



Day 22

Psalm 53
Psalm 54
Psalm 55

Does being victorious mean that you are no longer suffering? Or does present suffering mean that you have not experienced victory? Today's Scripture presents the truth that like the psalmist, we can somehow experience suffering while also being victorious! The simplest explanation for this is that our suffering on this earth is temporary and is a result of sin, but the fulfillment of God's plan through Christ grants us an eternal victory that puts everything into context. That victory begins at the moment of our walk of faith with Christ. The phrase, "we fight **from** victory, not **for** victory" sums up this thought. As a result, we are no longer captive to the sin in our flesh and the sin in the world! While we experience temptation and the consequences of sin until we die, our trust in Christ means that He has set us free and we are dead to sin's power over us. The Holy Spirit lives in us as the Helper, continuing to work in us to live under grace. This is the essence of the freedom that we live in, but it is a freedom that we simply forget we have. Perhaps this is the reason why it seems difficult to take heart and find joy in our sufferings; but do not despair of hope! Remember this truth: Jesus doesn't merely give you victory - Jesus IS your victory.

Day 23

Psalm 56
Psalm 57
Psalm 58

As you read these psalms, notice that David prays for vindication from his enemies, beginning with "Be merciful to me, my God" (Psalm 56:1); "Have mercy on me, my God" (Psalm 57:1), and ending with "The righteous will be glad when they are avenged" (Psalm 58:10). Although David was right in praying for vindication, we must be careful to pray the same, reminded that Paul, referencing the psalms, tells us, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Romans 3:10-12; Psalm 14:1-3, 53:1-3). We will be (and have been) wronged at times in our lives, but in those times, we must remember that we have wronged God, and God has forgiven our wrongs through Christ's death on the cross. Remember Romans 5:8, which says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." As you read these psalms, allow them to renew your thinking and to inform your prayers for those who have wronged you. If we truly face our sinfulness against God, it will humble us and open our eyes. Take those offenses to the very place where we have been forgiven: the cross of Christ. If God has so generously covered and removed our sin to the point of sacrificing His innocence for our guilt, then our reality is that His grace covers the offenses and hurt that we inflict on each other. In prayer, we will find ourselves able to understand and obey Ephesians 4:32, which says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." When all is forgiven, between us and God and us and others, we can humbly affirm the psalmist's words: "What can man do to me?" (Psalm 56:11)

**Day 24**

Psalm 59
Psalm 60
Psalm 61

In Psalm 59 and 60, David wrestles with the thought of enemies surrounding him. In Psalm 59, his enemy was Saul, who had sent a murder squad to track him down and kill him. In Psalm 60, he recalls the military battles with Zobah and Naharaim from Aram (Syria) described in 2 Samuel 8. Even when the nation was still very small, God had helped them to defeat the Canaanites against huge odds. Now they had a fully equipped army, and even with their power in the number and might of their army, they were defeated by Aram. As we read through the Psalms, we see that God had provided David victory in both personal and national attacks, but there were also times when David experienced defeat. In Psalm 59, His prayer to God is one of vindication where he establishes no fault saying, "Fierce men conspire against me for no offense or sin of mine, Lord." In Psalm 60, he reflects on the defeat by Aram and laments in that God has rejected them and shown them desperate times. He recognized that God had taken His protection off of His people because of their disobedience. Although David is struggling with the thought of God allowing his army to taste defeat, he writes this prayer to God nonetheless. "With God we will gain the victory, and He will trample down our enemies." He knew that no matter what he faced or had done, he could return to God and find refuge from his enemies and forgiveness for disobedience. You and I may never feel military defeat, but we feel spiritual defeat often. When we find ourselves in those times of defeat, we can rest assured that we have a God who is ever-present and aware of our circumstances. David could say that all he had seen had taught him to trust the Creator for all he had not seen. He recognized that victory came from God when he says in Psalm 61:2-3, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy." When you face defeat, are you willing to cling to the promises of God as David did? If you are finding it difficult, remember that we have an even greater promise today than the promises David had to cling to because God has secured the ultimate victory in Christ, who now lives in you!



Day 25

Proverbs 10
Proverbs 11
Proverbs 12

Righteousness versus wickedness; wisdom contrasted with foolishness; the upright as opposed to the crooked. These chapters capture the folly inherited by the fool, and the benefits begotten to the faithful. If we view these Proverbs as helpful advice to live a better life, we will no doubt benefit from them; but isn't there something deeper here? How does the fact that we live on the Resurrection side of the Cross alter the paradigm through which we see these verses? If we have trusted in Christ and given our lives to Him, we should see in each verse the futility of our old selves and the fruit of our new hearts. While we were yet crooked, Christ chose to make us upright. Though we were blinded by the foolishness of our sins, Jesus in His eternal wisdom caused us to see through His life, death and resurrection. Our Savior imparted His righteousness upon us by bearing our wickedness on the cross. With the lens of the Holy Spirit, we come to the knowledge of our lives without Christ compared to our lives with Christ. We live righteously only when we abide in Christ; we are foolish always when we abide in ourselves and our own understanding. "In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway, there is no death."

Day 26

Psalm 62
Psalm 63
Psalm 64

Life is anything but simple. Our situations can be rainy and windy one day, calm and sunny the next. The seasons of our lives come packed with emotions and experiences that can be difficult to understand, as in during the blossoming of new beginnings or the withering of old relationships. If my greatest hope is myself whether in persevering through the hard times or thriving in the good times, I'm doomed. If we trust wholeheartedly in our fellow humans to carry us on to victory, we are stuck in depending on people who have the same condition as we do, with the same sins and weaknesses we are to overcome. We need a rock of salvation, a fortress of deliverance, a refuge of mercy. By His grace, God has made Himself that rock, our fortress, our eternal refuge. Through our weaknesses we find hope in dependence upon God. Prayer is our safe place to be vulnerable with our loving Savior. Once we have tasted the steadfast love of God, we come to realize He alone is sufficient to satisfy our souls. Our mouths are forever dry and our flesh will forever faint at anything less than the all-satisfying nourishment of Christ's Living Water, the Holy Spirit's presence and work welling up inside our souls. We wait upon God, glorying in His righteousness that He has chosen to share with us. Deliverance belongs to the Lord, as does all our praise. By faith, in expectant hope, rest in God's promises and on His devotion to making His Name great through the story of our clinging to Him. "So I will bless You as long as I live, in Your Name I will lift up my hands."

**Day 27**

Psalm 65
Psalm 66
Psalm 67

These Psalms express the worship of God and the desire for God to be praised throughout the earth. All of Creation and the abundance of nature illustrate God's creativity, power, and faithfulness in His ability to sustain the earth. What better Good News is there than to know that the God of all Creation who is worthy of all praise has made a way through Christ for us to truly enter into a loving relationship with Him? We now no longer have to make inadequate attempts to control our lives, but instead we know that regardless of the trajectory of our lives, we have a true and everlasting reason to be joyful. With this in mind, how is it that we can allow this whole walk with God to then become a burden? How is it that while we know this is supposed to be great news, it sometimes feels like bad news? From an outside standpoint, it can feel like a burden of bad news when we experience ridicule or isolation because of our obedience to Jesus. Internally, it is bad news for our pride and need for control! But it's the best news ever for the child of God with the renewed heart He has made you! In what ways has your walk with God felt burdensome? In what ways have you desired to skip through the relationship with Jesus and just get to results? If your priority is finished results, you will experience a constant frustrating defeat. God's desire for you is not that you perfect yourself or that you measure your life by your performance; His desire for you is that you daily trust Him in every way, and look to Him instead of all that "needs to be done." This is the way that He can do in you what you can never do in your own self, to become more like Him and to enjoy Him in each moment in the journey.

Day 28

Psalm 68
Psalm 69
Psalm 70

What does it look like for you to be honest before God? While we see incredible worship of God throughout these Psalms, we also see the expression of despair from the psalmist. We read about physical, social, and mental suffering as a result of the psalmist's being an outcast and harmed because he worshipped God. In reference to yesterday's devotion, these circumstances present the picture of how the good news of Christ suddenly feels like bad news. If we could just abandon our beliefs, it sure seems like life would be easier to just be accepted by more people and free to make decisions that feel good. However, in these moments, we must remember that our life here on earth is literally just a snapshot of our eternal existence, and the choices we make now influence and impact that eternity. Even more importantly, the fundamental truth and experience of salvation in Christ changes our hearts and ultimately changes our desires. So while there may be moments when it seems easier to just do what we want, we know and find comfort in the truth that God is indeed near, that He loves us, and that trusting His faithfulness will allow us to know that good and bad are both gifts from God.