who are found to be in Him and purchased with that blood? For John comforts us, saying, "as [Jesus] is, so are we in this world," [1 Jn 4:17] and Jesus encourages us further, saying, "*even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows*;" and again, in the Psalms it is written,

> "*Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered*." [Psa 40:5]

Praise be to Jesus Christ who grants us such love and care from our Father. If The LORD takes such careful thought for insignificant fowl, how much more for us, who are redeemed by His Son's exceedingly precious blood? This fact regarding sparrows is quite marvelous; it reveals to us God's care for the smallest detail of each individual. Let us meditate upon this truth: for if God cares for the minute sparrow, easily lost in the vast scope of creation, certainly He gives exceeding more attention to every child of His who was bought with the precious blood of His Son.

Our Heavenly Father says, "*every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills*." [Psa 50:10] And we are also told, "*the earth is The LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For He hath founded it…*" [Psa 24:1-2] Even though God owns and has created all animals, not just birds, let us meditate for a moment upon only birds. If we are conservative, and estimate a total world population of 50 billion birds, [Nat'l Geographic], house sparrows only account for three percent of them all. But let us be careful to consider that our tender and good Father does care for each individual sparrow. The impact one sparrow has on 50 billion is numerically speaking incredibly small. And if we account for all animals, the number plunges vastly further; and if we then take into account all life, such as plants, and do remember that our God guides and

maintains all the heavenly bodies (for, "*he calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth*." [Isa 40:26]), we begin to realize just how supremely thoughtful and caring our God is. And if The LORD, Strong and Mighty, takes thought for just one sparrow, how much exceedingly more thought must He take for us, who are "*accepted in the Beloved [Son]*," [Eph 1:6] and who are "*dear children*." [Eph 5:1]

Surely, our God shall never forget us, and gives us surety in this manner, proclaiming, "*can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee*." [Isa 49:15] Yes praise be to God again, for His care, His pity, His mercy, reach to the heavens, extending far beyond even the furthest star – our God cares for and loves us of a truth.

Day 18 – The Longsuffering & Faith of Christ

John 6:64 – But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

In Luke, before Jesus was to choose out for Himself twelve disciples, naming them "Apostles," we are told that He, "*continued all night in prayer to God*." [Lk 6:12] Then, after a night spent totally in prayer, "*when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles*." [Lk 6:13] Knowing the end of the story, we will remember that in addition to those faithful eleven, those beloved of our Lord, of whom we "*have obtained like precious faith*," [2 Pe 1:1] we find the man rightly named last, "*Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor*." [Lk 6:16] If we dwell on this fact for some time, we will come to a few precious conclusions about Jesus and His character that shall encourage our minds and hearts. We will see that our King is meek, patient, and incredibly gracious; that He is merciful and full of love, abounding in longsuffering.

First, we must recognize that Jesus could do nothing in His own power. This may sound almost blasphemous; and, if we are not careful, it can become such. However, we would do well to read what our Lord spoke some two-thousand years ago, when He said, "*verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth The Father do*;" and, "*I can of mine own self do nothing*;" and again, "*when ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I Am, and that I do nothing of myself…*" [Jn 5:19, 30; 8:28] It may come as a surprise for the man who has not had this truth revealed to Him yet by The Spirit, but it is indeed true. And further, is this not how Jesus our Captain also chose and sent us? For He says, "*without me ye can do nothing*," [Jn 15:5] and, "*as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*." [Jn 20:21] We see then that all things which Jesus did and said were empowered and motivated by The Father; Jesus' body and life became a vessel for God to live through, that The Father, through the body of Christ, might show the world who He was – for in Jesus Christ, "*dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead in bodily form*." [Col 2:9] As Jesus said to Phillip, "*have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Phillip? He that hath seen me hath seen The Father*." [Jn 14:9]

Second, we read above in our passage for today, Jesus speaking and saying, "'*but there are some of you that believe not.' For Jesus knew from the*

beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." [Jn 6:64] And again, "*Jesus answered them, have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve*." [Jn 6:70-71] And again, "*for He knew who should betray Him*." [Jn 13:11] Clearly, we see that Jesus, "*from the beginning*," knew who of the disciples should betray Him and fulfil the scripture, "*my own familiar friend…has lifted up his heel against me*." [Psa 41:9, Jn 13:18]

If we now join these facts, we come to an understanding that Jesus, after a full night of prayer and fellowship with His Father, concluded by direction of The Father, that Judas Iscariot – a man who would surely betray Him – should be among His closest disciples. Jesus knowingly chose Judas as an Apostle, trusting in The Father's will. He did not grudge nor complain; He did not question or doubt; no, but Jesus firmly and resolutely, with pure obedience, chose a man of whom it had been revealed to Him that he should betray Him.

What glorious grace and mercy from our Lord Jesus! For remember that Judas was among the twelve when, "*[Jesus] riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded*." [Jn 13:4-5]

Jesus lovingly washed the feet of the very man whom He knew all along should betray Him for mere silver. Without complaining and without murmuring, "*with cheerfulness*" He did show Judas mercy. [Rom 12:8] Again, it was Judas who "*had the [money] bag*." [Jn 12:6] It was this betrayer whom Jesus entrusted with the ministry's monies. It was not Philip, to whom Jesus inquired, "*whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?*" [Jn 6:5] but it was to Judas. See the graciousness of our Lord who would give such a man opportunity to repent and change.

This betrayer was not treated any differently than the other disciples. He was equally loved by Christ, who, in context of all twelve disciples, "*loved them unto the end*," [Jn 13:1] and, though Judas was lost, prayed truthfully to The Father, "*I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world*." [Jn 17:6] Moreover, we see that the other disciples had no idea who should betray Jesus; for even when Jesus pointed him out and said, "*that thou doest, do quickly*," yet, "*no man at the table knew for what intent He spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor*." [Jn 13:28-29] The eleven were none the wiser, and they all were quite worried that they should betray Him when Jesus said, "*verily, verily, I say unto you, that*

one of you shall betray me." [Jn 13:21] These remarks and these actions show us that Jesus treated Judas with love. Knowing that he would sell him and betray Him, yet Jesus still chose to love Judas and treat him with respect. Truly, the magnitude of God's love, of Christ's mercy, is unfathomable and deep. Praise be to our Shepherd and our God who has revealed to us His character in such a profound way.

These facts display clearly to us our Lord's beautifully kind intentions. They show us His mercy, forgiveness, patience, and longsuffering. They exhort and encourage us to draw near to His kind breast and lean upon it; they admonish us to show the same mercy to those around us; they provoke us to love and good works, and to praise and joy. Yes, blessed be Jesus our King, who on earth displayed such lofty virtue.

Day 19 – Drawing Near Without Fear

2 Samuel 6:9 – And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?

In Numbers, The LORD instructed the Israelites to "*put in the staves*" of the Ark "*when[ever] the camp setteth forward*" in order to transport it. [Num 4:5-12] This was no accident; in fact, the usage of oxen was expressly forbidden. In a later chapter of Numbers, it is written, "*And Moses took wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites…but unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders*." [Num 7:6, 9] The Kohathites were not to use oxen to transport the Ark, for to them was the ministry given of bearing the most holy things [Num 4:4-15]. Instead, they were to bear these holy things upon their shoulders. The Apostle John tells us, "*for this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous*." [1 Jn 5:3] It is not of The LORD to provide us with burdens above what He has empowered us for; because regarding testing, the Spirit comforts us saying,

> "*No trial has laid hold of you except [that which is] suited to man: but* God *is faithful, who will not permit you to be tested above which you are being given strength [for]; but will with the trial also manufacture the way out, that you may be empowered to endure [through it].*" [1 Cor 10:13]

Therefore, if we ever feel grieved or desirous to disregard God's laws, as perhaps David did when he oversaw the Ark's transportation, wherein "*they set the Ark of God upon a new cart*," [2 Sam 6:3] then we must reevaluate and test our reasoning; for The LORD never commanded David nor Israel such a thing, but this was learnt from the Philistines, God's enemies, who when sending the Ark back from captivity said, "*now therefore make a new cart…and take the Ark of The LORD, and lay it upon the cart*." [1 Sam 6:7, 8] We cannot tell the motive of David's heart, nor Israel, who set the Ark upon a new cart like the Philistines had done years before. However, we may speculate they had thoughts of ease or fleshly lust within their heart: that is, setting the Ark upon the cart looked better to them, it was easier and less of a burden, it was quicker, and all-in-all it was far less odious of a thing to them, rather than to transport the Ark with much labor. And so in that fashion they set forth. But their ease of travel and joy were short-lived, for we are told, "*and when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to*

the Ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen kicked. And the anger of The LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the Ark of God." [2 Sam 6:6-7]

After being witness to these events, "*David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of The LORD come to me?*" [2 Sam 6:9] David saw there the holiness, gravity, and power of God, for The LORD struck Uzzah in awesome fashion, making His holiness and judgment known. David rightly feared, and very consciously spoke, saying, "*how shall the Ark of The LORD come to me?*" His words show us a fearful and stark truth: we cannot dwell with God nor be near to Him, for we are sinful and He is not. As it is written, "*who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?*" [Isa 33:14] and again, "*our God is a consuming fire*." [Heb 12:29] In his natural state, man cannot dwell with God, cannot be near to God, nor can serve God. For The LORD is holy and man is not; for The LORD abhors sin and those who practice sin, and natural man "*drinketh iniquity like water*." [Job 15:16] Thus, the natural man cannot perceive The LORD nor His Christ, nor can the man in that regenerate state experience any fellowship with God; for again The Spirit tells us through the prophet, "*thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity*." [Hab 1:13]

Joshua was knowledgeable of this fact; he said to the Israelites, after they had said "*therefore will we also serve The LORD; for He is our God…'Ye cannot serve The LORD: for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins*." [Josh 24:18, 19] What Joshua said is truth: we, on our own, cannot serve The LORD, nor will we be forgiven of Him, for He is both holy and a righteous judge, and of the latter He testifies Himself, saying, "*The LORD…will by no means acquit the guilty*." [Ex 34:6, 7] Since this is true, we are presented with quite a fearful problem. How shall we escape judgment? How shall we escape the wrath to come? How shall we be united in fellowship with our God and be granted access into His presence and of the knowledge of Him?

The answer to this problem is of course Jesus Christ, God's Son. It is because of Jesus, our Lord and The Lamb of God, the Bright and Morning Star, that we can be forgiven and obtain access to God. Because of Jesus, and Jesus alone we may serve God without fear of being condemned or consumed "*for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*." [Acts 4:12] For Christ our Lord came that we might be "*delivered out of the hand of our enemies*" and "*serve [God] without fear*;" [Lk 1:74-75] and, "*there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*." [Rom 8:1] Therefore, because of Jesus' great

sacrifice for our sins and resurrection from the dead, we need not lament as Isaiah, "*woe is me!*" in God's presence, [Isa 6:5] but as Hebrews admonishes,

> "*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*." [Heb 10:22]

What a glorious thing that our God, Jesus Christ, says to us "*come unto Me*," and not as it was warned of Moses, "*take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death*." [Mt 11:28, Ex 19:12] And this is because of Jesus' blood which was shed for us, with which we are covered, and because of His resurrection – by reason of which we are now, if we continue to believe in Him, presented to The Father as holy and blameless. Regarding this, it is written for our encouragement in Hebrews,

> "*For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest… But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to*

> *the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*" [Heb 12:18, 22-24]

May it always be for us a great encouragement to know that without Jesus we may never approach God nor serve Him, but with Jesus we may freely do such as dear children. We are beloved of God; just as it was said to Jesus, "*this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*," [Mt 3:17] so too it can be said of us. What glorious righteousness has been imputed to us, that God would see fit to make us sinners acceptable in His sight and worthy of friendship. May we ever give to Christ Jesus our adoration and praise for His salvation.

Day 20 – Faithfully and Righteously Hearing

Psalms 143:1 – Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.

We know even from Moses that God is faithful. It is one of God's most longstanding and common attributes. Our God, "*The LORD [our] God, He is God, The Faithful God*." [Deut 7:9] One can hardly study the writings of scripture and conclude otherwise: certainly God is a faithful God. But not just *a* faithful God, *The* faithful God. To be faithful means, "firmly adhering to duty; of true fidelity; loyal; true to allegiance." [Webster] It should come as a great comfort to us, though it is no wonder, that God is faithful; for even if one does not agree with all of His actions, most assuredly they would come to the conclusion that all God says, He does, for He is faithful to His word. Furthermore, God is faithful to every promise He has made; He is faithful to His revealed character; He is faithful to any and all relationships and people or things He engages with. There has never been a time, no, nor will be, when one could rightly proclaim, 'God has been to

me unfaithful.' And in this truth we rejoice; for above all things, let us be reminded that "*salvation is of The LORD*," [Jon 2:9] and that He has said "*for I am with thee, saith The LORD, to save thee*." [Jer 30:11] Regarding this promise and truth of God, we can be confident – our God is the faithful God, and "*whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed*." [Rom 10:11]

There is yet another attribute of our lovely and triune God to which we should stay and ponder awhile: and that is, His righteousness. Righteous is defined as, "just; accordant to the divine law," and in the sense that God is just, the word signifies, "upright; honest; having principles of rectitude; or conforming exactly to the laws…equitable in the distribution of justice;" and also, "conformed to truth; exact; proper; accurate." [Webster]

See what a good thing it is for us, that God is righteous. For by the word's very nature it reveals to us God is exactly as His law; that is, if God's law says one thing, God Himself does not practice another: He is in complete conformity to that which is written, it having risen from His heart, for "*out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*." [Mt 12:34] Our Heavenly Lord is utterly equitable and conformed to truth – in His dealings, whether in word, thought, or deed, God is most uncompromisingly upright, never deviating from scripture nor from His revealed character. Through-and-through our most gracious Father is

upright and just, perfectly righteous. "*The LORD is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works*." [Psa 145:17]

Having spoken briefly about the faithfulness and righteousness of God, let us now combine the two and find some encouragement. First, let us sweetly remember that we have been imputed Christ's righteousness. It is written, "*for [God] hath made [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*." [2 Cor 5:21] And again, we remember how that "*David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom The Lord will not impute sin*." [Rom 4:6-8] For those who, like Abraham, have righteousness imputed to them, no sin will be accredited to their account. Despite our former wretchedness and failures, whether past, present, or future, for the man believing in Christ, no sin shall ever be imputed to him.

> "*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*." [Rom 8:3-4]

And,

> "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*." [Rom 10:4]

Praise God that our sins are utterly wiped away. The LORD promises in His word, "*I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins*." [Isa 44:22] And, as one can hardly see through the clouds unto what lies above or below, so too The LORD does not, when studying us, see our sins; but rather, He sees Christ's righteousness: for it is written that Jesus "*is made unto us…righteousness*." [1 Cor 1:30]

Now, since God indeed is "conformed to truth" and "conforming exactly to the laws;" and Jesus truthfully spoke of His own righteousness, saying, "*till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*;" [Mt 5:17-18] and God's law states He is "*faithful*," then we can rightly conclude Christ Jesus was not just utterly righteous, fulfilling every single word flawlessly, but also that He was (and is) entirely faithful. Yea further, since we have been made into and gifted this righteousness, "*being now justified by his blood*," [Rom 5:9] then we too, in God's sight are esteemed as exhibiting the exact same faith and righteousness of Jesus.

But where we have been imputed righteousness, and indeed shall pluck up and enjoy the fruits

thereof, we know that we still sin in practice; for, "*if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*." [1 Jn 1:8] But thanks be to God, for The LORD is the source and perfection of all righteousness and faithfulness, and He never fails at performing them, no, not in the past nor ever shall He in the future. We then come to our verse for today, wherein the Psalmist prays, "*in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness*."

What a delightful thing has been recorded here for our admonition and encouragement! With this truth, may we be ever prodded onward into prayer and intercession to our great God. David appeals to God's righteousness and faithfulness, implying that if God were to disregard David's prayer, He should neither be righteous nor faithful. It has been written for us, "*The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.*" [Psa 145:18-19] And again, "*The LORD heareth the poor;*" [Psa 69:33] and once more, "*if ye shall ask anything in my name, I will act*." [Jn 14:14] For those in Christ, who fear The LORD, their prayers are always heard. They travel upwards into heaven and reach our Lord's ears. Truly we may each say, "*I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and He gave ear unto me*." [Psa 77:1] If The LORD did not hear us, He has been a liar,

and has broken not only His allegiance given to us through the blood of Jesus' covenant, but also been unrighteous, for His law states He must hear us. This is a sweet truth indeed. However, it is not the end of it, for not only will God surely hear our prayers and do something about them (though He may not grant all), but He greatly desires to hear from us.

We read in Songs a picture of Jesus' love,

> "*O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely*." [Songs 2:14]

And,

> "*Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck*." [Songs 4:9]

Our Lord not only hears us, but desires to hear us. Our voice is most pleasant to His ears, even as the bride to the bridegroom. May His listening ear prick our heart to greater affection and love for Him. As David wrote, "*I love the LORD, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because He hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live*." [Psa 116:1-2] And may we never fail to remember this precious reality.

But alas, even if we do, God still hears us; for "*If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself*;" and, "*I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee*." [2 Tim 2:13, Psa 31:22]

Day 21 – God's Infinite Understanding and Boundless Love

Psalms 147:5– Great is our LORD, and of great power: His understanding is infinite.

The word "understanding" is defined as, "the faculty of the human mind by which it apprehends the real state of things presented to it, or by which it receives or comprehends the ideas which others express and intend to communicate…the intellectual faculty…knowledgeable." [Webster] In our verse for today we see written, The LORD's "*understanding is infinite*." That is, according to our definition, The LORD's ability to apprehend the truth of things and His ability to comprehend ideas and concepts are unparalleled. There is no end to His understanding; if we were to theoretically plumb to the depths of knowledge regarding any subject, biology for example, there would yet be one more step which God could take in understanding and intelligence. He could easily show us our ignorance and lack of foresight in articulating yet another deep truth regarding any subject to which we put effort. God's understanding and knowledge is infinite and knows no bounds, far above and out of our sight.

For those that believe God's word, which clearly states, "*for in six days The LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day*," [Ex 20:11] this is easily accepted. For we can see that in every aspect of creation, scientists and those who study such things are continually coming to new and more profound conclusions. Humanity is often confronted with the reality that its understanding is incomplete and insufficient. Only The LORD possesses infinite understanding. The LORD Himself states,

> "*Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding*." [Isa 40:28]

Our Father's understanding cannot be searched out. "*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out*!" [Rom 11:33] To give us just a shadow and picture of what this truth encompasses, The LORD says, "*for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*." [Isa 55:9] Here, The LORD compares His thoughts to the distance from earth to the farthest heavens. The estimated distance of the observable universe is ninety-three billion light-years across. If we convert that distance to miles, it is over 546 sextillion miles. That's 546

with twenty-one zeros after it. To give us perspective, if one were travelling one-hundred thousand times faster than the speed of light, it would still take nine-hundred-thirty thousand years to travel that distance. We do well to remember here that this is only the *observable universe* and so the distance is even more incomprehensibly vast. Therefore, when God reveals to us that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so far are His thoughts above our thoughts, we should stand in awe, humbled at His understanding. No doubt, we should trust Him and take comfort in the direction He chooses for our lives.

But we must bring our pride down still further; reading in 1 Corinthians, Paul tells us, "*for now we see through a mirror, as in an enigma…*" [1 Cor 13:12] and again, "*but we all, with unveiled face [are] beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord…*" [2 Cor 3:18] From these passages we learn that the glory and love and character, yes, any good trait of God which we do love and study, is but a fraction of the reality. If we have thought God's understanding or love, which are infinite, or God's mercy, which "*endureth for ever*," [1 Ch 16:34] were great distances above our own or anything we could fathom, we have not even begun to see the true distance separating the two. Have we found God to be faithful? He is yet three billion times more faithful. Have we seen God's intelligence or

power to be incomprehensible? The truth and verity of those glories are yet several trillion universes farther in length and height and depth and breadth. Our verse today tells us that The LORD's "*understanding is infinite*." If this is but a shadow concerning the truth of God's wisdom, by which "*[He] hath founded the earth*," or of His understanding, again, by which He has "*established the heavens*," [Prov 3:19] then what glorious heights must the reality and fullness of this truth be! Our Father's understanding, wisdom, knowledge, prudence – yea, anything in the scope of knowledge – is infinity of infinities: so far beyond our grasp that we shall spend eternity in His presence learning of Him.

These thoughts ought to comfort our souls, our hearts, and our minds. If we have worried about the future or become anxious of the present; if we have faltered in faith, believing God to not have fully comprehended nor known our struggles or prayers, then let us take comfort and be of good courage: for our God's "*understanding is infinite*." Let us take heed to those writers of old who were moved by God's Holy Spirit and whom God was pleased to use to breathe out encouragement, who wrote, "*thou hast known my soul in adversities*," and, "*for The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous*," and again, "*He knoweth the way that I take*." [Psa 31:7; 1:6, Job 23:10] There is no struggle, nor prayer, nor thought, nor concept, nor praise too

lofty; nothing can ever escape God's understanding. So let us praise and extol and exalt our King; let us bow down before Him in worship and trust: for He is able, a thousand times able, to help us and understand us; He is capable and strong, and best of all, He is love, which love "*is surpassing knowledge*." [Eph 3:19]

Day 22 – The Poor and Humble Messiah

Luke 2:22, 24– And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord…And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

In the Torah, The LORD gives instruction regarding the purification of women after giving birth. Whether a male or female child was born, the woman was commanded, "*she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled*," [Lev 12:4] showing us God's grace and mercy in not laying any heavy expectations upon the woman who just gave birth: a process not commonly regarded as easy. For a male child, this process was to last eighty days in total. The LORD said, "*but if she bear a male child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days*." [Lev 12:5] After these days were accomplished, The LORD commanded, "*she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering…and if she be not able to*

bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons…" [Lev 12:6, 8] Again, the grace and mercy of God are revealed to us in that, as with most other sacrifices, a less expensive option was available for those lacking sufficient wealth. Therefore, when we read that Mary and Joseph brought "*a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons*," we understand, Joseph "*being a just man*" [Mt 1:19] and therefore not trying to cheat God, that they were not of any significant wealth. Not being able to afford a lamb, for they lacked affluence, they brought unto The LORD a pair of birds, thus offering for the most precious and valuable person to ever be born, The Christ, who is God's "*unspeakable gift*," [2 Cor 9:15] the humblest and poorest of offerings.

This speaks great volumes to us of God's glory and character. It indicates to us the meekness of God; for Jesus' coming was lowly and lacked parade, pomp, or grandeur: it was instead very subtle and easily missed. No doubt, if the birth of the long-awaited Messiah had been assigned to a man, there would have been a grand show and a rich family to welcome Him to earth. But with our God it was not so: for Jesus was born to a poor family, to poor, young parents. For us, who are "*not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, [and] not many noble*," God having chosen "*the foolish things of the world…[and] the weak things of the world…and base things of the world, and things which are despised*," [1

Cor 1:26-28] this is a most comforting and good truth. For Jesus came and lived much like us. He did not come to live in luxury or to be luxuriously treated. It is written, "*ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich*." [2 Cor 8:9] Christ Jesus our Lord emptied Himself of all that wealth and wonder, stepping down into the likeness of sinful flesh, being born to a poor family, and possessing nothing in this world compared to those things which He enjoyed in heaven. Jesus Himself said, "*foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head*." [Lk 9:58]

Seeing that Jesus came to earth in such a poor and humble state, even being born and placed "*in a feeding trough*," [Lk 2:7] we learn firstly that Jesus is, as He said, "*meek and lowly in heart*." [Mt 11:29] Jesus shows us that a righteous and pleasing life to God is not one that is surrounded by wealth, luxury, good health, or tangible prosperity; no, for Jesus had none of that, and those who preach such a word are liars and hypocrites. "*Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love Him?*" [Jam 2:5] And we learn secondly that our God loves to use us, and will even use those who have very little on this earth. If a man were to entrust his only Son to

someone and had a choice between an affluent family or a very poor family, generally that man would choose the wealthy family. For as men are like to reason, he will be better provided for and safer there. But our Father shows us that He entrusted His only begotten Son, the Savior of the world, not only to grow up in a helpless, baby body as we have had to, but also to poor and inexperienced parents. What a glorious Father we have, who is so eager and loving to use us, His children, to glorify His name. For we, like Mary and Joseph, are just as inept and inexperienced, no matter what opinion we may hold of ourselves. Like them, who "*supposing [Jesus] to have been in the company, went a day's journey*" and then had to backtrack to find their missing child, so too we often fail. But God is always there to guard us and help us. As David wrote long ago, so too it remains true today: "*thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip*." [2 Sam 22:37] And by reason that God is eternally merciful, good, longsuffering, and strong, He uses weak men such as ourselves to accomplish His will and to represent and bear the name of His Son Jesus to the world.

Thank and praise God, who chose poor and inexperienced men and women to carry out His plan, and who still uses such (for we too have been called unto His family and His service). And thank God again, for Christ Jesus shows us that a

life pleasing to God is not one full of wealth and status, but of love and righteousness.

Day 23 – Christ, The Faithful and Glorious Builder of Our Souls

Zechariah 4:9 – The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.

One of the most popular prophecies is in Zechariah, where God used the prophet to speak to Zerubbabel, a man commissioned of God to rebuild the temple following the seventy year captivity of the Israelites in Babylon. The LORD greatly encourages this man, and those with him, who had up to this point, due to discouragement and fear placed in their hearts by the enemy, left off the work. For it is written,

> "*Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia*." [Ezra 4:4-5]

And, after sending a letter to the king in favor of forbidding this rebuilding, a command was issued for them to stop. But with their obedience in this

matter, God was not well pleased. Whereas they should have acted as Peter said, "*we ought to obey God rather than men*," [Acts 5:29] they left off the work, and resumed diligence toward their own personal effects. Therefore, because of this, God stirred up and gave word to Haggai and Zechariah, who not only encouraged the work to restart and continue, but also helped alongside the people. The LORD spoke through Haggai, saying,

> "*Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes…. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house*." [Hag 1:4-6, 9]

It is plain for us to see that because of their negligence to God's command to rebuild and restore the temple, they were experiencing loss and suffering, not being able to fully enjoy the fruit of their work. But The LORD, gracious and merciful as He is, would not come to them with

just rebuke, but also offered strength and hope. In Haggai, we read,

> "*Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts*." [Hag 2:4]

And again, through Zechariah, God spoke,

> "*This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.... The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of The LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth*." [Zech 4:6-7, 9-10]

From this, we receive much encouragement and strength towards that which God has called each of us specifically to. For The LORD tells Zerubbabel that through the power of His Holy

Spirit, and not through his own innate strength or ability, but that through His provided grace working in Zerubbabel, he would finish the building of the temple. And whereas before, the enemy frightened him and thus left off building, now, by God's Spirit and power, the work would certainly be finished, and at the end when all was said and done, Zerubbabel would be able to say nothing except "*grace, grace*[!]" Therefore in our own struggles and "mountains" as it were, we can take courage; for just as God was with Zerubbabel, so too He shall be with us, and say likewise to our timid and weak hearts, "*be strong…and work: for I am with you, saith The LORD of Hosts*."

Certainly there is encouragement to be found here to revitalize and strengthen any who have fallen or felt discouraged, or to further spur on the man already busy at work. However, there is yet another truth put here of God by which we may receive encouragement.

The best strength and learning comes from when we see Christ in a passage. Jesus Himself says to us, emphasizing the subject of our learning, "*take my yoke upon you, and learn of me*." [Mt 11:29] Therefore, let us look at another prophecy God gave through Zechariah where He speaks to Joshua the high priest, the man who helped lead alongside Zerubbabel, and to whom the prophecies in Haggai also were addressed.

> "*And speak unto [Joshua], saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both*." [Zech 6:12-13]

Upon reading God's word regarding Joshua, "*behold the man*," we are immediately reminded of what Pilate said, who when presenting Christ, exclaimed, "*behold the man*!" [Jn 19:5] And further, as The Lord called Joshua "The BRANCH," we remember in Jeremiah God promised, "*the days come…that I will raise unto David a Righteous Branch…and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*." [Jer 23:5-6] In this, we see that though Zechariah spoke to Joshua, yet the prophecy is ultimately and fully intended for The Messiah, Jesus Christ, and it is there in which we shall find its greatest application and fruit. Therefore, when we hear God say, "*the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it*," and again to Joshua regarding the same work, "*he shall build the temple of The LORD…and He shall bear the glory…*" we can see that it is truly Christ who shall do these things. Whereas Zerubbabel

and Joshua built a physical temple, Christ builds a spiritual temple. Whereas the prophet reveals they shall build, finish, and bear the glory of the temple, in the fullest sense, it is Christ Jesus who has and is building His spiritual temple, the Church; who shall finish it; and who also shall receive and bear all the glory thereof.

Regarding the first truth, that the Church is Jesus' temple; we read in the New Testament, "*ye are the temple of the Living God*," [2 Cor 6:16] and,

> "*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*" [1 Cor 3:16]

And also,

> "*Ye also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*" [1 Pe 2:5]

And once more,

> "*But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*" [Heb 3:6]

Amazingly, God desires to dwell in us. Over and above fancy buildings or ornate structures hemmed out of precious stone, God desires chiefly to dwell in man; [Isa 66:1-2] and Christ, who is God, dwells

in us, His temple, through His Spirit. What a privilege it is to bear the presence and glory of Jesus Christ in our hearts and in our bodies. And let us be encouraged also by the latter two points from Zechariah: first, that Jesus shall finish building His temple, and second, Jesus will receive all the glory.

In answer to the first, we are greatly encouraged that Jesus shall finish the work He began. He shall not leave off for fear of the enemy like some have done; He shall not grow weary and leave off the work either; no, Christ Jesus shall never, until we are complete, stop working in our lives. Let us be "*confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*;" [Phil 1:6] for it is written, "*The LORD will complete that which concerneth me*," and, "*faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it*." [Psa 138:8, 1 Th 5:24]

Moreover, in answer to the second, we ought to remember it is Christ Jesus who shall receive the glory. We "*serve the Lord Christ*" [Col 3:24] and He is the one that will bear all the glory; for it was His blood that was shed for us. "*Yea rather, [who] is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*." [Rom 8:34] To Jesus Christ we shall lay our crowns down one day in submission, humility, and gratitude. He is King, and not us; He shall bear the glory, and not us. Therefore, let us not seek after it, "*for whosoever*

exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." [Lk 14:11]

Let us be confident and rest in Christ: for He is building us and shall see to it that we are completed. For He is not a lazy or crooked builder, but faithful and diligent and skilled. And let us be humble to His rule, for He is King, He is High Priest, and He is the one who shall get all the glory.

Day 24 – Unending, Unconditional Grace

2 Samuel 23:3-5 – The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.

Living in this world, we have no doubt seen the corruption that exists in judgment and leadership. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes, "*I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there*." [Ecc 3:16] In His wisdom, The LORD ordains leaders and judges for the ideal purpose of upholding that which is good and right. Speaking of the man who is in authority, Paul wrote,

> "F*or he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to*

> *execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*" [Rom 13:4]

Leadership was ordained of The LORD to uphold good and punish evil, to establish and maintain an environment for the people which is conducive to seeking after God. However, this is not always the case in practice, for men, of their own free will, grow lusty for power and control and often abuse those whom God has placed under them. Jesus knew this, and told us, saying, "*ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.*" [Mt 20:25] But regardless of what the world does, The Lord expects us to behave ourselves differently. Regarding leadership, we read again what God spoke to David,

> "*The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.*" [2 Sam 23:3-4]

If we are in a position of leadership, we ought to fear God; for it is written, "*The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.*" [Dan 4:25] It is a grave responsibility given of God to rule over men, men that He has created and whom He loves. And to that man The LORD

speaks, saying, "*he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God*." The man who rules in the fear of God, recognizing the position he holds and the gravity of God's intentions for him, will, The LORD says, "*be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds*." That man shall rule with such a good disposition and form, fearing God, that he shall be like the pleasant, morning sun and fresh, dewy grass, even as it says of Christ's rule, who is the ultimate King, "*He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth*." [Psa 72:6-7] This is the ideal: that whomever The LORD so chooses to appoint as a ruler would steward that position in such a God-fearing way as to be a great and righteous light, one that promotes peace and growth. As Solomon says in Proverbs, and as is true of Christ, "*in the light of the king's countenance is life; and His favour is as a cloud of the latter rain*." [Prov 16:15]

However, though God's intentions are so, and His laws of rule tending toward such a good conclusion, the reality of the matter is that few kings obey these directions. Instead, most men do what is right in their own eyes, exercising undue harshness and ruling in a way that promotes self-will instead of God's will. Even David was not perfect, as he says in our passage for today, "*…my house be not so with God…*" But even though

David's house was not according to God's ideal; though it was not in perfect accordance with just rulership as defined by God – a standard which glorifies the True King, one Christ Jesus – yet, David gloriously said,

> "*Yet [The God of Israel] hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He maketh it not to grow*." [2 Sam 23:5]

Despite David's sinful deeds, despite his failures, despite his disobediences, still God made with him "*an everlasting covenant*." God is filled with such grace, such wonderful grace, that He, despite our shortcomings and failures and sin, still chooses to love us and bless us. And here, David shows us that The LORD goes so far as to promise the Messiah, The Seed of David and of The Woman, in whose blood this everlasting covenant would be written, to come from his household. As The LORD said earlier in the book,

> "*And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son…*" [2 Sam 7:12-14]

And again, in Psalms,

> "*The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne*." [Psa 132:11]

To the man who murdered and committed adultery; to the man who lacked strength to discipline his children; who became unduly angry; who despaired of life in deep sorrow; who fled to the enemy and played the fool – yes, to this man, whom God loves with an everlasting love, was the promise made and secured, as David said, "*ordered in all things, and sure*." May this be eternally comforting to us, who also sin as David, who also fail time and time again. May this provoke us to love and adoration of our Great King, Jesus, who affords us such glorious and unending mercy at the foot of God's throne, that beautiful "*throne of Grace*." [Heb 4:16]

It is not of our works for which God blesses us, for it says of Christ, "*men shall be blessed in Him*." [Psa 72:17] And again, "*He hath made us accepted in the Beloved*." [Eph 1:6] It is not through our righteousness and goodness that we are blessed or accepted of God, just as it was not through David's that this promise was made to him. But it is through Jesus' righteousness and life we are accepted and blessed, both now and eternally, for remember that God.

> "H*ath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*" [Eph 2:6-8]

So praise be to our God and King who though we do not always behave ourselves in perfect alignment with His will, yet chooses to bless us in His Son, Jesus Christ, and shall do so forevermore.

Day 25 – The Joy of The Lord's New Covenant Dwelling

Zechariah 2:10 – Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith The LORD.

In the Old Covenant, pictured for us at Mount Sinai in the giving of the law, access to God was highly guarded. It was not except by means of great preparation and explicit permission wherein a man could approach God. The LORD spoke to Moses regarding this, saying,

> "*And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death: there shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live…*" [Ex 19:12-13]

This restriction permeated the Old Testament. This is shown to us in that the place which represented the most intimacy and acceptance, the

Holy of Holies, was only open once a year, and even then not except by great preparation and security. The Spirit helps us to understand this in Hebrews, saying,

> "*Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.*" [Heb 8:6-8]

Notice what The Holy Spirit shows us through this: "*the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.*" In that old system, which has been done away in Christ, it was not possible to freely approach God. Joshua spoke of this too, saying, "*ye cannot serve The LORD: for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.*" [Josh 24:19] Moses' successor reveals to us a very stark fact: without Christ, in ourselves, we cannot even serve God: for He is holy. The LORD is so far set apart from us that without any alteration to our natural state, we cannot serve Him. Imagine, for example, the

leader of a great company hiring a toad or a beetle as his office assistant. Would we not say he is a fool? How much grander is the contrast then when we compare The LORD to man? Moreover, Joshua shows us that without Jesus' propitiation for our sin, God will not forgive us. How could He, He being a just God? As He Himself says regarding His character, "*…that [He] will by no means acquit the guilty*." [Ex 34:7]

Therefore, seeing these things are true, we conclude that the grace and love and mercy offered to us by God through Jesus is exceeding great and without measure! "*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*." [Jn 1:17] "*And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*." [1 Tim 1:14] Praise be to God that when Christ died upon the cross, having been "*made…sin for us*," and who in that act "*condemned sin in the flesh*," that "*the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom*," opening up for us a "*new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh*." [2 Cor 5:21, Rom 8:3, Mk 15:38, Heb 10:20] So then, since those in Christ now have "*boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus*," [Heb 10:19] then,

> "*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*." [Heb 10:22]

The knowledge and application of this truth: that Jesus Christ died and rose again for our sins, and through belief in Him we may freely enter into and experience joyful, safe fellowship with God, being ever able to grow in the exceeding great and precious knowledge of Him, which is eternal life, is the most fantastic thing that can be experienced by man under heaven. In comparison to the Old Testament, this new truth exceeds in glory. As Paul wrote, "*for if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory*." [2 Cor 3:9]

But let us take this truth one step further, for if this fact of our now freely available access to God through Christ Jesus is glorious, then so much more glorious is the fact that God desires, through His Spirit, to dwell in us. If God's presence was so highly guarded and restricted before, so that a man could hardly enter into the tabernacle, except by great preparation and through a correct lineage, and we now, whosoever we be in Christ, get to freely, through His blood, experience not just God's presence, but intimate fellowship with Him

and knowledge of His glory, then how much more wonderful a fact is it that God, who was once so far away, now desires to dwell in us! Not only does God joyfully accept our fellowship and presence through and in His Son Jesus (and Jesus alone), but He desires to live in us! To make us His home!

Is it not a very precious thing that we might all truthfully say, as Paul did, "*Christ liveth in me[?]*" [Gal 2:20] And truly we can always say this, even if we act sinfully from time to time. For we have a sure and firm promise that God's presence, His Spirit, shall ever dwell in and be with us. As Jesus says, "*The Spirit of Truth…dwelleth with you, and shall be in you*," and as it is written, "*after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise*," and that, "*unto the day of redemption*." [Jn 14:17, Eph 1:13; 4:20] Further, see that the very man who said "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief*," [1 Tim 1:15] also proclaimed boldly, "*Christ liveth in me[!]*" That promise long ago, which God made, "*I will walk among you*," [Lev 26:12] and, "My *tabernacle also shall be with them*," [Ezek 37:27] is fulfilled for all those who are in Christ. As Paul wrote,

> "*And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple*

> *of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people*." [2 Cor 6:15-16]

And also which Jesus promised,

> "*If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*." [Jn 14:23]

Through continued obedience to the command, "*that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent*," [Jn 6:29] a man forever secures his salvation and is indwelt with The Holy Spirit of God. For, "*if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His*." [Rom 8:9] Again, we can see this truth in that all who are saved have become children of God, for "*as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God*," [Jn 1:12] and because of this, "*God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into [our] hearts, crying Abba, Father*." [Gal 4:6]

Seeing then The LORD told Israel to "*sing and rejoice*" over the fact that in the future He would come, saying, "*lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee*," how much more should we rejoice today, who have seen the fulfilment of these precious promises. As Jesus said,

> "*Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*" [Mt 13:17]

So let us praise and extol our good Shepherd, Jesus, who has fulfilled this promise and who has come to dwell in our hearts forevermore.

Day 26 – The Bravery & Boldness of Christ

Luke 12:1 – In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Shortly before Jesus' ascension into heaven from "*the mount called Olivet*," [Acts 1:12] He told His disciples, "*behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be clothed with power from on high*." [Lk 24:49] Jesus knew His disciples needed power. They were in great need, as are we, of The Holy Spirit. The night of His death, Jesus said, "*without me ye can do nothing*," [Jn 15:5] and after His resurrection, upon that Mount, Jesus spoke in similar terms, telling His disciples to wait for The Spirit to come upon them. Jesus said,

> "*Wait for the promise of The Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with The Holy Ghost not many days*

> *hence…ye shall receive power, after that The Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me…*" [Acts 1:4-5, 8]

In order for the disciples to be proper witnesses of Jesus, they needed the power and boldness of The Holy Spirit, and a continual filling of Him at that. For not long after "*they were all filled with The Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues*," they were again offering up supplications to God for The Spirit, saying,

> "*And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word…And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with The Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness*." [Acts 2:4; 4:29, 31]

Our need for boldness to speak the word of God as Jesus commanded is manifest: for without Him dwelling in us and living and speaking through us, we are but feeble and weak men who can do nothing. But this can only truly be found in The Holy Spirit, for, "*God hath not given us the spirit of timidity; but of power, and of love, and of self-control*." [2 Tim 1:7] Even Paul recognized this and offered petition to the Ephesians that they might

pray for him, writing, "*and [pray] for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.*" [Eph 6:19]

The Spirit whom Christ spoke of, saying, "*I will send [Him] unto you from The Father*," [Jn 15:26] is the same Spirit which He possessed, of which Isaiah prophesied, saying, "*and the Spirit of The LORD shall rest upon Him.*" [Isa 11:2] This Spirit, The Holy Spirit who retains all the attributes of God in full, is among other things, "*the Spirit of…might.*" [Isa 11:2] That is, He is the Spirit of strength. Therefore, if we have seen God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Defender of Israel, the Judge of all mankind, as strong, as full of vigor or toughness or power, then we can rightly see The Holy Spirit as the same.

Furthermore, seeing that it is written, "*God giveth not The Spirit by measure unto [Christ],*" [Jn 3:34] we can expect to see this attribute of boldness overflowingly exemplified in Jesus' life. And so it is; for we read first-of-all our passage for today, in which, when "*an innumerable multitude of people*" was gathered together at Jesus' location, "*insomuch that they trode one upon another*," Jesus "*began to say…beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*" And again, shortly thereafter, "*He that*

denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." [Lk 12:9] If this event does not seem to support the conclusion that Jesus was marvelously bold, let us ponder this further that we might see more clearly why. First, notice the location: Jesus is surrounded by an "*innumerable multitude of people*." Second, the audience: Jesus is surrounded by Jews, by His disciples, and by Pharisees. And three, the message: Jesus bluntly proclaims the Pharisees not only to be hypocrites and that they are lost souls headed to hell, but also that they were destined to be rejected by God for their rejection of Himself.

First of all, the location. Jesus spoke when there was an innumerable amount of people. There were so many people surrounding Him in this place, that one could hardly hope to count them: they were innumerable. Jesus did not say these provocative and bold things in secret, hidden away so that none could properly hear Him. He said them clearly and directly, insomuch that there is no room for debate regarding their meaning. In contrast, it is the wicked who hide away with their words, secretly plotting, fearful and apprehensive of speaking their true mind; and, when they do speak it is with cowardice and secrecy. As it is written of them, "*for lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they*

may privily shoot at the upright in heart." [Ps 11:2] But Christ is not so; as it says in Proverbs, "*the wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are as bold as a lion*." [Prov 28:1] And as Jesus testified during His trial, so it is true, and a great evidence to His righteous conduct: "*I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing*." [Jn 18:20]

Secondly, the audience. The Pharisees are most certainly present, for this discourse of Jesus our Lord was in response and in continuation of even harsher and bolder words afore, which we shall come to at our third point, but after which it is written, "*and as He said these things unto them, the scribes and Pharisees began to urge Him vehemently, and to provoke Him to speak of many things…*" [Lk 11:53] We therefore see that Jesus was not afraid to speak these words directly to the Pharisees. He was undaunted to publicly, surrounded by many hundreds if not thousands of people, boldly and confidently rebuke the Pharisees – men who were highly esteemed among the Jewish community as leaders and righteous men. No, but Jesus was unafraid and unashamed to speak the truth, even to elite, highly powerful men, upheld in the Jewish culture as the best and most devoutly righteous religious men. In this act, the words which The

Father spoke to Jeremiah long ago, are proved as genuine and sincere, showing us that what God speaks and commands He is not only willing to do, but also exceedingly able to perform. For we read,

> "*But The LORD said unto me, say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith The LORD*." [Jer 1:7-8]

And again to Ezekiel,

> "*And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house*." [Ezek 2:6]

It is one thing to command another to say something harsh or to utter a blunt rebuke. It would be easy for a man, as most cowardly and wicked leaders are today, to sit lavishly upon their throne, far removed, and command other men to speak severely. But it is another thing to speak that word oneself, publicly and face-to-face at that. But God shows us He is able and willing to speak, for Jesus, "*the Faithful Witness*," [Rev 1:5]

shows us who God is, He being, "*the express image of [The Father's] substance*." [Heb 1:3]

And finally, notice the message. Not only does Jesus plainly call the Pharisees hypocrites in front of an innumerable number of people, but He goes on to say that if they, and anyone else, does not confess Him as Lord and Christ, they would certainly be cast into hell; for we see not only does Jesus proclaim, "*he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God*," but also it is written,

> "*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven*." [Lk 12:9, Mt 10:32-33]

These words might have been harsh enough, but this is not even the full message, God deeming more strict rebuke necessary. Previous to this event we read in Luke a few sentences of the larger passage,

> "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them. Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto Him, Master, thus*

> *saying thou reproachest us also. Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! For ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.*" [Lk 11:44-46]

There is seemingly no end to our Lord's great boldness. Jesus was unafraid of men and unafraid to carry out God's will. In the face of danger, rebuke, reviling, or pain – all such things were as nothing to Him: as at the cross so with these, Jesus was "*despising the shame*," [Heb 12:2] and would not be dislodged from abiding in God's will. Take heart good Christian, for this same Christ dwells in us and desires to live through us. Let us then take heed to what He said long ago, and which still is true today,

> "*And I say unto you my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*" [Lk 12:4-5]

Day 27 – Christ, Our Excellent and Wise King

Psalms 78:72 – So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

In whatever area of life one may find himself, there is always a higher power. Even for those men who are the topmost branch as it were, this remains true; "*for He that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they*." [Ecc 5:8] In this broken world, things are not as they ought to be; and leadership is not excused from this rule. Jesus says, "*ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them*." [Mt 20:25] Those who have been appointed of God to be leaders in this world, (for, "*there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God*." [Rom 13:1]), are so often unideal; though many of them speak well of themselves and of their policies, those unregenerated leaders of this world most often fulfil that which Jesus spoke of, in exercising harsh authority over their subjects. This comes as no surprise. We have all experienced bad leadership, and have all surely longed for the benefits and

blessedness of a good leader. Proverbs speaks of the ideal king, saying,

> "*In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favor is as a cloud of the latter rain*." [Prov 16:15]

God's desire for leadership is that the authority in place acts and lives in such a way as to promote growth and life in those below. A king and leader of any kind ought to behave themselves in such a good manner that they are to their people as sunshine and fresh rain. Unfortunately, this world has not seen many leaders who have attained to such heights. Instead, by large, the leaders of our world have oppressed and subjugated those given to them, submerging them further into depravity and sorrow, spreading rot instead of blessing, evil in place of good. They are much like those wicked shepherds God placed over Israel, who went astray and erred from the truth and from sound living. The LORD speaks of them saying,

> "*Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither*

> *have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them*." [Ezek 34:2-4]

The shepherds which Ezekiel speaks of "*feed not the flock*," neither did they strengthen the diseased nor "*healed that which was sick*," or "*bound up that which was broken*." Nay, but instead "*with force and with cruelty*" they ruled God's people, feeding themselves and making merchandise off those less fortunate than they. And truly, these men of whom The LORD spoke still exist today in spirit, though not in flesh.

Truly, the desire for a pure and benevolent leader is common among men; and still further true, this reality and completeness will only be found in Jesus Christ when He comes to rule the earth, "*and He is the governor among the nations*." [Psa 22:28] When Christ rules, the entire world and all that dwell therein shall be blessed. He shall be a Great Light and Glorious King upon earth. The Spirit testifies to this, saying,

> "*He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth*." [Psa 72:6-8]

And,

> "*For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight…. His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call him blessed.*" [Psa 72:12-14, 17]

When Jesus returns to receive the kingdom and rule over earth, His bride faithfully by His side, He shall rule with great tenderness and care; not only will men be blessed through His strong leadership, but also the earth: for when Jesus returns, "*the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the meadow saffron. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing*," and, "*the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped*." [Isa 35:1-2, 5] There has never been a king like Christ, neither shall there be. He alone stands in supreme magnificence, above all – "*His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation*." [Dan 4:3]

But let us come now to our verse for today, which in context speaks of David. God says,

> "*He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young, He brought him to*

feed Jacob his people, and Israel His inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands." [Psa 78:70-72]

David, "*the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel*," [2 Sam 23:1] was chosen by God not for his stature nor strength nor countenance but for his heart, "*for The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but The LORD looketh on the heart*." [1 Sam 16:7] Surely, among biblical leaders, David rises to the top as one of the greatest; even God said of him that he was "*a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will*." [Acts 13:22] And so, when we see what is written in our passage, that David fed the people of Israel "*according to the integrity of His heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands*," we can confidently assume that his rule was well received by the people and to be desired, a rulership which many of us long for – for David's heart was pure toward God and His hands strong, skilled, and protecting. Yea, even he himself said, regarding his heart, "*one thing have I desired of The LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of The LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of The LORD, and to look at Him in His temple*." [Psa 27:4] The best of leaders has a heart as this, which purely and genuinely desires to know God. A heart similar also to Paul, whose "*earnest expectation and hope*"

was that "*Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death*." [Phil 1:20]

And though David was an excellent king, yet Christ, "*who is the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*," [1 Tim 6:15] is and will be a far greater king. But as with many kings and figures in Scripture, David especially was a figure and type of The Christ who was to come: that is, of Jesus. In many ways, passages which speak of David, are most fully understood when Christ is placed in the center, for He is the ultimate fulfillment of them. And so it is with our passage today in Psalms; for just as David led and shepherded the people by his good qualities given to Him of God, so too Christ, by His exceeding good qualities, leads and shepherds us.

First, let us take some encouragement and strength from the heart of Jesus. For as David "*fed [Israel] according to the integrity of his heart*," so too Jesus does with us. Integrity means "wholeness; entireness; [an] unbroken state." [Webster] We see then for a heart to have integrity, means that in whatever state it exists, it remains unbroken or whole. It cannot be broken or changed but remains always in its whole and entire state. Therefore, let us see how good Jesus' heart is: for it will bring us great security to know that the heart which shepherds us is one which is unceasingly and incorruptly good. In Deuteronomy, it is written regarding our Lord, "*He is the rock, His*

work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." [Deut 32:4] In order to more fully enjoy the fact that Jesus' heart and character are good, let us take a closer look at some of the words used here, which speak to us of such things.

Firstly, the word "*perfect*." This word means complete or entire. That is, all of God's works are complete, they are entire; there is not one thing that He has left out, nor failed to account for. In all possible aspects His works are complete. Secondly, "*judgment*." This word means "right;", and right means, "just; equitable; accordant to the standard of truth and justice of the will of God...fit; suitable; proper; becoming...correct." [Webster] In all of God's ways He is ever in perfect accordance with the standard of truth and justice which has been revealed in His word. His ways are always suitable and proper – God's ways are never incorrect, nor are they ever unbecoming: they are always perfectly lawful, rational, and proper for their occasion and intent. Thirdly, "*truth*." The word truth here means "faithfulness" and has the basic idea of "firmness;" that is, it means to be steady or firm. The word is used to speak of Moses' hands, which in intercession for the nation, were "***steady** until the going down of the sun*." [Ex 17:12] The Lord Jesus Christ is a God of truth: of steadiness. He never falters nor stumbles nor fails in His faithfulness. And finally, "*right*," which

word means "straight." The Lord is straight; that is, He is not at all crooked or bent. His word explains and reveals exactly who He is without any bends or fractures. Who and what He proclaims to be is exactly who and what He is: there is nothing hidden or deceptive – The Lord Jesus is in this manner, "*straight*." As it says in James, with "*The Father of lights*" there "*is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*." [Jam 1:17]

Through this exposition we see that our God, and thus Christ His Son, is most assuredly good. In every aspect and at every moment, The Lord Jesus, who "*change[s] not*," [Mal 3:6, Heb 13:8] is completely and utterly without deviation from His word or from sound judgment; His ways and works are sound and suitable; and He is perfectly faithful. Therefore, when we read of The LORD, that He is "*merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth*," [Ex 34:6] we can certainly conclude He is always this way, and in every aspect of His being maintains these attributes. Moreover, having come to this conclusion, we can now take great comfort, encouragement, and strength, in the fact that Jesus Christ our Good Shepherd, as David, cares for us "*according to the integrity of his heart*."

Second, let us observe what is also written regarding David, and thus Christ Jesus, that he "*guided [Israel] by the skilfulness of his hands*." For

this truth, it is most fruitful to our souls when we remember what it is written regarding Jesus' hands.

> "*Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands*." [Psa 102:25, Heb 1:10]

And,

> "*The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath He established the heavens*." [Prov 3:19]

Truly, His hands are most skilled, possessing great wisdom. The same hands which created all of the vast lightyears of space, stars, nebulae, and planets, far above all comprehension, are the very hands which guide us. Therefore, because of this, we can trust God, knowing that He is wise and capable to direct us. If His hands could create the vastness and awesomeness and incomparable detail of heaven and earth, and all that lives therein, surely He can direct the details of our lives, which are small in comparison to all of this.

We serve an awesome God. He is wise and pure, and we can trust that His heart and hands which shepherd and guide us, are true, lovely, and exceedingly able. Let us therefore cast down and put to death every idea, thought, or purpose which goes against these truthful and good notions. As Paul admonishes us in spiritual warfare, that we are to be, "*casting down arguments, and every high*

thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," [2 Cor 10:5] so let us be engaged.

Day 28 – Jesus' Overwhelming Victory

Isaiah 10:24 – Therefore thus saith The Lord GOD of Hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian....

Jesus, when speaking of Himself as The Rock, said to Peter,

> "*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*." [Mt 16:18]

When Jesus said, "*the gates of hell shall not prevail against*" His church, that living entity which would be built "*upon this rock*," Jesus was speaking of Himself. The word for "*rock*" is "petra," which word refers to a great mass of connected rock or stone, such as a cliff or ledge or boulder. Peter's name, on the other hand, refers to a single pebble or stone: much smaller in comparison to the Greek word, petra. And truly, we find this to be very accurate: for the church does not find its strength in Peter, but in Christ Jesus, who is "*the Rock of [our] salvation*." [2 Sam 22:47] And if the church is granted strength to resist evil, that strength and

victory is found solely in Christ Jesus. As John tells us,

> "*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world*." [1 Jn 4:4]

Paul further confirms this to us, admonishing us to "*be strong in The Lord, and the power of His might*," [Eph 6:10] and not in another's strength or might; for "*the horse is prepared against the day of battle: but victory is of The LORD*," [Prov 21:31] according as the Psalmist confesses,

> "*For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them…Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us*." [Psa 44:3, 5-7]

Most assuredly, the church stands today because of the power of God and of His Christ, Jesus, our Savior and Lord. The very LORD of the Heavenly Armies, who said to Joshua, "*as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come*," [Josh 5:14] is to us a defense and strength. And if He, then who can

stand against? What power can possibly prevail against He, The Glorious and Eternal One, The Christ of Almighty God, of whom it is written that He is, "*far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come?*" [Eph 1:21] As Paul said rhetorically,

> "*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*" [Rom 8:31]

And as Jehoshaphat prayed,

> "*O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?*" [2 Ch 20:6]

So then, for us who dwell in Zion, who are among the church of Christ, let us take heed to the comfort and encouragement The LORD offers in our passage for today, "*be not afraid of the Assyrian*." [Isa 10:24] In context, the Assyrian refers to that man whom we generally term the Antichrist, who in "*the Day of Visitation*," shall be used of God, sent "*against [Israel], an hypocritical nation*." [Isa 10:2-6] But who also, after being used of God and "*when The Lord hath performed His whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem*," will punish and judge Him. [Isa 10:7-13]

Even though the Assyrian, (and we may easily say any enemy which comes against us), "*shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem*," [Isa 10:32] (or again, we might say when the enemy shakes his hand at us as to attack and destroy), we do not need to fear. Yes, though our enemies, who may be stronger and more numerable than us in the flesh, yet nevertheless they have no real power against us in the Spirit, for Christ is on our side. Though they taunt and shout, though they, as the Assyrian, shake their fists at us in a rage, yet Christ our King and Defender stands unshaken and mighty. And truly, as it is written so it is true, "*The LORD is our defense*." [Psa 89:18] Therefore, brethren, do not be afraid of the Assyrian; do not be afraid of the enemy. In Jesus we shall always find victory. "*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ*." [2 Cor 2:14] Over those spiritual enemies and powers, Jesus reigns as chief, having utterly spoiled them. It says in Colossians,

> "*And having stripped [all] principalities and powers of their armaments, he openly exposed them, in [His cross], leading them as prisoners in a triumphal procession*." [Col 2:15]

What a glorious and dear truth it is for us who are in Christ, that He has obtained a full victory; and by trusting in Him we may freely obtain the same – for God says, "*who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*" [1

Jn 5:5] So then, if we dwell in Zion, if we be among the church, the called of Jesus Christ, of those who have taken refuge in His home and under His protective hem, let us not fear our enemies, whosoever and whatsoever they be. Because our God is far greater and far better, and it is He who is with us always.

> "*Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*." [Deut 31:6]

Day 29 – The Ever-reigning Light of Christ

Genesis 1:16 – And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also.

Amongst all of God's creation, the heavenly lights that He created on the fourth day, "*in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night*," [Gen 1:14] are in many opinions, that which give Him the most glory. These heavenly bodies and their tabernacle as it were speak to all languages across earth. They magnify God and show us His marvelous ingenuity. David writes,

> "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race*." [Psa 19:1-5]

Further, by beholding these lights: the sun, moon, and stars – the stark conclusion that we are all insignificantly small in this universe is inescapable. Any man who looks upon and studies the vastness and depth and beauty of the heavens, or of any creative work God has done, shall certainly conclude alongside David,

> "*When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?*" [Psa 8:3-4]

Moreover, we must cry out with humble awe when we realize the creator of these great things is far greater than them, again agreeing with David, "*LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him*!" [Psa 144:3] In comparison to even one of these heavenly bodies, let alone God, man's days are very brief and very small. "*Man is like to vanity: his days are a shadow that passeth away*;" [Psa 144:4] and so, the realization of God's tender and eternal love, who would take such thought and delight in man, "*which is a worm*," [Job 25:6] is truly awe-inspiring and should provoke us to worship and live for Him; as Paul spoke, "*for the love of Christ constraineth us*." [2 Cor 5:14]

Having the heavenly lights in our thoughts, let us prick up our ears to what God has said in Genesis,

that the Sun was made to "*rule the day*," and the moon, "*to rule the night*." First, we remember the sun, which lights up our days, providing us with energy and life. It is most pleasant, and though day-by-day it retreats and season-by-season its strength and pervasiveness wanes, we enjoy it most and hope in that blessed day wherein God promises,

> "*Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for The LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended*." [Isa 60:20]

The sun reminds us of Christ, who is "*The Bright and Morning Star*," [Rev 22:16] and "*The Sun of Righteousness*," [Mal 4:2] and how He provides us with strength, energy, light, and life, and who, shining in all His glory, shall one day light up the New Jerusalem, the City of God – for we are told, "*there shall be no night there*." [Rev 21:25] Though presently in our lives we experience seasons and days of darkness, of a lack of seeing and feeling Jesus' presence and warm light, as we see typified in creation, yet soon there shall be a day wherein, as the new creation, our "*sun shall no more go down*."

Just as the sun hides itself beyond the horizon and night comes, so too in our lives, from time to time, the Lord Jesus' glory is hidden from us and we must endure a season of darkness. As it is written of The

LORD, "*verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior*." [Isa 45:15] But as Peter says, these times are not without purpose, for He writes under influence of The Holy Spirit,

> "*…for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ*." [1 Pe 1:6-7]

Though it is necessary to experience hardship and temporary wanings of Christ's light in this life, (for "*we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*" [Acts 14:22]), yet even in these times of darkness, the light reigns supreme. For remember what God said regarding the moon, that it is, "*the lesser light to rule the night*." And so, contrary to the flesh and what is only apparent to our natural man, even in the night seasons light reigns and rules. It is not just the daytime, filled with light, wherein light rules as the chief influence, but also the night, wherein the light of the sun reflects off the moon and onto earth. And so too it is with us, who have found ourselves in the night season: Christ's light rules. When we cannot see the Lord Jesus, let us look to Zion, to the church, that great body which reflects Jesus' glory even as the moon reflects the sun. Where we cannot comprehend or ascertain the glory of

Christ primarily, let us allow our thirsty souls to seek after even a dim reflection – for His light, His glory, is so powerful a source, that even that dimness is greater than the surrounding darkness; for, "*the lesser light*" was set there of God "*to rule the night*;" and, "*greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world*," [1 Jn 4:4] and once more, "*the weakness of God is stronger than men*." [1 Cor 1:25]

When the night of testing, hardship, affliction, or discouragement comes, let us lift up our eyes. As the Psalmist proclaims, "*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from The LORD, which made heaven and earth*." [Psa 121:1-2] Yes, let us take heed to the command, "*set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth*," [Col 3:2] looking upward to Christ to catch a glimmer of His light. And if we be too weak, let us take courage, for The LORD is "*a shield for [us]; [our] glory, and the lifter up of [our] head[s]*." [Psa 3:3] No matter the season, light rules; darkness shall never reign supreme nor conquer our lives. For through the love of Jesus we have become "*more than conquerors*." [Rom 8:37]

Day 30 – The Steady, Unending Intercession of The Messiah

Exodus 17:12 – But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

There are many figures in the Scriptures which picture Jesus for us, who show us prefigures and shadows of Him; even the law, though "*now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held*," [Rom 7:6] yet even still it, and all its parts, are "*a shadow of things to come*," that is, of Christ. [Col 2:17] And in addition to those characters and things of God's word which are examples and figures of Christ, there are also figures and examples which serve as great contrasts to Jesus. One of these good types is Moses, who

"*truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall The Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me*," [Acts 3:22; 7:37, Deut 18:15] and which words are fulfilled for us in Jesus, God's own Son, who though He "*spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son*." [Heb 1:1-2] Just as Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, the go-between for God and Israel, in a similar but more complete way, Jesus Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant; "*for there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*." [1 Tim 2:5] And as The LORD used Moses to save the people in times past through intercession and through service, so too The LORD God has raised up His Son Jesus who likewise, but far more fully, saves us. Jesus said regarding this truth, speaking of the bronze serpent that Moses was directed to craft for the people's salvation,

> "*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For*

> *God so loved the world, that He gave His One-and-only Unique Son, that whosoever continues to believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*." [Jn 3:14-16]

And so just as Moses was used to save the people from poisonous serpents in the wilderness, so too Christ is used of God to save all of mankind from their sins: He, in like manner, being "*made…sin for us*," and being set up upon the cross for our transgressions, there being no "*salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*." [2 Cor 5:21, Acts 4:12] But there is also another way that Moses pictures for us Christ, which we shall see from our passage for today.

In Deuteronomy, we read of God's wonderful attributes. Moses says,

> "*He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He*." [Deut 32:4]

Let us focus on just one of these words: "*truth*." We are told God is "*a God of truth*." The Hebrew word literally means firmness or firm; that is, faithful. Our God is thus a God of faithfulness, a God of firmness, of steadiness. The word firm is defined as, "fixed; steady; constant; stable; unshaken." [Webster] When The LORD speaks to us here through Moses, declaring that He is firm/faithful, we understand that God is unshaken, He is constant. That is, if The Lord has said He is one way, then He is never not that way. He is constant in His love and goodness, steadily showing mercy, always and forever being compassionate, resolutely fixed in His love and upholding of what is righteous. Our God is a God of faithfulness, one who shall not ever be moved from His righteous and good purposes or characteristics, for He says, "*I am The LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed*." [Mal 3:6] Yes, as Jeremiah writes of The LORD so we also may exclaim, "*great is thy faithfulness*[!]" [Lam 3:23] For His "*faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds*," and "*endureth to all generations*;" and again, for those in Christ Jesus He

says, "*nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.*" [Psa 36:5; 100:5; 89:33]

To know that God is firm is a great comfort. Even great mountains which have existed nearly all of earth's history may falter and collapse, but God never will. He is stronger and more secure than the greatest mountain, for "*He is The Rock*" who has promised, "*He will not desert thee, nor let thee go.*" [Deut 32:4; 31:6]

> "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.*" [Psa 46:1-2]

The word which we have been expounding upon is first used in Scripture in Exodus 17:12, our verse for today. It is the word steady – Moses' "*hands were **steady** until the going down of the sun.*" As Israel battled beneath the mount, Moses stood upon it, observing and interceding for the people. As long as Moses endured in intercession, raising

His hands to God above, Israel prevailed in battle. It is written, "*when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed*." [Ex 17:11] Therefore, because of this, Moses' hands being steady and wavering, "*Aaron and Hur stayed up His hands*" so that "*his hands were steady until the going down of the sun*," and so Israel obtained victory, "*and Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword*." [Ex 17:13]

Besides being an admonition and encouragement to intercede for our brethren in their battles and afflictions, we see here a shadow of Christ's ministry as our High Priest. For we read in Hebrews,

> "*Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest is fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to*

offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up himself." [Heb 7:25-27]

Just as Moses' hands were steady, that is faithful, until the sun went down, so that Joshua and the people could obtain victory in their battle, so too Christ remains steady and faithful for us upon the Mount of God, continually interceding for us, that we might also obtain victory in our daily struggles and battles. But unlike Moses, whose hands grew weary, The LORD never grows weary; for The Spirit writes, "*hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding*." [Isa 40:28] And again, "*He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep*." [Psa 121:4] And unlike Moses, who required help to remain steady, Jesus Christ our High Priest needs no help; He alone, in all His glory, continually and for all our days, intercedes and prays for us without ceasing nor tiring.

Let us therefore look up and see Christ sitting there upon God's right hand making sweet intercession for us, that we might find strength to endure, to press forward in victory – for the Lord Jesus is "*for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate*." [Isa 28:6] Let us take the encouragement offered in the Psalm, "*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from The LORD, which made heaven and earth*." [Psa 121:1-2]

Praise be to God that we have "*such an high priest [who is] fitting for us*," [Heb 7:26] who continually prays for us. As Jesus "*departed into a mountain to pray*," and there "*saw [His disciples] toiling in rowing*," [Mk 6:46, 48] no doubt praying for their success, so too Christ Jesus our Lord prays for us as He sees us from heaven in all our toils. And with this confidence, let us go forth unto battle, knowing that through Jesus Christ's faithfulness and steadiness in prayer on our behalf, we shall obtain victory, for God "*always causeth us to triumph in Christ*." [2 Cor 2:14]

For inquiries or more information

Morningstarcleveland@yahoo.com

brightandmorningstarcom.wordpress.com

Morning Star Cleveland

Aaron Osowski

P.O Box 311063

Independence, OH 44131-4854