

What We Might Miss

My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever (Psalm 73:26, *KJV*).

Scripture: Psalm 73:1-5, 16-17, 21-28

Song: “All the Way My Savior Leads Me”

My family and I hiked the narrow path along the Red Rocks in Morrison, Colorado. My young boys complained about the uphill, rocky terrain. Suddenly my husband hushed them. “Look!” he said, pointing. A herd of deer was nestled in the overgrowth along the trail. Their light-brown color hid them from obvious detection. We’d almost missed their beauty by being focused on our discomfort.

In today’s passage the psalmist seemed to be suffering from tunnel vision, focusing only on his tribulations. However, when he entered the sanctuary of God, he gained insight. God reminded the psalmist that His presence reigns, even in hardship.

When entrenched in tough circumstances, we may doubt God’s plans for us. Where is He when we are in financial straits? How will He deliver us from sickness and pain? Will we find relief from our parenting challenges? Will He sustain us as we care for someone whose needs are beyond our strength? At such times we can feel beaten down. We may compare our problems with the seemingly carefree lives of others. But God never leaves us. He actively works for our good. Lift your eyes. He is near. Don’t miss Him.

Father, I’ll look up to You today, even in this difficulty. In Jesus’ name, amen.

October 10–16. **Kathleen Dunlap** lives in Colorado with her husband, two sons, and three crazy dogs. She enjoys running, crocheting, and exploring the mountains.

No Other

The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals (Judges 2:11).

Scripture: Judges 2:7-8, 11-19

Song: “Reach Out to Jesus”

Magnets, depending on their orientation to each other, either repel one another or cling tightly together. It’s an object lesson that can remind us of something Jesus taught: “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Matthew 6:24).

During the time of the Judges—between the time Joshua died and the time Saul became Israel’s first king—the majority of God’s people were not committed Him. Instead of paying attention to and walking in the protections and provisions of God’s law, they did what seemed right in their own eyes (Judges 17:6). They would waffle back and forth in their obedience to Him based on circumstances and what suited them.

Sometimes we think we can maintain a “balance” of having one foot in the world and one foot in God’s kingdom. If we think that, we’ve been deceived. The truth is, if our hearts are divided, we can’t be devoted to God, and we will eventually find ourselves in difficult and painful places. Whatever we feel we’re gaining by our compromise, it’s not worth it. It’s a path to sorrow. If we find ourselves compromised presently, we can take heed right now and repent. “Today, if only you would hear his voice, ‘Do not harden your hearts’” (Psalm 95:7-8).

Father, I want to be fully devoted to You and to no other. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Treasure in Common Vessels

We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:1-7

Song: “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name”

The Crown Jewels of England are kept in the Tower of London under tight security. The jewels remain England’s most treasured possession. Their beauty has fascinated many visitors from around the world, yet the Crown Jewels may only be observed from a distance, never touched by anyone other than royalty.

The apostle Paul carried the surpassing treasure of Christ in his heart. As one who had been redeemed, Paul recognized that God’s indwelling Spirit was empowering him to preach the gospel. And Paul was determined to preach the gospel to everyone, despite any adversity or spiritual resistance. His authority came from God. He was no common messenger, because the King of kings was with him.

If you have placed your trust in Christ by grace through faith, you have this treasure in your heart as well, and Christ’s glory shines through your life. Do you have a failing body? Do you stumble over your words? Are you overwhelmed by your shortcomings? Consider this: The presence and power Jesus Christ are alive and at work in your life. You need not hide or be ashamed. His love radiates through you to the world with a beauty surpassing any earthly treasure.

Father, thank You for this treasure in my heart—the presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ! Help me to persevere in hope today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What Truly Matters

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body (2 Corinthians 4:10).

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:8-18

Song: “So Send I You”

Amy and her husband, Aaron, spent three weeks fostering a young brother and sister. “It was the hardest experience of my life,” Amy said. She lost sleep and time at work, but when the siblings were reunited with their family, Amy felt fulfilled. “It was totally worth it,” she concluded. They all had endured hardship for a season, but when it was over, fresh joy had come.

The apostle Paul described his afflictions as a light burden because he endured them with a view toward his eternal reward. Even in his suffering, he was unafraid of the future. His soul remained hopeful because the living Christ was abiding in him, providing strength and grace in each circumstance.

When we surrender our own comforts and desires to serve in God’s kingdom, Jesus’ resurrection power is revealed in us. The practice of denying ourselves isn’t always easy, but God’s Spirit gives us the strength and grace we need each day. Even when we are tired and frustrated in the moment, we can continue to trust Him and His plans for our future, because we know our suffering is temporary. And as we anticipate the glory ahead, we can experience joy even in the midst of our difficult circumstances.

Father, as I face hardships while serving You today, reveal Your resurrection life through me for Your glory. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Grace in Surrender

[The Lord] said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9, *KJV*).

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Song: “Just as I Am”

The pregnancy test was negative again. Tears welled up in Courtney’s eyes. “How long, Lord, do I have to wait?” As she cried out to God in her pain, she realized she needed to yield her desire to Him. As she did so, God still did not grant her request. But He gave her peace while she waited.

The apostle Paul related his struggle to what he called his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7, *KJV*). He repeatedly asked God to remove it from his life, but God’s answer was no. Paul discovered he must surrender his desire to God’s purpose and be content in God’s grace to endure.

Our requests to God do not always get our desired response. Sometimes He simply tells us no without further explanation. Yet we can be sure He does not abandon us. Instead, He invites us to rest in His love. He calls us to surrender all to Him. He asks us to trust His purposes for our lives. Does God seem to be telling you no right now? What heart’s desire does He want you to give to Him? Whether it is a current trial or a future victory, will you relinquish it? Through the process of yielding, we receive the strength to endure—and in endurance, grace abounds.

Father, we yield our lives to You. Help us to trust You, even if You do not respond immediately or as we’d hoped. In Jesus’ name, amen.

All Things Are Possible

The LORD said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men that lapped [water] I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands” (Judges 7:7).

Scripture: Judges 7:1-8, 16-22

Song: “Little Is Much When God Is in It”

Mary’s father struggled with alcoholism and couldn’t provide a stable home for the family. At age 14, Mary was forced to work as a weaver to support her mother and siblings. Even amid her poverty, she believed God was calling her take the gospel to Nigeria. She willingly went, and there God granted her access to remote villages that other missionaries had failed to reach. Even today, Mary Slessor (1848–1915) is recognized as Scotland’s greatest missionary.

The Midianite army was overwhelmingly large compared to Israel’s. They were fierce warriors, seasoned in battle. God directed Gideon to assemble the men of Israel for war; then God whittled down the 26,000 responders to a slim 300. The battle would have to be won through God’s power alone.

If we view our lives through the lens of the world, what we have will never be enough. Culture teaches us that when resources are scarce, we must do more, make more, be more. By contrast, from God’s perspective, small offerings are not despised in His kingdom. He specializes in using underdogs. Your resources, your talents, your servant’s heart—bring them all to Him. Whatever you already have, God can use greatly for His glory.

Father, our little with Your power results in great victory. Thank You for Your power at work in our lives as we yield in service to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Powerful Questions, Powerful Works

“Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest” (Judges 6:15).

Scripture: Judges 6:1-2, 7-16a

Song: “His Way with Thee”

Dennis grew up on a farm, attended school to become a teacher, and worked a short time as a loan officer. So on a sweltering July night in a small church in Indiana, when he sensed God directing him to the mission field, he felt underqualified. How could he go and preach the gospel without qualifications? He shared his thoughts with a trusted friend, who said, “God is not looking for a résumé. He is looking for a willing vessel.”

The Lord appeared to Gideon while he was threshing wheat—an ordinary, menial task. Three times the Lord addressed Gideon; three times Gideon questioned what the Lord was saying. Gideon hesitated, questioned, and asked for a sign. God demonstrated patience with Gideon’s uncertainty until Gideon finally yielded to God’s call.

God can handle our questions. He is strong enough for our doubts, fears, and resistance. He understands our backgrounds, our status, and our résumés. Our doubting hearts may push against His nudges. Gently He persists. He simply needs willing hearts that will finally obey Him so His Spirit can divinely equip our humanity. He transforms the weak into the strong, confounding the world’s logic and reasoning. Let Him have all of you. He will take what is ordinary in you and—through His working—accomplish what is extraordinary.

Father, thank You for Your patience with our questions and doubts. By faith we lean into Your strength today. In Jesus’ name, amen.