

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

FIND PEACE

Relief in the Midst of Anxiety

NEW TESTAMENT WITH PSALMS & PROVERBS

Includes Hundreds of Highlighted Verses of Comfort and Hope

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

HOLY BIBLE



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FIND PEACE

Depression. Fear. Loss. Injustice. Violence. Addiction. Bullying. Insecurity. Joblessness. Anxiety.

The cultural tragedies and personal challenges are vast and can quickly trigger feelings of anxiety and hopelessness. While the sources of stress and worry may change over time, the need for hope and peace does not. As Jesus told his disciples in John 16:33, “In me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (page 64).

God is bigger than anything that comes our way, and he promises to be with us through the peace he gives. In John 14:27, Jesus tells his disciples he will send the Holy Spirit when he returns to the Father, and he encourages us today with this: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (page 63). These words still encourage us today.

This call to not be troubled or afraid is timely and timeless—in this life we will always need relief from our anxiety and fear. This New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs gives you the tools you need to find immediate help. As you turn to the highlighted verses of hope and peace, you can build a lifelong framework for help in anxious times as God’s Word becomes the bedrock on which to build your life.

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7; page 115).

PSALM 121

I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.

The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

IS EMOTIONAL HEALTH A SPIRITUAL ISSUE?

I learned the hard way. Just because I was raised in the church and was a passionate follower of Christ, that didn't mean that I was whole on the inside. The truth was, I was an emotional wreck.

I was demanding and critical of myself. I was obsessed with winning others' approval. I was terrified of rejection. I had a hard time listening to criticism. I felt it impossible to say no to others' demands. I could never speak my thoughts and feelings, and I did my very best to avoid any conflict that came my way.

For so many years, I sat in church and listened to amazing sermons by profoundly gifted pastors. Yet somewhere in the deepest shadows of me, what I could believe for so many others, I could not believe for myself. Other people could be whole, but that must not be for me. No amount of study, prayer, or faith ever seemed to glue together what was terribly broken inside.

My healing came in an altogether different way. God's greatest gift to me was the gift of emotional healing. He brought me to a place where my emotional wounds could be safely exposed, understood, and healed. My emotional healing did not detract from my faith—my emotional healing increased my faith.

God created us as multi-dimensional beings—we are physical, spiritual, and emotional beings. God wants peace for us. "Peace" in Hebrew refers to wholeness, completeness, safety, soundness, and fullness. God wants us to be whole—physically, spiritually, and emotionally. First Thessalonians 5:23 states, "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

According to a study by Jocelyn Rebisz, there is a significant correlation between emotional health and spiritual maturity^[1]. Rather than pulling us away from our faith, it appears the healthier we become emotionally, the healthier and more mature we become spiritually.

There are three reasons that emotional health is a spiritual issue:

1. God wants his children to be whole. God's purpose for us is to be continually "transformed into his image" (2 Corinthians 3:18). He wants us to be spiritually holy (set apart and pure), as well as emotionally whole (complete). If we ignore the emotional aspect of our lives, it will be very difficult to experience the peace and abundance we desire. We are left to carry with us the emotional scars from our past. That is not God's plan. James 1:2–4 encourages us to, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."
2. God wants his church to function properly. How can we be the hands and feet of Christ when we come to church on Sunday and feel so isolated, so veneered, so incredibly invulnerable? We smile the appropriate smile, we say the appropriate prayer, yet we never feel safe enough to get real. We rarely let anyone know what's really going on. We raise our hands and celebrate God's victory, and yet we walk into the rest of our week feeling depressed, anxious, and anything but victorious.

The truth is, the church can be uncomfortable with broken things. We don't typically like things that are messy. Yet Jesus always found himself in the messy. He was quite at home with the brokenhearted, with the diseased, with the downtrodden. He didn't need them to fix themselves up for him. He, rather, drew a picture of a church as a hospital, a triage, a place where the broken could feel comfortable exposing their wounds, where

they could be invited in and welcomed to bring their bruised and bothered selves to experience a fellowship of compassion, grace, and healing from God's people.

3. God wants his light to shine into the world. He wants the light of his love and healing to shine radiantly through our lives. He wants us to be "set apart," to be different, and to make a difference in our sphere of influence, whatever and wherever that may be. We cannot accomplish his purpose, we cannot be powerful ambassadors, if we are just hanging by a thread. Emotional abundance not only empowers our faith, it fills us with a reservoir of strength, of stability, of peace in Christ that overflows into our relationships with others.

We live in a broken world, in hurting communities made up of dysfunctional relationships between wounded individuals. We all need Jesus. Others need to see Jesus in us and experience the hope of Jesus through us.

Is emotional health a spiritual issue? Absolutely.

^[1] Rebisz, Jocelyn B D, "The Emotional Well-being and Spiritual Maturity Connection: A Study on the Relationship between Emotional Health and Spirituality" (2007). Counselor Education Master's Theses. Paper 87.

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ANXIETY

Philippians 4:6–13

Paul certainly had plenty of reasons to feel anxious. Sitting in a Roman prison, he didn't know if he would be released or put to death. Writing to the believers in Philippi, however, he urged them, "Do not be anxious about anything" (Philippians 4:6).

Anxiety and its companion, worry, do their best to immobilize believers. People are anxious about the future; they are anxious about events that haven't happened but could happen. Anxiety causes physical problems. Anxiety makes people fearful and distressed.

So, what can believers do about their anxiety? Paul gave the answer: "In every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." When we give our anxiety to God, he replaces it with his peace "which transcends all understanding" (verse 7). God's peace is beyond comprehension because it makes no sense—the circumstances seem to require anxiety, but instead we feel God's peace. When we feel anxiety rising, we should turn to God in prayer. He will give us the peace he promised.

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TROUBLE

“Opportunity’s favorite disguise is trouble.”

— Frank Tyger

Trouble: between a rock and a hard place ... when life isn’t the way it is supposed to be. Ever been there? It’s been said that there are only three types of people—those who have just come out of trouble, are in the middle of trouble, or, are somewhere down the road, headed into trouble. Life’s like that.

The children of Israel experienced times of great heartache and trouble. Granted, most often it was brought on by their own actions. Invariably, however, these times became opportunities for God to teach his people to trust their true King. Psalm 46 is actually a song to be sung to God in times of trouble. Within it we find amazing expressions of opportunity.

Our responsibility?

Press in to God. Verse 1 declares that “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” In an emergency we “dial” 911. In times of trouble we can “dial” Psalm 91:1: “Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.” When we dwell in the shelter of God, we will abide in his shadow. A place of refuge. And God is not just present. He is very present. The closer a train gets, the louder it becomes. The greater the trouble, the “louder” the presence of God.

Our response to trouble?

1. Don’t fear. “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea” (Psalm 46:2). No matter what happens, he is in the midst of it. And Paul reminds us “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline” 2 Timothy 1:7. Trouble is an opportunity to draw near to God without fear as he draws near to us.
2. Rest and relax. As difficult as it may seem when you are being pounded by trouble, God wants you to “Be still” and know that he is God (Psalm 46:10). Let go ... drop your hands ... let him be who he is ... GOD. Take the opportunity to watch him do what you could never do in your own strength.

Trouble. While you will probably never welcome it (me neither), you will, over time, learn to embrace it as a window for opportunity.

¹⁶When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸"A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more."^a

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

²¹So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ²and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." ³This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"^b

⁴John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹"I baptize you with^c water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with^c the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

The Baptism of Jesus

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

¹⁵Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

¹⁶As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^d by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³The

tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

⁴Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"^e

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."^f

⁷Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"^g

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

¹⁰Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"^h

¹¹Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Jesus Begins to Preach

¹²When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali — ¹⁴to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

"Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the
Jordan,

Galilee of the Gentiles —

¹⁶the people living in darkness

have seen a great light;

on those living in the land of the shadow
of death
a light has dawned."ⁱ

¹⁷From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

¹⁸As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²²and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Heals the Sick

²³Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. ²⁵Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis,^j Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

^a 18 Jer. 31:15 ^b 3 Isaiah 40:3 ^c 11 Or in ^d 1 The Greek for tempted can also mean tested. ^e 4 Deut. 8:3

^f 6 Psalm 91:11,12 ^g 7 Deut. 6:16 ^h 10 Deut. 6:13

ⁱ 16 Isaiah 9:1,2 ^j 25 That is, the Ten Cities

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

He said:

- ³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- ⁵Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
- ⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- ⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- ⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- ¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

¹³“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

The Fulfillment of the Law

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Murder

²¹“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder,’^a and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²²But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister^{b,c} will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’^d is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

²⁵“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Adultery

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’^e ²⁸But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Divorce

³¹“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’^f ³²But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths

³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ ³⁴But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.^g

Eye for Eye

³⁸“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’^h ³⁹But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Love for Enemies

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor’ⁱ and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Giving to the Needy

6 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²“So when you give to the needy, do not announce

^a 21 Exodus 20:13 ^b 22 The Greek word for *brother* or *sister* (*adelphos*) refers here to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in verse 23. ^c 22 Some manuscripts *brother or sister without cause* ^d 22 An Aramaic term of contempt ^e 27 Exodus 20:14 ^f 31 Deut. 24:1

^g 37 Or *from evil* ^h 38 Exodus 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21 ⁱ 43 Lev. 19:18

it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Prayer

⁵“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹“This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,

¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation,^a
but deliver us from the evil one.^b

¹⁴For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Fasting

¹⁶“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Treasures in Heaven

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²²“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy,^c your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are unhealthy,^d your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Do Not Worry

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life^e?

²⁸“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you — you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Judging Others

7 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

³“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

⁶“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Ask, Seek, Knock

⁷“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

¹³“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

True and False Prophets

¹⁵“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

True and False Disciples

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many

^a 13 The Greek for temptation can also mean testing.

^b 13 Or from evil; some late manuscripts one, / for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

^c 22 The Greek for healthy here implies generous.

^d 23 The Greek for unhealthy here implies stingy.

^e 27 Or single cubit to your height

Life Through the Spirit

S Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you⁴ free from the law of sin and death.³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh,⁵ God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.⁶ And so he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life¹¹ because of righteousness.¹² And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of¹³ his Spirit who lives in you.

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it.¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.¹⁶ And by him we cry, "Abba,⁹ Father."¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Present Suffering and Future Glory

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope²¹ that¹ the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who¹ have been called according to his purpose.²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of

his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

More Than Conquerors

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."¹

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,² 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.

Paul's Anguish Over Israel

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—² I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race,⁴ the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised!¹ Amen.

God's Sovereign Choice

⁶ It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. ⁷ Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."⁸ In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. ⁹ For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."¹⁰

¹⁰ Not only that, but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. ¹¹ Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹² not by works but by him who calls—she was

^a 2 The Greek is singular; some manuscripts *me*. ^b 3 In contexts like this, the Greek word for flesh (*sarx*) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit; also in verses 4-13.

^c 3 Or *flesh, for sin*. ^d 10 Or *you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive*. ^e 11 Some manuscripts *bodies through*.

^f 15 The Greek word for *adoption to sonship* is a term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture; also in verse 23.

^g 15 Aramaic for *father*. ^h 20, 21 Or *subjected it in hope*.

ⁱ 28 Or *that all things work together for good to those who love God, who; or that in all things God works together with those who love him to bring about what is good—with those who*. ^j 36 Psalm 44:22. ^k 38 Or *heavenly rulers*. ^l 5 Or *Messiah, who is over all. God be forever praised!* Or *Messiah. God who is over all be forever praised!*. ^m 7 Gen. 21:12. ⁿ 9 Gen. 18:10, 14.

❖ Psalm 18^a

For the director of music. Of David the servant of the LORD. He sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said:

- 1 I love you, LORD, my strength.
- 2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield^b and the horn^c of my salvation, my stronghold.
- 3 I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise,
and I have been saved from my enemies.
- 4 The cords of death entangled me;
the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.
- 5 The cords of the grave coiled around me;
the snares of death confronted me.
- 6 In my distress I called to the LORD;
I cried to my God for help.
From his temple he heard my voice;
my cry came before him, into his ears.
- 7 The earth trembled and quaked,
and the foundations of the mountains shook;
they trembled because he was angry.
- 8 Smoke rose from his nostrils;
consuming fire came from his mouth,
burning coals blazed out of it.
- 9 He parted the heavens and came down;
dark clouds were under his feet.
- 10 He mounted the cherubim and flew;
he soared on the wings of the wind.
- 11 He made darkness his covering, his canopy
around him —
the dark rain clouds of the sky.
- 12 Out of the brightness of his presence clouds
advanced,
with hailstones and bolts of lightning.
- 13 The LORD thundered from heaven;
the voice of the Most High resounded.^d
- 14 He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy,
with great bolts of lightning he routed them.
- 15 The valleys of the sea were exposed
and the foundations of the earth laid bare
at your rebuke, LORD,
at the blast of breath from your nostrils.
- 16 He reached down from on high and took hold
of me;
he drew me out of deep waters.
- 17 He rescued me from my powerful enemy,
from my foes, who were too strong for me.
- 18 They confronted me in the day of my disaster,
but the LORD was my support.
- 19 He brought me out into a spacious place;
he rescued me because he delighted in me.
- 20 The LORD has dealt with me according to my
righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he has
rewarded me.
- 21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD;
I am not guilty of turning from my God.
- 22 All his laws are before me;
I have not turned away from his decrees.
- 23 I have been blameless before him
and have kept myself from sin.
- 24 The LORD has rewarded me according to my
righteousness,
according to the cleanness of my hands in his
sight.
- 25 To the faithful you show yourself faithful,
to the blameless you show yourself blameless,
- 26 to the pure you show yourself pure,
but to the devious you show yourself shrewd.

- 27 You save the humble
but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.
- 28 You, LORD, keep my lamp burning;
my God turns my darkness into light.
- 29 With your help I can advance against a troop^e;
with my God I can scale a wall.
- 30 As for God, his way is perfect:
The LORD's word is flawless;
he shields all who take refuge in him.
- 31 For who is God besides the LORD?
And who is the Rock except our God?
- 32 It is God who arms me with strength
and keeps my way secure.
- 33 He makes my feet like the feet of a deer;
he causes me to stand on the heights.
- 34 He trains my hands for battle;
my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
- 35 You make your saving help my shield,
and your right hand sustains me;
your help has made me great.
- 36 You provide a broad path for my feet,
so that my ankles do not give way.
- 37 I pursued my enemies and overtook them;
I did not turn back till they were destroyed.
- 38 I crushed them so that they could not rise;
they fell beneath my feet.
- 39 You armed me with strength for battle;
you humbled my adversaries before me.
- 40 You made my enemies turn their backs in flight,
and I destroyed my foes.
- 41 They cried for help, but there was no one to
save them —
to the LORD, but he did not answer.
- 42 I beat them as fine as windblown dust;
I trampled them^f like mud in the streets.
- 43 You have delivered me from the attacks of the
people;
you have made me the head of nations.
People I did not know now serve me,
foreigners cower before me;
as soon as they hear of me, they obey me.
- 45 They all lose heart;
they come trembling from their strongholds.

- 46 The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock!
Exalted be God my Savior!
- 47 He is the God who avenges me,
who subdues nations under me,
who saves me from my enemies.
- 48 You exalted me above my foes;
from a violent man you rescued me.
- 49 Therefore I will praise you, LORD, among the
nations;
I will sing the praises of your name.

- 50 He gives his king great victories;
he shows unfailing love to his anointed,
to David and to his descendants forever.

❖ Psalm 19^g

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
- 2 Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.

^a In Hebrew texts 18:1-50 is numbered 18:2-51.

^b 2 Or *sovereign* ^c 2 Horn here symbolizes strength.

^d 13 Some Hebrew manuscripts and Septuagint (see also 2 Samuel 22:14); most Hebrew manuscripts *resounded, / amid hailstones and bolts of lightning* ^e 29 Or *can run through a barricade* ^f 42 Many Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac and Targum (see also 2 Samuel 22:43); Masoretic Text *I poured them out* ^g In Hebrew texts 19:1-14 is numbered 19:2-15.

- ¹⁴ for she is more profitable than silver
and yields better returns than gold.
¹⁵ She is more precious than rubies;
nothing you desire can compare with her.
¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
¹⁷ Her ways are pleasant ways,
and all her paths are peace.
¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her;
those who hold her fast will be blessed.
¹⁹ By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations,
by understanding he set the heavens in place;
²⁰ by his knowledge the watery depths were divided,
and the clouds let drop the dew.
²¹ My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out
of your sight,
preserve sound judgment and discretion;
²² they will be life for you,
an ornament to grace your neck.
²³ Then you will go on your way in safety,
and your foot will not stumble.
²⁴ When you lie down, you will not be afraid;
when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
²⁵ Have no fear of sudden disaster
or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked,
²⁶ for the LORD will be at your side
and will keep your foot from being snared.
²⁷ Do not withhold good from those to whom it is
due,
when it is in your power to act.
²⁸ Do not say to your neighbor,
"Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you" —
when you already have it with you.
²⁹ Do not plot harm against your neighbor,
who lives trustfully near you.
³⁰ Do not accuse anyone for no reason —
when they have done you no harm.
³¹ Do not envy the violent
or choose any of their ways.
³² For the LORD detests the perverse
but takes the upright into his confidence.
³³ The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked,
but he blesses the home of the righteous.
³⁴ He mocks proud mockers
but shows favor to the humble and oppressed.
³⁵ The wise inherit honor,
but fools get only shame.

Get Wisdom at Any Cost

- 4** Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction;
pay attention and gain understanding.
² I give you sound learning,
so do not forsake my teaching.
³ For I too was a son to my father,
still tender, and cherished by my mother.
⁴ Then he taught me, and he said to me,
"Take hold of my words with all your heart;
keep my commands, and you will live.
⁵ Get wisdom, get understanding;
do not forget my words or turn away from
them.
⁶ Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;
love her, and she will watch over you.
⁷ The beginning of wisdom is this: Get^a wisdom.
Though it cost all you have,^b get
understanding.
⁸ Cherish her, and she will exalt you;
embrace her, and she will honor you.
⁹ She will give you a garland to grace your head
and present you with a glorious crown."
¹⁰ Listen, my son, accept what I say,
and the years of your life will be many.

- ¹¹ I instruct you in the way of wisdom
and lead you along straight paths.
¹² When you walk, your steps will not be hampered;
when you run, you will not stumble.
¹³ Hold on to instruction, do not let it go;
guard it well, for it is your life.
¹⁴ Do not set foot on the path of the wicked
or walk in the way of evildoers.
¹⁵ Avoid it, do not travel on it;
turn from it and go on your way.
¹⁶ For they cannot rest until they do evil;
they are robbed of sleep till they make
someone stumble.
¹⁷ They eat the bread of wickedness
and drink the wine of violence.
¹⁸ The path of the righteous is like the morning sun,
shining ever brighter till the full light of day.
¹⁹ But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness;
they do not know what makes them stumble.
²⁰ My son, pay attention to what I say;
turn your ear to my words.
²¹ Do not let them out of your sight,
keep them within your heart;
²² for they are life to those who find them
and health to one's whole body.
²³ Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.
²⁴ Keep your mouth free of perversity;
keep corrupt talk far from your lips.
²⁵ Let your eyes look straight ahead;
fix your gaze directly before you.
²⁶ Give careful thought to the^c paths for your feet
and be steadfast in all your ways.
²⁷ Do not turn to the right or the left;
keep your foot from evil.

Warning Against Adultery

- 5** My son, pay attention to my wisdom,
turn your ear to my words of insight,
² that you may maintain discretion
and your lips may preserve knowledge.
³ For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey,
and her speech is smoother than oil;
⁴ but in the end she is bitter as gall,
sharp as a double-edged sword.
⁵ Her feet go down to death;
her steps lead straight to the grave.
⁶ She gives no thought to the way of life;
her paths wander aimlessly, but she does not
know it.
⁷ Now then, my sons, listen to me;
do not turn aside from what I say.
⁸ Keep to a path far from her,
do not go near the door of her house,
⁹ lest you lose your honor to others
and your dignity^d to one who is cruel,
¹⁰ lest strangers feast on your wealth
and your toil enrich the house of another.
¹¹ At the end of your life you will groan,
when your flesh and body are spent.
¹² You will say, "How I hated discipline!
How my heart spurned correction!
¹³ I would not obey my teachers
or turn my ear to my instructors.
¹⁴ And I was soon in serious trouble
in the assembly of God's people."
¹⁵ Drink water from your own cistern,
running water from your own well.
¹⁶ Should your springs overflow in the streets,
your streams of water in the public squares?
¹⁷ Let them be yours alone,
never to be shared with strangers.

^a 7 Or Wisdom is supreme; therefore get ^b 7 Or wisdom. /
Whatever else you get ^c 26 Or Make level ^d 9 Or years

GETTING TO KNOW JESUS

QUESTION: *How can I get to know Jesus?*

ANSWER: This is undoubtedly the most important question you'll ever ask. The great news is that there is an answer because God already knows you personally and intimately, and he wants you to know him too. He created you as a person of great worth, and he loves you deeply. Now maybe you're asking, "If God loves people so much, why are they so far from him?" The answer is a little three-letter word—sin. When we do what we know is wrong, when we don't do what we know is right, when we ignore or reject God, we sin. Sin keeps us from getting close to God—but God provides a way to come back to him. Jesus is the only way!

QUESTION: *Who is Jesus?*

ANSWER: Jesus is God's Son. Because sin came into the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, God asked Jesus to make things right again. Jesus was born (just about 2,000 years ago), and he lived in the part of the world called Palestine. When he was about thirty years old, he began to preach and to heal. Just a few years later he was nailed to a cross to die. When the people who loved him went to his grave three days after he died, Jesus' body wasn't there. He had come back to life, just as he said he would.

QUESTION: *Why did Jesus have to die?*

ANSWER: It was all part of God's great plan to make right what had become so wrong because of sin. You see, we all deserve to be punished. God loves us so much he sent Jesus to take our punishment. Because of Jesus we can know for sure that God welcomes us into his loving arms—right now and when we die and go to be him.

QUESTION: *Where is Jesus now?*

ANSWER: Jesus is in heaven with his Father. But he has not left us alone here on earth. He

sent the Holy Spirit to live with us—to make us strong when we feel like giving up, to help us to care about other people when we sometimes don't feel like it, to tell us that Jesus will always love us.

QUESTION: *Does God love me? Do I matter to him?*

ANSWER: The answer is Jesus. In Jesus God experienced what it is like to be a human being. Jesus knows how we feel—and he loves you more than you can imagine. He loves you when you cry and when you laugh; when you argue with a friend or when you've had a bad day. He loves you so much that he died for you—but he isn't still dead. He is alive, and he is loving you and watching over you every day.

QUESTION: *Will Jesus ever stop loving me?*

ANSWER: No! There will be times when you wonder if Jesus is really real. There will be times when you wonder if he loves you. There will be times when you do things that you shouldn't—when you act mean to someone you love or let someone down. But when you pray and tell Jesus that you have times when you doubt; when you pray and tell Jesus that you know you've done wrong and you want to do better—you can be sure that he will never let you down. He will love you your whole life, and you will live with him forever.

QUESTION: *How do I know I'm a Christian?*

ANSWER: There are many signs. When you love Jesus with all the love you can give, when you know deep down that Jesus loves you, when you believe he died to forgive your sins, when you want to live for Jesus—those are good signs that help you know you are a Christian. Sure, you're going to fail sometimes. But, you see, God's love for you is so great that it covers those times when you fail. He sees deep into your heart. He knows your desire to live for him, and he loves you.