

The Way Home

Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back (Deuteronomy 30:4).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:1-10

Song: “Something Beautiful”

Melissa had grown up in a Christian home. She knew all the “right” answers. But as she approached young adulthood, that life seemed boring and empty. Desperate for new adventures, she decided to leave behind the life she’d known in order to pursue fun and excitement. It seemed like such a good idea at the time, and at first she thought she was happy. But when she found herself with no meals and no means of making money, she longed for the security of home and missed being with her family.

Prodigals can be individuals or, as in today’s passage, an entire nation. Moses told the Israelites what would happen when they were dispersed among the nations because of their disobedience. Yet God’s message was clear: despite their waywardness, His desire would always be for them to return home to Him so that He might restore and bless them.

There is hope for us as well if we have strayed from God. The path home is marked by repentance, lighted by obedience, fueled by love—and leads to the heart of our Father. By His gracious restoration, we can prosper, grow, and live again. It isn’t too late.

Father, You know us and love us despite where we’ve been and what we’ve done. Please forgive and restore us. Thank You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Choose Wisely

I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:11-20

Song: “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”

When I was a kid, I enjoyed reading books in the Choose Your Own Adventure series. Do you remember those? The author would set up a story that led to a moment when the reader would need to make a choice about the direction of the story line. Normally it went something like, “If you choose A, turn to page 13. If you choose B, turn to page 33.” One of the best parts of the experience was that if you felt you’d made a bad choice, you could go back and try again.

But real life doesn’t always work that way. Our choices have lasting consequences, good or bad. In today’s passage, Moses challenged God’s people with an important question: Would they choose to follow and obey the one true God? The consequences of their decision would affect not only them but also generations to come.

We have that choice to make too. The world offers all kinds of different paths and promises. We can choose to follow the world. That’s easy. It’s harder choosing to follow the Lord. It comes at a cost and isn’t always popular. Yet choosing what the world offers will ultimately destroy us, while choosing the Lord and His path leads to eternal life. Let’s choose wisely!

Father, thank You for providing Your Word and Your Spirit of wisdom to guide our choices. Strengthen our desire today to walk in Your ways. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Walk in Light

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

Scripture: 1 John 1:1-10

Song: “Here I Am to Worship”

Mark Vanhoenacker, a British Airways Senior First Officer, is the author of *How to Land a Plane*, a book explaining the complexities of flying and landing. He describes what would seem to be a difficult thing: landing a plane at night. Yet of this Vanhoenacker says that the well-lit runways at night create a clear contrast in comparison to the surrounding darkness, and this actually ends up making landing less complex in a sense.

I’ve been a passenger many times on airplanes that have landed at night. And whether it’s an easy or difficult operation, I’m glad that my pilots have known how to guide their aircraft out of the darkness and safely onto those lighted runways.

Even more important than landing a plane safely in the dark, however, is finding our way out of spiritual darkness and into the light of life in Christ. Spiritual darkness is a place of sin, shame, and hiding. It breeds fear, anxiety, pain, and loneliness, and it leads to death. The good news is that there’s a way out of the darkness, and it’s not difficult to find. We can receive God’s gift of salvation and daily walk in Christ’s light, enjoying the blessings of His forgiveness, peace, and fellowship—and best of all, eternal life with Him.

Father, thank You for Jesus, whose light dispels our darkness. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Show Your Love

Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble (1 John 2:10).

Scripture: 1 John 2:1-11

Song: “Blest Be the Tie that Binds”

About a decade ago, Mike and Debbie began working as house-parents at a home for children. The mission of the home says that it’s a place “where love grows.” What a beautiful mission statement! I read a testimony from one of the kids in residence there. This young person spoke powerfully of how the Mike and Debbie’s love had been life-changing.

Extending and receiving love *is* life-changing . . . and life-*giving*. As Christians, if we are living fully in the light of our salvation, we will actively love our brothers and sisters in Christ and demonstrate God’s love to the lost world around us.

Showing love through our kindness and compassion can be the difference between someone feeling lost and forgotten and knowing that they matter to us and to God. Our offerings of love may be on a larger scale (like Mike’s and Debbie’s work at a home for children), or they can be as simple as writing an encouraging note, e-mail, or text. Or perhaps we can take that extra step and visit someone, providing the gift of presence. However we choose to reach out with Christ’s love is not as important as making sure that we go ahead and *show* His love.

Father, I want to be proactive in showing Your love today at every opportunity. Grant me Your insight and sensitivity to the needs of people around me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Who You Are

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1).

Scripture: 1 John 3:1-10

Song: “Children of the Heavenly Father”

“My adopted daughter is only an adopted child once. After that, she is my daughter.” One of the men on our preaching team shared that thought when we were discussing a sermon about how God has brought us into His family. This man’s point still resonates with me. Once the adoption is complete, the son or daughter doesn’t live under the label “adopted”; he or she is simply a beloved child.

God, through the redemptive work of His Son, has adopted us into His family. What amazing love the Father has lavished on us! (I love that word *lavished* in this passage, don’t you?) By grace through faith in Jesus, we have become God’s beloved children. As such, we are still becoming who He intends us to be.

The false teachers of John’s day insisted that there was no sin nature in anyone who is truly born of God. But they were wrong, and John refuted them. We still struggle against sin, and sometimes this erodes our confidence that we are in Christ. But as God’s beloved children, you and I have forgiveness and the promise of a fresh start whenever “we confess our sins” (1 John 1:9). Let’s keep loving and seeking to do what’s right. That’s what children of God do.

Father, thank You for bringing me into Your family. Help me to live and love in ways that honor You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

See His Glory

When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, “He is good; his love endures forever” (2 Chronicles 7:3).

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:1-11

Song: “Great Are You, Lord”

I attended graduate school at a university near Great Smoky Mountains National Park. My favorite spot to visit in the Smokies was a place called the Chimneys. I enjoyed all parts of that area, but especially the view. Between mountain peaks, at just the right time of evening, you could see the most beautiful sight ever. The blend of colors in the sky against the backdrop of the mountains produced a breathtaking work of art. It was glorious!

I think there is something in us as human beings that is awed by and drawn to that which is glorious. God’s people in today’s passage certainly were. After praying at the completion of the temple, Solomon and the people witnessed an amazing sight. Fire came down from above and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. They couldn’t help but praise Him.

Seeing God’s glory inspires praise. We see His glory in the beauty of nature or in the sweet face of an infant. We see it in great, powerful acts and in the small, barely noticeable touches of God’s goodness. Whenever God’s glory comes, we are compelled to praise. How can we not?

Father, whenever I see Your glory today, I will pause to praise You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Course Correction

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:12-22

Song: “Create in Me a Clean Heart”

Have you heard of the 1 in 60 rule? It is a rule of thumb that pilots use in air navigation. The basic premise is that for each degree the aircraft is off course over a distance of 60 nautical miles, it will result in being approximately 1 nautical mile off from the intended destination. So to break this down, if you are off course just one degree, after a mile you are off almost 100 feet. If you were aiming to fly around the equator, you’d end up 500 miles off course!

Starting just one degree off, which is hardly anything, leads to missing the mark. Pilots know this for navigation. In a spiritual sense, God’s people understand a similar principle.

We know what it is to miss the mark. We make an ever-so-slight shift toward what is not right, good, or true, and over time it takes us far from the Lord and His plan. If we are willing to humble ourselves, pray, and repent, we can have a fresh, new start. We can get the course correction we desperately need. Let’s start today, right here, right now.

Father, thank You for the fresh start we can have in You. We want to follow You closely and stay on course. In Jesus’ name, amen.