

Living in Victory

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Living in Victory

Dr. Matthew Webster

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Chapter 1
Your Sadness turned into Joy

Psalms 30:11-12

**You changed my mourning
into dancing.**

**You took off my funeral
clothes and dressed me
up in joy so that my whole
being might sing praises
to you and never stop.**

**LORD, my God, I will give
thanks to you forever.**

Have you found yourself struggling to get through the week? Day to day seems to be increasingly difficult and you just can't seem to pick yourself up because your hope that things will change becomes harder to believe with each passing day. Do you remember the last time you laughed? I mean really laughed to the point that you were in tears? Take a minute to think back to a moment in your life that brought you great joy. Did you know joyful moments are a part of God's beautiful plan for your life, whatever you face, God can turn your sadness into the most joyful moments. Today is the day that through God's Word, hope will be instilled back into your life and excitement for what God will do in your future.

I am grateful the Lord has led you to find this book because this Word will be such an immense blessing to you, moving you forward into the victorious life God has promised to you in Christ. In these next seven chapters, your part is to enter into the rest that God desires to give you.

As the Word of God fills your heart and mind you will discover how God will do for you what you are unable to do for yourself, turn things completely around and fill your life with His grace for whatever it is you need, great hope despite whatever you face, victory in the most improbable circumstances, and freedom to live in the abundant life that Jesus died to give you.

Every single chapter comes with a downloadable guide. The guide is simple and it's not a requirement to even have to do, but it is designed to help you focus on key parts from each chapter so you can reflect on it throughout the week. We have designed this book in such a way that you can progress to any chapter you'd like. You could reread a chapter over and over again or even jump ahead in chapters. The choice is yours, welcome to "Living in Victory".

Psalm 30:11-12: "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness, that my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever."

David at this moment in his life could have reflected on his past and done so by reflecting on all of the struggles, and all of the pain, and he could have missed out on seeing where God had brought him and the improbable victories God brought into His life. He was at times outnumbered facing an enemy much stronger, but victory was given to Him by the Lord. This is what David has to say:

In Psalm 30:1 "And have not let my enemies rejoice over me." Yeah, I had enemies attack me but You gave me the victory. So even if my future has more battles, and it does for all of us, I see victory ahead because you have done it in my past and You'll do it again in my future. I know who goes with me and who is it that gives to me victory over the things that come against me.

In verse 2, "I cried to You for help, and You healed me." This speaks to us and our wounds. Battles carry with them wounds even in victory. The good news is God will heal us. There were many times when David received healing from God from both illness and injury. I know who my healer is David proclaims.

In verse 3, "You have brought my soul up from the grave". We don't know if David is

describing what we might call a near-death experience or if it would be more like a narrow escape from death. Either way- the Lord kept and preserved him, as He is doing for you today.

So, think about all that you have gone through or might be going through- David can relate to the most difficult seasons that you experience in your life. And just like David but even more so for us, because we are living in the New Covenant, filled with the Holy Spirit, every single spiritual blessing is yours in Christ, so even more so than David did, you can rejoice in God as you visualize in your mind the victory you have in Jesus today! Even before the outward circumstance change, the change is already taking place in you. As you put your hope and your trust in God, victory will manifest within you and will lead to victory outside of you.

David knew that weeping may last for the night. Time is a funny thing because it seemingly can go so fast, and at times move so slowly. Every time I run on the treadmill I feel as though time stands still. When I am having a great time with friends and family there just doesn't seem to be enough time. Time flies when you are having fun. The night can be painful,

the night can feel so long. Maybe you are in a season of night but here is the promise "But joy comes in the morning." God has led you to this series as it is the breaking of the dawn for you- the sunrise is coming and so is your joy. A Joy that is loud, a joy that bubbles up within your soul and you can't help but sing God's praises for He will turn your sadness into joy in Jesus. David found that victory was not something he was able to do for himself. Having his sadness removed and turned to joy was not something He could do for Himself based upon all that had come upon him. But You God have turned for me sadness into joy is what he declared. The victory won't be by your might or by your wisdom but by the Spirit of the Lord fixing your eyes on Jesus, His finished work for you declares you are victorious in Jesus.

Isaiah 61:3—He has given me a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

What was it that David discovered that turned things around in his life? David discovered in what looked like defeat, in brokenness and in pain, our God who rushes to offer help to the helpless, to

bring healing to the broken, to restore life to the dying, despairing, and defeated. God is willing and able to have David's experience be yours and even more so because of what is available to us in Jesus.

David wrote in the same chapter a few verses earlier "Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. His favor is for a lifetime. (Psalm 30:4-5a)."

For those with faith in Jesus, no setback, no misery, and no loss can be lasting. Christ conquers our greatest fears and pains, not always swiftly, but surely. The suffering and loss cannot outlast the life He purchased for us on the cross. For us as believers, joy comes with the morning, and after the morning, and even in the mourning. And so we sing, even in the middle of severe sadness because we hope that God will turn it for us.

"You have turned for me" what this means in the Hebrew language in which this manuscript was originally written is that God can (hāpāḳ) overturn/ turn around, change, and transform your sadness into dancing¹ (Psalm 30:11).

¹ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h2015/niv/wlc/0-1/>

What this means for us when we are experiencing severe sadness whether it is from something in particular or just a combination of a bunch of many things, God isn't going to force a change in your emotion, only you can allow God through the Holy Spirit to overturn what has turned on you. David is speaking here of what I believe was not only his recent past circumstances but will be his future experiences as well.

God gave David this truth you have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness in 1017 B.C. about 24 years later in 993 B.C. we are given one of the saddest moments in David's life- he had Uriah essentially murdered because he impregnated Uriah's wife and now the message comes to David through the prophet Nathan that his son with Bathsheba will die.

We go to 2 Samuel 12:14-31 at a time when David was in sackcloth and it shows probably the greatest sadness you could ever experience, the death of your child.

“David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them. But, on the seventh day the child died.”

What did David do in the depths of his despair?

“Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions, and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request, they served him food, and he ate. Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and made love to her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon.”

The worship of the Lord, led David to comfort his wife, God can overturn and transform your sadness into dancing (Psalm 30:11). David’s sadness was transformed into dancing with Bathsheba which led to the birth of a child and produced great joy. He went from the depths of despair to worshipping the Lord which brought him to a place of joy. The same is true for us.

If you continue in a state of sadness, you probably aren't worshipping and receiving from God, the blessing of joy that God wants to give you. God wants to birth new joy in your life. Sing His praises and thank Him that He is turning it for you. The joy He will produce in you will lead to the birth of the new thing that God is bringing to you in your life. Victory, joy, and peace are some of the good things God gives us in Jesus.

David mourned the death of a child, but then he worshipped God (2 Samuel 12:20) and allowed God to turn and transform his sadness into dancing- which leads to the eventual birth of Solomon. Do you know what the name Solomon means? It is where we get the Hebrew word shalom from. It means peace. The message for us is that God brought forth peace (Solomon) into the world of a grieving father and mother as a result of worship (2 Samuel 12:20).

David could have remained sad and mourned and who knows- his attendants thought he would go another direction when they said. "How can we now tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate."

I can tell you from my own life experiences I have in the past mourned too long for the loss of something when God wanted to turn my mourning into dancing and great joy. A job loss, a financial loss, a loss to my health, and even a loss in a sports game. What turned it around was worship. Allowing God's transformative grace to result in His peace in my life. It didn't mean the child was brought back to life- it didn't mean the no turned into a yes. It meant God was bringing forth something new and the change, the Solomon (peace) began in my heart before any noticeable difference took place and it led me to dance in my soul.

I didn't know what God would do, or how He would do it, I simply believed God that He would turn it for me into joy. When I look to the cross and see how deeply loved I am that God would give me the gift of the life of His only Son, I am reminded how He will also graciously give us all things that we need.

I want to make sure that it is understood that there is a place and a time to mourn. David had a time of mourning- But he asks a question, "Can I bring him back again?"

Will my mourning of this loss change the outcome? That's a good point. Then David moves to a promise of God that would lead to his worship "I will go to him, but he will not return to me." (2 Samuel 12:23). Meaning I will see my child one day. Even defeat, even loss we experience on Earth is only temporary. And then God blessed David with a son who would be considered the wisest man on earth who would finish David's dream of building God's temple. And even in that story, it is not about David's love for God but God's love for David as God builds an everlasting house for David. The Messianic Kingdom through his lineage. This just goes to show how great our God is and how richly blessed our lives are in Jesus, as we too have a house that God has built for us in Heaven, that will never fade.

Now the last verse I wanted to share is Jeremiah 31:13 and it will sound familiar to Psalm 30:11.

It says "Then young women will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow" (Jeremiah 31:13).

Then young women will dance and be glad, young men and old as well.

Try dancing, when you are sad. Sad people typically don't dance. The dancing proves the condition of the heart has changed to joy.

Joyful people dance. I have been to many weddings- many interesting weddings. As joyful as weddings can be it is extremely rare for me to see all ages and genders on the dance floor at the same time for more than a song or two. The reason for it generally speaking is that different songs, move different people. One generation might be into a certain style or sound or beat. But there are exceptions when a song is so good it is timeless, it seems to move all people. What Scripture tells us is God is orchestrating such joyous music over your life, turning your sadness into joy, that I believe the people that encounter your life song will be moved to dance too. The joy of Jesus will flow from you and usher in the opportunity for peace in their lives.

"I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow."

Jeremiah 31 talks about the Lord who leads (9) redeems, delivers (verse 11), and provides (14) but it all comes out of His everlasting love (verse 3) for us.

In both Psalm 30 and Jeremiah 31, they both say the miracle of the downtrodden, mourning people who are transformed into joyful dancing people is a work of God. It is a miracle to behold. There will be times when you can't pick yourself up, you are down too deep a well of depression, the good news is there is one who can turn the depths of your despair and heartbreak around to joy as you worship God, as you allow the Holy Spirit to minister to your heart, and you call to your mind what you have in Jesus.

Let's bring Jesus into your situation so that we might see ourselves as truly are. Faith is essentially agreeing with what God's Word says and God's Word says that He will overturn/ turn around, change, and transform your sadness into joy. Praise God for this truth. He is turning it for you now.

Chapter 2

Freedom Over Worry



I am so glad that you have decided to receive more grace and truth, joy, peace, and God's immense love for you today by continuing to receive from the Word in chapter two. Today we are going to learn how we might have freedom over worry. The Message Version of the Bible says in Philippians 4:6-7:

"Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life."

Just listening to these words brings such calm and peace when worry has come upon me. Instead of worrying... did you know there is another option? Prayer. It does not say that worry won't come, that's why it is not freedom from worry but freedom over worry. When worry comes, you have a choice instead of continuing to worry you can do something about it that can shape your prayers to God.

Paul who writes this verse from prison doesn't sugar-coat it and tell us to ignore whatever you are worrying about. When worry comes just shake it off. Do some yoga. Download a breathing exercise app. He doesn't say any of that and I am glad. Relaxing exercise can help but ultimately you will still have that troubling thing hanging over your head while you are trying to relax and then after you finish doing what brings you calmness and reduces your stress, the worry is waiting for you and your mind to dwell on even more. I have found that some of the things that can help lessen some people's anxieties and worries can cause others to worry all the more.

One time our church hosted a Christian Yoga event with Scripture verses to meditate on when we were doing the poses. I arrived early because I was speaking at the event and made sure to place my mat far away from the stage. Since I was the first to arrive everyone else set up their yoga mats next to or behind mine. Before I knew it the event started and I was front and center doing Christian yoga for the first time with a large crowd from the community watching me struggle with even the simplest stretches.

Yoga for me did not lessen my worry but caused me to worry all the more. Paul says worry will come but instead of dwelling in, pitching a tent in the camp of worry you could do something else that will cure your worries, it is for everyone, and you can do it anywhere and at any time no yoga mat is required, and that is prayer.

Paul is smart, He knows the Old Testament well. When he writes Philippians 4, I believe He might be thinking about the words the Psalmist wrote: "I prayed to the Lord, and He answered me. He freed me from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4).

I prayed to the Lord and what happens when the Psalmist prayed and even more for us New Covenant believers when we pray is God will answer us. God will respond to your prayers. In that response to your prayer, He will rescue you or deliver you from fear and worry. This is incredible. The answer to your worries is found in your time of prayer which frees us from fear. We are freed from fear because we are receiving His love for us, which removes all of our fears.

Philippians 4:5 which is just one verse before our starting verse sets the tone for us to have freedom over worry and it is when we have freedom over worry that we can then receive rest.

“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.” It is easy to forget during difficult times just how near God is (Philippians 4:5) because in the trouble He can feel so far away. But He is with us, and we can communicate with Him, and pray at any time. You can’t get any closer than that. When you know that God is for you and that He is with you on your journey in life, prayer center us on this beautiful truth. As we communicate with Him, His love replaces our fear, and we realize there is nothing for us to worry about anymore.

“Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions (those things we truly need) and praises shape your worries into prayers (letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness points us to communion (I would recommend taking some time out to receive communion as communion is a sign of the health, wholeness, and every provision that we have in Jesus), everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down.”

Sunday mornings for me goes by very quickly. So much happens as our worship service is about to get started that it can feel as though I have entered a time machine and fast-forwarded a few hours. My morning goes from 6 am to noon in what feels like a few moments. But as we sing, as we pray, as we receive communion a sense of God's wholeness given to us, everything settles down like Paul said it would in Philippians 4. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life" (Philippians 4:6-7). That is why we need more time spent with Jesus because life comes at us all the time. The potential to be brought to worry can happen at any point in any day. So, pray, take communion, sing God's praises, and get into the Word and you will be amazed as Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. Your gaze is off of your need and onto the source of all you need.

Harper's index says the Average American is in a bad mood 110 days out of the year.² 110 days is roughly 1/3 of the year. It is nearly impossible to be in a state of worry and also in a good mood at the same time. We are a nation of worriers.

² https://buffalonews.com/news/harpers-index/article_e19e2430-9684-5def-bf47-a72d01c6d228.html

- 75% of our nation worries about money.
- 82% of us worry about our families.
- 68% of us worry about our health.
- 45% percent of us worry about our marriages.
- 3% percent worry about terrorism.
- 67% worry about identity theft.³

These are just categories within worry this doesn't factor in the day-to-day things that we might worry about too. "Don't worry" (merimnaō) which means don't even take thought of it to the point of allowing it to trouble you.⁴ Before it gets to that point of causing you trouble, pray (Philippians 4:6).

Worry builds and that is why it is best to deal with it before it gets to a troubling level.

It is remarkable to me that 1,000 years apart Paul and David are saying the same thing. However, Paul adds some things about prayer.

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3309/niv/mgmt/0-1/>

The New International Version says, "in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

The way this works makes this practical for us and living victorious lives. In everything by prayer with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God.

In the past, my wife was a finalist for a teaching position at a new job. She applied because it seemed like it would be a better job than what she currently had. However, there are so many unknown factors. I am proud of how my wife approached her potential new job because she didn't worry about it. A situation like this has the potential to have any of us lying in bed, tossing and turning at night. I want to make this very practical for you in your life for whatever has the potential to worry you. Some might pray in this way:

"Heavenly Father, I ask that you take away all of the worries that I have about this potential new job. Please give me faith." After several hours have passed you find yourself more anxious than you were before. Why might this be?

It seems as though God is not answering your prayer. The reason is that we are not praying like Paul instructs us to pray when worry comes.

Instead of worry, Paul writes, "in everything (this includes the potential new job) by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving." "With thanksgiving" is written in the Greek (meta)⁵ (eucharistia)⁶. Meta means after. Eucharistia is where we get eucharist or communion from. Worship God for all your spiritual blessings in Jesus before your requests. Thanksgiving as an act of worship.

Start praying by giving thanks for what God has done for us in Christ. And then let your requests be made known to God. In this way, it says I trust God. If I don't get the job something else will come along at the proper time. If it doesn't go well-there must be a reason. When we thank God for what He has given us in Christ it changes our thoughts about what we need and if God will provide for them and how He might meet those needs differently than how we think He should.

⁵ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3326/niv/mgnt/0-1/>

⁶ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2169/niv/mgnt/0-1/>

A very close friend of mine's mother recently had surgery- nothing major but the surgery didn't go well, she was in a lot of pain and then blood clots developed. Her health was worsened and it could have led her to simply feel sorry for herself, instead, she prayed with thanksgiving. Blood clots turned out to be for her good, she didn't know it when she prayed, but the blood clots led to the discovery of cancer. Cancer is another bad thing. But they caught cancer early and had she not had the previous complication; the small spot of cancer wouldn't have been discovered. Thank you, God, that you are providing me with healing. She didn't know that the path to healing would have to be blood clots first to discover the small spot of cancer.

So how does that work with the tossing and turning example that I used earlier? Let's use the same situation (a potential job change) with a different outcome internally (instead of worrying and tossing and turning at night):

“Father, I thank You that I can and I am casting all my worries about the job into Your loving hands because You care for me and You love me (1 Peter 5:7). Thanksgiving before the request, then, “Father, I ask for peace about the new job. Now, at the end of your prayer, finish with thanksgiving. Thank God for His faithfulness. “Father, whether I get the promotion or not, I thank You that You will always provide abundantly for my family. You who feed the birds of the air and clothe the lilies of the field will take care of us. So, I am not going to worry about this potential job change. You are the source of all my blessings whatever the outcome may be” (Matthew 6:30, Philipppians 4:19).

When you pray like this, all of a sudden, you are no longer held hostage by the promotion. The more you thank Him, the more His peace reigns in your heart. You are anxious for nothing. Whatever your concern is, bring it to your Father in prayer and thank your way to peace! Because my joy is not determined by what happens to me. My joy is Christ in me.

So little of our time in prayer needs to be focused on the supplication part which is our perceived needs. Your Father knows what you need, and He delights to give you good gifts. "Every good gift comes from God." Prayer changes our worries and brings us to have freedom over worry because we trust in God our Father. We know He hears us because we are in Christ. We know that our prayers are powerful because we are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, and so this means God will respond by working all things together for our good. Rest in this truth. Start with thanksgiving and conclude with thanksgiving. "For it is God's will for us in Christ Jesus to rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances."

Chapter 3

The Secret of Contentment Part 1

Philippians 4:12

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

The Bible says there is a secret to contentment that we can have in all things. We pick up right where we last left off in Philippians 4 in verses 10-13 which means the secret of contentment is part of living a victorious life.

“I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:10-13).

To begin with, if you are following along in your Bible chances are that you have a sub-header in this chapter. Headers and sub-headers do not appear in the original manuscripts, they were inserted later to help the reader understand the main idea the reader is about to read. In this case, the sub-header tells us that Paul is thankful for the gift the church at Philippi

has sent him. Now just like sub-headers don't appear in the original manuscripts, verses and chapters were also added later to help us study the text. They are important guides to help us in our study, so don't look past this sub-header, it is super helpful, especially when we get to one of the most popular verses in all of Scripture, Philippians 4:13 because it reminds us that "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength", is tied directly into what Paul is talking about and that is the gift the church has sent to him.

When I was in middle school, there was a poster, I saw for sale with Philippians 4:13 written on it with a picture of mighty mouse leaping over a building. People quote Philippians 4:13 as if we are mighty mouse, "I can do all things in Christ", I can leap tall buildings in a single bound. That is as ridiculous as thinking Philippians 4:13 is to be applied to anything and everything. I can pass the Barr Exam without studying. I am not a lawyer, never studied to become one, and I'm sure that if I took that test to become a lawyer, I would fail the Barr Exam. When we get to Philippians 4:13, I can do all things it is

still connected to Paul's thanksgiving for the gift the church gave him meaning that we will find that the "all things" Paul references he can do through Christ (Philippians 4:13), is connected to the secret of contentment he has found (Philippians 4:12). This is getting interesting.

In regards to gifts in general, gifts are a funny thing because gifts in themselves can lead to a wide range of emotions. Let's test this idea out. Imagine that it is your birthday today and you are excited to see what your loved ones got you this year. You dropped subtle hints like you made an Amazon wish list and sent it to everyone, you cut out pictures of the gifts you wanted most and put them on the fridge. You were obvious with what you hoped to get and now the moment you have been waiting for has arrived to open your gift. The box seems to be a little bit bigger than anything you put on your list, you're intrigued maybe they wrapped it in a big box to throw you off, you open it up to find a brand-new vacuum cleaner, which wasn't on your list, what is your response? Maybe you are mad, maybe you are shocked, probably not shocked in a good

way. Perhaps you are fine with the gift. That gift led to a certain emotional response, in this case maybe the gift you receive led to a not-so-good response.

I will use another example of a gift that I received that had no monetary value but made me very happy. One of my kids surprised me when they came home from school one day. They had a picture of them taken at school and they framed it. Inside the frame were written all the things they love about their dad and they drew a picture next to those things. I was overwhelmed by emotion when I received this thoughtful loving gift. Gifts in themselves can elicit a wide range of emotions.

This gift Paul received from the church he could have gone a lot of different emotional ways with it. In the first place, it was late to arrive and it would be helpful to receive it sooner rather than later. Paul's feelings could have been upset or irritated because it was something he could use.

On top of the gift arriving so late, the person the church sent to bring it to him

was deathly ill, perhaps even contagious. So maybe Paul's emotions could have been based on the condition of the person giving the gift, worry for them, perhaps feeling bad that it was a gift for him that led to someone almost dying.

Now, they didn't have FedEx, UPS, or USPS, they would have to send gifts by courier. This means they sent a person that they gave the gift to personally deliver it. The most common belief is that Paul is in prison in Rome at this time. If that's the case, the distance the gift the church was sending Paul (Philippi to Rome) was approximately 4,608 miles. What possibly could go wrong with sending someone so far in times of antiquity? To start with the gift would have been valuable to send it so far. The person carrying it could have been robbed, they could have gotten sick coming into contact with people all over the world (you know how germmy cruise ships are, think about ancient sailing vessels), many things could delay them such as weather, they could even die on such a dangerous journey. Fortunately for us, we do have a piece of the travel log from the journey.

The church sent a guy by the name of Epaphroditus. Philippians 2:25 says, "But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus... indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore, I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety" (Philippians 2:25-28).

Paul could have been super upset that it took so long for him to arrive but the apostle of grace sees Epaphroditus through the eyes of grace and says give this guy a hero's welcome when he arrives home, we discover this from verses 29 and 30:

"So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ."

This gift was delayed, and it could have caused Paul to be more stressed. The reason Paul does not land in the negative emotions, unsatisfied camp is because Paul was never focused on the gift, to

begin with. We are getting closer to the secret of contentment. Verse 10 gives us this insight.

“I rejoiced greatly in the Lord.”
Contentment is secured as you view everything made available to you in Christ which will cause your spirit to rejoice even in delays, even when the gift is yet to arrive.

“That at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.”

The focus was not on the gift but on the Giver. I am not meaning the church, although, there will be gratitude toward the brothers and sisters in Christ, this is what Christ has done in them. Paul was expecting Jesus would bear the fruit of generosity in their lives.

But is generosity a fruit of the Spirit? Some mistakenly think it's not. Let's see Galatians 5:22-23a: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” I don't see generosity listed there, but it is.

Most translations call it "goodness," because the root word means "good," but, given the context, a better interpretation of this fruit is "generous," which is the way it is worded in the New Revised Standard version of the Bible.

Even in the gift that would be sent to Paul, the focus is not on the gift, so contentment is secure when the gift is late, the focus is on the Giver or a better way to put it the supplier of His supply because Paul says:

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty." In Philippians 4 Paul says he has needs, but he is not needy because God is going to meet His needs (Philippians 4:12). The needs will be met whether the gift is delayed, or whether the gift never arrives. God does not need the gift given by the church of Philippi to meet Paul's needs, in this case, He will choose to use it to do so, but God doesn't need to meet our needs through a gift, our needs are met abundantly in Christ.

We all have needs. You have needs right now, but do you see yourself as needy or do you see yourself as abundantly supplied because God is going to meet your needs? If you see yourself as abundantly supplied in Jesus you will be content with whatever may come.

The way the supply comes to us changes so it is easy for us to worry and doubt and ask God what He is doing when it is delayed or comes about another way. That is the problem that arises when we put our focus on the supply, the factors surrounding the supply, instead of the Supplier. We can move from the contentment camp to the unsatisfied one when we do that. New seasons mean new supply. God's provision is ongoing (the source doesn't change, but the way the supply comes does).

But our God, Paul says seven verses later will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19). "He meets the needs according to" which is the Greek Word (kata) means daily.⁷ So, it doesn't matter

⁷ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2596/niv/mgnt/0-1/>

if your daily need is great or it is small, you can be content, and confident that God will meet your needs every day, and He does this for us abundantly in Jesus.

One of the best examples we have of this in the Bible is in Exodus where God provided His people with manna every day. In Exodus 16:36 it says, "As each man had an omer— three quarts — a day."

When you do the math with how many Israelites scholars have estimated there was in the wilderness that would mean God supplied 15,000,000 million pounds of manna every week for 40 years. Have you ever wondered what the word manna means? Manna means what is it. That's what it is. What is? Manna. Manna means what is it.

They had never seen anything like it before, what is it, that's what we'll call it, "manna".

Scientists have tried to say this was a natural occurrence— this manna from Heaven. They have said that what the Israelites ate in the desert was a naturally occurring thing, the Arabian Desert

Tamarisk-Manna. But that is something that Moses would have come in contact with before, he wouldn't have named it, "what is it" if he knew what it was.

I can easily debate and win this argument that scientists have tried to make that the manna that God's people ate was a naturally occurring desert resource. If what you are saying is that true manna from Heaven is just a naturally occurring desert resource—then that means that throughout thousands of years we should see the same thing happen again in the same quantity because nature is cyclical. But it wasn't natural it was supernatural. The world had never seen it before or seen it ever since. The day God took manna off the menu in Joshua 5 it has never returned. The reason God never sent it again is that He sent the Bread of Life. The manna which met their every need, pointed us to Jesus our Bread of Life, the one in whom we find everything we need for divine health and life. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from Heaven, that one may eat of it and not die" (John 6:48–50).

God wanted to be clear that He was their provider. The naturally occurring manna is exactly the opposite of what God provided.

Natural Occurring Arabian Desert Tamarisk-Manna

- has no nutritional value it would have done no good to eat it as much as you like.
- can't sustain a person's diet
- produced only three or four months of the year,
- found in small quantities

it can be kept good for a long time

Manna from Heaven

- has complete nutritional value in itself
- sustained God's people for 40 years
- was given all year long
- was in an overabundance
- spoiled after a single day

God pronounced from the manna He sent, that every single characteristic of it was not normal, it was not natural it was supernatural so the world might know that God is the source of the supply. God will meet your needs daily and supernaturally according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus. God continues to meet the needs of His people daily and abundantly through the Bread of Life.

Philippians 4:12 is an invitation to see your needs from the supply side. God is not trying to bring us to a place of no need. Instead, He wants us to know like Paul said, whether we find ourselves to be in great need, or little need, to learn the secret of contentment is that my God who will meet all my needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus and He does this every single day.

God's provision for you is not generic it is personal (Philippians 4:19). Your needs differ from my needs. God gives me what I need for what He has called me to do. God gives you what you need for what He is calling you to. So, I don't look to your supply and get jealous. And you don't look at mine and do the same. We both are

abundantly supplied for the good work He has prepared in advance for us to do.

Whether good ole Epaphroditus, brought a gift or not- I don't look to anyone other than Christ as my supply and His promise to daily meet my needs so I'm content whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. Whether the gift is on time or delayed.

What is the secret of contentment?

William Barclay says, "contentment comes from knowing God and delighting in His sovereign goodness and Fatherly care."⁸ The temptation to be discontent is everywhere.

Now let's look at the famous verse in Philippians 4:13 through an entirely different lens. "I can do all this through Him who gives me strength."

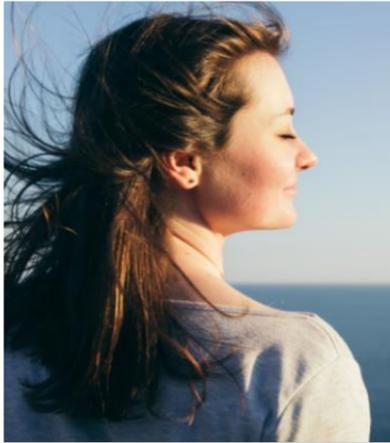
"All things" means, all that you need for God-glorifying contentment. Even Paul's love for the Philippians flowed from his

⁸ Learning Contentment in the Midst of Crisis.
https://www.pdclarion.com/opinion/learning-contentment-in-the-midst-of-crisis/article_b847944a-23b0-535d-a893-45ea674aa047.html August 27, 2020.

contentment in God. The strength of God (Philippians 4:13) and His supply (Philippians 4:19) often are revealed through our greatest struggles. Paul's aim here is contentment, not achievement. Rather than envisioning all that he can accomplish, he is focused on his heart's response to his circumstances, whether favorable or not. Paul grew to believe with great conviction all of who Christ was in his life—his Savior, his Friend, his Provider, his Lord—and it was the essence of what he needed most. The sufficiency of Christ that Paul experienced enabled him to have a strong heart of contentment (joy, peace, and gratitude) in the best and worst of times. Because Christ lived in Him and was with Him always. My prayer is that we might see that God has promised to meet all of our daily needs in Christ, so whatever may come whether our daily needs are great or small we too like Paul have learned the secret of contentment that the Lord will provide for me what I need so I can do all things that He is calling me to do.

Chapter 4

The Secret of Contentment Part 2



True contentment is not
having everything, but in
being satisfied with
everything you have.

—
OSCAR WILDE

We left off from part three touching briefly on verse 19 of Philippians 4 and today we are going to pick up from there once again looking at Philippians 4:19 which says:

“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

God has promised to meet all of your needs in Jesus. The more we put our minds on this truth the more content we will be in whatever may come. That was one of the big takeaways from the last chapter. When there is a need, God has promised to meet it for you in Christ.

This is a grand promise, but I believe a lot of people are confused about what they might perceive as unmet needs they might be experiencing. One reason people are confused and maybe struggle to believe in such a grand promise is that there are things we think we need that we don't have and when we read this verse it can be like; “what gives?” “When is my unmet need going to be met?” What about that one time? What about that one person that I know was in need? If we wait for something long enough, these thoughts of doubt can flood our minds. Maybe I did

something to screw up the delivery of the promise. Maybe God would give it, but my faith-o-meter didn't reach the level it needed to hit. Here's the good news, the promises of God in the New Covenant are upheld by His faithfulness- not yours.

When it comes to a verse like Philippians 4:19 and the promise of God to meet our every need, one of the issues we could have might have to do with our understanding of what should fall under the needs category and what should fall under the wants category. I remember when I was young getting excited to receive Toy catalogs in the mail for Christmas. Places like Kmart, K.B. Toys, and Toy S Rus. Whatever happened to those places? I would circle about 80 percent of the things in each catalog. What do you want for Christmas? I want it all! A follow-up question could be, "I know there are a lot of things you want, but what do you need this year? Clothes, a backpack, shoes? What do you need in your life, or better yet what do you need to do those things God is calling you to do? There are needs and there are wants, and God has promised to meet every single one of our needs.

What do I need? My eight-year-old self, said to my parents, "I told you what I need, I circled it in the toy catalog." And sometimes we might be tempted to read Philippians 4:19 like our eight-year-old selves and think, "God you know what I need right now, I circled them all in my prayers." When we don't get what we think we need, we can wonder what gives God, I thought You said that You'll meet all my needs. There are needs and there are wants and there is a big difference. So, let's start by looking at the Greek definition of needs that Paul wrote about in Philippians 4:19.

(Chreia) "needs" means such things as we need for sustenance and the journey.⁹ This makes so much sense right now. There will be good things that we think we need to sustain us moving forward in the journey ahead but if what we are praying for is not part of God's ordained steps for you ahead then there is no purpose in giving it to you. It could lead you away from where God wants you to be.

⁹ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g5532/niv/mgnt/0-1/>

Now to be clear, the things that we need, God always gives to us. Every single one of His promises to us is ours. For instance, the promise of finding rest in Christ. He will always give us that. We don't have to wonder about it, it lands firmly in the needs camp. Any of the promises of God in Christ receive the same answer from God. Yes! They are all needs and they are all met.

“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through Him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God” (2 Corinthians 1:20). I love that our part is simply believing God for those promises and we do that as we speak out by faith “Amen”. Did you know that Amen is a declaration of our faith? Amen was spoken at the end of something that had been shared and by doing so made the substance of what was uttered their own. We are owning that statement, we are believing that no matter how many promises God made to us, they are yes in Christ. We are saying “so be it” or “it may be fulfilled”.

According to the definition of needs hiya-
There will be things that we can

misidentify as being something we need for our journey ahead but if God is calling us to something else, then that thing we think we need we didn't, and that's why it didn't come.

Now let's look at Philippians 4:19 in light of what is written around it.

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through Him who gives me strength. That should be rather familiar from part 3.

This is just another way of saying the same thing as our verse in Philippians 4:19. If God supplies you with what you need, "meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus" then there is nothing you can't do that He has called you forward in. Paul says, "my God", His confidence flows because Paul has come to know God as a Good Father who provides for him and never fails to meet his need. From Paul's experience in God's faithfulness to him, he trusts that God will meet all of your needs too. There is the personal experience that God is faithful. Your testimony of God's

faithfulness to meet all of your needs in Christ will encourage others in the faith too!

So, verse 13, "I can do all things" and verse 19 "my God will meet all your needs" as we read it correctly are bookends for what is sandwiched in the middle and this is what I want you to pay close attention to verses 14-18 says the following:

"Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the Gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; or even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God" (Philippians 4:14-18).

Paul had some needs- Paul had some trouble in his life. And only one church gave him financial aid (the church at Philippi). Let me remind you the only church that gave to Paul was a deeply poor church. Paul would say in 2 Corinthians 8:1-6, "Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, (Philippi was a city in Macedonia) he is speaking of this church right now- that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. So, we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well."

And yet despite their poverty, they were a very generous church. Could the reason be that they learned and believed what Paul wrote to them, that my God will meet

all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus? They gave out of their poverty because they believed the supply to them of God's grace was on the way. You can only receive and you can only give with an open hand. When you hold tight to what you have, you fail to receive more of the abundance of God's grace. What God gives us is for our good and His glory. How can we use what we have to bless others and build the Kingdom?

They were a very poor church that gave what they could to support Paul. Their gift was used to meet Paul's needs. God will meet your needs in a variety of ways and sometimes He meets our needs through each other.

"I have received full payment and have more than enough" (Philippians 4:18). What I learned from this verse is how rich we all are in Christ. According to this verse, you already are rich. You are not trying to become rich. It does not matter how much you are earning or how much you have in your bank account. You are rich. How does that one work out? You are rich because as your need arises, God's

supply will be there for you (Philippians 4:18).

Aren't you glad that God's supply toward us is not according to the state of the world's major economies? No, He is the One who supplies our needs and His supply is not hindered by world economics. He protects us, provides for us, and restores unto us what we have lost—according to His riches in glory, which are limitless and unaffected by world events!

I have found even more so in a time of lack just, or need just how rich I am. Because "Being under grace means being constantly under His supply. It means being conscious not of the need, demand, or crisis, but God's supply to you." Because of the cross, God's grace is always supplying healing, protection, wisdom, and provision to you. And the more you are conscious of it, the more you will walk in it! Paul's desire for the Philippian church, and his desire for you and me is that more be credited to your account. My desire in this series is for you to receive more grace and live in the

victory Jesus has purchased for you to have.

The members of the Trustee's Board at the Philippian Church might wonder, "how are we going to pay the light bill now that we gave what we had? How are we going to take care of the widows and orphans now?" The promise comes next for them, "And my God will meet all your needs."

Paul was in need but God delivered on His promise and met Paul's need through the Philippian Church- now the Philippian Church may have a need and if they don't now, they will later and the promise is God will meet your needs as well. We don't know what that will look like, the promise is simply that He will and the way He does it for Paul and the way He does it for the Philippian Church will be different from the way He does it for me and the way He does it for you will vary as well. Don't get hung up on the how- How is it going to come? Where is it going to come from? Focus on the Promise and the Provider.

I have learned the secret of contentment is to come to that place where you don't put your trust in what you have accumulated. To be at a place in your life

to say I am willing to give because I know who my provider is and whatever life throws at me, I know that God will meet all my needs in Jesus, it is so liberating. What threatens our contentment is a false sense that our needs are not met or will not be met. But if you believe the promise of Philippians 4:19 you will be content in all things.

Learning that the secret of contentment is to know your Heavenly Father and His care for you. He made you, His child, a promise, believe in His promise. You can do all things through Him who gives you strength. What dream has God birthed in your heart? Does it seem too lofty? Have others told you that you are not resourced enough to make it happen? Have they forgotten the God of the Universe- your Heavenly Father Has made you a promise to meet your needs (which is such things as we need for sustenance and the journey ahead)?

Part of the journey is discovering that we are not to put our stock in what we have, or even the connections to resources we have, and the people we know. There were a lot of churches out there- churches

Paul started, that should have given to Him- that were well off, that didn't give a dime. It didn't anger Paul, He believes the poorest church that gave to Him, which was probably only a little financial amount, was more than enough. It was more than enough, just as the five loaves and two fish were more than enough to feed the 5,000 plus in the hands of Jesus. You have what you need for today. What you need for tomorrow, God will provide. When you feel the need causing you to worry, to fear, remind yourself of the promise and say "my God will meet all my needs". Thank God that the supply is coming to you according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 5
Lifted By Grace Part 1



Jesus had three of the twelve disciples that were closer to Him than the other nine. Do you know who those three disciples are? Peter, James, and John. The interesting thing is the three who are closest to Jesus are always mentioned in this same order. Have you ever wondered why that is and what message is sent to us living today?

Their names in this specific order communicated the message of what Jesus came to do on Earth. Peter's name means stone which the Law was written on. James means to supplant. John means God is gracious or we could simply say God's grace.

So, every time we see just the three together with Jesus the message that it will declare is that

(Peter)—the stone on which the Law was written was supplanted (James) and replaced by God's grace (John).¹⁰

Peter, James, and John.

¹⁰ https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/mat/17/1/t_conc_946001

Jesus came to fulfill the Law on our behalf and usher in the New Covenant of grace! Amen!

One of the most intriguing stories that included the three disciples with Jesus happened on the Mount of Transfiguration. In this story, there is a powerful message for you in your life if you feel as though you are down and out. If you feel defeated, and each day's battles have worn you down. The message on the mountain will lift you and give you victory over all that comes against you. Let's explore what happened that day on the Mountain with the three disciples and Jesus.

Matthew 17:1: "After six days Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves."

Matthew wants to let us know it has been six days since the last recorded detail of Jesus' life. By doing this we are instantly connected to the past six days and the heaviness of Jesus' words where He prophesied about His death and the kind of things the disciples would experience.

Jesus is preparing the inner three for more responsibility than the rest.

Jesus tells His disciples six days prior: "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (Matthew 16:28). Scripture records that eleven of the twelve were alive to witness the ascension of Jesus Christ. Judas hung himself beforehand.

Luke 9 says that "Jesus brought them up the mountain to pray." Luke is showing Jesus' dependence on God the Father. Remember this is showing what is to come, what grace does, and what grace will bring. The Law never tells you to pray. The law says thou shall not over and over again. The focus is on our strength, which we truly don't have. Whereas the time we live in now, this great year of the Lord's Favor that we have in Christ, New Covenant living is a period of grace and grace is total dependence on God. I can't, but He can and He did and in Him and through Him nothing is impossible. This is what the disciples needed to learn because Jesus was soon to ascend to Heaven. In this time of God's grace that we live in, we

need to place our total dependence on God. The three disciples are taken to prayer because prayer is just that, total dependence on God, His power, His grace, love, and goodness toward us.

Peter near the end of his life reflects on this moment in his life and says in 2 Peter 1:16: that he was an "eyewitness of Jesus' majesty."

What does the Mount of Transfiguration that the three disciples were privy to have to do with me? As you behold the glory of the Lord through the Word and in prayer, you'll find that there is power for healing, freedom from addiction, and peace to a troubled soul.

When Jesus transfigured two well-known individuals were there Moses and Elijah. "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" Singular—not "Hear them" plural, even though Jesus is there with Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:5). Don't listen to the voice of the Law anymore- listen only to the voice of grace. What did the three disciples need to hear

that day? They needed to hear the voice of grace. Listen to the voice of grace only. The names of the three testified to what was on display on the mountain that day. The Law was supplanted by God's grace. Grace is the only voice we are to listen to, we are not under the Law anymore. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"

Matthew 17:6 continues, "And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid."

God the Father says, "Hear Jesus". What is the first thing Jesus will say now that God the Father has got their attention and they are listening? Jesus says "Arise and do not be afraid." What you hear is the voice of grace. In Greek, the words, "arise and do not be afraid" are in the active voice and also the passive voice.¹¹

The active voice means that you are the one doing it. The passive voice means something has been done to you or for you. The word "arise" (Matthew 17:7) is in the passive voice. What this means and

¹¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/mat/17/7/t_conc_946007

what Jesus is telling His disciples is to “allow yourself to be lifted by God.” And when you are lifted, you realize that you stand on equal ground with Jesus because you have been given His righteousness. Allow yourself to be lifted by God's grace and that grace will remove your fear.

Paul Ellis said, “The transfiguration gave the three disciples a glimpse of what was to come with the Ascension to Heaven, so think of the Transfiguration like a movie trailer. While the Ascension left them looking heavenward in awe (the feature film). Listen to this comparison between the Transfiguration and the Ascension.”¹²

The three were on the mountain experiencing the voice of grace, Jesus Christ, but where were the other nine, and what were they doing?

As we continue reading from Matthew 17, we discover the answer in verses 14-16: “When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him.

¹² Paul Ellis. They Will Not Taste Death.

<https://escapetoreality.org/2016/12/08/they-will-not-taste-death/>
December 8, 2016.

“Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said.
“He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not heal him.”

The reason the boy was brought to the nine was that Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration with the other three. But when Jesus enters the scene Scripture records their reaction in Mark's telling of this story:

“When the crowd saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with awe, and they ran to greet Him.” They were amazed to find the answer to their problems, not in themselves, but in the Lord (Mark 9:15). The reason the nine could not drive out the demons in the boy is they tried in their strength. The answer was always in the Lord, it is in His grace that we receive power and authority to drive out demons. It happens in the power and the authority of Jesus, in His name.

Have you wondered why the disciples were not able to heal this boy because they were successful in other places, driving out demons and “healing people everywhere” (Mark 6:13, Luke 9:6). Their

past success puzzled them all the more when they failed on this occasion: Matthew's Gospel says, "Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out" (Matthew 17:19)?

Jesus' answer to their question of why they could not drive out the demon and heal the boy might answer questions you might have about why more people aren't healed today. The answer is not in their faith but their unbelief. Without a proper translation of Matthew 17:20, people have been led to believe the "little faith" of the disciples was the issue. This poor translation makes Jesus sound like He's contradicting Himself. The Greek word for unbelief (apistia) is the same word used by the boy's father when he says, "help my unbelief."¹³

Some translators equate unbelief as the same as having little faith, but little faith and unbelief are entirely different. Jesus clearly says right after this, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and

¹³ https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/mat/17/20/t_conc_946020

it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Little faith is not the issue. If little faith can move a mountain, it can surely heal one small boy. It's not about the size of your faith but whether your faith is handicapped by doubt and unbelief (Matthew 17:21).

In response to their question, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" Jesus answered: "Because of your unbelief..." (Matthew 17:20).

So going back to the story, Jesus said to the boy's father, "everything is possible to him who believes." Look at how the father responded: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24)!

I mentioned that the voice of grace lifted the three. Faith comes by hearing the Word, the Word is Jesus, and Jesus is grace and truth. So, we can say that faith comes by way of hearing and receiving grace. Natural unbelief is fueled by what we see and hear. We get a bad report, x-ray, or scan and believe the worst. We're now walking by sight rather than faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). Even if we have faith, our unbelief will send us to the Internet looking for reassurance and hope. We may

be declaring the promises of God over our situation but at the same time, we're feeding our doubts by heeding our circumstances.¹⁴

How do we deal with unbelief? That is the struggle the nine had. Starve our doubts and fears by feeding on the Word of God and through prayer.

And He replied to them, "This kind (of unbelief) cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29). Andrew Wommack said, "Instead of trying to build bigger and bigger faith, we need to stop feeding unbelief."¹⁵

Where else did only the three disciples go? We want to once again see the message that Grace is supplanting the Law.

When Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, He took James and John with Him into Peter's house. "Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her" (Luke 4:38).

¹⁴ Andrew Wommack. God Wants You Well. p.121,124.

¹⁵ Ibid.

What does Peter's mother-in-law desperately need? She needs God's grace to heal her. How many times do we not think about bringing Jesus to someone who is suffering? I think often our first response is what can I do to help? Can I fluff your pillow, can I get you an aspirin? All of those things are good, but the best thing you can do is receive grace to help in your time of need. Salvation is possible when we recognize someone is suffering and in need of salvation and we ask Jesus to help (Luke 4:38).

“So He bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them” (Luke 4:39) Do you know what the word minister means? Minister “diakoneō” to serve.¹⁶

When we bring the Gospel, the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus where it becomes a person's experience where they have been lifted by grace, in turn, grace other people.

Jesus took only Peter, James, and John when He went to heal the daughter of the

¹⁶<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=s=G1247&t=KJV>

Synagogue ruler. While praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus took Peter, James, and John to a place where He did not take the rest. What would happen later on? Peter preaches at Pentecost about 3,000 were saved that day alone. Peter and John heal the lame beggar while going into the temple. Peter and John are brought before the Jewish council. Peter and John were sent to the Samaritans when they received the Holy Spirit. James is killed by Herod in Acts chapter twelve. None of the other disciples are mentioned in the Book of Acts, leading us to believe that the fact Jesus spent more time with them was preparing Peter, James, and John for more responsibility than the rest.

“When you are conscious of God's constant supply to you, you are living under grace.” Lean wholeheartedly on His grace. Remember what the other nine disciples learned from their failure to heal a demon-possessed boy, success has nothing to do with self-effort, for us New Covenant believers, success has everything to do with Jesus' finished work for you. Listen only to the voice of grace that will lift you and will remove all of your fears.

Chapter 6
Lifted By Grace Part 2



Did you know that God has given us the location where we can go to find grace every time that we need it?

“Let us [therefore come boldly] unto the [throne of grace], that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

In the Old Testament when people used to live under the Law, they would not have any confidence at all when they would bring their petitions before God.

Unfortunately, some believers who are still trying to live under the Law are the same way today. When you do not realize that Jesus fulfilled the Law on your behalf, you will try to work for what you have been freely given in Jesus.

While there are several examples of prayers in the Old Testament, a person could not be sure of their standing before God, and if God would respond to their request. The problem was sin and the separation it caused between God and His people. No one could come directly before God's presence in the Tabernacle, except the High Priest, and only one time a year during the day of Atonement. The High Priest did not come boldly, he came

fearfully because if he did anything wrong or didn't properly purify himself he would die.

If the high priest sinned, he brought guilt to the nation of Israel, and God would reject the entire nation no matter how law-abiding the people were or how faithful they were in bringing their sacrifices.

Conversely, if their high priest was without fault and acceptable to God, God would accept the whole nation even if the people were sinful. This should immediately grab your attention and get you to think about our High Priest Jesus Christ and His perfect sacrifice for us.

Unfortunately, the high priests of Israel often failed because, like any human being, they were imperfect.

So what changed?

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into Heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess” (Hebrews 4:14).

Thank God that today, you and I have Jesus as our High Priest. As our High

Priest, His standing before God is always right. Jesus is always acceptable and pleasing to the Father. Therefore, we can never lose our acceptance of God because as our High Priest, Jesus only brings righteousness to His people.

In the Old Testament, people would bring their sacrifice and the priest would examine the sacrifice. During that time the priest wasn't looking at the person who brought the sacrifice, the priest only was focused on the sacrifice itself. And today it's the same thing. God doesn't look at us, He looks at the sacrifice, the perfect Lamb of God. God looks at Jesus. If Jesus is good as our High Priest, then in Him you are good and righteous and pure too. If Jesus is accepted, you are accepted. If God sees Jesus as perfect, then He sees you as perfect. If Jesus is righteous, then you are righteous. And we know that Jesus our High Priest is good, accepted, perfect, and righteous, which means that that is how God sees us! That's not fair, that's not deserved, that's not earned. That's called grace and that is why since we have a great High Priest We can "[therefore come boldly] unto the [throne of grace]."

Why does the writer of Hebrews call God's throne-a throne of grace? What do many people think of when they think of God's throne? They think of it as a throne of judgment. That would make any fearful and God unapproachable because no one wants to approach a judgment throne. Believers who think our sacrifice is what pleases God are confused and they view God's throne as one of judgment. Those who understand it is not our sacrifice that pleases God, but Jesus' sacrifice for us, see God's throne for them as it is- a throne of grace, when you understand Jesus' perfect sacrifice for you, you will come boldly knowing you have the favor of God in Jesus Christ. You come boldly unto your Heavenly Father receiving all that is yours in Christ.

If you put your faith in Jesus you get to come boldly because you know that the perfect Sacrifice has been made for you. Because Jesus is our High Priest something else also happens when you pray in your time of need. In Leviticus 1:14-17 we see what happens when we pray as we understand what the High Priest in the Old Testament did with the burnt offering of a bird.

The birds represent our prayers "flying" to the Lord Jesus because we pray to the Father in Jesus' name. What the High Priest did with the bird sacrifice is He would remove the bird's feathers after killing it, Jesus removes all the impurities from our prayers, such as any unbelief and self-centeredness. Then, just as the High Priest offers the bird as a burnt sacrifice, a sweet aroma to the Lord, Jesus our High Priest adds His perfection, beauty, and excellence which the Father so delights in. Our prayers with Jesus as our High Priest are delightful to our heavenly Father. Leviticus 1:14-17 gives us a picture of how Jesus presents our prayers to the Father. Jesus lives to make intercession for you.

You don't have to run to a church leader for them to pray "more powerfully" for you. You can pray yourself. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). You are the righteousness of Christ Jesus so take advantage of Jesus' intercession for you and say, "Lord Jesus, thank You for being my High Priest adding Your personal touch to my prayer, so I have confidence in my prayer that it will be answered in

accordance with God's Will and I will find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

One of the most important lessons I have learned in my life is that I need help and that God offers His grace that will meet my needs. You and I were born with needs we cannot meet. We have needs for love, acceptance, and affirmation. These God-given needs were hardwired into you to lead you to the Source of all love.

In Genesis 2:18-20 The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." It will then say, "So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals. But for Adam, no suitable helper was found" (Genesis 2:18-20).

People have misinterpreted this to mean that Adam was incomplete without Eve. God provides Eve as an amazing part of His plan and gives the two the instruction to be fruitful and multiply. But I think we can easily miss something here- In verse 18 God says to Adam, "You need a helper." Then in the next verse, God helps! He brings all the animals and birds

to Adam for naming. This is a God-sized job. I'm sure Eve was a great help, but she wasn't God. Her help was merely human help, while we all need God-sized help. God plans to co-labor with you and do great, big, impossible things. The word for "helper" in Genesis 2 is 'êzer.¹⁷ This word appears 21 times in the Bible and every single time it refers to the Lord. Here's an example:

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help ('êzer) comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1-2).

"But for Adam, no suitable helper was found." For Adam, He couldn't see His Helper. God just told you what you need (a helper) and then He provided Himself as the answer to your need. (Or did you think those animals showed up by themselves?)¹⁸ But you might not see the Helper behind the help. Lift your eyes to the hills and see the Creator Himself helping you today in your life. See the

¹⁷ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h5828/niv/wlc/0-1/>

¹⁸ Paul Ellis. Who's Your Helper?

<https://escapetoreality.org/2016/04/14/whos-your-helper/>

<https://escapetoreality.org/2016/04/14/whos-your-helper/> April 14, 2016.

Helper providing you the grace you need in your time of need.

Eve was always part of God's plan for Adam, but she was never meant to be his primary Helper (Ps 60:11, 108:12). Thank God for helpful spouses, but they cannot help you in the way that God helps. Nor is it fair to put God-sized helper expectations on our loved ones.

Paul Ellis said:

“Here are three lies that will stop you from finding God's help today:

I don't need help (I can help myself)

I can't get help (I'm helpless)

God won't help (I'm hopeless)

The Gospel truth is that God promises to meet all your needs.¹⁹ We are reinforcing what we learned from previous chapters. Believe it! Come boldly to his throne of grace knowing that your heavenly Father loves to help.

¹⁹ Ibid.

“There is no one like God, who rides across the heavens to help you” (Deuteronomy 33:26).

Something I have been teaching my kids lately is this: Who get's helped? The answer is those who ask for help. So ask. See the God who rides across the heavens to help you. Bring your needs to Him.

“Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings” (Psalm 63:7).

Every one of us needs help. We have needs. We have weaknesses. We have limitations of all kinds. We need help. And the promise is God will provide the grace to help in time of need.

We started off the chapter with a question, “Did you know that God has placed the location where we can go to find grace every time we need it?”

I want to clarify that it is not that grace is lost and we have to find it. Instead, grace is what we have been given (Hebrews 4:14-15) and God's Word places an X marks the spot on how we receive/obtain it (Hebrews 4:16). The spot is at the throne of grace through our High Priest Jesus. Because the word for “find” in this

text, means obtain as in to see, learn, discover, understand.²⁰

That we may obtain it means -to take or to receive it. Grace to help you in your time of need is yours for the taking (Hebrews 4:16). So come boldly to God in prayer and receive the grace you need.

What is grace? That which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: the favor of God or the merciful kindness by which God keeps, strengthens, increases us in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles within us the fruits of the Spirit.²¹

John Piper said, "The sacrifices that the high priest offers in (Hebrews 5:3) point to Jesus because Jesus is such a perfect and complete fulfillment of the priesthood that he is not only the High Priest, but he is also the sacrifice that the High Priest gives" (Hebrews 9:12, 25–26; 13:12).²²

We all need help, and we know where to go to receive it, at God's grace throne.

²⁰ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2147/niv/mgnt/0-1/>

²¹ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g5485/niv/mgnt/0-1/>

²² John Piper. Draw Near the Throne of Grace with Confidence. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/draw-near-to-the-throne-of-grace-with-confidence> September 15, 1996.

This is only possible because the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ was made for us. When our Lord Jesus died on the cross and cried out, "It is finished!" (John 19:30), the Bible tells us that at that precise moment "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51), this opened the way into the Holy of Holies! Through Christ, there is no longer any separation between God and man. We can come directly to God in Christ. Because when you are in Christ all your sins are forgiven.

Jesus is our High Priest purifying our prayers too. Because you are forever righteous in Christ, God hears your prayers every time you pray. The apostle James tells us that the earnest prayer of a righteous person—which is you— is powerful and will produce wonderful results". What provision do you need today? Receive the grace you need and live in the abundant victorious life.

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Chapter 7
Accessing Every Spiritual Blessing



One of my all-time favorite verses in the Bible is from Ephesians 1:3. I am excited to share it with you in the last chapter of Living in Victory.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”

One thing many believers might miss is that Paul will list for us what these spiritual blessings are. I am grateful that he did not just throw out a nice-sounding phrase “spiritual blessings” and leave it up to us to try and determine what those might be.

Normally what I do when I study any verse in Scripture is look at the context of what is written around it. But in this instance, all we have that comes before it is Paul's address to the Ephesians where he says:

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

What this means is that the very first thing that Paul wants the Ephesians to know after his address to them, that they are God's holy people, is for them to know that God has blessed them and He has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. The beauty is that when you follow Paul's thoughts moving forward, he will go on to explain what that means for them and for us too.

But let's stop at Ephesians 1:3 for a moment- Ephesians 1:3 is so powerful. It tells us that There is not a single spiritual blessing that isn't yours right now in Christ. That means there aren't some spiritual blessings for certain believers and not for others. It doesn't mean that you have to do certain things to have access to all the spiritual blessings either. This is really good news.

So, who were the people that made up the church at Ephesus? God's most holy people, which let's not get that confused, everyone in Christ are saints, the holiest people, this is who Christ has made us to be. This is confirmed to us when we discover who the Ephesians are, the word

Ephesus means desirable, and in many ways, it was certainly a desirable place to live. It attracted all kinds of people.

Because of all of the commerce that took place at Ephesus, the church was multiethnic as well as diverse in its socioeconomic makeup.

How did the church get started? On Paul's second missionary journey (around A.D. 52), he visited Ephesus after leaving Corinth and planted the church there (Acts 18:19). On Paul's third missionary journey (A.D. 54-56), Paul spent between two and three years teaching in the city (Acts 19:8-10). He spent his time addressing false doctrines and pagan practices. Paul's teaching in the rented school of Tyrannus was so successful that those who practiced magic brought their books and burned them as an act of repentance (Acts 19:18-20). As the sale of silver idolatrous images began to fall off, the silversmiths caused an uproar (Acts 19:26-41). Shortly after this dust-up was settled Paul left for Macedonia. It was during this stay that he wrote 1 Corinthians. A lot was happening at this time in the history in the life of the church.

This church that Paul started and invested years of his life in, he wants them to know that God....

"Has blessed us"

It is a done deal- in Christ, you are blessed. You didn't earn your salvation it was a gift of His grace, in the same way, you don't work for forgiveness, holiness, righteousness, peace, or any blessing. God who freely gave us his Son—will he not also freely give us all things (Romans 8:32)? Everything we need for life and godliness has already been provided for in Jesus (2 Peter 1:3).

When Paul would write that you and I and the church at Ephesus have been blessed by God there is great power in understanding the depths of what this means. "Blesses us" comes from the Greek word *eulogeō*.²³ which means to bestow a blessing on, to be favored by God. In Christ this is what you are, you are immensely blessed. No matter what happens to you, the good, the bad, the ugly, God's favor goes with you through

²³ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2127/niv/mgnt/0-1/>

your life. You have been blessed in your past, and you are being blessed now in your present, and your future contains His blessings all over your life.

Now when you put the "He has blessed us" together with "in the heavenly realms" people can misinterpret this as being that my blessings are all waiting for me on the other side of eternity, "in the heavenly realms". Maybe you have heard a pastor say, "just grin and bear whatever comes your way because you have an eternal reward waiting for you one day." Is that what this means here? No, it's not. Paul would say in 2 Corinthians 4:17, "for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." While it's true that even the bad things we experience are working together for our good (Romans 8:28), that we have God's favor upon us even during momentary troubles, that is not the point of Ephesians 1:3.

The Word for heavenly realms "epouranios" is an adjective meaning existing in heaven or things that take place in Heaven.²⁴ You and I have been

²⁴ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2032/niv/mgnt/0-1/>

blessed in Christ. The blessings that exist in Heaven belong to us now on Earth in Christ. This is an incredible truth that Paul is sharing. This makes sense when you read later in the same letter to the Ephesians, "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). That is your position right now. Which reinforces the point that we are blessed with what takes place in Heaven, which is "every spiritual blessing" to us today!

This is where the context of Ephesians 1:3 comes into play- Paul doesn't throw out a nice-sounding phrase "spiritual blessings" and then we are left to figure out what those are. The rest of the chapter is all about what those spiritual blessings are and what they mean for us who are living on Earth.

There are 15 spiritual blessings that Paul lists directly after Ephesians 1:3:²⁵

Blessing #1: Chosen Before the Foundation of the World (verse 4)

²⁵ Dr. Matthew Webster. Heaven Come Down: Living as Citizens of Heaven Today. January 1, 2022.

To know that God chose you before He even made the world means that your life matters to God. Think about how special you are to God and how much He loves you. He thought about you before creating the world. You are so special! Your existence isn't an accident or by-product of natural selection, you were chosen by God. God has been thinking about your destiny before He ever said, "Let there be light." Your life is a life of purpose with grand plans. God will equip you for what He has called you to do. Just as uniquely made as you are, so too is your unique calling, gifting, and supply of grace.

Blessing #2: You are Holy and Blameless (verse 4)

Christ's atonement for our sins makes us who we are, holy people (Ephesians 1:1). What makes you a saint (the holiest people) has nothing to do with your behavior, but everything to do with your union life with your Savior.

Blessing #3: In His Love (verse 4)

In Christ, you stand in unconditional love. You cannot earn it. Today, you are unconditionally loved in Christ. The

ultimate purpose of being in Christ is to share in His life.

Blessing #4: Predestined to Adoption
(verse 5)

God has predetermined to call you His own in Christ. He has selected you to be His son or daughter. You are a part of His family. He is your Father. "God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure."

God does not only adopt you. He moves in, by his Spirit, and imparts something of Himself to us. If you are a child of God Paul is right, you are so by adoption, but more than adoption, by new birth (1 John 5:1).

Blessing #5: Accepted in the Beloved
(verse 6)

You are not rejected. You are not an outcast. You are not unworthy of approval. The Creator of the universe accepts you in Christ. You have been relationally reconciled in Christ and are pleasing to God.

Blessing #6: Redemption through His Blood (verse 7)

Outside of Christ, you were a slave to sin and eternal death. You couldn't buy or earn your way out of it. The price for your freedom was the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus paid for your freedom. Galatians 3:13-14: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.' He redeemed us in order that the blessing promised to Abraham would come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."

Blessing #7: Forgiveness of Sins (verse 7)

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Romans 5:9: "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood..."

How can we presume to call ourselves righteous? Because the vine is righteous and He shares His righteousness with His branches. How could He not? We are joined together. We are just as righteous as He is.

Blessing #8: Riches of His Grace Abound to You (verses 7-8)

Grace means "unmerited favor". Abound means "to have in abundance". In Christ, there is an abundant measure of unmerited favor flowing to your life like a river that will last from here into the never-ending depths of eternity.

Blessing #9: Made Known to you the Mystery of His Will (verse 9)

In a fallen world of war, suffering, and disease; a sinful world where bad things happen to good people; God has revealed His solution to us. He wrapped up every answer to every aspect of the human condition in Christ and He gave Him to us.

His Will is to bless mankind in Christ. The solution to the problems that plague us living in a fallen world, or another way to put it every spiritual blessing, the things of Heaven are ours today on Earth through Christ.

Blessing #10: Obtained an Eternal Inheritance (verse 11)

The devil cannot take your inheritance from you. He can only try to get us where

we don't tap into it, and we don't believe it or remain ignorant of it. Inheritance is something owned by someone that upon their death they leave something to you. It is meant to be a blessing to help you. "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous" (Proverbs 13:22). Jesus died to give you His inheritance. Jesus' death made available to us every spiritual blessing, an eternal inheritance. The question of our inheritance is not whether God has purchased it for us, but whether we will possess it. Faith possesses. Faith inherits. At the cross, Jesus purchased peace, healing, and provision for us.

He sweat blood in the garden of Gethsemane to redeem us from stress and negative thoughts and give to us peace and sound minds.

"He was destitute of material goods so that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

He carried all our diseases and pains so that we might be healed.

All these blessings that God wants us to ask for have been paid for.

Blessing #11: Heard the Word of Truth (verse 13)

God's truth is a light in the darkness. We are not without counsel. We are not left in the dark. We have heard His good news and discovered the path of life. This gives us faith to receive what is ours in Christ. "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ" (Romans 10:17).

Blessing #12: Sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise (verse 13)

The Promise of the Holy Spirit that was prophesied about by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Joel, John the Baptist, and Jesus has been given to you in Christ today! The Holy Spirit is God's guarantee that He will give us the inheritance He has promised and that He has purchased us to be His people.

Blessing #13: You Know the Hope of His Calling (verse 18)

His calling over your life is the basket you can put all of your eggs in. It's an anchor. It's a rock. It will never end in vain. "The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all He has made" (Psalm 145:13).

Blessing #14: You are the Riches of His Inheritance (verse 18)

You are of great value to Jesus. As Christ brought you back to God, God gives you back to Jesus as His inheritance. You are the righteousness of God in Christ. You are His eternal reward that He cherishes.

Blessing #15: The Exceeding Greatness of His Power (verses 19-20)

Paul says, "the exceeding greatness of His power is toward you who believe." What kind of power of this? It is the same power that raised Christ from the dead! It is the same power that conquered sin, death, and hell. In Christ, this same power is present in your life today!²⁶

²⁶ Andrew Mason. 15 Spiritual Blessings You Have in Christ. <https://andrewsmason.com/15-spiritual-blessings-you-have-in-christ/>

God does not bless us because we are good, but because He is good. Our heavenly Father withholds no good thing from us. He does not withdraw his favor if we're bad, and he doesn't dispense bonus blessings if we're good. Every blessing is available to you now. So why isn't everyone blessed? Perhaps it's because we're trying to earn what God freely provides.

God does not bless us because of the things we do or the money we give. Whatever your need, your abundant supply is found in Christ Jesus.

How do we receive these blessings? By seeing ourselves in Christ. "In union with Christ, you have become rich in all things" (1 Corinthians 1:5, GNB). When you pray, don't beg God to do what He's already done, but thank Him that He's done it. "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Have faith that whatever your need, God has already met it in Christ.

If Ephesians chapter one wasn't one of your favorite chapters in the Bible before today, I bet it is now. The blessings that

exist in Heaven belong to us now on Earth in Christ. There is not a single spiritual blessing that isn't yours right now in Christ.

I want to thank you for taking the time in God's Word with me in this Living in Victory book.

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