



food for the famine

14 DEVOTIONALS IN GOD'S WORD FOR HARD TIMES

Romans 5v1-8

¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. ⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Further reading: 1 Peter 1v1-12

REFLECT

- How are we able to stand before God? What has Jesus done to allow us to do this?
- With God's love in our heart, how can we face our sufferings?
- What is so amazing about God's love for us?
- How does it make you feel that God loved you enough to send Jesus to die for you?

RESPOND

Heavenly Father, I am amazed at the depth of your love for me, that you sent Jesus to die for me, not because I was good, but because I wasn't. Thank you that you loved me that much even when I did not love you. Thank you for the peace that you have given me. Father, please let that peace rule in my heart. When I go through difficult times, please help me to rest in you, that sufferings would help me to taste and see how faithful you are, and how you protect me. When I feel down or hard-pressed, help me to remember that even when I was still a sinner, Christ died for me because you loved me. Amen.

John 14:1-7

¹ Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going."

⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Further reading: John 3:1-20

REFLECT

- What does Jesus mean by the Father's house?
- What do we need to know to find the way to the Father's house?
- How does this help us not to be troubled when things are hard?
- What promise does Jesus make to his friends to give them hope?

RESPOND

Heavenly Father, thank you for Jesus' promise that he will come back and take us to be where he is. Thank you that through him, we can know you, the God who made the universe and everything in it, including us. I praise you for sending Jesus and making him the way for me to know you now, and live with you forever. Please help me to remember you every day, and, by your Spirit at work in me, please help me to see my troubles as far less than the joy that you are preparing for me. Amen.

John 14v15-20

¹⁵ "If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever - ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

Further reading: John 17v20-26

REFLECT

- What else does Jesus promise he will do for us?
- How can these promises bring us comfort?
- How does the Spirit help us to keep trusting in Jesus although we cannot see him now?
- What does Jesus say he will ask the Father to do for us?

RESPOND

Father God, I thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit whom you have given to your people as our friend and guide to comfort us and be with us forever. Thank you that he helps us to hold on to Jesus' promises, even when life is hard. Thank you that he is with me now in all that I am going through. Thank you that because of what you have done, I am not alone, but I am united with Jesus, as he is united with you. Please help me to raise my eyes from what's going on around me to rejoice that I am united with you, your Son and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

Psalm 139v7-12

- ⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
- ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
- ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
- ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
- ¹¹ If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,'
- ¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

Further reading: Psalm 139

REFLECT

- Where does the Psalm writer say God will be (verses 7-9)?
- How does it make you feel that the God who made you and loves you is with you where you are now?
- God's hand will hold us fast wherever we are - how should we respond to that?
- When times are really hard, we can sometimes feel things are completely dark and there is no hope. In our "nights", how does it help us to know that God is in control?

RESPOND

Heavenly Father, thank you that you are here with me right now, and that you will always be with me wherever I go. Thank you that you hold me safe and will never let me go. Father, sometimes life seems very hard and I don't know what is going to happen. Thank you that you know all things and you are in control. Please help me to keep trusting in your love for me - thank you that you loved me so much that you sent your Son to die on the cross so that I can live with you forever. In His name, I pray. Amen.

Psalm 46v1-7

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
- 3 though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.
- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.
- 5 God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.
- 6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.
- 7 The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Further reading: Psalm 46 & Psalms 42-43

REFLECT

- o What could make the Psalmist afraid? What about you?
- o How is the city of God different from earthly cities and kingdoms?
- o What difference does it make to us that God is with us?
- o How can we respond when we are afraid and in trouble?

RESPOND

Father, I praise you because you are an ever-present help in time of trouble. I often feel like mountains are crashing around me, and that my world feels very fragile. Lord, please work in me so that like the Psalmist, I can truly say that I do not fear because you are my help and strength. Thank you for this vision of your heavenly city, where you have promised that this is a place for me. Thank you that even as I wait for that, you are my fortress right now. Help me to hold on to you as my fortress in all that I have to go through today. Amen.

Isaiah 40v27-31

²⁷ Why do you complain, Jacob?
 Why do you say, Israel,
 "My way is hidden from the LORD;
 my cause is disregarded by my God"?

²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard?
 The LORD is the everlasting God,
 the Creator of the ends of the earth.
 He will not grow tired or weary,
 and his understanding no one can fathom.

²⁹ He gives strength to the weary
 and increases the power of the weak.

³⁰ Even youths grow tired and weary,
 and young men stumble and fall;

³¹ but those who hope in the LORD
 will renew their strength.
 They will soar on wings like eagles;
 they will run and not grow weary,
 they will walk and not be faint.

Further reading: Habakkuk 3

REFLECT

- In what areas of your life could you feel forgotten by God?
- How can verse 28 reassure you that God does know what is going on?
- How does Isaiah say the Lord helps those who trust in him?
- How can God increase our strength even while we feel, and remain, physically weak?

RESPOND

Father, I praise you that you are the everlasting God, the crater of the end of the Earth. You see all and know all, and therefore you know all the situations that I am facing now. Father, I rest in you; please work in me to renew my strength, physically, emotionally, and spiritually that I may face all that awaits me. Thank you that even though I grow tired and weary, you do not, and you are always watching over me. Amen.

Zephaniah 3v14-17

¹⁴ Sing, Daughter Zion;
shout aloud, Israel!
Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,
Daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The LORD has taken away your punishment,
he has turned back your enemy.
The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you;
never again will you fear any harm.

¹⁶ On that day
they will say to Jerusalem,
'Do not fear, Zion;
do not let your hands hang limp.

¹⁷ The LORD your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.'

Further reading: Isaiah 52

REFLECT

- What has God done for Zephaniah?
- How has he "taken away our punishment"?
- What does God think of His people in this passage? How do you feel about that?
- How can these verses give us hope in hard times?

RESPOND

Father God, thank you that you are with me right now. Thank you that when Jesus died on the cross, he took the punishment I deserve, and now you rejoice in me. Thank you that you take delight in me. Please help me to remember that you are strong and mighty, and that you will love and rejoice in me forever. Please help me not to be afraid, but to rest in you, and trust in your unfailing love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Romans 8v31-39

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Further reading: 1 John 4

REFLECT

- o How does God keep blessing us even after the gift of forgiveness?
- o What cannot separate us from the love of God?
- o How can this assurance help us when we're struggling?

Sometimes our problems can feel more immediately real than God's love for us; take some time to hand over all your problems to God in the assurance that none of them is greater than his love for you.

RESPOND

Father God, please help me to know deep in my heart that because you are for us, we are totally secure. As you did not spare your Son for our sake, we can know that you will give us all that we need. Thank you that your love is all-powerful, all-conquering, and that there is nothing in the world that can separate me from it. Please help me to run to you when I face things that trouble me, and to be confident that your love will always be with me whatever I face. I pray this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, who died, was raised to life, and is interceding for me before you now. Amen

Lamentations 3v19-26

- ¹⁹ I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.
- ²⁰ I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.
- ²¹ Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:
- ²² Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.
- ²³ They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
- ²⁴ I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him."
- ²⁵ The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him,
to the one who seeks him;
- ²⁶ it is good to wait quietly
for the salvation of the LORD.

Further reading: Psalm 145

REFLECT

- What does Jeremiah remember in the midst of his troubles?
- How does God keep helping us even when life seems dark?
- What has God done in the past that shows us his love and compassion?
- How should we respond when we're struggling?

RESPOND

Father, there is much that is really hard for me at the moment. Sometimes it all seems too much for me. But thank you that your compassion and mercy are strong for me today, and that they will be just as strong tomorrow and the next day. Thank you that you will never let me be overcome by my troubles, and that you are completely faithful. Please help me to keep remembering that you are full of goodness and mercy, that you do not slumber or sleep and that you are with me now. Please help me now in my struggles to know the peace you give, that is beyond all understanding. Amen

Psalm 23

¹ The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.

Further reading: John 10v11-18

REFLECT

- What are the ways that God blesses us as listed in this Psalm?
- When we are in a dark valley, or surrounded by enemies, how does God help us?
- How can we be comforted by God's goodness and love following us all the days of our lives?
- The Psalmist says that if the Lord is our shepherd, we lack nothing. Dwell on the truth that the God who made the universe is blessing you in all the ways listed in this Psalm.

RESPOND

Father God, you are my shepherd. You lead me and protect me. Thank you that even when I go through worrying or frightening times, you are with me and comforting me. Please be close to me now. Through your Holy Spirit living in me, remind me of your promises that you will be with me every moment of every day of my life, and that even after death I will live forever with you. Thank you that you are stronger than every evil or threat I may face - please remind me of your power and love when I have to face the trials of life. Amen.

I John 1v5-9

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Further reading: John 1v1-18

REFLECT

- How can God help us when we're feeling like we're surrounded by darkness?
- What are the blessings he promises us when we walk with him - in the light?
- What comfort does John give us for times when we sin?
- How would your life be different if you dwelled more on the truth that God is true light, had no darkness at all - and yet chose to live in you through his Spirit?

RESPOND

Father God, thank you for the assurance that in a world that often seems filled with darkness, you are true and complete light. Thank you that in Jesus, you have shone light into the world that will never be overcome. Please work in me that I would choose to walk in your light, rather than in the darkness. I praise you for the assurance that even when I do things wrong, you are faithful and just and forgive me, to keep me walking with you. Please help me to be quick to confess my sins, and quick to return to walking in the light to which you have called me. Amen.

Hebrews 4v14-16

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Further reading: Hebrews 2v9-18

REFLECT

- What did Jesus, our great High Priest, experience during his earthly ministry?
- Why is it good news for us that Jesus knows what temptations and struggle feel like?
- What can we hope to receive from God when we ask him for help?
- Did you know you can have confidence when praying to God? What does praying confidently look like?

RESPOND

Father God, I pray to you with confidence, not because I have done great things but because you sent your Son for me. Thank you that he experienced all the difficult things I do, but did not sin. Thank you that he knows how I feel right now. Father, I pray that you would have mercy on me and help me to keep trusting in you; give me the grace I need to face all that is going on in my life. Thank you for your wonderful promises that you will never leave me, but will always give me the grace I need to deal with all the challenges of life. I pray this in the name of Jesus, my great High Priest. Amen.

I Corinthians 15v51-58

⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you.

Further reading: 1 Thessalonians 5v8-11

REFLECT

- What does Paul say will happen at the end of time?
- How would an imperishable body be different from a mortal, physical body?
- How do we have victory over death "through our Lord Jesus Christ"?
- How does the victory and assurance over death in the future help us to stand firm and keep trusting in Jesus now?

RESPOND

Dear God, I am in awe of the amazing plan of salvation that you have achieved through the Lord Jesus. I praise you that because of him, I can have a true and certain hope of victory over sin and death. Thanks be to God! Death and sin have no hold on me! Please help me to enjoy the freedom that this gives me to live for you now, rejoicing that you are sustaining me now, helping me to live for you in this world, while holding on to the great hope you have given me for the future. Amen.

Revelation 21v1-7

¹ Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

⁶ He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

Further reading: Revelation 22v1-5

REFLECT

- How is God’s promise to live with his people forever described here?
- What will not be there?
- How does it help us in times where we are surrounded by mourning and crying to know that there is no place for these in the new creation?
- Is it us who will bring this about, or God? How should we act in response to his promises?

RESPOND

Heavenly Father, thank you for this vision of your plan for your people. It is so wonderful to look forward to a time when there will be no more death or mourning or pain, and even more wonderful to know that we will be with you yourself, our loving God forever. Thank you that you will be with us, and that you will wipe every tear from our eyes, comfort us from every sadness we have gone through in our lives. While I wait for that day, please help me to keep coming back to you, keep trusting you, and keep casting my cares on to you, because you are the one who cares for me. Amen.



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