

# 31 Ways Your Father Says; "I Love You!"



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**“O taste and see that the LORD is good;  
How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!”  
Psalm 34:8**

How close are you to God? Closer than you have ever been? Have you been drifting away? Are you in a habit of sinning, confessing, repenting over and over again? Are you so far from God that in order to hear Him He would have to shout? Are you close enough to hear His whisper? Can you see Him? Do you need a telescope or reading glasses? How close are you to God right now?

Notice how close we would need to be to God in order to obey the words of David in Psalm 34.

**“O taste and see...”** How close do you have to be to taste something? Taste, like touch, is one sense that we cannot use from a distance. Sure you can smell that apple pie as soon as you enter the house, but is that all you want to do? You want a big slice placed on the plate with a fresh scoop of vanilla ice cream and then you want to taste and see if it tastes as good as it smells.

How close to God do we need to be in order to taste Him? How can we taste God? If we can taste Him we will see that the Lord is good. So many Christians doubt the goodness of God. We can tell people that we know God. We have received Jesus Christ as our Savior, believing that He died on the Cross for our sins and rose again from the dead. We have been born again by the Spirit of God and that Spirit lives within us. However, over the years our fire for God has died out and we would have to sift through a mountain of ashes to find an ember or two that burn with desire to know our Father.

We are so busy. We have to work, care for our family, pursue our hobbies, take care of our many possessions, network with the right people so that we can climb the ladder of our own success because we believe that at the top of that ladder we will be happy. Our pride cheers us on as we succeed and our earthly wealth increases. Sure, out of the corner of our eye we see the bodies of others who have failed and inwardly we might even rejoice thinking that means there is more at the top for us. Our pride whispers that we are better than them. They did not have what it takes, but we do. So on we climb giving less time to God and growing further and further from Him.

Some of you may not be in that place of pursuing your own success and seeking to become great. Many people are not close to God and are not seeking Him because they had a bad relationship with their earthly father. There may have been a divorce, your father left and as a child you did not understand why. Your father may have been there but so wrapped up in his world that he never entered yours and built a good relationship with you. Perhaps you were abused by your father and that has made it extremely difficult for you to understand and seek God as your Father.

Still other people simply do not know or understand how much our heavenly Father loves us. Some create God in the image of our earthly father and can believe that He does not love us. We believe the lie that His love is conditional upon our actions. If we have failed to obey him we imagine that He is angry at us and wants to punish us so we distance ourselves from Him and other believers as well.

If any of these situations describe you I pray that this devotional will be a two by four upside your head. We are going to look very closely at the love that God the Father has for us. We want to get so close to our Father that we can taste and see that the Lord in good. In so doing we are going to take refuge in him. We are going to reconnect with him and begin to experience the relationship we long for and allow Him to pour His love into our spiritually parched souls.

### **Healing the Father Wound** 31 Ways God says; "I Love You!"

- Day 1 - My Father chose me before the creation of the world.
- Day 2 - My Father predestined me to be adopted as a son because of His great love for me.
- Day 3 - My Father knitted and formed me in my mother's womb. I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
- Day 4 - My Father ordained all of my days for me before there was even one of them.
- Day 5 - My Father knows ever hair on my head.
- Day 6 - My Father has my name engraved on His hands.
- Day 7 - My Father placed me in Jesus when Christ died on the cross.
- Day 8 - My Father buried me with Jesus in the tomb.
- Day 9 - My Father gave me a new life through being born again in Christ.
- Day 10 - My Father drew me to Jesus so that I can have eternal life.
- Day 11 - My Father removed the blindfold of Satan so that I could see the light of the gospel.
- Day 12 - My Father gave me spiritual life even when I was dead in sin and an object of His wrath.
- Day 13 - My Father has showered me with gifts beyond my wildest dreams.
- Day 14 - My Father has poured out on me his unlimited grace.
- Day 15 - My Father has made me His personal project for the rest of my life.
- Day 16 - My Father has totally forgiven all of my sin.
- Day 17 - My Father imputed to me the righteousness of Christ.
- Day 18 - My Father sealed me with the promised Holy Spirit.
- Day 19 - My Father has placed a shield around me for the rest of my life.
- Day 20 - My Father has grace for every trial he puts me through.
- Day 21 - My Father disciplines me because He loves me.
- Day 22 - My Father is strong when I am weak.
- Day 23 - My Father has given me everything I need to live a righteous and holy life.
- Day 24 - My Father wants to heal me.
- Day 25 - My Father will never leave me or forsake me.
- Day 26 - My Father has made full provision for my safety and protection.
- Day 27 - My Father wants me to experience an intensely close relationship with Him daily.
- Day 28 - My Father wants to hear about everything I am thinking and feeling.
- Day 29 - My Father will reward me at the end of my life.
- Day 30 - My Father has an incredible place for me live in forever.
- Day 31 - My Father sacrificed His Son for my sins as a demonstration of His love.

## **Day 1 - My Father chose me before the creation of the world.**

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight...”  
Ephesians 1:4

Everybody wants to be wanted. Whether it is being picked for touch football or first to be asked to pin the tail on the donkey, something in us cries out; “Pick me! Pick me!” We want to be picked because we need to feel wanted and loved. If we do not receive that from our parents it can leave a void in our souls that nobody can fill. Ideally we have a mother and father that love us, nurture us and provide us with a home environment where our masculinity has been affirmed and we have grown into men who know the Lord Jesus Christ and daily allow Him to be the source of our strength to live the lives He has called us to live. We deepen our intimacy with Him daily and he becomes the source of our lives.

However, rarely is that the case. Our parents were probably not raised that way. They were preoccupied struggling with their own issues and so the flaws and wounds that they experienced have been passed on to us. When we are not raised in a wholesome Christ-like way we can become stuck in our development and not become strong adults that are mature in Christ. We become wounded in many ways by the thoughts words and deeds of others. We have this deep craving to be loved and have our masculinity affirmed and when that does not happen many seek it through sex. Sex being an powerful physical emotional and spiritual event that we learn to use like the drug addict taking his next hit. This becomes a total misuse of God’s plan for sex.

God designed sex to be a way of experiencing intimacy between a husband and his wife. The physical act of sex is so powerful and can touch us deeply. So in our search for true intimacy we think we will find it through sex. Ideally sex provides us with the joy of touching and being touched by another person. When it is done in love and tenderness it can powerfully affirms who we are and that there is someone who loves us.

However, when that does not develop in a marriage, or someone is single or feels same sex attractions some men seek it through sexual fantasy, pornography and eventually physical contact with prostitutes and/or by having affairs. Some are out to prove their masculinity by conquering the feminine. Some are just seeking physical touch while others are seeking the father that they never had who will affirm their masculinity and turn to same sex relationships.

No matter who you are or where you are in this realm of seeking true intimacy there is only one place where it can ultimately be found. It is not with your mother or father. They were flawed. It will not come from your wife, girlfriend or friends. They are flawed. All of us are flawed and there is only one who is perfect and can understand our wounds and needs and bring to us the perfect healing. Our finding true and fulfilling intimacy must start with finding it in God our Father.

I remember saying to my wife when I was just a couple of months into my recovery; “I feel like there is a hole in me the size of the Grand Canyon and yet you could fill it up so easily.” Thankfully, she was wise enough to see that I was wrong. I still had not learned that only God can fill me up. Only God can heal us. I was thinking that she could do it if she would just love me the way I felt I needed her to love me. Wrong! Instead I have learned by restudying what God has done and how God feels about me that it is only in him that I can find wholeness and healing. Secondly, I should never put that pressure on my wife to do what she is not able to do. She has her own canyon that needs filling by Him.

Look at that verse for today. God chose us in him before the creation of the world. Before the universe was created, before there was Adam and Eve, or the birds of the air, fish of the sea and creatures to roam the earth, in fact before there was the Earth, the Sun, moon and stars...before there was anything, **God chose you.**

In His infinite knowledge God knew every human being that would ever be born, every female egg that would become fertilized and produce a person. The Bible teaches us that out of the trillions of people that would be born that God choose some of them to be His children. Now, please let's not get into the age old theological discussions about what this means and miss the power of this truth. God chose you and there is only one motive given us in the Bible about why He did that. **He did that because He loves you.** Let that sink it for a minute. Say it out loud; **“God loves me and He chose me as one of His children even before He created the world.”**

You have been chosen by **God**. He chose **you**. He knew you before He created the world and He selected you to become someone He would reveal Himself to so that you could be forgiven of all your sin and find healing from the wounds of sin in your relationship with Him.

Children by nature want to spend time with their Dad. Too often our Dad's were too busy, too tired or too wrapped up in other things to spend that time with us. Not so with our Heavenly Father. He is waiting to meet with us everyday so that He can heal our wounds and inhabit our brokenness. So make meeting with Him a priority each morning and He will begin to transform you into the man He wants you to be.

**Prov. 1:7** “Start with GOD—the first step in learning is bowing down to GOD; only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning.”

**Heavenly Father, Thank you that before the creation of the world you loved me and chose me to become one of your sons. Forgive me for making my dreams and desires the god of my life. That has led me to such emptiness that I have a Grand Canyon sized hole in my soul. Only you can fill it up. Only you can make me whole and into the kind of man you and I both want me to be. I offer myself to you today and ask that you fill me with your Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Notes:

**Day 2 - My Father predestined me to be adopted as a son because of His great love for me.**

**“In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will...”** Ephesians 1:5

No doubt some of you reading this have been adopted. At some point in your life and for whatever reasons you needed someone to adopt you into their family. In actuality that is true for all of us who are Christians. **God adopted us!!!** This truth follows right on the heels of the truth that He chose us. However, adoption becomes more personal.

I might chose you to play on my basketball team if we are doing a pick up game at the gym. However, my motives are selfish. If I want to win and you are 6’10” I probably would not choose you because I like you. Man, I just want to win and you are an asset to help me do that. Yesterday we learned that God chose us because loved us.

Today we take a giant step further in understanding our relationship with our Father. He has not only chosen us but He has adopted us into His family. What was His motive? Did He adopt us because we are such great men and we can do so much for Him? Well, let me ask you...has that been the case? Have you responded to His love and adoption with undivided devotion, giving yourself completely to serving Him and expanding His kingdom on earth? Or have you thanked God for the fire insurance of not going to hell for your sins and just kept on seeking what you wanted in life?

Here is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, before the creation of the universe and the Father says’ “OK, I want to arrange this universe in such a way that \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in your name) will one day understand that I love him and have sacrificed my Son for him so that he can be forgiven of all of his sins and then I will adopt him into my family and allow him to be one of my sons.”

However, notice one very important fact. Why did He do that? Let me first point out why He did not do it. Have you ever played Fantasy Football or Baseball? Guys chose a fantasy sports team and select specific players, before the season starts, to create a fantasy team. They pick who they think will be the best players and who will have the most success in the coming season. I guarantee you that nobody will select Joe Montana for their team this year. Why? Because he no longer plays the game. He will have no pass completions, throw no TD passes and achieve any wins. He may have been one of the greatest quarterbacks to play the game but this year he will be totally unproductive.

So why did God chose you and adopt you as His son? Was it because He knew what a great Christian you would turn out to be? Or was it, in spite of what He knew you would do He chose

and adopted you anyway so that you would know that He is a God of love and grace. Look at what Paul writes about himself in his letter to Timothy.

**1Tim. 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.**

Have you ever thought you were the worst of all sinners? Get in line bud, Paul was at the head of that line and you are somewhere in the millions. However, you have been shown mercy and grace by God your Father. He loves you and did so before creation. He adopted you into His family because He forever wants you to be one of His sons. He has gathered you into His arms and gripped you with a bear hug and says to you through Jesus Christ; “I will never leave you or forsake you.” “Your sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

What a great Dad you have. He did not adopt you because of what He wants you to do for Him. That would not be love. Slave owners did that. They bought human beings for what they could get out of them. God does it for what He can pour into you. He has chosen you. He has adopted you as one of His sons so that He could pour himself into you and make you into the man He wants you to be.

Are you open for Him to do that? If your heart is closed to Him He is not going to rip the top off and force Himself in. Even loving earthly fathers do not do that. You must choose. You decide if you are going to get up a little earlier and start your day opening up your heart to Him. Oh, the things He will show you and the power of His presence in you will do remarkable things to make you the man He wants you to be.

**Heavenly Father, I know I cannot go back and change the past. Just as a man cannot erase the sins of the past that he has committed so he cannot undo the sins that have been done to him. However, I know that you can heal me. As I draw close everyday to you I know your presence and your Fatherliness can heal the wounds. I ask you to heal me in everyway I have been wounded by the failings of my earthly father and inhabit my brokenness so that I experience your presence in my life today and everyday.**

**“Simpletons! How long will you wallow in ignorance?**

**Cynics! How long will you feed your cynicism?**

**Idiots! How long will you refuse to learn?**

**About face! I can revise your life.**

**Look, I’m ready to pour out my spirit on you;**

**I’m ready to tell you all I know. Proverbs. 1:22-23**

**(This is wisdom speaking in Proverbs)**

**Notes:**

**Day 3 - My Father knitted and formed me in my mothers womb. I am fearfully and wonderfully made.**

**“For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb.**

**I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;” Psalms 139:13-14**

How do you feel about yourself? Do you hate the way you look? Do you dislike the way you are or the way you have developed? Our world has spoken so much about self image and self esteem. I do not buy all they say but I cannot fully discount it either. Allow me to use myself as an illustration.

I was born the third son into a military family. My father graduated from the Naval Academy in 1943 and had a distinguished career as an officer. Both of my older brothers graduated from the Naval Academy. One is a nuclear engineer and the other had a career as a dentist in the Navy. They are both very intelligent men who excelled in school and were loved and admired by my parents when we were growing up.

Then I came along. I grew up in their shadows. I felt that I was the misfit in so many ways. They had good eyesight while my vision was 20/400. They were healthy kids while I had a long list of problems. I had many allergies and asthma. They seem physically normal while I began developing nervous tics that were later identified as Tourette Syndrome. They made A’s while I struggled to make C’s. I looked up to them and admired them and hated the way I was. The only positive’s I could say about myself were I was extremely competitive and found my few successes in sports. Regardless, I grew up feeling like they were the superstars and I was crap.

In addition to that I bought the world’s view that your value comes from what you do instead of who you are. I could not do much very well so I felt I had no value. Do you feel that way? Do you look at the failures you have had and label yourself LOSER or FAILURE. Perhaps your sexual addictions have cost you your marriage, your reputation, your relationships with your children and you feel like you are the bottom scum in the cesspool of life.

Do you realize what you are saying to God when you think about yourself in that way? Today I want us to look at ourselves not in light of what the world, others or even we think, but in the way God sees us.

The author of the verses for today was David. Not the biggest, strongest or smartest of his 7 brothers. He was the youngest and his job in the family was to stay out and take care of the sheep.



He gets the job nobody else would take because caring for the sheep went to the low man on the totem pole. However, David looked at himself not through his eyes or their eyes but through God's eyes. He could have felt his job was condemnation for being the least of his brothers. However, God taught David truths as a shepherd and molded his character and ways of thinking into a great leader

Remember what we have already learned? We were **chosen** by God before the creation of the world. God also **predestined** us to be adopted into His family. Then when the time was right He choose the parents He wanted to give birth to you. He determined you would be conceived at a specific time and place and then, as the verses tell us, He began to knit you together in your mothers womb. One way to look at it is scientifically and say it all just happened by nature and it is a fluke that you are even here. However, the real way is to believe that God made it happen. God selected the DNA and RNA that gave you the body and characteristics you have. God says that you are fearfully and wonderfully made and it is about time you stop looking at God's creation and thinking it is junk.

Yes, we have sin natures. Yes, we have all done things that we are ashamed of and wish we could undo but cannot. That is not the way God sees you. He made you and you are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Consider as well these two verses.

**“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:10**

**“...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6**

We are not garbage...we are God's workmanship. We are each a masterpiece in the making. Stop fighting the work of God in your life and yield yourself to Him and let Him do what He wants to do. You are going to love the results.

We are also not finished products. He is continuing to work everyday and He will finish His work of making you into the man He wants you to be. If you are wondering what the finished product is going to be like read the Gospels. He is making you like Christ. He is conforming you into the image of His Son.

**Heavenly Father, Thank you that your chose me and have adopted me as one of your sons. Thank you that you knitted me together in my mothers womb. Thank you that even though I may have hated the home I grew up in or the parents you gave me that You can heal me from the wounds of my childhood and You can inhabit the broken areas of my life. I offer myself to you today as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in your sight (Romans 12:1) and I ask that you fill me with your Spirit and continue your work in my life.**

**Notes:**

**Day 4 - My Father ordained all of my days for me before there was even one of them.**

**“My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” Ps. 139:15-16**

First, we must be careful to not misinterpret what this beautiful passage means. It does not mean that we are living in a fatalistic world where God has caused everything to happen and we are just puppets on a string. The biblical view of the world as God’s creation is that He created it out of nothing and because He knows all things, and knew all things before He created time, He therefore knows everything that would happen in time. In His infinite knowledge he knew everything that I would do in my life. He does not force me to do them. He exists both within and outside of time and therefore he knows everything I will think, do or say.

Now some things He did determine and I had no free will in. I did not choose the parents I would have, where I would be born and the number of siblings in my family. However, He has also given us a free will and He allows us to make almost all of the choices in our lives.

This specific passage is saying that when it comes to the number of days we will live God has ordained that. He has determined what the length of our lives will be. We can react to that in one of two ways. The first way is to react negatively. Who the heck does He think He is determining the amount of days I will live. Well...after all He is GOD!!! When we are standing before Him you are not going to be arguing with Him over that. You will be face down in utter worship before Him totally amazed that this absolutely holy being would choose you to be an object of His love and grace. So get over it!

The positive reaction is to think like David. Wow, God knows every day that I am going to be alive. He not only knows the number but He has selected how many days I have to live. He has given me the freedom to live and make the choices I want, but I do not live in an uncertain world where my life could be tragically cut short by some fluke of nature. God has me in His hands and nothing will change the amount of time He has given me to love Him and learn to follow His will for my life.

It also says something about how close of a relationship we can have with our Father. Many of us who struggle with sexual sin did not have a great relationship with our earthly father. They were too busy for us or did not like us or even abused us. Instead of a loving father who is able to meet all of our needs and instill in us our worth as men affirming our masculinity, they failed.

Now I thought I grew up with a pretty good dad. However, he had a very busy career as a Naval officer and was often too busy to spend time with me or be at all the activities in which I participated. I remember once when I was playing softball when I was about 8. I had the game of my life. I pitched a great game, and won the game on a grand slam home run. However, what stands out most in my memory was that after the game when everyone was patting me on the back there was nobody from my family around. I have no idea where my mom or dad were, but I distinctly remember looking around to find them and they were not there. In fact I even had to walk home because nobody came to pick me up. They had forgotten about me so I had to walk a couple of miles back to the house and I was so angry by the time I got home the only way they knew what happened was reading it in the local newspaper.

Not so with my heavenly Father. He is always here with me. He sees everything I do. He knows my every thought and word. He is right there hanging over the balcony of my life watching and cheering me on. He is there that way for you too.

When I watch my children, whether it be in sports, in music or just sometimes observing them when we are together I am so proud of them (most of the time). Our heavenly Father has ordained everyday of our lives before there was one of them. He lovingly watches over us and protects us. We have the capacity to bring joy to Him through our walking with Christ and being filled with the Holy Spirit. When the time is right and all that He has for us is accomplished then He will take us home to be with Him.

To me that is a great thing. I can live daringly. I do not have to weave around me some safe cocoon so that nothing bad happens to me. Being too safe might be far worse for me than jumping into the whitewater of life, holding on tight and going on a God ordained white water ride. I have a number of days which He has given me and I can invest them in doing His will or I can build my own padded cell and try to live “safely”. Some men are more concerned with making sure they have a fat 401K than if they are passionately pursuing God’s great adventure for their life.

Do you think it is possible to play it safe all your adult life, put all of your money into great earthly investments so that you can retire early, making yourself into a financial success and then drop dead when you hit 55?

So you leave everything to others and go to heaven and meet your heavenly Father. He sits you down and shows you the DVD entitled; “The Life You Could Have Had.” There you see the incredible things He had planned for you that you were not able to experience because you played it safe. You lived for yourself and not for Him. You sat on the beach with your head covered, a thick layer of SPF 500 suntan lotion covering every pore of skin and worried about what you were going to do tomorrow when all along He wanted you to surf the Pipeline on the North Shore of Oahu. You missed the thrill of hanging out over a mountainous wave, flying down on your surfboard,

knowing there was razor sharp coral beneath you and curling up inside that wave and riding it out. Hey guys...SURF'S UP!!!

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that you have ordained everyday that I will be alive and when my time is up you will take me home. Help me to live this life believing in your Sovereign power over me. Help me to reach out and live daringly for you...to stop worrying if I am safe instead of am I doing what you have for me to do. I give myself to you today as a living sacrifice and I ask you to use me today to accomplish your will for your glory.**

### **Project**

Make a list of 5 things that you would really like to do that would bring glory to the Lord. Take mission's trip with the church, jump into a ministry where you would have to be stretched and learn new things or figure out some way to reach out to those you work or live with. Share that list with your spouse or friend and have them hold you accountable.

### **Day 5 - My Father knows ever hair on my head.**

**“Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. “So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.” Matthew 10:29-31**

OK, for some of you guys today's truth may be less impressive than for others but when you think about it this verse communicates something very incredible about our Father. We have already considered the truth that God's knowledge is infinite. He exists both outside and inside of time. He knows the beginning from the end and has even numbered the days of our lives.

However, these words are spoken by Jesus and the context of this statement is very important. Jesus is telling his disciples that after He leaves them they are going to face a lot of trouble and persecution. Since people were going to kill Jesus for who He was and what He taught so also they will come after us. Those who face this have to battle fear everyday and so Jesus is telling us that we are not to live in fear. Our Father will never forget about us. His knowledge of what is happening in our lives is complete and immediate.

Since our Father knows of everything that happens in His creation, like even the death of something we might consider as insignificant as a sparrow, then He is certainly going to know what is happening in our lives even down to how many hairs we leave behind in our hairbrush everyday. In today's language Jesus might have said “But even the number of cells in your body are numbered.” That is how full and complete our Father's knowledge of us is.

However, it is far more than just some hair follicle accounting process that our Father does everyday. The emphasis behind the information is that our Father loves us so much He wants to know everything that happens in our lives, everyday, and because of that we should not be afraid.

Children by nature want their father's attention. "Daddy, Daddy look at me. Look at me!" Why did we say that? We wanted our earthly father's attention. We wanted his approval and affirmation. We wanted him to see us. We wanted to see him smile, run to us, lift us up in his arms and give us a big hug. We wanted to hear him say; "I love you. I am so proud of you. I am so glad you are my son."

That is what should have happened but for many of us it didn't. Instead there were grunts coming from the other side of the newspaper. Instead of a smile and words of love he might have said; "Get out of the way I can't see the television. Gradually that spark inside of us that burned for his love and affirmation died and left a wound in our soul. Some men seek to fill that wound with relationships with other men. It becomes sexualized and they can pursue it through countless relationships trying to find what only our loving heavenly Father can give them.

Others of us look to our friends or our world to bring this affirmation. We become driven to achieve and accomplish. We compete to win but every victory, all the money, increased status and power cannot heal the wound. Eventually we are disillusioned, depressed and exhausted and probably addicted to sex, alcohol, drugs or something else that has the potential to destroy us.

Guys, your Father does love you and He watches you every moment of every single day. For too long we have known this and thought He is watching us to catch us doing wrong so that He can have a reason to punish us. Guess where that idea came from? Not from our loving heavenly Father.

He watches us because He loves us. We can bring delight to Him and He alone can heal the wounds that we have. One thought that has been extremely helpful to me to is visualize being not just in my Father's presence but so close to Him I can hear His heart beating. This is where I need to be and the longer I am there and the more times I am there and stronger and better I feel. The wounds do not hurt as much and I am beginning to feel the joy of the Lord in my heart as I learn it in my mind.

Can you grasp the idea that our heavenly Father delights in us? Consider these verses;

**Psa. 37:23**     **The steps of a man are established by the LORD,  
And He delights in his way.**

**Prov. 3:12**     **For whom the LORD loves He reproveth,  
Even as a father *corrects* the son  
in whom he delights.**

**Mic. 7:18**     **Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity  
And passes over the rebellious act  
of the remnant of His possession?**

**He does not retain His anger forever,  
Because He delights in unchanging love.**

**Heavenly Father thank you that you love me so much. If I could see your eyes they would be filled with joy. If I could see your face I would see you smiling because of your love for me. If I could see your arms they would not be folded against your chest in an angry position of disappointment. They would be wide open, everyday, like the father of the prodigal son welcoming home the son that was lost. Father, I have been lost but I want to come home. I want to come back to you and remain in your presence everyday. Help me to taste and see that you are Good.**

**Notes:**

**Day 6 - My Father has my name engraved on His hands.**

**“Can a mother forget the infant at her breast, walk away from the baby she bore?  
But even if mothers forget, I’d never forget you—never. Look, I’ve engraved your  
names on the palms of my hands.” Isaiah 49:15-16**

One day when our children were younger we went to lunch after church at our favorite Mexican Restaurant. We had gone to church in two cars and so when it came time to leave I went up to pay the bill and my wife took some of the kids with her in the minivan. As we are riding home I said to my oldest son; “Do you see Caleb in the van with Mom?” I did not have him and neither did she. She thought he was with me and I assumed he was with her. He had gone to the bathroom as we were walking out of the crowded restaurant so when he came out we were all gone. Thankfully, half of the people in the restaurant were from our church so he was never in any danger. Some of our best friends had him with them for the few minutes it took us to return.

The more scary situation happened when we were on vacation in California and were at the beach in San Diego. Our two oldest sons were about 5 and 3. The beach was crowded and Mona and I were basking in the warm sunshine while Nathan and Micah were covering our feet with sand and then going to the ocean with their buckets to get water. At some point both Mona and I dozed off. Suddenly I hear her say; “Where is Micah?” with an urgency in her voice that was alarming. The next few minutes seemed like a lifetime. We could not find him. Panic was beginning to set in as I imagined someone had grabbed him and taken him away. More fear was welling up as the seconds

ticked past. We had headed off in different directions hoping that the other had found him. When we met back at the blanket neither of us had found him. Now we were really scared.

Suddenly, one of the life guards came walking up with Micah in hand. He had gone down to the water and came back at an angle and could not find us. The lifeguard had found him walking around crying and lost. Imagine the fear he was feeling. Where is my mommy? Where is my daddy? Have they left me? Have they forgotten me?

We have all felt that way about God haven't we? He has forgotten about me. God has abandoned me. We might know theologically that is not possible, but we can sure feel it in our hearts. Worse yet, we can believe that He has turned His back on us because of our sin or the choices we have made. Nothing could be further from the truth. However, we convince ourselves of it and use that as an excuse to turn our backs on Him.

Most of us have been wounded in some way or another. We had fathers that ignored us or abused us. Some men never knew their fathers and their mothers gave them up for adoption. Maybe their reasons were justifiable. They were poor. They were drug addicts or alcoholics. They could not provide for you so giving you up could be justified in their minds as an act of love and trying to give you a better chance. Or, perhaps it was just pure selfishness and not wanting to be bothered with having to raise a child.

No matter how bad it was for you and how wounded you might be because of your parents here is the good news. God has never, not even for a split second, forgotten about you. He has never lost you or ignored you. He has your name engraved on the palms of His hands. Wow, what a great thought.

Have you ever done that? You have to remember something. Writing it on a piece of paper might mean you could lose the information and you cannot afford to lose it. So you write it on your hand. Then you will notice it and remember.

Maybe, as an act of love or devotion you might engrave someone's name into your skin by getting a tattoo. God has engraved your name on the palm of His hands. What this passage is trying to say to us is that God never loses sight of us. He always sees us. He always knows where we are and what we are doing. However, even this great comforting thought gets turned around by Satan into something negative. Instead of the loving Father He becomes the "eye in the sky" that is watching us constantly to see everything bad we do so that He can punish us. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Here is the way we should look at it. (My wife showed me this in a devotional by Maxie Dunham.) Instead of viewing this truth in a negative way like God is constantly watching us so that He can nail us for our sin think of it as God **not being to keep His eyes off of you.** He likes what He sees in you so much...He feels so much love for you that He cannot keep his eyes off of you.

Have you ever felt that way? Was there a time when your spouse was so beautiful to you that you just did not want to stop looking at her? Or you loved seeing your children play that you could

hardly stand to leave them and go to work? God feels that way about you. He cannot keep His eyes off of you. He will never forget who you are, where you are or that you are His beloved child and just to make sure He tattooed your name on the palms of His hands.

**Heavenly Father, Thank you so much that you never take your eyes off of me. Forgive me for looking at this in a negative way. Your motive is always one of love and grace. It is hard for me to think this way, that I am the apple of your eye, because of that I have done against you. Today, help me to feel your love. Help me to remember that your love for me was so great that you sacrificed your own son in my place so that I could experience your love and forgiveness.**

**Keep your life a free from love of money, and be content with what you have,  
for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."  
So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper;  
I will not fear; what can man do to me?" Heb 13:5-6**

**Notes:**

**Day 7 - My Father placed me in Jesus when Christ died on the cross.**

**"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." Romans 6:3-4**

Sometimes, earthly parents make the right decisions for their children and there are extraordinary things that result. Tiger Woods was introduced to the game of golf at an early age by his dad. What if his dad hated golf and never let Tiger get anywhere near a golf course? Or if Michael Jordan never dribbled a ball? Incredible results can be achieved if the right decisions are made even if those results cannot yet be seen. Did you invest in Microsoft in the 70's? If so you could have been a millionaire today.

Our Heavenly Father chose to do something for us and the results of His choice are far greater than we will ever know or imagine. He chose to place us "in Christ". Doesn't sound so great but let me explain it to you. When we are "in Christ" it means that everything that happened to Him has a direct result on us. There are certain privileges and gifts that are ours simply because we are in Christ.



If you have ever been “in” almost anything you know a little of what this means. If you were ever “in the military” you know that there were certain privileges and responsibilities that came with that. Now being in the military, like my earthly father was for 28 years, was not always great. He had to fight in World War II. He was moved around at the discretion of others. He had to go to work for them everyday and for his services he was compensated. However, because I was “in” his family I received a lot of benefits without having to pay the price.

The Bible clearly teaches us that we are “in Christ”. God placed us in Him and it was not because of who we were or what He knew we might do. He did not look down the path of time, seeing we were going to be a really good person and addition to His family and then He chose us. That would be salvation by our works and not by faith. No, God put us in Christ simply because He loved us and wanted to show us His love.

Have you been experiencing this “newness of life” that the Bible talks about or are you struggling with your sinful flesh and losing the battle? Identifying how we have been wounded is only one part of the healing process. Knowing what God has done for us and acting upon it in faith are two other vital things we need to learn if we are going to experience the fullness of our Father’s love. So what does it mean that God has placed us “in Christ”?

Because we are in Christ the Bible teaches us that everything that happened to Him is applied to us. His pain is our gain. He did what we could not do for ourselves so that we could have the results of His actions as our own. God has placed us in Christ and then places His Spirit in us. Both are incredible significant biblical truths that we are going to learn about and that learning starts at us being placed in Christ at the Cross. So when Christ died on the Cross we were in Him and it is as if we died there with him. That is why Paul writes things like what he says in Galatians 2:20. **“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”**

If we are ever going to experience the power of God to live the life we want to live we must understand this truth. **Death separates things from one another.** For example if a man and woman are married and one of them dies their marriage contract or vows are fulfilled and the living spouse is free to marry someone else. You hear it at almost any Christian wedding...“till death do us part”. One has to die for the other to be free to join another.

Imagine that you are married to sin. You are bound to sin and sin has had a grip on your life. No matter how hard you try, in fact, the harder you try to not sin, the worse it gets. There is only one way to break free from the bondage of sin and that is to die. Well, guess what? In Christ we have already died to sin. The life Christ lived He lived to God but the death Christ died he died to sin once for all so that we could experience a new life.

**“For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”**

Our Father chose to place us “in Christ”. It is there, in Christ, that we find forgiveness for all of our sins. It is there that we are loved fully not because of what we have done or who we are but simply because our Father chose to love us. Also, here in Christ is where we will find the love of our Father not only dealing with all of our sin through the death of His son on the Cross but it is the

place of life and spiritual power to live a Christ like life. It is the place where we can go from experiencing not only the forgiveness of our sins through the death of Christ but the power to live through the life of Christ. It is the place of faith where all the power of our Father's goodness can be released in us.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you for placing me in Christ. Thank you that when He died I died to sin, when His body was crucified my old self (the old me who was separated from God) was crucified. Thank you that because of His death I can experience the separation that death brings between myself and the power of sin. Father, I want so much to live a holy life and not continue to fall back into sin. Help me to learn these things so I can experience everyday the freedom you have for me to live a godly life.**

**Notes:**

**Day 8 - My Father buried me with Jesus in the tomb.**

**“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” Romans 6:3-4**

One of my greatest fears when our children were small was that somehow one of them might die and I would have to bury them. It happens sometimes and as a pastor the most difficult funerals I ever had to do was the burial of a child. God our Father buried His Son. It was not unexpected because God knows all things. In fact it was planned by The Father and the Son before the beginning of time. However, here is the deal...God placed us in Christ. Jesus was our representative and like we learned yesterday, when He died on cross we died there with Him. So it follows that when He was buried so were we.

Now I know what you might be thinking. This is just some spiritual stuff that doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me so I can just skip over it. Absolutely not! One of the reasons we struggle with failure in our spiritual life is because we have skipped over the foundational stuff. We want to be in the Super Bowl but we never played Pop Warner. These most basic spiritual truths in Romans 6

have to be learned and experienced or we will never get to the point of having a deep healing relationship with our Heavenly Father that takes us on into spiritual maturity.

So what does this idea of me being buried with Jesus mean for me today?

First, it means that you have experienced death with Christ on the Cross. In verse 7 Paul writes; "...anyone who has died has been freed from sin." Burial is what follows death. Here is the great truth. Our death with Christ has opened the door for the power of sin in our lives to be broken!!!

We can feel so defeated when we continue to struggle with sin in our lives as Christians. We can feel that God has failed us or we have failed God. We begin to expect God our Father to react the same way our earthly fathers reacted when we failed over and over again. "Can't you do anything right? You'll never amount to anything! I can't believe how stupid you are!" Those words wound a person deeply and you may have heard them as a child. So, when we fail as Christian's we can almost imagine hearing our Father saying the same thing. We are wrong and nothing could be further from the truth.

By now we have learned that our Heavenly Father loves us with an infinite love. His love is not conditional upon what I do or what I say. My sins have all been forgiven and He eagerly awaits for me to understand the victory and freedom that Jesus has gained for me so that I will get over my struggling with sin and begin to allow Him to transform me by the power of the Holy Spirit.

See the problem with our earthly fathers was that they all had expectations. Dad's hope their kids will turn out great. They even think that if they push their kids in the right ways they will become better than if they just sit by and watch them. Some push them to excel where they themselves have failed and that is devastating to a child.

Was your dad like that? Even if your relationship is fine with him now, did you grow up with a sense of having let down your father and that he was less than pleased with your and your performance in some areas? He did not affirm you simply because you were his son. His affirmation was always connected to what you did or accomplished. That probably wounded you. It created in me the deep desire to be the best, to be number one because then I would get my father's love and approval.

However, here is the great thing about our Heavenly Father. He knows us too well to expect us to measure up to some preconceived accomplishments. He is not hoping that we will someday grow up and become independent of Him and become successful on our own. He knows that when we stop depending on Him we will fail and our enemy will harm us. Unlike our earthly fathers who had unrealistic expectations and wanted to kick us out of the nest, our Heavenly Father has no unrealistic expectations and is there every moment.

When we fail, which we will do if we try to live without His help, He is right there to help us. He is there to heal us. He is there to not only pat us on the back and say try again until you get it right. He says; "Aren't you tired of failing on your own...would you like me to help you?" Then, the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit becomes our strength and instead of becoming independent we become dependent upon Him.

God has united us with Christ in His death and burial so that we can be broken before him. We have been wounded by our earthly parents and broken by the weight of our sins and failures. But in this condition we learn such a powerful spiritual secret. In our being wounded and broken we can find and experience God. Ask Him to heal the wounds that you have. He is the great physician and can heal anything. But do not ask Him to help you put the broken pieces of your life back together. Because when we are broken before God He inhabits our brokenness and we experience His life in us.

If we try to fix ourselves and put ourselves together again He will have to break us again until we learn to ask our loving Heavenly Father to inhabit our brokenness. When you feel the pain of your brokenness it becomes a reminder of how much you need to draw closer to your Heavenly Father.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that you love me with a never ending love and that your love is kind and unconditional. Please heal me of the wounds that I have as a result of an earthly father that did not know better. I forgive my dad of any and all things that he did or did not do that wounded me. Father, today I want to spend some time just sitting on your lap and sensing your loving arms around me. May your love flood me and heal my wounds. I do not ask that you heal my brokenness. Instead I want you to inhabit my brokenness with your life so that when I am weak then I am strengthened by your power. Help me today to walk in the power of your Spirit and not fulfill the desires of the flesh.**

**Notes:**

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**Day 9 - My Father gave me a new life through being born again in Christ.**

**“Nicodemus \*said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. “Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.” John 3:4-7**

Most of us had fathers who gave us gifts but that did not mean that Christmas and birthdays in our childhood were always happy times. They might have been great or because of the stress of the season or a serious disconnect in our relationships they may even today bring up painful memories.

However, that can never be true with our Heavenly Father. With Him there are three birthdays that should be annual reminders of His great love for us. The first being the birthday of His Son. Imagine how utterly incredible the incarnation was. God the Son, co-existent with the Father and the Holy Spirit for eternity past comes to a point in time thousands of years after the creation of the

universe and goes from His eternal position as fully God to becoming a fertilized egg in the womb of a virgin Jewish girl in Nazareth. From a position of complete authority to utter obscurity. From a position larger and greater than the universe into a piece of microscopic matter. "...**although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.**" (Phil. 2:6-7)

Our Father sent His Son into humanity, to be born as a human being so that he would be sacrificed on the cross. He did this in order that the Father could cleanse us of all our sins and demonstrate beyond any shadow of a doubt that He loves us. The greatest gift of all time for all people, for you and for me. That is one message of one birthday we remember every year at Christmas.

Birthday number two is the day in which we were born...our birthday. Mine is April 26<sup>th</sup> 1953. My Father chose that date. He made me a gift to my parents because Psalm 127 tells us that children are a gift from the Lord. Were your parents thrilled the day you were born? Was the pregnancy planned and you were welcomed into the world by being wrapped in a warm cloth and gently laid into your mother's arms, who in spite of all the pain of passing a Volkswagen through her uterus welled up with tears at her precious child. Was your father there in absolute awe of you and the miracle of birth he just witnessed? Or was dad not even around? Were you born out of wedlock? Perhaps you were viewed as a terrible inconvenience, given up for adoption or kept but not wanted. Millions a year are aborted some are abandoned, left at the hospitals, doorsteps or worse yet thrown into a dumpster.

I do not know what your circumstances were but whether you were cherished or cursed at birth by your earthly parents I can promise you one thing...you are cherished by God the Father. He created you and knit you together in your mother's womb. You are here now, alive, reading this because of His Sovereign love. Your parents may have been the parents from hell who wounded you terribly, but God has held on to you and brought you to a place of healing in Jesus Christ.

Birthday number three is the day you were born again and became spiritually born unto God. Mine was when I was 19 and happened some time in October of 1972. It is interesting to me that we do not celebrate our Christian birthday as if it is some insignificant date. It is far more important than our physical birthday. It is the day we became born into God's family. All people are part of God's Creation, but only those who place their faith in Christ to be their Savior are born into God's family. We went from being spiritually dead to being eternally alive. We were separated from God by our sin but then we are cleansed by the blood of Christ and we are completely forgiven. The angels in heaven rejoiced the day you believed. Your heavenly Father watched and even orchestrated the whole thing. He gave you the faith to believe because He wanted you to be in His family. He chose you. He adopted you. He loves you so much that He was willing to sacrifice His Son so that you could be His child. So no matter what you have done or what has been done to you your Heavenly Father cherishes you. He is showing your pictures to all the angels and boasting to the universe of how precious you are to Him.

May I suggest to you that even if you do not know the date of your spiritual birthday that you pick a date and throw a party? Celebrate the fact that God your Father loves you to death, through the

valley of the shadow of death and on into eternal life. Make it a joyful celebration with your family and friends. Make it a witness to those around you that on that day you went from being dead in sin and separated from God to becoming a child of God's. And instead of receiving gifts on your spiritual birthday give a gift to God by giving into some else's life that needs to know that there is a Heavenly Father that loves them.

We give gifts to one another to celebrate Christmas, the birthday of our Savior. We receive gifts from loved ones on our physical birthday. So why not set the date for your spiritual birthday and give some kind of gift to a complete stranger, some random act of kindness to someone who does not expect it. You have been surprised by the Grace of God in your life so pray that God would show you someone else who needs a little grace as well.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you for birthdays. Thank you for sending your Son to be born into humanity so that I could have a Savior and be cleansed from all my sins. Thank you for bringing me into this world and giving me the parent or parents you chose for me. Help me to love them and forgive them for any ways they have wounded or hurt me. Thank you for giving me a new birth into Christ, for my spiritual birth as an act of your love and grace. Help me today to be as loving and gracious to others as you have been to me. Show me those I need to forgive and grant me the grace to forgive even if those who have hurt me should have been the ones to help me.**

Notes:

**Day 10 - My Father drew me to Jesus so that I can have eternal life.**

**“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day...” John 6:44**

**“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.” John 15:16**

In October of 1972 my Heavenly Father “drew” me to Jesus. At some point in time He did the same to you. However, I really want us to understand this idea and have a new appreciation for it. We have learned that our Father chose us before the creation of the world and that He adopted us to be His children because of His incredible love for us. In today's concept we are going to learn just how much our Father really wants us to be with Him.

Literally, what does it mean that the Father “drew” us to Jesus. I mean, is this a weak or a strong word? Was this an easy or difficult task for our Father? Have you ever had your dog get out without a lease and then try to get him to come back in? We used to have a golden retriever named Sam. We used to call Sam the foster dog because several families had tried to have him as their pet but for one reason or another had to give him away. So Sam had no concept of where his real home was. Given half a chance he would bolt through the aluminum screen door and take off down the street. There was no way to catch him because he was running full speed enjoying all the glory of being a dog set free and would not return willingly to captivity. So we had to lure or draw him back. We had to grab a treat and after he had run awhile let him get a whiff of the food then he would come.

Is that what the Father did? He let you get a whiff of forgiveness and you came running to Him?

Or was it something stronger than that. In Acts 21:30 the word to draw is used of the actions of an angry mob that became very upset with the preaching of Paul and they “dragged” him out of the temple. In John 21:6 this same word is used to describe the situation where the disciples had so many fish in their net, 153 to be exact, that they were not able to “drag” the net into their boat. So this does not appear to be a word that simply means to gently lure. James 2:6 uses it to describe someone dragging someone else into court.

In all three of these passages the concept is a very strong one of dragging someone or something even against their will or to strain to drag something because it weighs so much. So Jesus’ words could be translated; “**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me drags him...**”

The idea that when we came to Christ to receive Him as our Savior was just a simple luring of us on the part of the Father does not have any biblical support. Some people have used the illustration that we were drowning in the ocean of life and someone threw us the Jesus life preserver and all we had to do was to grab hold of him and we were saved. However, it was really more than that. Consider the following...

**Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.**

**Romans 3:10 As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”**

In reality we were not drowning in the ocean of life...we were already drowned, dead in our sin and at the bottom of the sea with no spiritual life in us whatsoever. However, because of our Father's great love for us He reached down to the bottom and dragged us up through the resurrection of Christ and caused us to be spiritually born again. Our salvation is as great a miracle as the resurrection of our Lord. We dare not take any credit for it and should stand in awe everyday of the

infinite love of God that saved us not because of who we were or the good things we had done, but in spite of our sinful condition He saved us by His Grace...his totally unmerited favor.

He did this because He wanted you to be one of His children. I do not care how lousy a job your earthly father did at showing you the love you needed as a child or even today as a man. All of our father's are sinners and incapable of totally giving us all that we needed. Our Heavenly Father is so totally different and infinitely better. His love is full and complete. His love took action and when we were dead in our sins He breathed new life into our dead bodies. We need to embrace Him with the strength and joy with which He embraces us. We need to cling to Him with all our might because He holds us in His mighty hand and will never let us go.

Stop listening to the lies of the evil one. Stop creating an image of God based on the poor job your earthly father did. Enter into the perfect unconditional love our your Heavenly Father and begin to rest by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ done for you at the cross. His is no weak and wimpy lite beer commercial kind of; "I love you man." His is the eternal, everlasting and never ceasing love that will never let you go.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that you love me so much that in spite of my being dead in sin you dragged me to yourself so that I could have forgiveness and eternal life. Thank you that your love for me is perfect. Father, I have been wounded in so many ways. The love of my earthly father was lacking and has hurt me deeply. Please begin and continue to heal those wounds. Please help me to forgive him for what he did to me or failed to give me and help me to look to you everyday for the love and affirmation that I need.**

**Notes:**

**Day 11 - My Father removed the blindfold of Satan so that I could see the light of the gospel.**

**“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:4-6**

Remember pin the tail on the donkey? Talk about bad ideas. In my childhood people were not as safety conscious as they are today. No, if we were going to “pin” that tail something sharp and pointed was needed. We blindfolded children and put a sharp object in their hands. We spun them



around about ten times and then let them stumble around a room filled with other children. We let them jab into the air, at eye level, hoping to find the donkey thumb tacked to the wall. If you are in the Southwest you stuff a paper machete animal with candy and hoist it up on a string, blindfold and excited birthday child, spin him or her around at least ten times then put a baseball bat into their hands and have them start swinging with all their might in a room filled with small children.

Yesterday we learned the concept that before we came to Christ we were spiritually dead in our sins and so our loving Heavenly Father literally had to drag us to Christ so that we could become believers and experience the forgiveness we have in Christ. This same concept is in today's passage but the metaphor Paul uses here is one of blindness. Notice that it is not the eyes that the god of this age has blinded but it is the minds. He also says that in our blinded state what we cannot see is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

So our minds were blinded. All around us there was light, or information and knowledge about the existence of God but we did not see it. Paul says in Romans 1:18-20;

**“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”**

God's invisible qualities of His eternal power and divine nature are have always been there in the creation. Notice also in Psalm 19:1-3

**“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.”**

In the beauty and majesty of the creation God has been declaring that He exists and that He is powerful and divine. However, people do not see it. Romans 1 tells us that God has made it plain to everyone but we did not see it because people **“...suppress the truth by their wickedness,”** So internally, in our minds, even though God is screaming at us through the creation that He exists we suppress that truth because of wickedness.

Here is the deal. If we recognize that there is a God then we are not living in a random universe where everything happens by chance and I am in control of my own destiny. In that scenario I get to be god. But if creation is the result of a real God who is almighty and all powerful then I have to bow before Him and I do not want someone else telling me what to do and how to live. So, the text says, we all suppress the truth of His existence.

Now in spite of this internal wickedness we have an outer source that is blinding our minds to the light of the gospel. Satan uses our desires and our sinful nature, the brokenness of our parents and fallen world to further blind us to the truth of God's existence, but here is the good news. Here is the gospel...

**“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”**

The bible teaches that before there was a creation there was nothing that was created. There was the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then God spoke and made something out of nothing. There was darkness and no light until God spoke and created the universe. Now, that same God has spoken into the darkness and the void in our hearts. The god of this age has blinded our minds. We ourselves had been suppressing the truth in our wickedness. We were dead in sin and separated from God and could not save ourselves until the time came and God, our Heavenly Father spoke and “...made his light to shine in our hearts...” It was His choice. It was His decision and He did it because He loves you.

Our Father does not want us to be stumbling around in the dark blinded by the god of this age and suppressing the truth in our wickedness. He drags us to Jesus. He rips off the blindfold. He shines into our hearts the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ into our minds and that is only the beginning. He forgives us of all of our sin and loves us eternally. Everyday He has true life, abundant life for us to live as long as we walk in the light as He is in the light.

He wants to take us to the wonderful place of life with Him where we can be healed and used in the lives of others. The god of this age tries to pull us back into the darkness where we want to hide in shame, where he can further wound us and devastate our life and the live of those around us. The Holy Spirit within us is there and so is our sinful flesh. Who will you walk with today? The one who wants to destroy you and your friends and family...or the one who wants for you to have life, joy and peace?

**Heavenly Father – Thank you for removing the blindfold that was over the eyes of my mind. Thank you for not being offended for the years that I suppressed the truth in wickedness. Help me to walk with you and in the light today. I really want to press into you today Father. Please shine the light of truth into my life and help me to see the ways I have been wounded. Reveal those root issues by the light of your love and heal me.**

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**Day 12 - My Father gave me spiritual life even when I was dead in sin and an object of His wrath.**

**“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.” Ephesians 2:1-3**

Have you ever filled out a resume? On your resume you list your educational and work background. You try and present yourself in the best light possible to impress the hiring boss or Human Resources Department. We are told to never lie on a resume but we might stretch the truth a little in an effort to make ourselves seem more impressive or than we really are.

All of us longed for our father’s approval. We wanted for them to love and cherish us and affirm our masculinity. We would cry out either with our words or our actions; “Look at me...look at me daddy! Didn’t I do a good job?” If we had a wise father he affirmed us not on the basis of what we did but based on who we were. He would have said things like; “You know son I love you no matter what. I love you simply because you are my son and you will always have my love. If we did not get that from our father and our mother then we have been wounded.

However, it is only from God our Heavenly Father that we can receive the true love and affirmation we deeply desire. God has created us to want to be accepted unconditionally. If our affirmation is based on looks, achievements and success then it is always hanging in the balance and we can be chasing it on a daily basis. However, when it comes to our Heavenly Father we have what the bible calls GRACE.

Grace is not loving us for who we are or for what we can do. Grace is the opposite. It is loving us in spite of who we are and what we have done. Now read Ephesians 2:1-3 again. That is our resume. These are the contents of our permanent folder that is presented to God before He adopts us and it is powerful how this text describes us. Remember, these words were given to the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and reveal to us what we never would have known was true about ourselves.

First, we were dead in our sins and transgressions. We were spiritually dead. We had no spiritual life. We could not jump up and down and say; “Daddy, look at what a good spiritual person I am.” Nope, we were spiritually dead in our sins and transgressions.

Secondly, we were followers of the ways of this world. When the bible talks about the world in this passage it means the universal thinking of our world that is against God, loves to rebel against him and seeks our own selfish ways. We were that way by nature. If you question that and buy the idea that we were all born with a clean slate and were neutral from a moral standpoint then spend one Sunday morning working in the nursery with the 2 year olds. The two most common words you will hear are “No!” and “Mine!”. The ways of this world are anti-God and elevate humanity to the level of gods. That is what humanism is all about.

Third, we were followers of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. In other words we were followers of Satan. Now I do not know about you but I do not recall being involved in Satanic worship. That is not what it is saying. We followed in the same way that Satan went. Satan was created as the most beautiful angel Lucifer. Lucifer became so sold on himself that he wanted to take the place of God and he wanted to be worshipped. Each of us were like that in our own lives. We wanted to be in control. We wanted to run our own lives and be our own gods.

Fourth, all of us lived to gratify the cravings of our sinful nature and followed its desire and thoughts. If it felt good we tried to do it. We pursued the things that made us feel and look good. We fell into sexual sin. We allowed pride and glory to be our drink of choice and became drunk on it.

Lastly, because this was the way we lived, it says we were, like the rest of the world, by nature objects of God's wrath.

Pretty impressive resume isn't it. Is there anything in it that should cause God to want to choose you to be one of His children? Nothing whatsoever. But now read the next two verses of the passage...

**Ephesians 2: 4 “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”**

So the next time our enemy comes to you and tries to discourage you. The next time he says; “Look at what a completely lousy person you are...you are such a failure and hypocrite...how dare you think that God loves you.” Turn square into the face of that pathetic loser and say; “You are absolutely right. I am all of those things and I always have been...BUT MY FATHER KNEW THAT WHEN HE CHOSE ME AND ADOPTED ME AS HIS SON AND BY HIS UNLIMITED GRACE HE LOVES ME FOREVER!”

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that in spite of who I was and the things I have done you still love me. Thank you for your refreshing grace that pours over the wounds of my life and not only applies forgiveness but helps to bring healing as well. Father, help me today to feel your love and to love you in return not because I have to but because I want to. I want to be like you Father and be able to love myself and others in spite of the damage sin has done to their lives.**

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**Day 13 - My Father has showered me with gifts beyond my wildest dreams.**

**“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2: 6-7**

Remember as a child what you did on Christmas morning? In some homes the kids rush downstairs or into the living room and in a mad rush find and unwrap their gifts in a frenzy of materialistic gluttony. Not so in my military family where order and procedure were always important. We had to wait in our rooms until we were summoned to the kitchen. Mom had prepared a great breakfast and we would stuff ourselves on scrambled eggs with sausage, cinnamon roles and orange juice. Then the kitchen had to be cleaned up and the dishes put away. After mom was satisfied with the state of her kitchen then we would go into the living room and distribute the gifts to where each family member would be sitting. Finally, one at a time we would open our gifts making sure to read from whom the gift was from and thanking them after taking off the paper.

Later that morning or afternoon we would get on the phone with our friends and ask them; “What did you get?” Never did I hear any of my friends say; “I don’t know...I mean I am so thrilled with just being my father’s child I haven’t even opened the presents from this year or even from years past. I really do not care what my father gives me. I am fully satisfied just being able to live under the same roof.”

Could you imagine any of your children saying the same to you? Yet I think it is that way with many Christian men and their relationship with their Heavenly Father. We receive Christ as our Savior believing that it was our decision, thank Him for forgiving our sin and saving us from an eternity in hell and spend the rest of our lives ignoring the rest of the gifts He has given us while we wait to go to heaven.

Most of us who live in homes do not stand just inside the front door and admire the doorframe. After about 5 minutes we would get bored with that. We do not stand there with our guests and try to make conversation about how well hung the door is and what nice weather stripping we see. Yet, many followers of Christ have been standing in the doorway of their salvation and never entering into the mansion of glory that God has prepared for His children. We have opened the first present that our Father has given us, forgiveness of our sins through Christ and left the rest of the gifts unopened.

Our passage today continues the thought of yesterday that God has loved us and saved us in spite of being dead in our sins. Because of His great love for us He has not only raised us from the dead but He has lifted “...us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

Sounds to me like He has given us far more than just forgiveness. Our Father has lifted us up and seated us in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. Notice the verb is in the past tense. Yes, we will go to heaven in the future but there is a reality that says, in a sense, He has already done this. In the Greek there is a verb form that is used when something is so certain of happening that even though it is yet in the future, it can be spoken of as if it were in the past. This is one of those times. The absolute certainty of God giving to us incomparable riches of His grace is real and we need to live in such a way that we believe it.

Many Christian men that I meet and work with, especially those who have gotten wrapped up in some kind of sinful addiction live as if their Heavenly Father must be angry at them or even hates them. They live in fear of Him seeking them out to punish them for what they have done or failed to do. In reality their addictions have taken them so far from God that He appears as an Ogre instead of a loving Father. Instead of drawing close to Him and pressing into His love and grace they hid in the shadows, curse Him and feel justified in acting out against Him.

If that describes you, then the God that you have created in your mind does not exist. There may be a pathetic demon like that or you may feel that way because of the way your earthly father treated you, but God is not like that at all. He is the God who created you. He is the Father who has loved you every second of your life. He is the God that in spite of our sinfulness and rebellion chose to send His only Son and to sacrifice Him on the Cross to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. He did that as an undeniable statement to you and the world that you are loved by Him.

He has raised you up from being spiritually dead in sin and made you alive in Christ. However, beyond that He has seated you with Christ in the heavenly realms. He wants to show us the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Today, can you stop running and stop hiding from the love of your Heavenly Father? Can you move back toward His direction and ask for forgiveness for your rebellion and sinful attitudes. If you start that journey and are willing to take the first step you will find it to be a short one. For like the father of the Prodigal Son, your Heavenly Father waits with open arms to welcome you home. He will hug you to His breast. He will place His cloak upon you and place His ring on your finger. He will throw a party for you and tell everyone to celebrate because the son He has missed and longed for, who was dead, has returned home to be with Him. You can bring joy to the heart of your Heavenly Father if you are ready to come home. Are you willing to take the first step today?

**Heavenly Father – Thank you for everything that you have given to me. Forgive me for not pressing into you to discover the depth of your love for me. I am sorry for my rebellion and sinful acts that I chose to do and which moved me farther and farther away from you. I want to come home. I want to experience the depth of your love. I want to enter into my**

**salvation in Christ Jesus and know you deeply so I can allow you to fill the void in my heart and heal the wounds that are in my soul.**

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**Day 14 - My Father has poured out on me his unlimited grace.**

**“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8**

Grace can be a hard concept for us to grasp simply because it is such a foreign thought to us. We are not by nature gracious people. We would rather think of ourselves as people who are fair and just. We want to get what we pay for. We teach our kids about fair play and we expect to give and receive justice in the settlement of any problems. If gas is selling for \$2.59 a gallon and we buy 10 gallon of gas that pump better read \$25.99. If it reads more than then we feel cheated. We want to get what we pay for and if the baker throws in a 13<sup>th</sup> donut to make the baker’s dozen then we like that. However, if we pay for a dozen and open the box at home to find only 11 then we feel cheated, unless we snuck one in the car.

If God is going to have a relationship with any of us and be our Heavenly Father there is no way He can be fair and just. If He were going to be fair and just He would give us what we deserve. We are sinners at heart and have sinned against Him countless times. We have suppressed the truth about Him in our wickedness and so if He were to treat us fair and justly we would be condemned to hell forever.

My Father has not chosen to be fair and just when it comes to my relationship with Him. Instead He is merciful and gracious. Let me explain to you the difference.

Mercy is to not give to someone what they deserve. If you see red flashing lights in your mirror and an officer of the law appears at your window, listens to your lame excuse and only issues you a warning you have just received mercy. You were speeding and the law says speeding is a crime but you were let off for some reason and did not have to pay the fine then you did not get what you

deserved. That was mercy. My Father is extremely merciful. So many times He does not give us what we deserve.

In the Old Testament there was a place on the top of the Ark of the Covenant between the wings of the angels where the glory of God was said to have rested. It was called the Mercy Seat. One time a year the High Priest would come in with the blood of a bull and sprinkle the Mercy Seat with the blood in order to cover the sins of the people so that God would be merciful to them. Mercy is to not get what you deserve.

Now grace is something far greater. Grace is getting what you do not deserve. Mercy is what I call a ‘whew’ word and grace is a ‘wow’ word. When the police officer does not write the ticket I wipe the sweat from my brow and think; “Whew, that was a close one.” However, when we understand the grace of our loving Father in heaven it is truly amazing and we are in awe. Grace is a WOW word.

In fact every idea that you have read so far in this devotional is part of the wow of God’s grace. He has not given to us what we deserved. We have all sinned. We deserve condemnation and eternity in hell as a punishment for our sinful choices. Mercy says no and our Father forgives us in his mercy. Then His grace takes over and He blesses us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. He gives us a new life and eternally claims us as one of His beloved children.

We need to see our Heavenly Father as the One who has chosen to pour out on us His unlimited mercy and grace. We need to everyday embrace Him and feel His grace. We are told in Hebrews 4:16; **“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”**

Our Father has poured out His mercy and grace not because someone held a gun to his head. He does it willingly out of His incredible love for us. It is His love for us that will heal the wounds that our earthly fathers may have left because they were inadequate, because they too were wounded. What we need to do everyday is forgive those who have wounded us and embrace our Father’s love that heals and affirms.

We have been given a new life in Christ. Our new life is a gift from Him and in our new life we can experience Christ in our day to day living. However, if we are angry and bitter and unforgiving over what others have done to us we will never move forward to receive the new life that Christ has for us.

So please, do yourself a huge favor...forgive. Even if you do not feel like forgiving make forgiveness an act of your will. You might pray; “Father I am full of anger and unforgiveness toward those who have wounded me. I sure do not feel like forgiving them. However, with my mind and with my will I choose to forgive them because you have chosen to forgive me at all times. I want to feel like forgiving them but I am just not there yet. So I chose to forgive them and believe that you will take it from being an act of my will and make it a part of my heart.”



**Heavenly Father – I want to enter into your mercy and grace for my life today. Thank you for forgiving me and not giving me what I deserve. Thank you also for your grace and for giving me what I do not deserve. Please help me today to be more like you in my relationships with others. Help me to show mercy and grace so that I give to others what I have received from you.**

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**Day 15 - My Father has made me His personal project for the rest of my life.**

**“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:10**

We are God’s workmanship. Simply stated we are creations of God. He created us. We existed in His mind before the creation of the world. We were knitted together in our mother’s womb. He chose who our parents would be. We are a creation in progress and God, our Father, is the artist.

I want you to focus on that for a moment and not just skip over it lightly. It is a central truth to our healing. We are not a mistake. Have you ever heard that one? “Oh, we thought we were finished having children and...oops...then you came along. NO! You were not a mistake. You are not junk or trash. I know of a man and his mother was a whore, a prostitute. He is not junk. His creation in the womb of his mother was no accident. We are all personally chosen pieces of art that our Heavenly Father, has ordained into existence.

Notice that this is something we “are”. We are God’s workmanship. Since He is not finished with us and we remain on this earth we are still a work in progress. God continues to work on us and promises to do so until the day we die.

**“...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6**

So your Heavenly Father conceived you in His mind before creation. He formed you in your mother's womb and at just the right time He drew you to Christ so that you could discover the power of His love and his limitless grace. However, we can resist the process. We can be rebellious and angry. We can walk away from the only one that can really heal us...but why would we do that? Let me show you what He is transforming you into.

In Romans 8 God through Paul tells us what we will look like when He is finished with us.

**“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him,  
who have been called according to his purpose.  
For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son,  
that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” Romans 8:28-29**

He is conforming us into the likeness of His Son. He is making us like Jesus. Now before you write off this thought think about it. We are becoming like Christ. If you have not read the Gospels recently you could shrink at this thought. Christ was no wimpy little peace loving pacifist. He was strong, courageous, powerful and wise. He could stand toe to toe with His enemies and have enough self control to allow brutal men to crucify Him. He was all powerful and yet under control. Can you imagine the problems in your life that would change if you responded like Christ? That is what our Father wants us to be like. He will do it but it is not some magic moment in which we are suddenly transformed. It is really a joint effort.

My initial coming to Christ was the work of God. He chose me, drew me, convicted me, showed me the light of the gospel and gave me the grace and faith to believe. At the end of my life He will finish transforming me in the twinkling of an eye and I will shed my earthly body and receive a heavenly one. So God starts it and He finishes it. However, from the day I receive Christ until the day I die it is a joint venture. God has done and will do His part. It is up to me to do mine.

It never ceases to amaze me how few men can really discipline themselves to strongly maintain a spiritual life and yet show incredible discipline in other areas. Some are intense about working out and staying in shape. Others excel at golf or fishing or hunting, reading, gardening, watching sports...whatever the list is endless. They give hours and thousands of dollars to these things and think nothing of it. But ask them to dedicate 30 minutes everyday to something that can really change them from the inside out and you hear them howl.

God will transform you but you have to get serious about doing your part. Our Father has marvelous things for us and wants to heal the wounds we have. He will come and abide with us and inhabit our brokenness and then transform us into the people He wants us to be. However, He will not do it without our permission and partnership.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that you began this work in my life of making me like Christ. Forgive me for being lazy and having such screwed up priorities. Only you deserved first place in my life. Help me to do whatever it takes to make put you and keep you in first place so that the work you want to do can be accelerated. I know that becoming like Jesus in the**

**way I think, feel, talk and act is what I really need and what those around me really need. Thank you for doing your part and help me to do mine.**

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**Day 16 - My Father has totally forgiven all of my sin.**

**“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.”** Colossians 2:13-14

What was your relationship like with your father? Did you grow up sensing He loved you and accepted you fully as his son? Was he proud of you and did you hear him telling others about your successes? Or was he distant and angry so caught up in his own life and failures that he rarely talked to you at all? Some men never even knew their fathers because they had left or died.

If you grew up with a father or without one the issue of forgiveness is a crucial one if we are to be spiritually healthy. Whether it is your father forgiving you for what you did wrong or you forgiving him for what he did or did not do, or both...forgiveness is so very important because it is a central issue relative to us and our Heavenly Father.

A long time ago the Senior Pastor of a church I worked at asked all of the staff a question. He said; “How many of you have any unforgiven sin in your life?” Some of them did not listen carefully to the question and so they raised their hands. What many of us thought he said was “unconfessed sin” instead of “unforgiven sin”. There is a world of difference between the two.

When speaking about the forgiveness that exists between us and our Heavenly Father let’s know one thing for certain. God the Father has forgiven us all of our sins. Every single sin that I have ever committed, might be committing now and ever will commit is completely forgiven by the finished work of Christ on the Cross. It cost our Father the death of His only Son, Jesus Christ, to

accomplish this and there is no way we should ever try and diminish this fact. Every single sin of our entire existence...past, present and future are forgiven at the Cross.

Hebrews 10 makes this so clear...

**“Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. Hebrews 10:11-14**

The writer of Hebrews is making a strong point here. He is comparing what Christ did on the cross with what the priests were doing in the Old Testament. They would offer sacrifices continuously at the Temple. Animal after animal were sacrificed with the blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins and then the next day it all started again. They never quit and never sat down. There were no chairs in the Temple because their work was never done.

However, after Christ died on the Cross, after he went into the true Temple that exists in heaven and offered his own blood as an atoning sacrifice to the Father for the sins of the world...he sat down because total forgiveness was accomplished for the sins of the world. Notice also what that offering did; **“...by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”**

Did you catch that??? By the one sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ you and I have been made perfect forever even though we are still in the process of being made holy. Know what that means? It means that all of our sins have been completely forgiven by the Father because of the finished work of Christ on the Cross.

Brothers, our Father has forgiven us!!! He has forgiven you for what you have done. Whether it was addiction to pornography, sexual adultery, homosexuality even child molestation there is complete forgiveness for you in Christ. It is not a forgiveness held out for you to work for. It is free and given as a gift to all who receive Christ as their Savior. So make no mistake about it no matter how many lies the evil one has whispered in your ear. All of your sins were paid for at the cross and if you are a believer in Christ you have been forgiven all of those sins.

So what about confession of sins? What are we supposed to do when we sin? If they are already forgiven do we need to confess them? The answer is yes. When you first became a believer you confessed that you were a sinner and probably felt a great weight of your sin and asked God to forgive you for all you had done. He did that and much more. You might not have realized it but He forgave all of your sins for all of your life at that point.

However, God tells us that we are supposed to confess our sins even though they are already forgiven. He does not hold out our forgiveness for a sin until such a time as we ask for forgiveness for that sin. I am sure there are sins that I have committed of which I am not even aware. Add to that the truth that **“...all our righteous acts are like filthy rags...”** (Isaiah 64:6) and we would spend all of our time everyday either trying to not sin or confessing the sins we have committed in

order to have forgiveness. Instead, God has already forgiven us of all of our sins. However, when the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin we need to stop and confess that sin to God not to receive forgiveness that we already have but to acknowledge to our Father that we have done wrong and want to change.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that all of my sins have been forgiven. You placed them...all of them on Christ at the Cross and His blood has been shed to purchase my forgiveness. His body was sacrificed for the sins of the world. Help me to stop trying to earn my forgiveness. Help me to live in grace and experience the new life of the Spirit everyday. When I do sin help me to be quick to confess it so that I am acknowledging my sin to you and agreeing with you that it is wrong.**

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**Day 17 - My Father has “imputed” to me the righteousness of Christ.**

**1Cor. 1:30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.**

**2Cor. 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

We rarely use the word “imputed” so let me first describe what this word means. It means to grant something to another’s account. If I were to impute to you \$100.00 without giving it to you directly I would deposit it into your bank account. Our Father have basically given to us the righteousness of Christ. Now that is not something we feel or can go online and look it up. It is another one of those truths that we are told in the Bible and is a revelation that we would have never known by logic or reasoning.

One of the most marvelous things about the Christian life is to learn all that our Father has given to us in Christ. We have already seen how He chose us before the creation of the world and adopted us to be his sons. He drew us to Christ even though we were dead in sin and blinded by the god of this age. He is the sovereign God all and yet He does this for you because His love for you is infinite... it is huge...never ending huge.

Yet that is just the beginning. He has given to us the righteousness of Christ. What does righteousness look like? We initially think of righteousness as right actions, doing the right things. We can look back on our lives and easily remember the wrong things we have done. The thousands of times we chose to sin instead of obey. The times we gave in to our sexual desires, lied to others and ourselves and picked rebellion instead of yielding to God. Yet even when we did what others would call “good things” if our motives were known then we would see that they were done selfishly. In reality the bible teaches us that even our good deeds are as filthy rags in the sight of God.

Have you really grasped the fact that within all of us there is this sin nature that is rotten to the core. Forget the garbage we were taught by our world that everyone is born basically neutral and then our environment determines whether we turn out to be a good or a bad person. The Bible does not teach that. It says we were born with a sin nature. That sin nature causes us to be selfish, prideful, self-seeking and rebellious people. Sure we can be taught right from wrong and see the value to ourselves by doing the right things.

However, what happens when we set a rule that we want to keep? For example, I am never going to look at pornography again. In your mind you say that and as soon as you do your sin nature springs into action and makes sure you are tempted at every turn. Paul describes this in Romans 7.

**“I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire.”**  
Romans 7:7-8

So here is the great news. In spite of our sin nature, our rebelliousness and selfishness our Heavenly Father chooses to give to us the righteousness of Christ. He determines out of his great love for us that even though we deserve to be punished for our sins he is going to take them away and give to us what we could never achieve by our actions...the righteousness of Christ.

Understanding this should change the way we think and feel about ourselves. I have known plenty of men who feel they are the worst people in the world. They have been beaten down by the negative criticisms of others. They have experienced their own moral failures. Some of them have lost their wives and children and feel about as valuable as road kill that has been flattened by a thousand 18 wheelers. They are the scum of the earth and find it hard most days to even think of a reason for living.

If that describes you then please listen to me. Your reason for living is that God your Father loves you so much that He was willing to take every one of your sins...past, present and future...and place them on His innocent and righteous Son while he was on the cross. God took him who knew no sin (Jesus) and made him become sin (placing on him the sins of the world), so that we could become the righteousness of God.

Guys, our Heavenly Father has declared us forgiven. He has given to us the righteousness of Christ. He has taken away our sin and has made us perfect forever even though He is still in the process of making us holy. We need to stop beating ourselves up everyday with our focus on our past failures and instead look to the Cross everyday and thank God for what Christ did for us there. Thank our Father for His forgiveness. Thank our Savior for his willingness to die for us in our place. Thank the Spirit for coming and indwelling us to help us live for Christ today.

**Heavenly Father – Forgive me for not thinking correctly about myself and what you have done for me. Thank you for your incredible love, for forgiving me and giving to me the righteousness of Christ. Thank you that it is not a righteousness that I have to earn because I could not possibly do that. Now help me today to live a more righteous live. I come to the Cross and recognize that you died there for me. I want to experience that death of self at the Cross today so that I can also experience the life of Christ today.**

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**Day 18 - My Father sealed me with the promised Holy Spirit.**

**“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.” Ephesians 1:13-14**

There is so much confusion today among believers about whether one can or cannot lose their salvation. I am not going to argue about this in this work. I firmly believe you cannot lose what God has permanently done in your life. This verse is one of the reasons I believe that. Let's unwrap this great truth to understand that our Father's love for us and His plan for us is not a temporary conditional upon our actions, but is a work He started and He will finish.

This passage tells us that we have been included in Christ. To get that full impact of that thought we would have to read verses 3-12 which I would encourage you to do sometime. In fact if you want to really strengthen your faith memorize it sometime. In the Greek it is all one sentence. If the English translations were to translate it directly it would be the worst run on sentence in the Bible. But it is perhaps the greatest sentence in the Bible. However, let's just looking at the end.

We have been included in Christ and that happened when we heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. Someone shared the gospel with us. Someone told us about Jesus and we believed. At that moment a gazillion things happened. However, this verse says at that moment God marked us in Christ with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit.

What did it mean to "seal" something in those days. It is a word that is used when someone was trying to make something secure. It is used in the book of John when the Roman soldiers wanted to secure the tomb in which Christ was buried so they set a seal upon it. That seal was a leather strap across the stone at the entrance and was set in place with wax and imprinted in the wax was the seal of Rome. Now the strap itself had little power to secure the tomb, but because the seal of Rome was in the wax it stood for the authority of Rome and therein lay its power. Also, when God throws Satan into the bottomless pit where he will stay for 1000 years that place is sealed shut. That seal has such power that not even Satan can break it.

So we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. Next it says that He, the Holy Spirit, is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. The word for deposit there is the word from which we get the idea of earnest money. Earnest money is money placed into a transaction that is given as a pledge that the full amount will be paid. So what our Father did at the moment we believed in Christ was to place us in Christ and seal the deal by depositing within us the Holy Spirit. That Holy Spirit is God's promise that He is going to give us the rest of our salvation when we get to heaven.

Now whenever I have bought or sold a home there is a dance that takes place between the seller and the buyer. The seller wants to have a strong buyer. Not someone that is going to flake out during the process but will be able to finish the deal and give to the seller all of the money they are asking. So what a buyer does is make a down payment. It is also called earnest money. It is the buyers way of sealing the deal with the seller so that if someone else comes along and wants to buy the house they cannot. Now the more serious a buyer is the more they are willing to put down.

Look at what God has put down in your life as a promise that He is going to finish the job. How about 1/3 or the Trinity? The Holy Spirit is one third of the entire Godhead. Before the creation when there was only God, 33% of God is the Holy Spirit. He is fully God and He dwells within



you. In fact He is God's promise to you that you are always going to be His and He will never leave you or forsake you.

We are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. Why does Paul use that word "promised"? Because of what Jesus said to his disciples before He went to the Cross. **"But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."** (John 16:7) In John 14 Jesus identified this Counselor as the Holy Spirit.

Remember when your parents sent you off to camp? Chances are your mother took every article of clothing you took with you, got out a black permanent magic marker and wrote your name even on all of your underwear. My mom wanted to do it when I went off to college...but I would not let her. She wanted to make sure that I would not lose what was mine. If, when doing laundry, my underwear were to get mixed up with someone else's, perish the thought, then I could identify it as mine.

We belong to the Father. We are forever His. His permanent way of marking us is to seal us permanently with the Holy Spirit the moment we believe. There is no trial period. It does not happen after you have proven yourself worthy of a relationship with God. There is no 30 day probationary period. Boom, it happens at the point of salvation, the moment you believed and He remains with us forever.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that you love me so much that you would seal me with the promised Holy Spirit. Thank you that He has come into my life and I am sealed with Him forever. Thank you that He is your deposit in my life guaranteeing my inheritance in heaven. I want Him to fill me today so that I can experience His leading and His fruit in my life.**

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**Day 19 - My Father has placed a shield around me for the rest of my life.**

**"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into**

**an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”** 1 Peter 1:3-5

We are “...shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.” This is a great truth and should be a great comfort. It should embolden us to live courageously for Jesus Christ. However, so many believers live in defeat and fear. Let’s unpack this truth together.

Clearly it is a simple truth. Our Heavenly Father is a shield around us. We are shielded by His power. Therefore, in His sovereignty, He is controlling everything that happens in our lives. We do not live in a random universe where everything is up to chance. So if this is true then anything and everything that hits me or happens to me is allowed by God. He let it pass through His shield because there is a reason for it. He has a purpose in it.

If I embrace that truth I can learn from everything that happens to me and believe what God says in Romans 8:28; **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”**

If I do not embrace this truth then I can live in fear of what is going to happen to me next. I begin to try and play it safe to protect me and my family. I withdraw from the world I live in so that I am not contaminated or hurt by it and in so doing I live in disobedience to Christ’s final command to His disciples to go into the world and make disciples. I learn to live in fear instead of strength and I become an infant in my faith. I let the world around me go to hell and forget trying to be the salt of the earth or the light of the world. If all believers in the past lived like so many do today Christianity would have died a generation after the ascension of Christ.

So is your Heavenly Father a shield around you or not? Are we protected or not? If we are, and make no mistake about it...we are, then why do bad things happen to us? Why do we get hurt? How is it that sometimes horrific things happen to God’s children? Does God take a vacation and let His shields down? No, He is omnipotent and always there. Is He cruel and delights in the suffering of His children? No, He is loving and never delights in evil. So without getting into the issue of the problem of evil within the creation of God, since that is not the point of this devotional, let’s move on to understand what God says about why he allows things that seem harmful to happen to us.

The answer is really there in 1 Peter 1:6-7 **“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”**

Our Heavenly Father allows trials to pass through His shield that surrounds us so that we will grow in our faith and the ability to trust Him. So to our Father there is nothing more important in this life than to teach us to trust in Him and depend on Him. When we are going along and everything is going great we tend to become independent of Him. Who needs God when everything is going

great? There are some who are mature in their faith can learn to handle success and not ignore God but praise Him in it. But most of us when everything is going great tend to pull away from God and become more independent and self reliant. Our faith becomes weaker and we become less like Christ.

In reality it is the loving grace of our God to allow us to suffer so that we become like gold which is refined only by fire. When God turns up the heat in our lives our faith is being tested and those things that are impure in our lives are burned away and we become more like Christ in the end. Unlike many parents today who over protect their children and who do anything to try and keep them safe from everything, our Father is the one who puts Daniel in the lions den so Daniel learns to believe that God will handle the lions. He puts David in front of Goliath so David can see that faith in God will slay the giants of life. He even allows the great Apostle Paul to be stoned by an angry mob, perhaps even to the death, so that God could show him what heaven is like and then resuscitate him back to life so that he could continue to be the missionary to the Gentiles.

I am sure that all of us could spend the rest of our lives complaining about what God has allowed to happen to us. We could live in fear of what is going to happen next and we could remain spiritual infants until He comes for us. Or we could learn to praise Him for the good and the bad things that we have experienced. We can grow in our faith and trust in Him. If we will learn to embrace even the bad things that have happened to us we will be taking huge steps is becoming stronger and more faithful children of the Heavenly Father.

Are you secretly angry with God over something that happened to you? Are you living in resentment and bitterness of soul because of someone that has deeply hurt you? Can you take that to your Father and ask for forgiveness for your attitude against Him? Can you believe that He allowed that in your life for a purpose? Can you even thank Him that He has allowed you to be hurt and wounded so that you would learn to depend on Him instead of yourself? If so you will be taking a great step toward being healed of our wounds.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that you are a shield about me. Your protecting love knows anything and everything that is happening in my life. Thank you for the blessings you bring my way and for the trials as well. Thank you for your ability to take everything and use it to the good in my life if I will yield myself to you and your healing. Father, strengthen my faith and purify my life. Help me to trust in your protection and live courageously for you today.**

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**Day 20 – My Father gives us grace for every trial he puts me through.**

**“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ...” 1 Peter 1:6-7**

Before we move away from this passage I want to point out something that has been very helpful to me in developing a deeper love for my Father. I know that He is a shield about me. I know that He allows things to pass through His shield and that some of them hurt me just as He allows blessings to come into my life that I do not deserve. So what are we supposed to do when those trials come and they we feel deeply the hurt they bring?

We have already seen the purpose of those trials in our lives. In case you missed the point yesterday these trials come so that our faith can be tested. They come so that we are drawn back to God and stay close to Him and depend on Him to be the only one we need. They come so that we are drawing from Him all we need in life. However, there is another key truth in this passage and it comes from the little phrase in verse six where it says we have been distressed by “various trials”.

The word “various” is an interesting word in the Greek. It is only used 10 times in the New Testament. The basic meaning of the word is obviously “various”. It is used to describe people who came to Jesus with “various” diseases. It is used to describe people who give “various” teachings or to talk about “various” miracles. Each time it is used it is describing things that we would normally think of as coming in a variety of ways. There are multiple kinds of sicknesses, teachings and miracles.

However, this word is used twice by Peter. The first usage here in 1 Peter 1:6 is to describe the “various” trials that God allows to pass through the shield around us. Again, not an unusual thought. However, the second time Peter uses it is when he writes; **“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”** (1 Peter 4:10 NIV)

Notice two things in this verse. First is that God’s grace comes in “various” forms. I had never thought of God’s grace being in various forms before. I mean I guess I just thought of grace as grace. But here Peter attaches that same word that he uses with the word trials in the first chapter of his same letter. Literally the word can mean “multi-faceted”. Like a diamond is multi-faceted. Someone takes the raw stone and cuts tiny facets in it to that the beauty of the diamond is revealed

and it sparkles. The facets allow the light to come into the stone and reflect the beauty that is in the light.

I believe that for every kind of various trial or every kind of multi-faceted trial God allows into our lives there is a corresponding facet of the multi-faceted Grace of God. If I have been wounded by someone there is a facet of the grace of God for that wound. If you have been abandoned, Jesus knows what that is like, He was abandoned by his disciples and forsaken by His Father on the cross. He has experienced it and has grace for your wound of abandonment. There is a facet of the grace of God for every kind of trial God allows to come into our lives.

Here is the second thing to notice in this verse. Where does that grace of God come from so that we can experience it in our lives? It comes from other Christians when they use their spiritual gifts in ministering in the lives of other people. It comes from other believers when they use their gifts of compassion. It comes from other believers when they hear about your trial and they have gone through the same thing and tell you about their experience. All of a sudden you are not alone in your suffering. You find someone who can empathize with your pain and that helps. Look at how Paul describes it in his second letter to the Corinthians; **“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”** (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NIV )

The grace of our God comes to us either directly from Him or indirectly from others if we allow them to minister to us. What can keep this thing from happening? If we are silent in our pain and refuse to share it with others. We are ashamed and too embarrassed to share with others what we are feeling or the mistakes we have made. We have stuffed the memories that are so painful thinking they will go away. They never do. They fester and rot away in our souls until the puss comes bursting out in an angry tirade. They cause us to act out and medicate our pain with alcohol, drugs or sex. When all along there is a grace of God waiting to salve the wound and bring healing.

We need to open up to our Father about our trials and the pain we feel. We need to open up to others about what has happened to us and find the people whom God will use to administer the facet of His grace to heal the pain we are feeling. For every single trial that can afflict us there is a facet of the grace of our Father waiting to be poured over our wounds so they can heal. However, if we try to suffer silently, like most men try to do, or ignore the pain and just go on in life the wound will become infected and greater damage will be done.

What wounds are you trying to hide and suffer in silence about? Where is there a group of people who have suffered the same thing that you need to be in? Who do you need to share your secret pain with? If you do you will find the grace of God poured out into your wound and you will begin to experience the healing from the grace of your Heavenly Father.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you for your Grace. Thank you that there is a facet of your Grace for every kind of trial and wounding that I have experienced. Help me to pour out the truth of my wounds to you and to others who have experienced the same thing so that I can experience your healing.**

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### **Day 21 - My Father disciplines me because He loves me.**

**In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?”**

The word “discipline” can strike one of two reactions in most people. The discipline that is usually valued by people is the ability to make yourself do something that you might not want to do but choose to do for the value of doing it. That would be the discipline of exercise, eating a balanced diet, spending daily time with God...you know, the good disciplines that most of us are lousy at and struggle to make happen.

I grew up in a military family. We lived at the Naval Academy for 4 years and then when my dad retired we were living in Annapolis. My father and both older brothers went to the Academy and so I knew a lot about the value of discipline. Then there was me, regular guy without the ominous threat of the United States Military over my head to make sure I folded my underwear properly in my drawer.

The other discipline that comes to mind is what a good parent does when they have a child that disobeys. I have no idea how many parents are good or bad at this. One tends to hear the horror stories about “the belt” that dad used or the parents that are sadistic and harm their children in anger either physically, verbally, emotionally and or psychologically. Today’s focus is on the discipline that our loving Heavenly Father gives us and I am aware that many of you may have been harmed by the discipline of your earthly parents. Please read on because the discipline of our loving God is never, ever improper or excessive.

What our verse really says is that if we are being disciplined by God it is a sign of two things. First it says that the Lord disciplines those He loves. We tend to think that when bad things happen in our lives that God has forgotten about us. He must be on vacation and this thing snuck past Him. No, that can never be the case, remember He is a shield around us and He is always there and knows all things. Our Father allows things to happen to us as a way of showing us He loves us when we have strayed from His will. His main reason is that He knows that if He does not do something we will continue to follow the desires of our sin nature and will get farther and farther from Him until sin seriously damages us and those around us. So His discipline is good, a sign of His love and attention to us and is meant to turn us around before we go too far and get badly hurt. So first and foremost it is a sign that God is your Father and that He loves us.

Secondly, it is proof that you are one of His children. A good father disciplines his sons because He cares for them and desires the best for their lives. I have four children. I love them with all of my heart and I want the best for all of them. However, when they were young everyone of them tested us to see how far we would let them go.

I can clearly remember our first born son and the first time he did this. He was not even two years old and the cutest kid in the world...of course. We were in the family room. My wife and I were on the couch and he was standing next to the turntable of the stereo. He wanted to play with the stereo and when he reached for the knob I called his name and said; "Nathan...no." He knew what the word no meant. So his arm stopped in mid air halfway to the desired knob. He turned his head, hand inches from the prize, looked at me and flashed a smile as if to say; "Please dad I really want to touch this." Again I repeated myself a little more firmly; "Nathan...No...do not touch!" His smile faded and his brow furrowed. You could see the emotions playing on his face and the wheels turning in his head. I want to touch...Dad says no...I want to touch...no...really want to touch. His fingers inching closer to the knob. Finally the lure of the knob became greater than the admonition from Dad on the couch and so he grabs the knob, increasing the volume and causing the arm to skip on the album going round on the turntable.

I immediately went over to him. Reminded him that touching the knob was a no and gently slapped the back of his hand. Then I held him in my arms and told him I loved him as I sat back on the couch with him in my arms. When I put him down on the floor guess where he went directly back to? Again, at the stereo standing in the exact same place reaching for the knob looking back at me to see if another "no" was coming. I did, he grab the knob giggling and thinking this was a new game. Again I disciplined him and slapped the back of his hand a little harder. This time it hurt and he cried a little. I am not sure how many times we had to do that, however, I wanted to teach him the meaning of "no" and so I was consistent in the discipline.

Now that may seem silly to you but what if instead of that knob it was the side of our wood burning stove that would burn his flesh if he were to touch it? See a loving father disciplines his children as a sign of their being loved and important to him and as a way to keep them from being damaged if they continue on the path they are going on. Our loving Heavenly Father disciplines his children because He loves us and He knows if He does not our sin nature would lead us farther and farther away from him and into behaviors that will be destructive to us.

Has your Father been disciplining you? Is He trying to show you that He loves you and you are one of His children? What might He be saving you from in the future if you learn his discipline now?

**Heavenly Father – Thank you for when you discipline me. Instead of me fighting against your discipline or responding in anger against you because of the lousy job my parents might have done, help me to see you hand as loving and your discipline of the proof of my being your child. Help me to be thankful for your discipline and may it get my attention and cause me to repent from whatever sinful direction I may be heading in.**

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**Day 22 - My Father is strong when I am weak.**

**“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10**

Weakness is something that we are trained to hide. Weakness is a bad thing that makes us less of a person, or so our world says. We are told to be strong, to keep a stiff upper lip and everything will work out fine. Isn’t it interesting how often the natural instruction of our world comes into direct conflict with what God wants to teach us?

We have learned that God is our Creator. We existed in His mind before the beginning of creation. He created us, adopted us, saved us and has a plan for our lives. In fact everything that happens in our lives God can take and work for the good according to His purpose. He takes the bad things, the things that hurt us and uses them to help mold us or conform us to the image of Christ.

If there is one thing I know about myself it is that when things are going great I tend to think less about God and more about how great things are. I tend to want to take credit for my successes and blame others for my failures. When I am doing well I tend to put my relationship with God on the back burner and will check back with him when trouble comes. However, that is not the way God wants it or how developing a strong spiritual life really works.



The problem is that for my entire life I have been trained to try and be independent. My parents did not want me hanging on to them forever so after college I was expected to strike out on my own and make something of my life. In 18 years I went from a breast feeding, needing my diaper changed and butt wiped totally dependant infant to a well educated ready to make it on my own adult. We transition from total dependence to independence.

However, the exact opposite is what I need to be experiencing now as a follower of Christ. My Heavenly Father wants me to learn to be completely dependent on Him. He wants me to trust in Him and His provision for me and my family. Now do not get me wrong I work hard and long hours, but it is God that gives me the health and strength to do so. He calls me to take a percent of my income and with joy give it to my local church. Why? So I will learn to trust him with my finances. My world tells me that having 100% of my income is the best thing for my bottom line. God says for me to give at least 10% to him believing that having 90% of my income and His blessing in my life will be far better.

Then, in all of our lives there comes times of disaster. Something happens and we are in deep trouble. Over a year ago I resigned from 26 years of full time ministry because of sexual sin. I lost not only my job but my career and life calling as well. Talk about devastation. I felt broken into a million pieces that could never be put together again. I deeply hurt my wife and all four of my children and my daughter in law. Never in my life did I feel so weak and helpless. I was crushed and defeated and as I have learned...exactly where God wanted me.

I was weaker than I have ever been as an adult. However, I was ready to learn that when I am weak God can be strong. When I am so crushed that I can no longer depend on myself and God is the only hope then I am right where I can experience the greatest love and power of my Heavenly Father.

How about you? Are you so busy trying to keep your life together and all the balls in the air that you are close to exhaustion? Have you become dependant on anti-depressants and other medications just so you can sleep at night and function in the daytime? Has God broken you and you feel your life is shattered into a million pieces that can never be put together again? Good, praise God you are close to learning this great truth, when you are weak He is strong.

What we have to learn to do is to depend on Him. Everyday for all of our needs we need to depend on Him. The source of life for me, my provider for all I really need is not my employer, not my bank accounts, not my wife or my children, not even my friendships or my ministry. The one and only thing I need is God. The one and only One who can meet the needs that I have and be faithful to be there all the time with everything I need is God. Until I learned that lesson I spent my time and effort running from one thing to another, from one person to another and each and everyone and everything was not able provide what I need. Only God can do that. Only God knows exactly what I am feeling and what I am needing.

At one time I said to my wife, after I felt I had lost everything; "I feel like there is an empty space in me the size of the Grand Canyon. I was hoping she would fill it up. I had tried filling it up with

everything else but whatever I threw in there only seemed to make the hole deeper. Now I have started to learn to look to God whenever I feel that emptiness, that despair or that feeling like I need something from someone. The truth is I do not. All I need is God and His allowing me to be broken and becoming weak is the prelude to His filling me up...if I will look to Him and Him alone.

**Heavenly Father – Like Paul I thank you for my weakness. For in reality I am weak. I need your strength and I thank you that you are always there and you are all that I need. Thank you that you can fill the emptiness, take away the loneliness and flood my being with your presence and love. Help me today to rejoice in weakness and to embrace my brokenness so that I can experience your strength. Thank you that you are all I need.**

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**Day 23 - My Father has given me everything I need to live a righteous and holy life.**

**“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” 2 Peter 1:3-4**

Have you ever felt you were failing because you lacked what you needed? Maybe in your job or in a relationship with someone or in school? I sell cars for a living and many are the times I feel I have not been given what I need to be able to close a deal with a client. Either the buyer has not given me all of the information I need or my boss has not given me the authority to really negotiate within the deal. That is a frustrating experience which I liken to being sent out to hunt down this Grizzly bear but not being given any bullets.

Our Heavenly Father is not like that. He wants us to live a godly life and to not walk in sin. He wants our obedience because He knows it is what is best for us and we will be blessed in obedience and harmed in sin. So look at what this verse is telling us.

First, we learn we have been given everything we need for life and godliness. God has not held back anything. There is not more to come at a later date. He is not dispensing it with a thimble but rather has given us EVERYTHING we need. However, notice the avenue he has chosen to dispense all of this...”through our knowledge of him who called us.” The everything that God has already dispensed to us is received through our knowledge of Christ.

Did you ever have a hamster or some kind of rodent as a kid. Remember the way you kept it from dying of thirst? You had a little water dispenser that hung on the side of the cage and there was enough water tension to keep it from running out so that just a drop would hang there until the pet would break the water tension and the fluid would flow into it’s mouth. All the water it needed was right there but the pet had to drag his thirsty self over to the bottle to get a drink.

Now, in the same way, God has given us all that we need for life and godliness. It is right there for all of us. It comes through our knowledge of Him. If we are not gaining any more knowledge of Him then we are trying to live on yesterday’s water. We can only do that for so long until we die of thirst. So God has given us all that we need and it comes from...”his very great and precious promises.” Now where do you imagine we can find those? In His Word, the Bible, of course.

Now notice what Peter says will happen if we make the effort to deeply drink the very great and precious promises that God has given to us in His Word. We can participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Now notice several things here. One, we can participate in the divine nature. We can experience a real connection between ourselves and God. We have already learned that God in transforming us into the image of His Son. He has placed His Holy Spirit within us. All of this is fostered and enhanced when we work at increasing our knowledge of Him. If we will be keep working at disciplining ourselves to read the word of God, increasing our knowledge of Him and developing a real prayer life this participation in the divine nature is going to be strengthened and increase.

Second, and the real benefit we all long for is that we will escape the corruption in the world that is caused by evil desires. It is like we have only two choices. Either we are increasing in our connection with God and growing more like him or we are falling away from Him. If we are moving toward Him we are growing in Christ and being transformed into His image. If not, we are moving away from him and entering into more sin and frustration in our spiritual lives. There is no

neutral ground. We are either moving closer to God or further away from Him, or at least it seems that way.

So where are you in all of this? Moving closer to God, increasing your knowledge of Him through learning His great and precious promises and thereby participating in the divine nature and escaping the corruption that is in the world caused by evil desires? Or are you lazy and too easily satisfied with having a taste of victory in the past and ever so slowly slipping farther and farther from the Father?

The premise that I have in even writing these devotionals is to put something in the hands of men that will be easy to read on a daily basis, not covering too much stuff and helping men develop the discipline of a daily pursuit of God. If you will develop this discipline then I have the assurance that God will keep growing you into the man He wants you to be. You will experience a closeness with Him and you will have more victory over the evil desires that have so long hindered your walk with Him.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that you have given me everything I need for life and godliness. Thank you that you have poured it out and made it all available to me. Forgive me for not seeking you on a daily basis and increasing my knowledge of You. Help me to grow a little more everyday, expanding my knowledge of You from your precious and great promises found in the Bible.**

**Notes:**

**Day 24 - My Father wants to heal me.**

**“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”** Isaiah 53:4-5

This is truly one of the amazing passages in the Old Testament. Spoken by the prophet Isaiah hundreds of years before Christ came it predicts that our Lord would be stricken, smitten and afflicted. He would be pierced and punished for our sins and by his act of submission to this mission of death we would be healed.

Many use this passage to claim physical healing for the believer. That really is a misuse of this passage. Certainly there is healing mentioned here but if it meant that every believer is going to be physically healed by the death of Christ then what do we tell Christians who struggle with physical illness? No, the healing here must be a healing that every believer experiences. It is the relational healing that takes place in our broken relationship with God our Father.

Our Father placed all of our sins upon Christ. Not only our sins but the Bible teaches all of the sins of the world. It was our sins that were separating us from our Holy Heavenly Father. So when those were placed on Christ at the Cross and the righteousness of Christ was imputed to our lives we became forever born into the family of God. We became born again into God’s family. We went from being spiritually dead in our sins to being spiritually alive into the family of God.

We were healed at that moment of faith when we believed in Christ as our Savior. It was a spiritually healing that included the forgiveness of all of our sins. However, I also believe that there is another healing that God wants to do in our lives. It is a healing of the wounds to our soul that either we brought into this relationship with God or have developed in our Christian lives by experiences that God has allowed to happen to us.

When bad things happen to God’s children we can become wounded and broken. They are designed to teach us to yield ourselves to Him and allow Him to work in our lives. I know it sounds cruel but the truth is that sometimes without hurting us God would not get our attention. It is a testimony to the love of God and the self centeredness of our lives. Let me give you an example.

I am told that there are times when a shepherd has a lamb that will not stay with the flock and likes to wander away from the safety and security of being near the shepherd. In Jesus’ day this was deadly to the lamb as it is today in our lives. A wandering lamb is easy prey for wild animals that would love to destroy and eat the lamb. Lambs are stupid animals and not too bright about getting lost or getting into trouble. So sometimes a shepherd will have to break the leg of this lamb in order to keep it from wandering away. How cruel...or how loving???

Is it cruel of the shepherd to cause some pain to the lamb if it saves the lamb’s life? When this happens the shepherd has to carry the lamb back to its fold. Instead of placing the lamb with the other sheep the shepherd keeps the lamb close to him. Naturally, it has to be cared for and helped because it cannot walk. The lamb will try at first to bite the hand of the shepherd when he is trying to feed it because it is in pain and fears the shepherd. However, eventually it is driven to eat for

survival and establishes a new bond with the shepherd that is stronger than ever. That lamb will become a sheep that will stay closest to the shepherd and be the most obedient to the shepherd of all the other sheep.

I believe we are just like that lamb. We have wandered away from His care and His provisions. So our loving Father has had to break us. For me it was the exposure of my sin to my wife and family. There were already wounds in my life caused by others and some self inflicted. However, my loving Shepherd had to break me so that I would stop wandering off and hurting myself. The pain He caused is intended to bring my wounds to light and teach me again that I must trust and rest totally in Him and the finished work of Christ on the Cross.

So here is the prayer thought that I have learned to carry with me everyday. “Lord, heal my wounds and inhabit my brokenness.” I need and am receiving His healing of the wounds that have led me to seek out sin as a way of self medicating my pain. However, I am not asking God to heal my brokenness, because it is that brokenness that keeps me by His side. I would rather remain in a state of brokenness and utter dependence upon Him so that daily I am receiving from Him all that I need for each day.

How about you? Do you feel wounded and broken? Has God allowed things to happen or even allowed the consequences of your own choices to have their full effect on you? It is with a divine purpose that He is acting in your life. It is to draw you and keep you by His side so that you will be protected, healed and nurtured. Instead of fighting Him with an angry and bitter spirit why not give in to Him and allow Him to heal your wounds and inhabit your brokenness?

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that you are the Good Shepherd. Through Christ you have spiritually healed me and given me a new life. Thank you for the wounds that I have wherever they may have come from and that I can see you working to reveal and heal those wounds. Thank you also for allowing me to be broken. Please inhabit my brokenness today so that instead of it keeping me from you it keeps me close to you. Help me to experience this closeness to you and to realize that you are there for me every second of every day.**

**Notes:**

**Day 25 – My Father will never leave me or forsake me.**

**“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” 6 So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” Hebrews 13:5-6**

One of the last things Jesus said to His followers was for them to go into all the world and to make more disciples. It is the calling of a follower of Jesus to be a disciple maker. At the end of that message in Matthew 28 Jesus says; **“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** Those are the last words of Matthew’s gospel, the final words to role off of our Lord’s lips.

Luke, who wrote the book of Acts starts there with the same idea. Jesus, before ascending up into the clouds and out of view of the disciples tells them that they will receive power to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Put that with Matthew’s words and we have the truth that Jesus will always be with us and His Holy Spirit will be giving us power to take the days of our lives and invest them in making disciples.

Over the years I have heard so many believers say they do not feel God’s presence in their lives. They are not seeing God do anything in them or for them. They question if He is there at all and internalize it all with the conclusion that God must not love them and has abandoned them. They are ignoring the fact that God is everywhere, omnipresent and there is no place they can go where He is not.

Our earthly fathers may have been failures. They may have abandoned us and not been there when we needed them. We can never say that about our Heavenly Father. It is true that if we were more involved in making disciples and needing the Holy Spirit to empower us to be his witnesses we would see and feel God more active in our lives. However, even if we are silent and never witness to the world about Christ, even if we are not making disciples like He has called us to do the fact of the matter is God has said he would never leave us or forsake us.

Regardless of what you are feeling right now you need to exercise faith and use your mind to affirm what you know to be true over what you think you are feeling. I have been in the place where I felt God had abandoned me. I was sure He had rejected me because of my sin, shook the dust off of His shoes and walked away from me because I had failed Him so badly. I did not feel or sense His presence and felt very alone. All of those feelings were false. His presence has always been there and I can now sense His closeness and His love for me. How did that happen? By simply believing what I know to be true and spending the time in prayer focused on the truth of the Word instead of the lies of my feelings.

Has God said He will never leave you or forsake you? Yes! Did Jesus say that He would be with his followers forever? Yes! Is God omnipresent and able to be everywhere at all times? Yes! So is not God right there with you right now? Of course He is. So how do I move that knowledge from my head to my heart where I can feel it? By praying prayers of thanksgiving in faith based on what you know to be true.

Listen to the words of David as he does this in Psalm 139.

**O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
You understand my thought from afar.  
You scrutinize my path and my lying down,  
And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before there is a word on my tongue,  
Behold, O LORD, You know it all.  
You have enclosed me behind and before,  
And laid Your hand upon me.  
*Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
It is *too* high, I cannot attain to it.**

**Where can I go from Your Spirit?  
Or where can I flee from Your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, You are there;  
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.  
If I take the wings of the dawn,  
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,  
Even there Your hand will lead me,  
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.  
If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,  
And the light around me will be night,”  
Even the darkness is not dark to You,  
And the night is as bright as the day.  
Darkness and light are alike *to You*. (Psalm 139:1-12)**

**Heavenly Father – I thank you that you are right here with me. I thank you that you can wrap your powerful arms around me and draw me close to your chest and that I am completely safe and loved in your presence. Thank you that you will never leave or forsake me. When I rebel you hold on. When I am faithless you are faithful and you will never, ever let me go. Help me to not only pray this but to feel this because it is true...so much more true that all the lies Satan has been telling me.**

**Notes:**



**Day 26 – My Father has made full provision for my safety and protection.**

**“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.” Ephesians 6:10-11**

As a father I have thought about something for over 26 years. On October 17, 1980 our first son was born. So for over 26 years my wife and I have thought about, prayed over and sought to love our son. Over the next 8 years we had three more children born to us. On October 17, 1988 our only daughter was born and since we finally got it right we stopped there.

However, for over 26 years my thoughts have been how to do provide and care for my children. How do I nurture and love them? How do I provide for them physically, emotionally, spiritually and financially? We have tucked them in at night and locked the doors before we went to bed just in case someone might want to come into the house to harm them. We have tried to live in places where we felt we were safe and when they could grow up unharmed by the evil that exists in our society. If I were to die there is life insurance to care for my wife and family. In our limited knowledge and wisdom my wife and I have tried to protect and care for them to the best of our ability.

Our Heavenly Father has perfect knowledge and wisdom. He knows everything that will happen to us in our lives and He knows everything that might happen to us. He not only knows us but he knows full well the intent and plan of our enemy who seeks to destroy us. He knows Satan, the devil, and has made provision for us to stand against him on a daily basis. His provision is the called the full armor of God.

Now if you have not read my first devotional, 40 Days of Purity, you might not have a deep understanding of this great passage and how crucial it is for us as believers to know and practice on a daily basis. I spend several days going over all of the armor and talk about how to put it on. I hope you will take the time to read or reread it. However, for now let’s just look at what God has done for us as an act of His incredible love and goodness toward us.

The full armor of God is His daily provision for us against an enemy that never sleeps or slumbers. It is something I need to put on daily. How do I know that? Because the passage tells me in the Greek that the verb “put on” is in the present tense. When something is said in the present tense it means it is something we are to do and keep on doing in an ongoing or daily way. So literally it could be translated; “Put on and keep on putting on the full armor of God...”

Why is that necessary? Because of who our enemy is. We are not wrestling against flesh and blood on a moment by moment daily basis. Our battle is against forces of spiritual darkness, against demons and against the enemies of our souls. These creatures are followers of Satan and will war against us constantly. They will seek every opportunity to deceive and whisper lies into our minds. They will fire at us flaming arrows of doubt and fear seeking to get us to turn from God and try to do things on our own. Then they have us and we become easily defeated.

Therefore, our loving Heavenly Father has given us protection. He has provided for our needs against this daily enemy. His provision is called the full armor of God. We are told to put it on daily so that we can stand strong in the strength of His might. Did you catch that??? The strength of His might. I do not have the power of strength to stand against an enemy that I cannot see, hear, feel or touch. God knows that so He has designed this armor to do the job for me. If I put it on I will be able to stand in the strength of His might. If not I will surely fall by the weakness of my own limited humanity.

So everyday I try to remember to do this simple thing. I pray through the pieces of armor and imagine placing them on my body. The helmet of salvation to protect my thoughts and help me to have the “mind of Christ” in my thinking. The breastplate of righteousness to help me remember that my Father has declared me righteous and that I can live a righteous life. The belt of truth so that I will know the truth and speak the truth at all time. The sword of the Spirit so that I will know the Word of God and allow it to pierce me down to the thoughts and intentions of my heart. The shield of faith so that it will extinguish the flaming arrows of Satan and protect me from fear and doubt. The shoes with which to spread the gospel so that I will live like Christ before those I work and live with. Praying at all times in the Spirit so that I will have spiritual discernment as the day goes by. Being alert so that I will not grow weary in the battle. Praying for all the saints so that I will keep my mind focused on those near me who are in the battle as well.

Having placed these pieces of armor on my body I am now ready to experience something that I will not have without them...and that is the ability to stand in the strength of His might. See, we have a powerful enemy that is not flesh and blood. So we need spiritual power from God himself to be able to defeat these enemies. With the armor in place I will be able to stand strong in the strength of His might. Without it I am naked and left to my own limited abilities. I become an easy target and soon will be trashed by my enemies.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you for the full armor of God. Thank you that I can put it on everyday. Help me to develop the discipline to do that. Help it to become as much a daily part of my day as brushing my teeth and getting dressed before I go outside. Thank you that your armor will allow me to stand in the strength of your might and help me to defeat this enemy of my soul.**

**Notes:**

**Day 27 – My Father wants me to experience an intensely close relationship with Him daily.**

**“Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” John 14:23**

I firmly believe that what each and everyone of us deeply desires a full and intense relationship with our Heavenly Father. We want to feel his presence but so often He seems distant. We want to know that He is right there with us and yet He is invisible. We want to sense His loving and strong arms around us and yet we know that God is spirit and does not have a physical body.

Yet the bible is full of phrases that talks about our Father as if he has a body.

**Ex. 3:7 Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are I n Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings...”**

**Is. 53:1 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?**

**Deut. 11:2 Remember today that your children were not the ones who saw and experienced the discipline of the LORD your God: his majesty, his mighty hand, his outstretched arm;**

He sees the affliction of His people and hears their cries for help. He reaches out his arm and has mighty hands. Now I know there is a word for this type of language. These are called anthropomorphisms. Using human terms to describe God. Yet, are not these statements true?

Isn't the unlimited God who created the universe, the human body and who made is in his image able to connect with us in such a way so that from our perspective it is as if He holds us in his hands or carries us in his arms? Can we classify our Father in such theological terms and philosophical ideas so as to strip him of any real ability for us to be able to feel him? Which error would be the greater? To depersonalize Him in such as way as to make him unknowable and unreal or to over simplify the plain words of Scripture and believe that I can feel and sense Him in my life?

After years of sensing that God is distant from me and wrestling with a feeling of emptiness even though I knew He is omnipresent I have begun to think in terms of my Father's closeness. I am

attempting to feel Him place His arms around me and have Him draw me snug up against His side. I am hearing in my heart His words that say He loves me and that everything will be alright. Is it just some figment of my imagination that I am using to create these images or is it really God? You know what...I am at the place where as long as what I am sensing is in line with what the Scriptures teach to be true then it is ok with me.

Do I know God is everywhere? Yes, that is clearly taught in Psalm 139. Do I believe that God is my Father and deeply cares about me? Yes, everything you have read in this devotional is designed to show us the reality of that idea. Is it not more real and accurate for me to then try and sense His closeness and his loving arms around me then it is to believe my feelings of Him being distant and uninterested?

Ok, I can just hear you saying to yourself...wow this stuff is getting too hard for me to read and understand. What I am trying to say is I believe it is ok to use our imagination and our senses to try and feel God's presence and His love. When I am feeling His love I am experiencing His presence and these feelings are not improper to try and create. The only reason I do not feel them is not because they are not there but because I am so blinded to the spiritual realities that are all around me all of the time.

Sometimes I feel like my Father is standing there shouting out His infinite love for us. His words are shown in the reality of the Cross where He sacrificed His Son. But we stick our fingers in our ears and get distracted by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the sinful pride of life and we imagine that He has grown distant. What a load of crap that is. Take your fingers out of your ears and reach your hands out and He is right there. Close your eyes and sense what it might feel like if He were to place His mighty arms around you and hold you to His chest. Feel him holding on to you and protecting you from everything that is worrying you.

In my images I see myself as I am now and sometimes as I was as a child. However, it is mostly me as an adult. For my wife she often sees herself as a little girl climbing onto her Father's lap. I say go with where you need to go with this and allow your Heavenly Father's presence to fill the wounds in your life. Sense His healing hands placing a salve on the cuts in your heart and healing them closed. Allow his gentle hands to rub the scar tissue pain out of every spot where you have been wounded. Because the fact of the matter is He is right here with you. He does love you unconditionally. He can make his presence known to you in ways that are deep and healing to your heart.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that you and the Son have come and make you abide with me. You dwell in me by the Holy Spirit and your presence is with me and in me everyday. Help me to walk in the Spirit and obey your Word and His leadings. Help me to remember at the point of temptation that what I am really longing for is not sin but your presence and your love.**

**Notes:**

**Day 28 - My Father wants to hear about everything I am thinking and feeling.**

**“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”** Philippians 4:6-7

Did you ever get the sense that your dad did not want to listen to you? Maybe what you were saying seemed stupid to him. Maybe his mind was preoccupied with the stress of his work, financial pressures or he was worried about a thousand other things. However, for whatever the reason you were left with the feeling that he did not care. As a result you learned to keep things to yourself. You began to believe that you should only bother him if it were really important or you had some really big news. Don't bother dad with the trivial, only talk with him about the monumental.

Then we carry that attitude to God our Father. We think if we were more of a man we should be able to handle all that life throws at us and not need to bother God with our problems. After all He has the whole universe to worry about...who am I and how insignificant I must be. So we shut up, try to keep it inside where it festers. Those little worries and seemingly insignificant issues have a way of growing in the darkness. Like good food left over in the refrigerator a spore of mold grows into a culture and what was previously pleasing to the taste buds becomes a noxious mass of mold and stinks up the whole house. In the same way the little things of life, left unaddressed, can become a stench in our souls.

Our Heavenly Father wants to know about everything we are thinking and feeling. He waits on the edge of His Throne leaning forward, hoping we will come close enough to share with Him what we are worried about. He waits hoping we will wake up to the concept that he intensely wants us to bring everything...everything...everything to Him in prayer and petition.

The parent that wishes his child would shut up and stop talking about insignificant things later wishes his teenager would tell him anything. All he gets from his adolescent are grunts and nods about how things went at school that day. He longs her to open up and really share with him what she is thinking and feeling.

Are you like that with God. You sheepishly come into His presence and whisper a few nice things in prayer thanking Him for something and then creep away satisfied that you have communicated with God that day.

Our verse for today tells us to be anxious about nothing. What are the little and big things that are bothering you? What thoughts are weighing you down and swarming around in your mind like a thousand yellow jackets? We are told to take everything to God in prayer and to do it with thanksgiving. In fact we are commanded to make our requests to God...about everything. That might take some time. It might require us to get into our Father's presence and really search our souls about what is bothering us. We might have to carefully examine what we are feeling and what is concerning us.

Can I make a suggestion to you? How about taking some time today and sitting down and making a list of everything that is troubling you. A thought you are worried about crosses your mind...write it down...add it to the list. Then take that list to your Father. He wants to hear you tell Him about it. But notice this in the verse...do it with thanksgiving. Instead of having a gripe session with Him frame your comments in the form of giving thanks.

Let me give you an example. Next fall I will have the challenge of having two of my kids in college. There is going to be a huge tuition expense come September. Now I can worry myself sick about it. I can let fear grow inside me and be anxious about having to tell my kids I cannot afford for them to go to college. Or, I can thank God for the opportunity I have to trust in Him. I can thank Him that He will provide and please help me to find ways to save money and make more money.

Another example is perhaps I am feeling badly about myself and that nobody loves me. I want to feel loved and appreciated and if I do not feel that I might be tempted to act out and self medicate with sexual sin. Instead I need to go and talk to my Father with thanksgiving. I thank Him that He alone loves me unconditionally. I thank Him that He can heal my wounds and can help me to feel good about myself.

Now notice what the passage tells us will happen. The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus. If I will make the time and spend it with my Father. If I will present to Him everything I am anxious about and worried over and will do it in such a way that I can express it with thanksgiving...then something happens in my mind. The peace of God comes into my being. If I am not feeling that peace then I still have more to pray. I have to keep digging and pressing into Him. I need Him to search my heart and know my anxious thoughts and I ask Him to reveal to me anything else I need to pray about.

Then the peace of God comes and it guards my heart and my mind from fear and doubt. So what is troubling you? What is weighing you down? Start the list today in the notes section below. Get another piece of paper if you need to. Make the list and bring it before your loving Heavenly Father everyday...with thanksgiving. Pray these things verbally out loud. Keep praying until you sense His peace coming and freeing you of your anxiety.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that you know all the things that are troubling me. Thank you that you understand my fears and worries and you have answers to them. Help me to identify these areas where I need to learn to trust you and experience your presence and healing. Help me to see myself truthfully and understand why I feel the way I do.**

**Notes:**

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**Day 29 – My Father will reward me at the end of my life.**

**“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”**  
2 Cor. 5:10

Have you ever seen one of those Chick tracts? I do not know if they are still around but I remember them. They were little “Christian” comic books designed to scare the hell out of you. One of the ideas they would use is that at the end of your life you are going to go before God and the entire population of time and God is going to put your life on a large movie screen so everyone will see all the sins you have committed. So in order for you to be spared from that you need to accept Christ as your Savior and experience the forgiveness of God.

How whacked out is that idea? Like God wants to show everyone the X-Rated movies of our lives to everyone else. Like He doesn't have incredible things for us to do...we have to watch billions of bad movies. It was a great scare tactic but some really bad theology.

However, what is true is that both believers and unbelievers will face the judgment of God for how we have lived our lives. However, that judgment does not take place in the same location or in the same way for both groups of people.

Those outside of Christ will be judged at what the Bible calls the Great White Throne judgment. If you read the passage beginning at Revelation 20:11 carefully you will see that those who are judged there are those who do not know Christ and they are judged according to what is written down in the books...the records of what they have done. Then it is double checked by seeing if their names are written in the Book of Life. If their names are not in that Book of Life they are thrown into the lake of fire. That is the judgment of unbelievers.

The judgment of believers is different. It happens at a different place and in a different way. It is not at the Great White Throne, but a place called in this verse the judgment seat of Christ. In the Greek it is called the Bema seat. The readers in Paul's day knew exactly what the bema seat was. It was the place that the king or emperor sat in during the Cerinthian games (like the Olympics). When an athlete competed and won they would come before the king to receive their prize or reward. The bema seat was not a place to receive punishment but to receive reward.

Paul takes that image to teach us about what our judgment will be like. We are going to stand before our beloved Savior, the one that loved us enough to die for us. He will examine how we have lived our Christian lives. He will know the good and the bad things we have done. Then He will reward us for the good things. He will give to us eternal blessing that we will have forever. It is a place of reward and blessing, not punishment and condemnation.

Christ does not want us to live for him out of a fear of punishment. He wants us to live our lives in such a way that we are trying to gain as much blessing and rewards as possible. Paul says it himself...



**“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.” 1 Corinthians 9:24**

So many believers today are trying to live the Christian life out of the fear of punishment instead of out of a love for Christ. Those fears lead to legalistic ways of living and the love of God seems to dry up in their lives. The list of what not to do becomes endless and their box becomes smaller. God never intended us to live that way.

He wants us to go for it. He tells us that our sins and lawless deeds He will remember no more. He says there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. He wants us to follow and obey Him and His word so that we will be rewarded at the end of our lives for the good things God has done through us.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you for your eternal love and forgiveness. Thank you that you are a God who loves and rewards his children and that you have placed the punishment for my sins onto your own Son. Thank you that they are paid for and forgiven. Fill me with your Spirit today and help me to live my life out of joy and a desire to earn eternal rewards. Help me to go for it and live for you today with boldness and love.**

**Notes:**

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**Day 30 - My Father has an incredible place for me to live in forever.**

**“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”** John 14:1-3

These words were spoken by Jesus to his followers the night before he was crucified. He wanted to make sure they knew that in spite of all that was going to happen on the next day ultimately everything was going to be alright, He pulls back the curtain between earth and heaven and gives us a glimpse of the realities on the other side of death and what will be in heaven.

He tells us that after we pass away from this life there is a place prepared for us. Jesus himself is preparing that place for you. Paul says later in the bible that to be absent from the body (when we die) is to be present with the Lord. So be clear about this. At the point of death the believer steps into the presence of the Lord.

Jesus tells his followers that He will come back for us and take us to be where He is and we will be there with Him forever. The Greeks of Jesus’ day had a different idea of heaven. They believed that there were infinite levels of existence in heaven and depending on how good a person you were on earth determined how far up you would be in heaven. Jesus says that is not the case. He is going to come for us himself and He is going to take us to where He is. He will not throw us into the basement of heaven...but will take us with Him to the owners mansion where he has made a room for us.

Even wonder what heaven will be like for us? Not much else is given to us in the New Testament about heaven. There is a description in Revelation about what the eternal city will be like. But what about you and me? What will we be like and what will our lives be like?

Peter gives us some ideas in 1 Peter 1:3-5. **“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you.”**

Three things Peter says here about our inheritance and what heaven will be like for us. He says it will never perish spoil or fade. Seems strange language to me that he uses but these words unlock three great truths about heaven for us.

The word perish is not used very often in the New Testament. In fact in the Greek the word is imperishable. Something about heaven for us is going to be imperishable. We live in a world where things are very perishable. To keep food fresher and more edible for a longer period of time we add preservatives and store them in refrigerators. However, eventually it will all spoil and its value to us perishes. Our bodies are another example of what is perishing. As we become older we lose our strength and flexibility and ultimately we perish when our bodies cease to be able to function.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul specifically tells us that these perishable bodies we now have are going to be changed into imperishable ones. This will be done in a split second when Jesus returns for us. Now I wish I know what kind of body I am going to have. Can I get a catalogue and choose? Can I

select the age I want to be for eternity in my new imperishable body? I don't know. All I do know is that my body will be imperishable. Is there anything wrong with your body right now? Great news...God is going to fix it and you will be free from all sickness and imperfections forever.

Secondly, something about heaven is said to be unspoiled. This word is used only two other times in the New Testament. Once it is used in talking about the unspoiled glory of God. The other time in Hebrews it talks about the unspoiled nature of Christ...or the holiness of Christ. The second great news is that in heaven we are going to be holy. There will not be found in us or in heaven even a hint of sin. Is there a sin that you struggle with? It will be gone forever in heaven. How much has sin and is sin damaging people in our world today? All of that will be gone in heaven.

Lastly Peter says our inheritance is unfading. That means that it is going to be as exciting and wonderful in heaven a million years after we are there as it is on the first day. On earth most things fade with time. The best a new suit looks is the first time you put it on. With age it fades. A new car can be a thing of pride, but put some miles on it and get some scratches and dings and its beauty fades. Not so in heaven. Its beauty will be unfading. Everyday we will see it as just as beautiful as the previous thousand years.

There also, we will have access to our Savior and Lord Jesus. We will be able to see Him and hear His voice. We will be with family and friends and nothing will ever separate us from our loved ones again. There will be no sin and no evil and our hearts and lives will be filled with joy. Lastly, we will fully understand the incredible love our Father has for us because we will see His grace in everything and everyone in heaven. What a great place and a great future our Father has for us.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you for the future you have for me. Thank you for heaven and all that we will experience there. Now help me to live today in faith. Help me to sense and feel your presence and love in my life. Help me to be healed from all the wounds that I have experienced and may you inhabit my brokenness by your Spirit so that I will remain your faithful and beloved son.**

**Notes:**

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**Day 31 – My Father sacrificed His Son for my sins as a demonstration of His love.**

**“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:7-8**

My wife and I have four children. Outside of our relationship with each other, without any doubt, they are the most precious objects of our love. For over 26 years we have given our lives to them and tried to tell them in thousands of ways that we love them. There is nothing on this earth or in this universe that we would sacrifice one of them for.

However, that is not true of God. He has made the greatest statement He could ever make in telling you that He loves you. That statement was made at the cross when He allowed Roman soldiers to nail his Son onto a wooden cross and left him there to die.

Whenever someone says to me; “I just really wish I could feel God’s love for me.” I know one thing is for certain. They have never really gotten close to the Cross or they have wondered a long way from it. God has already spoken. For 30 days we have listened as He has told us in various ways that He loves us. However, make no mistake about it they all pale in comparison to the cross.

I can know that He has my name engraved on His hands. I can read that he knows the numbers of hair I have on my head. I can appreciate that He has chosen me from before the creation. All of these are biblical truths and good to know. But nothing...absolutely nothing screams the love of God for us as much as the Son dying on the cross for our sins.

One other passage I want us to consider gives us a good perspective on this truth. It is a prayer in the book of Acts that John and Peter were praying...

**“The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.’ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Acts 4:26-28**

This passage tells us that our Father made this decision to sacrifice his son for our sins beforehand. In other words Herod and Pontius Pilate were not acting on their own. They were simply doing what God the Father decided beforehand would happen.

Listen, God’s message for all time to all people is that He loves us. His love is so great that He chose the greatest demonstration in the world to show that love. He sent his one and only Son to earth, born of a virgin, to live a holy life and ultimately give that life as a sacrifice for your sins. Your Father loves you that much.

So the next time you feel distant from God. The next time you want to feel the loving arms of God surround you and draw you to His chest...start with remembering the Cross. Remember the precious son of God hanging there, beaten and crucified for your sins. Bow your head in humble thanksgiving and tell your Father for loving you that much. Thank the Lord Jesus Christ for leaving heaven, becoming a human being, living a holy life and then allowing sinful men to crucify him. Stay there and look. Meditate on that message until you begin to understand again how great the love of the Father is for you...even though you...and I...are sinners and deserve none of that.

**Heavenly Father – Thank you that you do love me. Certainly there are thousands of ways you have communicated that to me. However, above all thank you for the Cross where you sacrificed your Son the Lord Jesus for my sins. Forgive me for my selfishness and my lack of faith. Take me to the Cross today Father and help me to see and feel your love for me.**

**Notes:**

I sincerely hope that this devotional has helped you renew your love for God the Father. I pray that the Holy Spirit has used the Scriptures to help you sense His infinite love for you. I know in my struggle for healing that the more I am able to embrace the Father and run to Him when I need to be embraced the less I am drawn away from Him and act out in sin. May God bless you deeply. May He heal your woundedness and inhabit your brokenness.

John Doyel

