

Love that Pursues

[James said,] “The law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times” (Acts 15:21).

Scripture: Acts 15:12-21

Song: “The Love of God”

After my now-husband and I started dating, we were separated an entire summer. I was in Canada while he worked in North Carolina. We planned for him to come up and spend a week about halfway through the season. But then a couple of days before his scheduled arrival, he showed up at my front door! (This was before GPS and cell phones.) I had planned to meet him in town and lead him to our remote location. However, he’d driven the 20-hour trip in one day and had somehow found me.

Immediately after the fall of humanity, God began working out His plan to restore our relationship with Him. The apostle James pointed out that, through the Old Testament prophets, God revealed that He would do an amazing restorative work so all of humanity might seek the Lord (Acts 15:16). The Law of Moses had been taught in every city, so that when Jesus was revealed, God’s surprising plan of salvation might be made known far and wide. God has truly gone to extreme measures to pursue us!

If you ever feel unworthy, contemplate what God has gone through to reach you. No matter how removed from God you may feel, He can find you.

Father, thank You for going to such lengths to reach me with Your saving love. In Jesus’ name, amen.

October 30–November 5. **Jane Keller** lives in Colorado with her husband. She loves sharing the table with her friends and family.

A Generous God

The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble (Psalm 37:39).

Scripture: Psalm 37:27-40

Song: “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us”

Some friends of ours moved across the country to serve in ministry. What they couldn’t anticipate was how the pandemic would affect the housing market, and they found themselves unable to buy a house. As much as they believed God’s call, they began wondering how they could stay. After a long period of renting, they were approached by someone who wanted to sell them their home. The purchase was made in a private sale for \$60K less than the property appraised for. What the seller didn’t know was that the house was on our friends’ favorite street!

Psalm 37 is a beautiful promise of God’s overwhelming generosity. Words like *flourish*, *salvation*, *deliverance*, and *inherit* are all included in the promises for those who hope in the Lord and keep His ways. In Scripture, law and love are always linked. Law without love is legalism, not life.

It can be easy to fall into a works-based mindset, believing that we must earn God’s gifts, as though we could somehow do that. If we read the Scriptures through the lens of Jesus having fulfilled the law—of Jesus being our source of grace and truth (John 1:17)—then we can freely receive His good gifts with a thankful heart.

Father, thank You for reminding me that I can never earn Your gift of life. Teach me to live in the freedom of Your grace with a grateful response to it. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The Perfect Parent

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

Scripture: Psalm 121

Song: “Good, Good Father”

When my first child was born, I couldn't stand to have him out of my sight. I would spend hours holding him or staring at him while he slept until I would fall asleep from exhaustion. My watchfulness over him was part amazement that he was mine and part fear of something going wrong. If I let myself, I could spend hours worrying and wondering about his life. Would he be OK? Would I be a good enough mother for him?

Psalm 121 paints a tender picture of God as our watchful maker. But unlike human caregivers, there are no lapses in His oversight and protection. God is perfect in His love, and there is no fear in Him. He never worries or wrings His hands over us. He is not anxious for our present or our future. In this passage God is like an attentive parent watching over a child at play.

Our heavenly Father is a perfect parent, lovingly and tenderly shepherding us throughout our lifetime. He hears our cries for help and is able to attend to our needs from a pure source of perfect love and wisdom, having already marked out all the days of our lives (Psalm 139:16).

Father, teach me to be like a child who is at complete rest in the knowledge that You are watching over me with deep love. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Beauty of Unity

We were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12-20

Song: “How Beautiful”

A church that was planted in rural North Carolina started with just 37 people. This small community did not seem to be an ideal place to plant a church, and yet it grew and flourished. Years later the pastor talked with awe and gratitude at what God had done there. People from various walks of life came together to build something that was a testimony to God’s presence among them. The pastor attributed it to God’s blessing on all the members working together in their areas of gifting.

The Spirit of God is life-giving and unifies us as believers. God’s design—as demonstrated through the His triune personhood—is for community. God created us to be in fellowship with Him and with others. When we come together in unity to serve Christ, we are participating in building the kingdom of God.

So many of us have struggled to keep a sense of community during life’s recent events. If you find yourself isolated and lonely, remember that you belong to the body of Christ. God’s Spirit unites believers with an unbreakable bond, and that unity will flourish in our own lives as we continue to minister grace and truth to one another.

Father, give me the grace I need to live in fellowship with the body of Christ. In Jesus’ name, amen.

A Living God

[Paul said,] “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands” (Acts 17:24).

Scripture: Acts 17:22-34

Song: “Spirit of the Living God”

I had the opportunity to visit Ghana a few years ago. What a beautiful country! We met many Christians who had a deep faith in Jesus. But, as with most cultures, there were other religions, and one we came across was *animism*—the belief that an inanimate object can have a living soul—a form of idol worship. There were idol worshippers in every village we visited. What struck me deeply as I met all these people was the stark contrast between them and the worshippers of Jesus. There was such joy, trust, and freedom among the Christians versus an utter hopelessness among the animists. You could see it, feel it, and hear it.

The living God is not manmade—not crafted out of silver, stone, or wood. He was *not created*; He *is the creator*, and He created humankind. He gave us life and breath and a lifespan so that we would seek after Him and find Him (Acts 17:27).

What a joy to worship the living God! What peace and hope we have in knowing our God is alive and active in our lives (Ephesians 2:10)!

Father, thank You that You are not an inanimate idol that cannot participate in my life. You are alive and are working all things out for the good of those who love You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Outsiders Welcome

Let no foreigner who is bound to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely exclude me from his people.” And let no eunuch complain, “I am only a dry tree” (Isaiah 56:3).

Scripture: Isaiah 56

Song: “10,000 Reasons”

A woman once told me about a time she was invited to a moms’ group. It was her first time going, and she only knew one other mom. When she got there she spent the entire time alone. When she did speak up and say something, everyone just kind of looked at her but didn’t respond. She said it was such a strange experience, feeling isolated and alone in the midst of others. She felt like a complete outsider.

Isaiah 56 is a beautiful picture of God including outsiders through His law of love. He promises to never forget those who “hold fast to my covenant” and says He will give them “an everlasting name” (Isaiah 56:4-5). Those who are faithful to God—even when excluded or overlooked by others in society—will be included among God’s people. God promises they will not be discarded or forgotten.

What a gracious, uplifting promise from the Lord! I think we’ve all likely had times when we’ve felt excluded. The feelings of shame and embarrassment can be so demoralizing. But through Jesus, all who believe in Him *belong* to God’s family and will have a place of honor in His kingdom.

Father, thank You for desiring that all would come to You. Help me to welcome both those who belong to You and those You are calling to yourself. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What a Relief!

[Peter said,] “Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear?” (Acts 15:10).

Scripture: Acts 15:1-11

Song: “My Faith Has Found a Resting Place”

Several years ago I had a health scare. For a couple of weeks, I did not know whether everything was OK. When I finally got the news from my doctor that I was indeed healthy, the relief was overwhelming, exhilarating! I felt like a virtual boulder had been lifted off my shoulders.

In today’s passage, some believers in the first-century Church wanted to add extra burdens from the law to the Gentile believers’ salvation requirements. In Galatians, the apostle Paul refuted such a notion, saying that if we could gain righteousness through the works of the law then “Christ died for nothing” (2:21). Sadly, over the centuries many have tried to say that salvation comes through the cross *plus* something else. But if we say that what Jesus did for us is not enough, we discredit His sacrifice. We also add a burden to others that they are not meant to bear.

Jesus fulfilled the law on our behalf, and in doing so He made a clear path to God for us. It is by grace through faith in Jesus—and by this alone—that we find salvation. Any teaching that tells us we must do something else to be saved is a burden we are not meant to bear.

Father, thank You for sending Your Son and that the way to be saved is by faith in Him. In Jesus’ name, amen.