

GOD'S

*faithfulness*

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

21 Days of Prayer

BY DANA OLSON



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# FOREWORD

I have been part of this movement of churches called Converge my entire life. I asked Jesus to be my Savior in a Converge church. I went to college and then seminary at our Converge school. I was ordained in a Converge church. I served as a pastor in three Converge churches. I even married a Converge pastor's kid! And for several years now, I've had the privilege of serving one of our Converge regions.

Simply put, I love Converge. To me, it is far more than a movement, a denomination, or a network—Converge is family.

One of the people in this family who has shaped me deeply is the man who wrote this 21-day prayer devotional, Dana Olson. I met Dana early in my ministry and quickly realized he has a unique, Spirit-empowered gift in prayer. When I heard him teach about prayer—and actually pray—I felt the same longing the disciples expressed when they said to Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Listening to Dana pray made me want him to teach me to pray.

Before long, I had the privilege of serving alongside him in his Converge prayer ministry, Prayer First. Through that experience,

I continued to grow in my understanding of prayer. I am forever indebted to Dana—not only for teaching me to pray, but for equipping me to help others learn to pray. I still feel like a novice, but I remain committed to making prayer a first priority both in my own life and in our shared lives as followers of Christ.

That’s why I’m so excited about this resource you hold in your hands. Once again, Dana is gently and powerfully teaching us how to pray. I can’t wait to see what God will do as we journey through these 21 days together.

In the summer of 2026, we will gather to celebrate 170 years of Converge. I’m grateful that before we celebrate, we have the opportunity to make Prayer First once again. May this devotional remind us that we are a movement birthed in prayer. And now, as a family of 1,700 churches and roughly 200 missionaries, may we continue to boldly and joyfully keep Prayer First.

**REV. BRYAN MOAK**

*Vice President, Converge MidAmerica • Southeast • Caribbean*

# INTRODUCTION

*“All God’s giants have been weak men and women who have gotten hold of God’s faithfulness.”*

HUDSON TAYLOR

There is no better time than the present for pressing into the truth of God’s faithfulness. The current times are full of challenges. You may feel as if Matthew 24 is coming alive as you survey the world scene. Wars, natural disasters, false philosophies leading many astray, division instead of unity, hatred instead of love, persecution, and disease. The list seems endless.

Perhaps it reminds us of Lamentations.

To borrow a phrase from Dickens, it was the worst of times. The biblical book we call Lamentations was just that—a series of formal laments, expressions of loss and grief, in forms of acrostic poetry. God’s people rebelled and sinned against Him. As a result, their enemies brought great calamity down upon them. Warnings were not heeded, with heartbreaking, disastrous outcomes.

LAMENTATIONS 2:20-21

*Look, O LORD, and see!  
With whom have you dealt thus?  
Should women eat the fruit of their womb,  
the children of their tender care?  
Should priest and prophet be killed  
in the sanctuary of the Lord?  
In the dust of the streets  
lie the young and the old;  
my young women and my young men  
have fallen by the sword;  
you have killed them in the day of your anger,  
slaughtering without pity.*

Yet, into this morose atmosphere of suffering and pain, into the very heart of this book at literally the halfway point, enters a glorious moment of hope, a reminder of grace. A speaker, who has experienced the worst of this tragedy and has not been spared the suffering, expresses the hope of God's grace in the tumult.

LAMENTATIONS 3:21-24

*But this I call to mind,  
and therefore I have hope:  
The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.  
“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul,  
“therefore I will hope in him”.*

Great is Your faithfulness! Hope in extremely hard times—times of suffering, pain, loss, and calamity—comes from turning to God and trusting Him. We trust Him in hard times because of His faithfulness. God has made many precious promises and failed at none! Our Faithful Father has kept every single one.

As the poet of Lamentations 3 sees the light of God's mercies shining in the darkness and knows the reliability of God's faithfulness to keep His promises, so we too can say, “The Lord is our portion at all times, therefore we will hope in Him. Great is our Father's faithfulness!”

# 170 YEARS OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

There is something else to spark our interest in God's great faithfulness: the 170th anniversary of the gospel movement now known as Converge. From its earliest roots in a Scandinavian revival, to the present-day global, multi-racial and multi-ethnic church planting and missionary movement that it is today, God has been faithful to this family of believers. We were lovers of Jesus, the Bible, prayer, and one another then, and by the grace of God we are lovers of Jesus Christ, His Word, prayer, and one another now.

This *21-Day Prayer Guide* celebrates God's faithfulness in the past (including a few brief glimpses of God's earliest work among us), in the present (what God is doing today), and looks ahead with confident faith in what God has promised for the future.

Each day you will have Scripture to read, a brief word on that passage, reminders of God's work of grace and a prayer of response. Then you will have space to respond personally with a prayer to our Faithful Father. We hope this guide will prompt in you praise for God's faithful character, thanksgiving for all He has done and is doing and intercession with confident hope in the fulfillment of God's grand promises.

So, step into this three-week journey. Step into God's Faithfulness: Past, Present, and Future. Then step onward in confident faith and great joy towards all that our Faithful Father has planned for you!

ALL SCRIPTURE IS ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV).

CREDIT: HISTORICAL ROOTS INFORMATION TAKEN FROM THE LATE DR. NORRIS MAGNUSON,  
"HOW WE GREW" (BAPTIST GENERAL CONFERENCE).

WRITTEN BY DANA OLSON



W E E K

# ONE

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS  
IN THE PAST

DAY ONE

# CREATION

*(1 Peter 4:19 and Genesis 1:1-3)*

1 PETER 4:19

*Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*

GENESIS 1:1-3

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

**W**e serve and love a faithful Creator. God created all the universe out of nothing by the word of His mouth. Imagine this: God said, “Let there be light”—and there was light! We flip a switch and have light in our kitchen. God “flipped a switch” and a billion stars were in their places. And God called them all by name.

And we trust this faithful Creator. We can place our complete confidence in Him because He holds us firmly in His trustworthy grip. In times of suffering, setback, or enduring criticism or critique, we can rely on our faithful God to see us through to a brighter day.

## Our Converge Past

We can trace the earliest roots of our movement to 1844 with the conversion to Christ of a Swedish sea captain, Gustavus W. Schroeder, while visiting the United States. Dr. Norris Magnuson writes that Schroeder was “a strong and willing witness among the Swedes” when his seafaring brought him to his homeland.

Three years after his own conversion, the sea captain baptized another seaman, Fredrik O. Nilsson, who became the founding leader of the Baptist movement in Sweden. When Nilsson was exiled by the King of Sweden in 1850 for his aggressive evangelism and commitment to Baptist faith and principles, Nilsson journeyed to America in 1853 to continue leading Swedish immigrants to Christ and shepherding a small flock of Christ-followers. Now, 170 years later, Converge is a racially and ethnically diverse movement of churches with a comprehensive commitment to evangelism, church planting, and pioneer missions.

Schroeder and Nilsson would be thrilled!

## Our Prayer

Heavenly Father, what a faithful Creator You are! From the moment the stars took their places in creation to the moment new Christians came to faith in Sweden to the global gospel movement we see today, You have faithfully shepherded Your people—a people committed to the Scriptures and to the biblical gospel.

We praise You for Your faithfulness, O God! We thank You for Your astounding gifts of grace over many generations. We ask nothing less than for our continued growth as a gospel movement of churches.

Father, let us be faithful!



# DAY TWO

# PROMISES

*(Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:1-6)*

GENESIS 12:1-3

*Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”.*

GENESIS 15:1-6

*After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.”*

*And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*

**W**hat a promise! “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” And a companion promise, as well: “Number the stars...so shall your offspring be.”

These promises, made to Father Abram, make it clear that the promise of blessing would extend far beyond the Jewish nation. It would include all the peoples—Jew and Gentile alike. The people of God would be as the stars of the sky, too many to count.

The grandest pictures of God's faithfulness to these promises are the cross and the empty tomb. Jesus Christ, Son of God, died to pay the just penalty of our sins, then rose from the dead to conquer sin, death, and Satan. The salvation story is our story: we have a faithful God who never fails to keep His promises. The benefits of the cross and empty tomb are what we announce to all the peoples of the earth, without exception.

It is the heart of our gospel message, our good news to the world. Jesus saves!

## Our Converge Past

The conversions to Christ of Schroeder and Nilsson (see Day One) were part of a larger movement of God in Scandinavia. This revival movement, called *läsare* or “readers” movement, was a turn from formalism and government-controlled religion to heart essentials such as personal conversion, Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship. We can liken it to home Bible studies and prayer groups. Salvation was personal—of the believer's heart—brought about through the reading of Scripture and emphasizing the good news of Jesus Christ.

This movement had wide impact across Scandinavia, including our Swedish Baptist forebearers. In time, it would produce at least three evangelical movements that continue in America today: Converge, the Evangelical Free Church, and the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Our movement is a fruit of revival, a move of the Spirit through prayer, and the reading of God's Word.

## Our Prayer

Heavenly Father, we celebrate the Holy Spirit's power to save, renew, revive, and empower. What You did in Scandinavia almost 200 years ago, what You have done many times and in many places through 2,000 years, You continue to do today in us. As You have given us such a great salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord, now also fill us with Your Spirit, strengthen us, and revive us for living in step with Your Spirit and for the fulfillment of our calling and mission.

May we be faithful to the promise that *“this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come”* (Matthew 24:14).



## DAY THREE

# PROVIDER

GENESIS 22:7-14

*And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.*

*When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.*

*So Abraham called the name of that place, “The Lord will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided”.*

**W**hat an extraordinary picture of God's faithfulness! God provided a sacrifice for the altar: the ram in the thicket. Thus, Isaac was not the sacrifice, for a divine substitute was supplied by the glorious Provider, Jehovah Jireh. It is the perfect picture of the ultimate provision by our loving God, who sent His Son Jesus Christ to be our Substitute when He died in our place and paid the penalty of our sins. God supplied the needed sacrifice for us!

And God our Provider has done so much more for us! His Son as our Savior, His Spirit as our Comforter and Counselor, His grace as our sustaining power for walking with Jesus, the gifts of the Spirit for fulfilling the ministry to which each of us has been called. And even more: "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

What gift of grace do you desire from Jehovah Jireh today?

## Our Converge Past

Two men influenced by Fredrik Nilsson soon joined him as Swedish Baptist leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. Both were formerly Swedish Lutherans. "Devout and scholarly Lutheran clergyman" Anders Wiberg set out to refute the believer's baptism practice of the new movement but instead became convinced of it and wrote a volume defending it. Gustaf Palmquist, a Lutheran lay preacher, was touched by revival at the Swedish gathering of believers in Galesburg, IL, and soon organized the first Swedish Baptist Church in America, in Rock Island, IL. In 1859 he composed the first hymnal of the new movement that blessed the churches in Sweden and America.

## Our Prayer

Father God, when You begin a movement of gospel grace, You provide leaders to shepherd Your people! From Abraham and Moses and David, to Peter and Paul and John, to our pastors and leaders of today, You have given Your people godly shepherds to preach, teach, love, and care for Your people. More than that, You provided our Redeemer, Jesus Christ!

We pray now for our pastors, elders, teachers, and leaders. Give them grace and grit and guidance for their task; Father, fill them with Your Holy Spirit. Be their Jehovah Jireh, supplying whatever they need for their calling.



# DAY FOUR

# LAW

*(Exodus 20:1-21: Ten Commandments)*

EXODUS 20:1-21

*And God spoke all these words, saying,*

*“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

*“You shall have no other gods before me.*

*“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

*“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.*

*“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

*“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.*

*"You shall not murder.*

*"You shall not commit adultery.*

*"You shall not steal.*

*"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

*"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."*

*Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.*

**I**n thunder and flashes of lightning, with trumpets and smoke, God impressed His law into the hearts of His people. In doing so, God revealed the perfections of His character and the depth of their sin. In this way, the law was a great gift; they could not be ignorant of their sin nor of its offense to a holy God.

Ponder each:

1. No rivals for the true God.
2. No idols. God is jealous for His glory but loves His people.
3. No vain use of God's holy name.
4. Keep the Sabbath holy.
5. Honor your parents...with a promise!
6. Don't murder.
7. Don't commit adultery.
8. Don't steal.
9. Don't lie about your neighbor.
10. Don't covet your neighbor's things.

But here's what the law was not: a way of salvation. Only one person in all history met all the standards of the law: Jesus Christ, our Savior and the Son of God. No one else. Not you. Not me.

So, the law exposes our great need. It's a schoolmaster to lead us to Jesus Christ. We need a Savior, a Redeemer, One to purchase our redemption by His own blood.

We need Jesus!

## Our Converge Past

“Seaman/Missionary/Scholar John Alexis Edgren’s arrival in Chicago in 1870 heralded new and major developments,” according to Norris Magnuson. Those developments were the birth of a school for theological education and a magazine to facilitate communication for the growing movement. Edgren’s passion for trained, theologically sound pastors became what is now Bethel University and Seminary in St. Paul, MN (affiliated with Converge).

Edgren explained: “It had been my prayer that after ten years in this work we might win 1,000 souls for the Lord. Now see, He has given us 2,000.... Praise be His name!” Edgren credited his students with starting 55 new churches and 25 Sunday schools to reach lost people. Remarkable!

## Our Prayer

You have exposed us, our Father in Heaven. We saw in You mirror our idolatry, our loose use of Your name, our lust, our fibbing, our jealous desire for our friend’s stuff—and all the rest. We so easily replace You with a pathetic imposter god of this world. Forgive us our sin. We repent. We turn again to You and You alone.

Faithful One, thank You for Jesus! We have the Righteous One as our Friend and Redeemer and Savior. By faith in Christ, His righteousness has been imputed to us. Oh, what a love! Oh, what kindness, mercy, grace, and favor You have shown us in Christ. Through Christ, all the families of earth will be blessed!

Enable us by grace and Your Spirit to now walk in a manner worthy of our calling as Your people. Fill us. Use us. We are Yours. Give us a passion for the gospel, changed lives, and new churches.



DAY FIVE

# PRAYER AND PRAISE

1 SAMUEL 2:1-10

*And Hannah prayed and said,  
“My heart exults in the Lord;  
my horn is exalted in the Lord.  
My mouth derides my enemies,  
because I rejoice in your salvation.  
“There is none holy like the Lord:  
for there is none besides you;  
there is no rock like our God.  
Talk no more so very proudly,  
let not arrogance come from your mouth;  
for the Lord is a God of knowledge,  
and by him actions are weighed.  
The bows of the mighty are broken,  
but the feeble bind on strength.*

*Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,  
but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.*

*The barren has borne seven,  
but she who has many children is forlorn.*

*The Lord kills and brings to life;  
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.*

*The Lord makes poor and makes rich;  
he brings low and he exalts.*

*He raises up the poor from the dust;  
he lifts the needy from the ash heap  
to make them sit with princes  
and inherit a seat of honor.*

*For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,  
and on them he has set the world.*

*“He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,  
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,  
for not by might shall a man prevail.*

*The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces;  
against them he will thunder in heaven.*

*The Lord will judge the ends of the earth;  
he will give strength to his king  
and exalt the horn of his anointed” .*

What an exalted, glorious poem/prayer/praise/prophesy from the heart and mind of Hannah, praising God who turns things upside down! Her heart is bursting with joy over God’s gift of her son, Samuel. Not only has her heartache been turned to gladness, but her understanding of God’s ways has been heightened and broadened and deepened: “There is none holy like the Lord, for there is none beside you; there is no rock like our God.” Hallelujah!

How many reversals of circumstance can you count in these ten verses? And who is responsible for them? The Lord! Add to these grand reversals the prophetic word that the Lord, along with His judgments, will “give strength to his king” (possibly anticipating David) and “exalt the horn of his anointed” (anticipating the Messiah, Jesus Christ). There is a glory in Hannah’s poetry and song that goes far beyond her little boy Samuel. That’s why her words are echoed again and again, from the Psalms to Revelation.

Our faithful God be praised, for by the gospel He is continuing to transform lives and turn circumstances upside down—for His glory and our good.

## Our Converge Past

The starting of new churches with a passion for evangelism was a distinctive of the early Swedish settlers in America. Norris Magnuson notes that by 1902, “the single congregation of 1852 and the 65 churches of 1879...had multiplied to 331 with more than 22,000 members.”

Though church planting would wax and wane over the following decades, the new church fervor of two young brothers in Wisconsin, Paul and Steve Johnson, along with a growing number of passionate coworkers like Tom Nebel, David Olson, Gary Rohrmayer, and others, led to the establishment of TeAMerica. This brought about a renewed zeal for church planting that continues in Converge. It is often said that the most effective means of reaching lost people is the starting of new churches. It is our heritage in Converge, as well as our present and our future as a movement.



DAY SIX

# SIN AND FORGIVENESS

*(Psalm 51:1-7 and 1 John 1:8-9)*

PSALM 51:1-7

*Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin!  
For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.  
Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you may be justified in your words  
and blameless in your judgment.*

*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.  
Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,  
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.  
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

## 1 JOHN 1:8-9

*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

**O**ur God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us! What a marvelous promise to take deep into our hearts.

King David took the gift of repentance to heart. After being confronted by Nathan about his sins of adultery and murder (see the gripping story in 2 Samuel 12), David forthrightly acknowledged his sin. He wrote about the reality of it in Psalm 51. He recognized three powerful realities:

1. Forgiveness is rooted in the abundant mercy and steadfast love of God.
2. Forgiveness requires our clear and unequivocal confession to God. Yes, God, I have sinned (Psalm 51:3-4).
3. Forgiveness and cleansing are possible. David knew long before John that our faithful God will mercifully wash us clean. Forgiveness is through the cross of Christ.

Jesus paid it all! All to him I owe.  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.

This is the very heart of the gospel, the good news we proclaim to all the peoples of the world: sin is our reality, forgiveness is possible, and Jesus paid it all on the cross! Sin impacts every aspect of a society and culture, but change is possible. That change is through Jesus Christ. And it occurs one life at a time.

## Our Converge Past

It was this deeply felt love of the gospel of Jesus Christ that compelled the Swedish converts to join the cause of world missions. In fact, their passion for missions led to one of the most dramatic turning points in Converge history. For example, Johanna Anderson, a Swedish immigrant to Minnesota who became a teacher, sailed for Burma in 1888. She used her teaching skills in a mission school in Toungoo. Suffering from ill health, she died there in 1904.

Johanna's story is just one of many, and that missionary fervor led to a dramatic step: the Swedish Baptists, who had previously cooperated with others for their missionary sending, formed their own sending agency in 1945, spurred in part by the great need of the world reported by soldiers returning from WWII. Often called The Advance, this courageous step led the Swedish Baptists, now called the Baptist General Conference, to its own unique identity as an evangelistic, gospel-centered, mission-minded movement of churches. That identity continues today as Converge, with its passion for starting, strengthening, and sending.

## Our Prayer

Heavenly Father, where would we be without Your mercy and steadfast love? You made a way! We have sinned and fallen short of Your glory. You have given Your Son Jesus to be our Savior and Redeemer. Thank You, God. What a gift! If we confess our sin openly to You, You are faithful and just to forgive us through Jesus Christ.

And now we earnestly desire to spread that good news to every people group on earth, to start churches, strengthen them, and send gospel workers globally. Help us do this, Father! Please keep our fire for the good news burning. Bless each worker who has gone to the unreached. By Your Spirit, spur us to give generously, send graciously, and go as You call us.



DAY SEVEN

# PROPHECY

*(Isaiah 56:6-8; A House of Prayer for all Peoples)*

ISAIAH 56:6-8

*“And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,  
to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,  
and to be his servants,  
everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it,  
and holds fast my covenant —  
these I will bring to my holy mountain,  
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;  
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices  
will be accepted on my altar;  
for my house shall be called a house of prayer  
for all peoples.”*

*The Lord God,  
who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares,  
“I will gather yet others to him  
besides those already gathered”.*

**W**e might call these words from Isaiah 56 the “Old Testament Great Commission.” These prophetic words make three things clear:

1. There is a welcome to all the nations, Jew and Gentile alike, in the Kingdom family of God. All those—no matter their race or ethnicity—who “join themselves to the Lord” in faith, love, and worship while holding fast in covenant relationship to God, are joyfully welcomed.
2. The people of God are to be a House of Prayer for all the people groups of the world. This is the calling of the church! And their focus is the spread of gospel to all peoples.
3. This promise is guaranteed. God has plans to gather some from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. This is confirmed in Revelation 7:9-10: “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”

And so, we stand on the shoulders of generations of believers who have come before us—men and women who prayed earnestly, shared the gospel fervently, started churches, and sailed to faraway mission fields. We are called to be a House of Prayer for all nations—to start, strengthen, and send. To pray!

As Matthew 24:14 clearly prophesies, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

## Our Converge Past

Here is how Dr. Norris Magnuson concludes *How We Grew*, his summary of the early history of the movement now known as Converge, quoting historian Adolf Olson:

“...the Bible at the center as the eternally sure and dependable Word of God, the message of redeeming grace and deliverance from the guilt and power of sin by means of the new birth, the glorious possibility of a consecrated and Spirit-filled life, and the privilege and responsibility to tell the story of Jesus to all nations....”

These are the “strands” that mark our past as a movement, and hopefully as well our present and future, until Christ returns.

## Our Prayer

Faithful Father, we stand on the shoulders of generations who have gone before us—Christians who have experienced the great gift of salvation by grace through faith, who have been filled with the Holy Spirit, and who have answered the call to faithful service in Your Kingdom family. And we now, as Your redeemed children, ask You to also use us in the grand enterprise that is the church, to spread Your praise to every people.

Help us to start new churches, strengthen others, and send our very best to the unreached. Help us to love every soul You bring our way, no matter their race, ethnicity, or heritage. Help us to share the truth and love of the gospel with them and welcome them into Your Kingdom family through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. You are faithful! Enable us to be faithful as well, empowered by Your Spirit and guided by Your Word.







W E E K

# TWO

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS  
IN THE PRESENT

DAY EIGHT

# THE CROSS AND NEW CREATION IN CHRIST

GALATIANS 6:14-15

*But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation*

If you are in Christ by faith, you have one boast and one boast only: the cross of Christ. We cannot boast of our accomplishments, credentials, race, ethnicity, or heritage, but only this: that Jesus Christ, God's Son, died for us. Through the cross we have forgiveness and a right standing with God.

Even more, we have been made new! We are a new creation, no longer under the bondage of sin and no longer under the thumb of the world. We have not earned this new standing by our adherence to the law ("neither circumcision...nor uncircumcision") but it is the gift of God, by grace through faith.

And this is our message to the world, to every people group, to every community: Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and coming again, King of Kings and Lord of Lords! "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). God is forming "new creations" by His gospel all over the world.

## Right Now

God is moving! There is a work of God occurring among young people today. They are gathering for worship, for biblical instruction, for united efforts to reach their friends and classmates. Church attendance is up among the young, a decade after books were written saying that the next generation was fleeing the church. What an opportunity for the body of Christ today! The only explanation: our Faithful Father is moving by His Spirit to draw this generation to Himself—new creations for a new generation!

Seeing that this is a work of God, let us pray, let us build relationships and build bridges, let us join with God in what He is doing! Let us respond with gospel love!

## Our Prayer

Father God, thank You for the cross! We boast only of You, of Jesus Christ our Risen Savior, of Your grace to save us by that cursed tree. Hallelujah, what a Savior! You are the God who makes all things new, and we give You all the glory.

We see that You are working among young people today. Thank You, God! We are blessed to see it. Help us to join You in what You are doing. Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to relate and reach out with love, kindness, hospitality, and generosity. Help us welcome these young people into our lives, into our churches—to point them to Jesus Christ and fan into flame the work of grace You are doing in their hearts. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!



DAY NINE

# GOD'S LOVE AND GRACE

EPHESIANS 2:1-10

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

“**Y**ou were.... But God.” This is the very heart of the Christian gospel.

You were...dead in your trespasses and sins:

- Following the course of this world
- Following the prince of the power of the air
- The spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience
- We all once lived in the passions of our flesh
- Carrying out the desires of the flesh and mind
- By nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

But God...rich in mercy:

- Because of the great love with which he loved us
- Even when we were dead in our trespasses
- Made us alive together with Christ!
- By grace we have been saved
- And raised up and seated with him in heavenly places.

And our future? Immeasurable riches of grace! Won't that be something?

It will be. That's the “new creation” work of God that we read about in yesterday's reading. Made alive with Christ! By grace we have been saved through faith. We didn't do it. We didn't earn it or deserve it. We can't boast about it. It's a gift from God.

And now, in Christ, we are God's workmanship, His *poiema*, His work of art, created for good works that God has designed just for us as we live out this new creation life. Amazing grace!

## Right Now

Part of those good works that God has designed for His people is the planting of new churches. Our nation—and in reality every nation—needs new churches. Growing, thriving, multiplying, gospel-believing and preaching churches. Churches that preach the Bible faithfully and straightforward. Churches with heartfelt and Christ-exalting worship. Churches that evangelize lost people and disciple new believers.

And it is happening! Our Converge movement is committed to starting new churches. Every region is mobilizing to raise up, train, and deploy church planters and their teammates. Churches meeting in new facilities, previously abandoned facilities, storefronts, warehouses, and homes—it's not the place but the people!

Is God calling you to lead or join a church-planting team?

## Our Prayer

We praise You, our merciful and loving God! We rejoice that in Christ we are no longer what we were but are now Your new creations. We are amazed that we are now Your works of art, created in Christ for good works, including the planting of new churches. Faithful God, we ask You to raise up church planters. We ask You to give wisdom in identifying locations for new churches. Supply the funds needed for this grand endeavor; pour out a spirit of generosity in Your people. We look forward to seeing new churches raised up by Your Spirit across this great land and around the world.



DAY TEN

# THE HOLY SPIRIT

TITUS 3:4-7

*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

The application of God's saving work through Christ is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in us. The Third Person of the Trinity washes us, gives us new hearts, and renews us: the old is done away and the new has come. New creations! The Holy Spirit is "poured out on us richly"—a phrase worth pondering for a while—through Jesus Christ our Savior. Oh, what a gift is the Holy Spirit! God in us, the conduit of grace.

The Holy Spirit is our Helper (John 14:16, 26), the Spirit of Truth who dwells in us (John 14:17), our Counselor and Comforter. The Spirit gives us power to fulfill what the Father has commissioned us to do—to be His witnesses in every sphere (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit gives us gifts to enable us to fulfill His calling and plan for our lives (Romans 12:6-8) and build up His Church.

What a blessing is the Holy Spirit! We are given the great task of following Jesus and fulfilling our calling. God Himself, by His Spirit, changes us, baptizes us with His presence, dwells in us, and enables us to be all God has called us to be. This is extraordinary news! From first (drawing us to Christ) to last (heirs according to the hope of eternal life), the Spirit of God is alive and working in us and through us.

Thanks be to God!

## Right Now

The Holy Spirit is at work in Christ's Church. There are no laws, no borders, no restrictions that can bar the Holy Spirit from working to fulfill the Father's divine plan.

Here's just one way the Spirit is working: the Holy Spirit calls and gifts shepherd leaders for the encouragement, instruction, and leading of the local church. Pastors, teachers, and evangelists, along with elders and deacons, are equipped by the Holy Spirit to equip the local church (Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 3:1-13).

Across the body of Christ there are called, gifted, and equipped leaders who are shepherding the local church. Pray for your pastor(s) and all the leaders of your church. Ask God to fill them with the Holy Spirit. Pray for the wisdom, discernment, and knowledge they need to do their ministry well. Pray for their families and marriages. Pray for their good health and emotional well-being. Ask God to protect their time in His Word and prayer.

## Our Prayer

Heavenly Father, what a kindness You have bestowed upon us in giving Your Holy Spirit to us. Thank You for every aspect of the Spirit's work in us, from first to last. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit today and enable us by Your Spirit to use the gifts You have given for the work of ministry today.

Thank You for our church leaders. We can only imagine what burdens they carry. How much they need Your presence and power by the Holy Spirit! Grant them that fullness, O God. Give each pastor and elder the blessing of time in Your Word and prayer. Give each staff member discernment in the best use of their time and spiritual gifts for fulfilling their callings. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!



DAY ELEVEN

# THE CHURCH

*(Colossians 1:24-29 and 2:1-7)*

COLOSSIANS 1:24-29

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.*

COLOSSIANS 2:1-7

*For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.*

*Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving*

**T**he church! Reflect for a moment on this: as a believer in Christ, you are a member of Christ's Church, the only organization that will endure through the great judgement fire of God. You will last forever!

This "assembly of called-out ones" will do what no other will do. The church is utterly unique; it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." So much so that the Apostle Paul, who wrote the letter to the Colossians, willingly suffered much for her sake.

The goal of the church is to present all her members mature in Christ. Toward that end, the church preaches and teaches Christ. Why? Because in Him "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." We have no other message to deliver. The ministry of the church produces strong, faithful disciples, rooted and built up in Christ and, with thanksgiving, established firmly in their faith.

Aren't you glad you are a part of Christ's Church?

## Right Now

We recognize that Paul was not the only one to suffer for Christ, the gospel, and the church. Consistently, we read of horrific persecutions facing Christians around the world. Recently, the wave of murder against Christians in Nigeria has been much in the news. It has captured the attention of the U.S. president, members of Congress, and even the secular media.

But that is not the only place where Christians suffer. To take the gospel of Christ to the most unreached and unengaged peoples of the world will take courage and boldness. Some will no doubt suffer in doing so; this has been true and will be true. But the Church of Jesus Christ continues to grow—the mustard seed is becoming a global tree!

“I will build my church” Jesus said, and He will! Your church, in both its local impact and in its missionary advance, is part of that great work that cannot fail. God is faithful!

## Our Prayer

God, we thank You for calling us into Your Kingdom family and making us a part of Your Church, the body of Christ. You are faithful, and Your promise to build Your Church is coming true right before our eyes. Thank You for faithful, committed, joyful churches all over the world. We rejoice to be part of it.

And we pray earnestly today for the persecuted church. We intercede for Christians who are suffering and even dying for the cause of Christ. What courage You give to them! Grant us that same courage. Give us holy boldness to take the gospel to the unreached places of the earth and to the difficult places of our communities. You are faithful and true! You will never leave us or forsake us. You will never fail, so we join in this glad adventure.



# DAY TWELVE

# LOVE

## 1 CORINTHIANS 13

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

*Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

*So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;  
but the greatest of these is love.*

Love is a vital ingredient in the church because Jesus commanded us to love one another: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). God designed His Church to be “knit together in love” (Colossians 2:2).

In 1 Corinthians 13, the apostle is writing to the church about spiritual gifts when he shifts gears and begins to speak in lofty terms about love. Why? Because Paul knew that what the Corinthian church needed more than anything was for the love of Christ to permeate their body. Rather than “every person for himself,” the church needed to love one another. A person might be some sort of spiritual giant (at least in his or her own eyes) but without love nothing is gained and nothing is accomplished (verses 1-3).

Instead, a detailed description of love emerges in verses 4-7. Take a moment to jot down the positives and negatives of love:

Positives (7 items):

Negatives (8 items):

Many things are temporary; we often get too focused on such things that will not last forever. Or we focus on childish fancies. There is a much better way: love never ends! The greatest of these is love.

## Right Now

It's good to stop what we are doing and reflect. Ask yourself, "Am I too preoccupied with the temporary things that will not last into eternity?" Then ponder this: "What doors has God opened for me to be active in Kingdom service? How am I showing love to others in the body of Christ?"

God is so faithful! Today He is faithful to remind us of the vital importance of love. Love for Him, love for one another, love for our neighbors, and yes, even love for enemies. Love stands out! When the body of Christ displays the love of Christ to a needy and hurting world, "all people" will know that we are His disciples.

Is there someone God is asking you to love in a practical way today?

## Our Prayer

Faithful Father, we are sometimes noisy gongs and clanging cymbals. We are so easily distracted by the wrong things. Forgive us, Father. Give us love! You showed Your love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Help us in turn to display Your love, filled with faith and the Holy Spirit. Give us Christ's love for all kinds of people: other Christians who are hard to love, neighbors who don't know You, relatives who require extra grace, and for people who speak other languages, have different customs, and have never even heard of Jesus.



DAY THIRTEEN

# OUR MISSION

*(Matthew 28:17-20 and 24:14)*

MATTHEW 28:17-20

*And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age”.*

MATTHEW 24:14

*And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

As the church, we have a mission, given to us by Jesus Himself. That mission involves evangelism (“make disciples”), discipleship (“baptizing them...teaching them”), and missions to the peoples of the earth (“all nations”).

This task Christ has given us comes with an amazing promise: “And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Jesus has all authority to call us to this mission because the authority was given to Him by God the Father Himself.

And so, we go. We go to our neighbors, relatives, and friends. We go to the unreached peoples—and wherever God sends us. As we saw in Day Ten, we go in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

Our faithful and sovereign God has told us in advance the outcome of our mission: “the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world.” All nations (“all people groups” in the Greek) will receive this testimony. When they do, the end will come. When the church has fulfilled the Great Commission given by Christ, He will return. Isn't that just awesome?!

## Right Now

Christians are engaged in mission in this exciting moment in history. Your church is sharing the gospel and building up disciples right where you are. Together you are praying, giving, and going as your church seeks to do her part in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Our Converge movement of churches has 22 initiatives on five continents focused on reaching the least-reached peoples. Faithful believers are learning languages, adjusting to new customs, fervently praying, and living their Christian lives in contexts where the gospel of Christ desperately needs to be heard.\*

There are stories told of God's faithfulness! Lives are being changed. Previously unreached people groups are now reached—that is, a worshipping and witnessing church has been planted among them to reach their people. Pastors are being trained, children and youth are hearing the gospel, and practical needs are being met, all in the name of Jesus.

Is God stirring up the desire in you to take a new step in praying, giving, and going to the nations?

## Our Prayer

You are doing this, Faithful One! This is Your plan being carried out by Your Spirit through Your people, the church. You have given us a great mission to carry out, starting in our home territory and extending to both the nearby and faraway. All of this is because You have made precious promises to us and laid out Your instructions, calling us to obedience. What a mighty God You are! We exalt You. Thank You for including us in this great cause. Help us to fulfill it, Father. Thank You for those who have already heeded the call and aligned their lives with Your mission.

Give us clarity now, Father, as to what our part in the mission is to be. In the name of the One to whom you granted all authority in heaven and earth, Jesus Christ, Amen!

\*For more information on what is happening and how you can get involved, individually and as a church, go here: <https://converge.org/what-we-do/converge-international-ministries/about-converge-international-ministries/>



DAY FOURTEEN

HOPE AND  
JOY AND  
PEACE

ROMANS 15:13

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy  
and peace in believing, so that by the power  
of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

**L**et's finish off this second week of our 21 days with encouragement from our God of hope! Ponder this amazing statement from Romans 15. By grace God has for us:

- joy
- peace
- and by the power of the Holy Spirit—hope!

Joy comes when we recognize that present realities—no matter how challenging or difficult or disappointing—are not final realities. We trust our Father who has planned a fabulous future for us! And so, we also have peace, not born of comfort or easy circumstances, but a peace that surpasses human understanding because we can pray and trust God, knowing God's Spirit will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

Earlier in Romans 15:4, Paul describes the very practical way that the God of hope, by His Spirit, builds our hope. It's through His Word, the Scriptures: "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

The Scriptures were written to instruct us. They exhort us to endure hardships while being encouraged by great truths—truths of God's glory and power, of His love and grace, of our future hope, of God's faithfulness. Those truths help us to trust God completely, rest in His power and plans for us and hope in the victory that lies ahead.

Joy, peace, and hope. Why? Because our faithful, sovereign Father is in control—and all His promises are Yes! in Jesus Christ.

## Right Now

The present tensions such as political division, social unrest, wars, and rumors of wars tempt us to despair. But wait. In Christ, we endure though joy, peace, and hope. In your church, region, and around the world, ministries are touching the lives of people and bringing the hope of the gospel. Churches are being planted, missionaries sent, military chaplains mobilized. Struggling churches are being coached and strengthened, and caring ministries are touching the lives of hurting and broken people.

You are part of something God is doing, locally and globally. Something big! As a believer in Christ, you are part of God's Kingdom family. And through local churches like yours, much good is happening to fulfill our mission and calling in Christ.

Yes, there is much more to do. The times call for Christians to stand tall and true, loyal to Jesus Christ, filled with His Spirit. We go with God's Word in hand, living as gospel people in a needy world. As we live with joy, peace, and hope in Christ, our lives will stand out from the crowd and our testimonies of faith will be heard.

## Our Prayer

Faithful Father, only by Your grace and the Holy Spirit can we be filled with joy, peace, and hope today. Troubles abound, but Your grace abounds evermore! Help me to trust You today, Father! Thank You for the truths and promises of Your Word that give us hope. Help me to make a Kingdom difference, love others, share my joy in Christ with them, and be salt and light as Jesus taught us to be.

I pray for my church and others like it. Help us to bring light to our communities and focus not on ourselves but the greater cause of Christ's Kingdom. By Your Spirit's power may we bring maximum Kingdom impact to our communities and to our world. In the name of Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, Amen!





A blurred, low-angle shot of a crowd of people walking on a paved surface, likely a sidewalk or street. The image is in a dark, monochromatic blue color scheme. The people are out of focus, creating a sense of movement and a busy environment. The ground in the foreground is more in focus, showing the texture of the pavement.

W E E K

# THREE

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS  
IN THE FUTURE

DAY FIFTEEN

# THE KING IS COMING!

REVELATION 19:11-16

*Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse!  
The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in  
righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a  
flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has  
a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed  
in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called  
is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in  
fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.  
From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike  
down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron.  
He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God  
the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name  
written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*

**T**he Word of God. The King of kings and Lord of lords. There is no doubt about who this is—Jesus Christ!

And there is no doubt about what these verses in Revelation are describing. Christ is coming again! The second coming of Christ is the remarkable reality that enables believers to live with confidence, joy and hope even in the worst of times. Tough times are penultimate; Christ's return is ultimate! Jesus is coming back to rule and to reign, a reign that will never end.

Offering hope to suffering Christians who were distressed at the fate of believing friends who had died, the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18:

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

How could Paul help these faithful ones remain true to Christ, to “walk in a manner worthy of God,” to please God, to endure hardship and suffering for the present time? The coming of the Lord Jesus! Brothers and sisters, he says, live in the light in these dark times, not sleepwalking through life, but rather “let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation”

(1 Thessalonians 5:8).

And so, let us keep our hope fixed on the return of Christ, not fearful of the calamities of the times but rather pressing into our faith, our calling, our spiritual gifts, and the mission of God. May we press on with endurance to live with faith and love, pleasing our Faithful Father.

## Right Now

Our current times call for pressing into the truth that Christ will return. God's faithfulness in the future will be displayed in the coming of the King of kings. In the meantime, we remain confident of the success of the mission of God and pursue it. We start new churches, strengthen churches that are struggling, ask the Lord of the Harvest to send workers into the fields, and participate by going and sending (Luke 10:2-3).

Yes, we anticipate setbacks and struggles, for we have an enemy who opposes the gospel. But we are not deterred. We press on in hope!

Is there a gospel worker, pastor, missionary, chaplain, or faithful layperson you can encourage today with the hope of Christ's return?

## Our Prayer

Our Father in heaven, grant us courage and endurance for this amazing moment of history. We are buoyed up by Your promise of the return of Christ. We pray for the spread of the gospel all over the world and intercede especially for those who face opposition for their faith. Implant hope in their hearts, O God, and remind them often of Your faithfulness and promises. We soak in Your Word, filling our hearts and minds with Your promises, and look forward with joy to the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Thank You for the blessed hope we have in Him.



# DAY SIXTEEN

# RESURRECTION

*(1 Corinthians 15:3-11 and 50-58)*

## I CORINTHIANS 15:3-11

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*

## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-58

*I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

*“Death is swallowed up in victory.”*

*“O death, where is your victory?”*

*O death, where is your sting?”*

*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

**V**ictory! We love to win. Whether a little league baseball game as a fourth grader, our hometown team winning the Super Bowl, or our favored candidate getting elected, we like winning.

In Christ we are all victors. And this victory lasts and lasts—it's forever. Our victory is rooted in Christ's victory over sin, death, and Satan. This is of first importance:

Christ died for our sins, as the Scriptures prophesied.

He was buried in the tomb.

He was raised from the dead, as prophesied.

The resurrected Christ appeared to hundreds of witnesses.

This is the very heart of the good news we proclaim. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, died for our sins and then rose from the dead. He's alive! And so shall we be alive—changed—with imperishable, immortal bodies, ready for forever.

Will death win the victory? No! Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, what now? How do we await that resurrection day? As ones who are “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

That's how.

## Right Now

Do you feel steadfast, immovable today? We often don't feel that way. We feel unsteady, even dizzy, with the realities of life: family relationships, work problems, church concerns, health setbacks, and more.

When we feel unsteady, shaken and upset, we stop and refocus. We preach the gospel to ourselves: Christ died for me, rose from the dead, is alive right now and is interceding for me. And when He returns, I'll be immortal! Resurrection is my future, and it can't be stolen from me if I am in Christ (Romans 8:38-39).

In every place, all over the world, Christians are hanging on to the hope of the resurrection. Facing death, suffering, mistreatment, disappointment, or illness, the one thing that every believer can grip firmly is victory in Christ!

Winning!



DAY SEVENTEEN

# ETERNAL HOME

*(Revelation 21:1-5 and John 14:2-3)*

REVELATION 21:1-5

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”*

*And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true”.*

## JOHN 14:2-3

*In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*

**H**ome! When you think of home, what comes to mind? Is it a happy thought of love, familiarity, support, and rest? Sadly, that's not true of everyone.

Our forever home will be much more than that. It will be all new (the first heaven and earth will pass away). The new heaven and earth will be a holy city come down from heaven. But most importantly, most grandly, our forever home will be with God! The dwelling place of God is with man.

We will be with God forever—His people who know Him and are loved by Him! Those things we associate with sadness and hurt and pain will be no more: no tears, no death, no mourning or crying or pain. Gone! All things new.

How do we get there? Jesus. He is preparing this special dwelling place for us, and He will make sure we get there—a perfect place that's all new. The things that make our current life painful and hard are all in the distant past.

Home! This is our destiny as believers in the Faithful God.

## Right Now

How do we relate to this future home? For one, we avoid putting our focus in the wrong place. We heed the word of Christ and seek first the Kingdom. Not the love of money, stuff, or worldly success, but rather the things that will last forever.

Imagine for a moment: Christ has returned. You have a resurrection body and are dwelling in His presence in this new heaven and earth. Worshiping at God's throne in the presence of the Lamb of God, Jesus, you look around you. Who is with you? Your neighbor? Your co-worker? Your buddy from the army? Your family members? People who got saved because your church sent a missionary to them?

Who are you prayerfully seeking to join you in our future, forever home? Who are you longing to see come to Christ?

## Our Prayer

O God, we long for the eternal place You are preparing for us! Thank You for sending Jesus as our Savior and Redeemer. We are so blessed to know that You have announced Your plans to dwell with us forever in the new heaven and new earth! That's beyond fabulous!

But God, our greatest concern today is for those who will not be with us if today is the day of Christ's return. O God, please work in their hearts. Draw them to Yourself. Take out their stony hearts and give them new ones that beat for You. Our desire and prayers for these lost ones are that they would be saved! Pour out Your Spirit upon them, Lord.



DAY EIGHTEEN

WORTHY IS  
THE LION  
AND THE  
LAMB!

*Revelation 5*

*Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”*

*And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying,*

*“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”*

*Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice,*

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”*

*And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,*

*“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”*

*And the four living creatures said, “Amen!”  
and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

**A**n entire book—a very large book—could be written on this glorious chapter of Revelation. A powerful angel makes a strong point by asking an interesting question: “Who is worthy to open the scroll?” The point? No one is worthy! No one like you or me, no one anywhere, neither angelic nor human. John is overcome with sobbing at this reality.

But—there is One worthy! It is the Lion. It is the Lamb. It is Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He alone is worthy! As Jesus takes the scroll in hand, the four living creatures and twenty-four elders fall down before Him in abject worship. They hold in their hands a harp (perhaps our worship) and golden bowls full of incense (our prayers, “the prayers of the saints”). They sing exuberant songs of praise and adoration to the Lion and the Lamb and are joined by myriads of angels. Their song is loaded with gospel truth for our benefit:

- Jesus alone is worthy. Why?
- He was slain. He died on the cross for us.
- His blood purchased the ransom for people from every tribe and language and people and nation (the fulfillment of Genesis 12).
- These believers have an extraordinary destiny: they are a kingdom and priests who will reign with Christ forever.
- He rose from the dead! He conquered death.
- The Lion and Lamb is worthy of every conceivable honor and glory that the Father can bestow upon Him.

He is worthy of our praise and adoration and exultation!

## Right Now

Our full engagement as worshipers of Jesus Christ is now devoted to joining with the heavenly host of angels.

Our minds are engaged because of this gospel truth: Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins. But more, He ransomed some from every people group on earth and then conquered sin, death, and Satan. Our hearts are engaged because of this grand salvation God has given us, so we cannot help but sing and shout and declare His glory. What’s more, this scene tells us that our worship and prayers will be a vital part of that great day, represented by the harps and bowls.

And so, we pray. We worship. We participate with our church in evangelism and discipleship, in church planting and missions, in loving every person and people group that crosses our path. We are part of the greatest enterprise in the history of the universe! We are the Jesus People! We are the church.



DAY NINETEEN

# UNCEASING WORSHIP

REVELATION 7:9-17

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."*

*Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

*"Therefore they are before the throne of God,  
and serve him day and night in his temple;  
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.*

*They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;  
the sun shall not strike them,  
nor any scorching heat.*

*For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of living water,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes"*

Once again there is so much detail in this passage that an entire book could be written about it. But let's begin this way: Wherever you are, stop and stand and cry out in a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

How did that feel? If you are in a coffee shop, it might have attracted a great deal of attention!

Do you enjoy sporting events? A huge crowd, shouting at the top of their lungs, cheering on their team? That scene pales in comparison to this one. Imagine, some from every people group on earth, "a great multitude that no one could number," shouting their praise at God's throne to the Father and His Son, the Lamb who was slain. Imagine the chill in your spine, the surge in your heart! Awesome.

But for today, let's notice especially the benefits bestowed on believers at the throne of God. This is our future in Christ:

- washed clean through the blood of Christ
- serving in the very presence of God
- sheltered there at the throne by God our Father
- no hunger, no thirst; protected from the elements
- shepherded by Jesus Christ Himself
- guided by Jesus to springs of eternal life
- past tears (hurts, disappointments, pain) wiped away by our kind and tender-hearted heavenly Father.

That, believer, is our future. That is our destiny. No wonder the scene is charged with whole-hearted worship.

## Right Now

Perhaps as you read this today, your life is filled with pain. That is our present reality: cancer, arthritis, broken relationships, church hurts and disappointments, persecution for loving and following Jesus. And there is our own sin: "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love."

So, be encouraged by this hope. God has plans for you in His presence. There is a glory to come that is beyond our ability to imagine. Shepherded and guided by Jesus; comforted by our Faithful Father. Wars and rumors of wars and terrorism and hatred and division and persecution and ridicule today. Grace and glory and eternal joy tomorrow!

Hold fast to Jesus today. Walk with Him, following closely, fulfilling your calling, filled with the Spirit. Meet Jesus in the air to worship Him forever tomorrow. (Or someday soon—His timing is perfect!)



DAY TWENTY

# REIGNING FOREVER AND EVER!

REVELATION 22:1-7

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.*

*And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."*

*"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book"*

**T**wo days ago, on Day Eighteen, we read in Revelation 5 that the people ransomed by Christ from every tribe “shall reign on the earth.” Now, in the Bible’s final chapter, we read it again: “and they will reign forever and ever.”

Believer in Christ, as a member of God’s Kingdom family, this is your future—to reign with Christ. Awesome to think about, isn’t it?

In this passage there is more as well:

- the river of the water of life and the tree of life with its fruit
- healing for the nations
- purity (nothing accursed) and the presence of Christ
- worship
- the Lord God as all the light we will need
- reigning with Christ forever
- and for now, the promise of Christ’s return.

Abundance. Healing. Face-to-face fellowship with Jesus. Wholehearted, unadulterated worship. Reigning with Him!

Do we know with certainty what reigning with Christ will look like in the new heaven and new earth? No. But we can be certain of this: it will be awesome, meaningful, fulfilling, glorious, Christ-honoring, and overflowing with joy. For now, we hold on to the prophecies and promises of God’s book, the Bible. We trust our Faithful Father, worship with all our hearts, walk in obedient faith, follow Jesus, and seek to fulfill all that God has designed for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

## Right Now

With such a fabulous destiny just ahead in our future, we will not fear. Rather, we step out courageously to seek first His Kingdom. Tell people what Christ has done for us. Love our neighbors and care about them. Build up others in their walk with Christ. Pray earnestly. Worship shoulder-to-shoulder with God's people, the Church. Use our spiritual gifts. Help start new churches, strengthen others, and send out workers into the global harvest.

We're going to reign in the Kingdom someday soon, so let us put the Kingdom first in our priorities now! Let's invest our time, efforts, and resources to be part of all that God is doing now, with anticipation about what's coming later, in Christ Jesus.

What is your role in the Kingdom efforts of your church?

## Our Prayer

Because You are faithful, Father, we can rest assured that in Your perfect timing we will reign with Christ over the earth. You have promised that. Please help us now to live out the priorities of Your Kingdom. You are working powerfully, and we want to join You. Revive Your Church. Bring spiritual awakening to our land. Give us boldness in witnessing for Christ. Use us in any way You please. Help us prepare for reigning by being fired up to follow Jesus today. Fill us with the Holy Spirit to fight the good fight of faith.

In the name of Jesus, the Light of the World, Amen.



DAY TWENTY-ONE

# WHAT NOW? FUTURE GRACE!

*(Ephesians 2:7 and Psalm 16:11)*

EPHESIANS 2:7

*...so that in the coming ages he might show  
the immeasurable riches of his grace in  
kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

PSALM 16:11

*You make known to me the path of life; in  
your presence there is fullness of joy; at your  
right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

In Day Nine, we reflected on the marvelous gospel passage of Ephesians 2:1-10. Today, we'll end our 21-day journey by reflecting on just one phrase—not even an entire sentence—that sums up perfectly this third week. In the future (“the coming ages”), God has plans to show us something. What will He show us? What will He display for our grand benefit and joy? Immeasurable riches of His grace.

Why will He do this? Kindness! God is kind to show us these riches. How is this possible? Christ Jesus, the Son of God and our Savior, Redeemer and Friend, has made this possible by His perfect life, sacrificial and substitutionary death, resurrection from the dead, and ascension to God the Father's right hand. He is preparing the place where He will kindly show us all this astounding grace.

Our Faithful God, who has been faithful in the past (including the humble origins of the Converge movement of churches, with roots in Sweden and among immigrants here in America), who is faithful to us today as He is powerfully working in our world (including in churches like yours), will in the future continue, without end, to show us grace.

Our Faithful God has an ocean-reservoir of grace, inexhaustible and unending, grace sufficient to sustain us in Christ now, in the present, but also forever, into a never-ending future. God's grace supply will never run dry, never disappoint, never fail. God will truly supply us with “pleasures forevermore” at His right hand (Psalm 16:11).

J.I. Packer says in *Knowing God*: “Christian hope expresses knowledge that every day of his life, and every moment beyond it, the believer can say with truth, on the basis of God's own commitment, that the best is yet to come.”

This is our future as believers, as Christ-followers, as the church. This is your destiny, Christian!

## Right Now

Brothers and sisters, let us then run with endurance the race set before us. Let us be inspired by God's faithfulness in the past, encouraged by God's faithfulness in the present moment, and thrilled to contemplate what the Faithful One has promised for our future. Let the promise of "pleasures forevermore" and "immeasurable riches of grace" strengthen your faith, firm your resolve to live for Christ, and increase your vision for how much you can contribute to the Kingdom cause of Christ.

Consider telling your pastor that you are "all in" and ready to use your gifts, time, and resources to make a Kingdom difference in fulfilling God's calling on your church.

## Our Prayer

We can hardly wait, heavenly Father, for the future You have planned for us. We want with great eagerness those pleasures forevermore at Your right hand. We desire to see and experience the immeasurable riches of grace in Christ that You are kindly planning for us.

But until that day, we offer ourselves to You. Use us however You please in bringing the gospel to the unreached peoples, planting new churches, sharing the gospel, and discipling new believers. Please help our church achieve maximum Kingdom impact for Your glory. What a thrill to take part in Your Kingdom advance!

To that end, help us keep on praying, Father. Help us learn to pray without ceasing, be alert in prayer, and call upon You in every circumstance. For Your glory and our good, for Christ and His Kingdom, Amen!



# CONCLUSION

**O**ur heavenly Father has been faithful, from creation to consummation. From Day 1 to Day 21, we have celebrated the faithfulness of God. We look forward to future grace that will never, ever end. Every promise God has made is *YES* in Jesus Christ our Savior. Isn't God kind and good?

And we respond to this great grace by being faithful. The One who has chosen and called us to Himself will in turn strengthen us by His Spirit to walk faithfully, following Jesus. There is a marvelous glimpse of this in Revelation 17:14. It doesn't shy away from the spiritual battle that surrounds us. But it guarantees that the victory already belongs to the Lord. It tells us who we are in Christ Jesus:

*They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.*

We Christians are *those with Him* and, thanks be to God, we are called and chosen and faithful. Yes, Faithful Father. By Your Spirit may we be faithful, as You are faithful. *Amen.*



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