



"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength"

Deuteronomy 6:5

It's easy to overlook the obvious. Things that are right before our very nose we fail to notice or appreciate. For example, I can see close by items clearly, but objects far away appear blurry. (I am near sighted.) Without corrective lenses, my focused vision is severely limited. I don't thank God enough for the obvious—my eyeglasses. Every day when I put them on, I am able to see distant objects distinctly rather than fuzzy blurs of color.

When David admonished himself to bless the LORD in Psalm 103, he encouraged himself to "...forget none of [God's] benefits..." (Ps. 103:2b) It is easy to overlook and forget God's blessings. God is faithful every day, but often we fail to notice or reflect upon His faithfulness. We find it easy to focus on what's not the way we think it should be and overlook the abundant evidence of God's faithfulness. "...Know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God..." (Deut. 7:9) God's faithfulness is great. (Lam. 3:23) God is true to His word. He can be fully relied upon. He does not lie or deceive.

In June of 2014 we approved our 2013-2014 Annual Budget, praying that God would supply us our needs. We agreed as a congregation to trust God and approved an annual budget of \$306,002. On June 30, 2014 we completed this past church fiscal year. God has kept His promise and supplied our needs. While our giving/income for the fiscal year was \$276,234.58, our spending/expenditures for the fiscal year was \$258,261.46. This means that God supplied more than enough to meet our obligations and ministry commitments.

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How God Restores Lost Years

Money can be restored. Property can be restored—broken-down cars, stripped painting, old houses. Relationships can be restored. But one thing that can never be restored is time. Time flies and it does not return. Years pass and we never get them back.

Yet God promises the impossible: "I will restore the years that the locust has eaten" (Joel 2:25). The immediate meaning of this promise is clear. God's people had suffered the complete destruction of their entire harvest through swarms of locusts that marched like an insect army through the fields, destroying the crops, multiplying their number as they went.

For four consecutive years, the harvest was completely wiped out. God's people were brought to their knees in more ways than one. But "the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people." God said, "Behold I am sending to you grain, wine and oil, and you will be satisfied (Joel 2:18-19).

In the coming years, God said, their fields would yield an abundance that would make up for what had been lost: "The threshing floor shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. . . . You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied" (Joel 2:24, 26).

Take heart! There is hope, because God can restore your lost, locust years.

God can restore lost years by deepening your communion with Christ. "You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God" (Joel 2:27). These people, who have endured so much, enjoy a communion with the Lord that is far greater than anything they had ever known before in their religious lives. Christ can restore lost years by deepening your fellowship with him.

Why not ask him for this? Tell him, "Lord, I have spent too many years without you, too many years at a distance from you. Fill my heart with love and gratitude for Christ. Let the loss of these years make my love for Christ greater than it would ever have been. Restore to me the years the locusts have eaten."

God can restore lost years by multiplying your fruitfulness. The harvests for these people had been wiped out for four years, but God restored the years that the locusts had eaten by giving bumper harvests.

This provision makes me think about the parable where Jesus spoke about a harvest that could be 30-, 60-, or 100-fold. There's a huge difference between these three harvests. Three years at 100-fold is as much fruit as a decade at 30-fold.

Why not ask him for this? "Lord, the locusts have eaten too many years of our lives. You have called us as your disciples to bear fruit that will last. Too many fruitless years have passed. Now Lord, we ask of you, give us some years now in which more lasting fruit will be born than in all of our years of small harvests."

<http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/god-can-restor-your-lost-years>

Talking to Our Souls

By: Ed Welch

I once thought that the psalms were sung by a fine choir in God's throne room. Then I actually read them, and they sounded more like the words a street troubadour who encourages the participation of those around him. Now I find that they are simply spoken and sung everywhere: in the darkness of night, in the early morning, in all the details of everyday life. And there are a handful of psalms in which the psalmists speak to themselves. These are the ones I want to consider. There are times when we must learn to speak to ourselves.

Speak to yourself when you feel isolated and alone. This is from Psalm 42 and 43, which are the ones best known for how the psalmist speaks to his own soul. "Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Put your hope in God." One thing we know about being downcast is that, left to itself, the soul can only see the worst and is almost impossible to interrupt. As such, this simple reflection is impossible for us to do alone but it is very possible with God's power. What a gift this is—to slow down that runaway train of despondency.

Speak to yourself when you need a refuge from hard people. "For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him" (Ps. 62:5). Isolation, especially when it comes at the hands of other people, is one of the hardest of human experiences. As a general rule, the harder the experience, the less natural it becomes to talk to the Lord because he too seems distant. So this is a time to put boundaries around that experience and quiet our soul before the Lord. Imagine this. When your mind is racing with everything from anger to self-loathing, and your isolation intensifies them all, you quiet yourself because "On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God" (v. 7). Or, you keep aiming in that direction until your soul is, in fact, quieted. Once you interrupt your soul—that is the hardest part—perhaps you could access the entire psalm. It is filled with soul-quieting realities. If you stick with it, you will find yourself encouraging other people to interrupt the stream of doubt and unbelief in their souls (v. 8)

Speak to yourself when rest is elusive, and the past still haunts you. "Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you" (Ps. 116:7). Something very hard happened to the psalmist and he was delivered, but he is still shaken—a kind of post-traumatic shock. He speaks to himself about how God acted, how God delivered him. God responded to his prayer—he did something good—and he does something good now. He keeps his mind focused on the acting-God. "Bountifully" is implied, "dealt with you" is what the psalm actually says, so the psalmist is essentially saying, "The Lord has dealt with me, which means that he never sits idly but he does something. And, of course, that something is evidence of his lavish love to me. The psalmist is telling himself about God's past action to encourage his faith in the present.

Speak to yourself when you don't understand—and feel compelled to understand or compelled to fix something that you can't fix. "O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me" (Ps 131:1-2). We tell ourselves that we are not God. Instead, our job is to live out our calling with the matters that are right in front of us, and we trust the Lord for all those things we would like to control but can't and shouldn't. In short, "Humble yourself, O my soul, before my God and King. Humble yourself."

Speak to yourself so you can be in sync with the universal chorus of praise. "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Ps 103:1-2, also Ps. 104, 146). This one is for every occasion.

I am not very good at these things yet. When I was a boy, I remember the first time I spoke a dialogue for some army men that I had set up. Hearing my own voice this way shocked me. Plus, my imagination had betrayed me by not letting me think that I could make these toy men talk. So I haven't talked aloud to myself since. But this opportunity to talk truth to ourselves is so hopeful, so mature. I am working on it. It is another step to taking possession of the psalms and making them our own.

<http://www.ccef.org/resources/blog/talking-our-souls>

"Single life may be only a stage of a life's journey, but even a stage is a gift. God may replace it with another gift, but the receiver accepts His gifts with thanksgiving. This gift for this day. The life of faith is lived one day at a time, and it has to be lived—not always looked forward to as though the "real" living were around the next corner. It is today for which we are responsible. God still owns tomorrow."

-Elisabeth Elliot, Let Me Be a Woman

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Note to self: Forget not all God's benefits this past year. He was faithful last year. He is faithful now and will always remain faithful.

Pastor Mark Musser.

Children have a heart problem. They are constitutionally sinful. Like their parents, and like the rest of the Adamic race, they are fallen. What they need most are regenerate hearts. This is the most fundamental issue in parenting. It's not ultimately about behavior; it's all about the child's heart.

—John MacArthur

Let no one grieve at his poverty,
for the universal kingdom has been revealed.
Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again;
for forgiveness has risen from the grave.
Let no one fear death, for the Death of our Savior has set us free.
He has destroyed it by enduring it.
—John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople; sermon, ca. 400

JULY 2014						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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AUGUST 2014

SEPTEMBER 2014						
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28	29	30				

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					Ignite Youth Group 1	2
Worship Service 3	4	Fusion Youth Group 5	Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer 6	7	Ignite Youth Group 8	Men In The Morning 9
Worship Service 10	11	Fusion Youth Group 12	Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer 13	14	Ignite Youth Group 15	16
Worship Service 17	18	Fusion Youth Group 19	Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer 20	21	Ignite Youth Group 22	23
Worship Service 24	25	Fusion Youth Group 26	Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer 27	28	Ignite Youth Group 29	30
Worship Service 31						