

REFLECTIONS

A teaching letter encouraging believers to develop a clear mind and a warm heart



GOD’S GOOD WILL FOR OUR LIVES

Dear Lord, Your ways are past finding out. Just when I think I understand Your direction, I discover that a new level of trust in Your purposes is necessary. As I look back, I realize that You have never let me down, though it often appeared that way when I was going through the trials. As I look ahead, I rest in Your good will for my life. Mine is only an illusion of control—all things are really in Your hands. Like Abram of old, You change my name and my destiny, and You call me to a country and to a promise that seems impossible to fulfill. But by Your grace I will believe that what You say is true, even when it makes no sense to me. You have called me to trust in You, not to understand all Your ways. Nothing is impossible with You, and I will confidently hope in what You have promised.

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THE BEST KIND OF INHERITANCE

Read 1 Peter 1:3–4

Wealth that is held in the form of property has one universal characteristic: It decays, spoils, rusts, and generally falls apart. Every house, office building, real estate holding, oil well, airplane, automobile, and factory that one might inherit will be in worse condition one day after the inheritance. Although an object may initially have a high market value, that value will decrease if the object is not maintained.

Simply put, things break down instead of up. They get worse instead of better. They get older instead of newer. They get duller instead of shinier. Jesus warned us against the dangers of investing treasures in earthly things, “where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal” (Matt. 6:19).

But Peter says that every believer has an inheritance from God that comes guaranteed against the devastation of entropy. Our inheritance is being preserved for us by an overseer—God Himself, who is keeping it for us in heaven. As a result, Peter says, our inheritance is “imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away.” We do not know everything that our inheritance will entail. We do know, however, that it will be in

perfect shape when we receive it and that it will remain that way forever.

If you are a Christian, but don’t think of yourself as wealthy, think again! You are the heir to a fabulous inheritance. And unlike worldly inheritances, yours is worth more today than yesterday. Why? Because God is maintaining it for you, and every day brings you one day closer to receiving it.

God’s Promise:

He cares for your inheritance daily in anticipation of your arrival.

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Psalm 27:

The Vertical/Horizontal Principle

Imagine an artist commencing a portrait on a piece of canvas that is living and conscious. Whenever he is dissatisfied with the way it is turning out, he begins again by rubbing or scraping the picture, causing great pain to the canvas. The more trouble the artist takes on the portrait, the more trouble he gives to the canvas. It would not be long before the canvas would want to cry, “Stop being so fussy! I’d rather be a thumbnail sketch!” But this would be to ask the artist to love the painting less, not more, since he wants it to become his magnum opus.

This illustration, derived from C. S. Lewis’s *The Problem of Pain*, holds a profound truth for each of us in our relation to the divine Artist whose loving labor of grace in our lives will stop at nothing short of bringing us into complete conformity to the image of Christ. Like the canvas, we are willing to settle for far less than the Artist’s best if only we can have a little comfort and minimal pain. But our heavenly Father loves us too much for that.

Many of the psalms record great wrestlings with God over

the problem of adversaries, affliction, and adversities. Although we may not have human enemies who are seeking our life as David faced in Psalm 27, we wage real warfare each day on the battlefronts of the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are not immune to trials, discouragements, and loss of friendships, jobs, and loved ones. What resources can we lay hold of so that we can “overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37)?

David’s great resource was his ongoing practice of the presence of God. He learned how to view every horizontal circumstance in light of his vertical relationship with his Lord. This vertical-horizontal (V/H) principle is encapsulated in Psalm 27, in which the psalmist constantly shifts his focus between heaven and earth.

V/H #1: Light (vv. 1–3)

Psalm 27 begins with a great vertical affirmation:

The LORD is my light and
my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the defense
of my life;
Whom shall I dread? (v. 1)

David’s commitment to the sovereign care of God enables him to look at horizontal adversities with courage and conviction:

When evildoers came upon me
to devour my flesh,
My adversaries and my enemies,
they stumbled and fell.
Though a host encamp against me,
My heart will not fear;
Though war arise against me,
In spite of this I shall be
confident. (vv. 2–3)

V/H #2: Love (vv. 4–6)

We are shaped by what we love. If you want to know what a person is like, find out what he loves and longs for above all else. David’s deepest longing was the key to his character.

One thing I have asked from
the LORD, that I shall seek:
That I may dwell in the house
of the LORD all the days of
my life,
To behold the beauty of
the LORD,
And to meditate in His temple.
(v. 4)

It was this vertical worship that gave David a true perspective on the horizontal warfare:

For in the day of trouble
He will conceal me in

His tabernacle;
In the secret place of His tent
He will hide me;
He will lift me up on a rock.
And now my head will be lifted
up above my enemies
around me;
And I will offer in His tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing, yes, I will sing
praises to the Lord. (vv. 5–6)

V/H #3: Longing (vv. 7–10)

Again, David returns to the upward look, this time directly addressing God:

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with
my voice,
And be gracious to me and
answer me.
When You said, “Seek My face,”
my heart said to You,
“Your face, O Lord, I shall
seek.” (vv. 7–8)

As it was with the psalmist, so it is with us—the Lord tells you and me to seek His face, and the extent of our response is the measure of our joy and peace.

As he turns again to his circumstances, the poet feels that he has been forsaken by others (vv. 9–10), but knows that the Lord will not abandon him.

V/H #4: Leading (vv. 11–14)

Teach me Your way, O LORD,

And lead me in a level path,
Because of my foes.
Do not deliver me over to the desire
of my adversaries;
For false witnesses have risen
against me,
And such as breathe out violence.
(vv. 11–12)

David not only worships by seeking God’s face; he also walks by seeking God’s way. He asks God to teach him, to lead him, and to protect him from treachery:

I would have despaired unless I had
believed that I would see the goodness
of the LORD
In the land of the living. (v. 13)

Because his trust is in the vertical (God), come what may, he need not despair on the horizontal. The psalm concludes with this decisive exhortation:

Wait for the LORD;
Be strong, and let your heart
take courage;
Yes, wait for the LORD. (v. 14)

Instead of frantically seeking to rectify your circumstances, wait for God’s timing, God’s power, and God’s method. Have the courage to rest in Christ, and in Christ alone (Matt. 11:28–30).

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