



Israel's Greatest Hits Continued – 1

Drawing Near to God

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, some Christians bother me. They bother me, and I'll bet the kind of person I'm thinking about sometimes bothers you as well. The kind of Christian that always acts like everything is going great all the time. Like all the time. Like, how are you? "I'm blessed, I'm blessed. I'm so blessed." It's like everything's always going their way. God is answering all of their prayers. They say stuff like, you know, they feel God so palpably present in every hour of every day of every week of every month of every year. They're just like everything's great. Well, thankfully, there's the biggest book in the Bible called Psalms that kind of injects some reality into that kind of thinking, particularly for us who can realize by reading the Psalms that those Christians are the weirdos and we're not. That if you don't always feel like that, that you're not defective, that, in fact, that's pretty common and been a pretty common experience for us to not feel that way all the time. The people of God have been feeling down and frustrated a lot in walking with the Lord. That's just how it works. And, it's good for us to look in the Psalms every now and then to figure that out, just to kind of realize we're sane if we're not feeling on cloud nine every single day of our Christian life. With that said, it is important to recognize that the Psalms will remind us that when we're feeling bad, when we're feeling in some emotional desert, we're feeling left out, alone, we feel frustrated, we feel like God is distant. We shouldn't be content just to stay there and just say, okay, well, this is how I should go on feeling. There are remedies given to us in the Scripture, and thankfully it tells us what to do when we feel that way.

What we need to do, frankly, when you're feeling off, when you're feeling alone, when you're feeling like your prayers are hitting the ceiling, you feel like this doesn't feel good anymore to be a Christian. You know that you're believing in the right things, the true things, but your life isn't working out. Here's one thing you should do for sure. You should study Psalm 43. I know you should do that. And then to take it a step further, you should do what it says, and what is modeled there for us in that passage. Now, doing what it says and reading it and studying it as we're going to do this morning, won't immediately just, you know, yank you out of the funk of feeling weird and feeling off. But, it will certainly give you the tools to start walking in a direction that will start to remedy the emotional desert that you might feel that you're in.

So let's turn to this passage and see if we can't understand it, and then maybe set out this week to do what this text says. And I think this will be helpful because we want to know what to do when we feel the way the psalmist feels here. Now we're going to Psalm 43. And you know, if you're a Bible scholar or whatever you're thinking, well, this is attached to Psalm 42 and it is, this is connected. Matter of fact, if you took Hebrew in seminary or college or whatever you might have learned in the Hebrew Psalter Psalm 42 and 43 are often together as one psalm, numbered as one psalm, connected at least in terms of prose and poetry and lyrics in one psalm and that's okay. But we're going to take it as is in many cases in manuscripts that these are two separate. At least we're going to deal with the themes that we have here in Psalm 43 which is only five verses for us. And if you've been around Compass very long, you might know this is the chapter from which we derive our theme verse for our

church. Not the first two verses, thankfully, but verses 3 and 4. So let's take a look at this text to see the frustration of the psalmist when he starts with this interesting word, "Vindicate me," vindicate. It's the Hebrew word for "justice." Give me justice, make things right, fix things in essence, "O God, and defend my cause." What kind of cause? It's a cause "against an ungodly people." And you can't be a Christian in America in the 21st century and not feel that kind of pressure. Like the culture is just insane and pressing against us. And then it may be closer to home that there are "deceitful people and unjust people" that you need to be "delivered from." Something's going wrong, something's unjust, and you don't have things going right. "Deliver me from deceitful and the unjust man, deliver me! For you are the God in whom I take refuge." I mean, that's my theological commitment. I'm yours. And in our case we're Christians. We're going to relate to God in Christ and so that's our commitment. And yet it says, "Why have you," here's a big word, "rejected me?"

That's not unusual in the Scripture to have people that we know are tight with God to feel rejected by God. I mean, he's not getting his prayers answered. He's not being delivered immediately from "deceitful and unjust men." And then he says, "Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" Well, I think the answer is in the question. Well, because you're not being delivered from the oppression of the enemy. Now here's our theme verse here and really both verses are helping us to get the full picture of what we had hoped our church would be some 20 years ago when we set out to establish it. "Send out," here the psalmist says, "your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!" A lot like a compass. Do you see where we're going here with this? I mean, I don't want to preach two different sermons here, but the idea is there's going to be truth metaphorically described as light, just like the Scripture says in Psalm 119, like a "Lamp to our feet and a light to our path." And it's going to guide us. Now for us it's to a metaphorical hill. But to them in the Old Testament it was to bring them to a literal holy hill. The holy hill was called in Jerusalem Mount Zion not often called that geographically, but often called that in the ultimate sense that we know it represents the ultimate Zion, God's dwelling place. But it was God's dwelling place among men as it was put, where there would be a Tabernacle, a dwelling place, a temple later that Solomon would build, that it would be on Araunah's threshing floor that David bought from this man in the middle of that plague, if you know all the history of that.

But he buys this hilltop, Mount Zion, which is just a hill, basically. And they build this dwelling place on it where God had picked that particular piece of real estate to put his temple on. He says, "Then I'll go to the altar of God." This very important and large, you know, kind of oversized hibachi that sat there in the courtyard of the temple where they would barbecue all the animals. And it smelled good, unless you're vegan or whatever, even if you're vegan it smells good. And you vegans know it. You don't admit it. (audience laughing) But it smells good. "I'll go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy." Ultimately he says, I'll be brought because this is part of the remedy here. "And I will praise you with the lyre," that's the ancient, you know, a form of a harp, a handheld harp, "O God, my God." And then he asks himself this question. He speaks to himself which we see in the Psalms. "Why are you cast down, O my soul, why are you in turmoil within me?" Well, we know the first two verses give us the context for that. We know that your prayers aren't being answered. You feel distant from God. But he



says, I'm going to get this truth. It's going to lead me to get closer to God. And so then he tells himself, "Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God." So this journey, if you will, this moving toward God, this drawing near to God, I mean, this is really what it's all about, but it comes from the context and the place in this man's life where he's feeling far from God, where he's feeling like he's rejected by God when he's in mourning. That's a heavy word. He's not just sad. He's in mourning.

So we want to learn from this text. And the first thing we can learn in the first two verses is the grammar of this. Now that sounds very dry and stodgy, but the grammar helps us and it leads us to something very practical. Take a look at it. "Vindicate me, O God." Right? Here's something he is requesting of God. "Vindicate me, O God, defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me! For you," so he's speaking first person, second person singular, he's talking to God. "You are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you rejected me? Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me." All of these pronouns and all of this grammar of him speaking in the first person to God reminds us that all of these words are couched grammatically as a prayer. And these are lyrics intended for the people of Israel to sing these lyrics as a prayer to God, to kind of get in the sandals of the guy who's feeling far from God and feeling oppressed in some way, feeling like life is not working out. Now, he's not saying, I feel blessed when someone says in the courtyard of the tabernacle, how are you feeling or the temple. He's saying, I feel bad, things are not good. I feel like God is my enemy right now. He's opposing me. I feel like he's rejecting me, and yet he's saying this in a prayer and that's a wild thought. His prayers are not being answered and the answer for him for unanswered prayer is more prayer. And that's a weird thing to think. Now, it's not the kind of prayer you might think because he's being very honest with God. I feel like my prayers are not being answered. But he's wording that not to his friend in the small group. He's wording that to God.

And if you want a definition of persistence, it's you not getting what you want from someone you feel is rejecting you and you're not rejecting him. You're saying you're my refuge, I'm running to you and I'm talking to you even though I feel like you're not answering me and you're rejecting me. That persistence, let's put it this way, Letter "A," or number one, "Persist in Prayer." And you know when that's hard. When life hurts, right? If all your prayers were immediately answered I think there would be a lot of praying going on in your life. But when you pray and there is no answer or the answer doesn't turn out the way you want, that is when you recognize it's hard to keep praying. I don't want to pray. I mean, if you're like me, when someone rejects me my default response is I reject you. And the psalmist does something counter-intuitive. He continues to lean in in prayer. He continues to talk to the God who he feels is rejecting him. Did you read our Daily Bible Reading this morning? Our Daily Bible Reading. If you're on schedule in Job, this is exactly what Job is praying in the first chapter of our Daily Bible Reading. There are two chapters. One is the response to Job. But Job says to God, why are you rejecting me? How long is this going to keep going? Why are you against me? It's like you're my opponent, right? I need to get a hearing with you. All these things are going wrong for Job and Job feels rejected. And yet, even in Job's life, just like in the life of the psalmist here, he's leaning into prayer. He's praying more. I need you to pray



more when you don't feel close to God. I need you to pray more when you feel like your prayers aren't being answered. I need you to pray because that's what God asks us to do.

Now, the person who always feels blessed, right? They think they can put themselves in First Kings Chapter 18, put themselves right in the sandals of the hero in that passage and that's how they feel. But if you've been around the block a few times in the Christian life you cannot look at First Kings Chapter 18 and think, oh yeah, that's me. Because I don't know many in this room who would say that's me. And you remember what went on in First Kings 18. First Kings Chapter 18, Elijah is there in a society where unjust and deceitful people are winning, the prophets of Baal were having a field day because Ahab and Jezebel were in charge of the nation, and they are doing everything they wanted and it's all against the truth of revealed Scripture. And yet here is Elijah and he basically says, I got to quote the passage for you. I mean, if you want to talk about a throwdown deal. Here it is. First Kings 18:24, he says to the 450 prophets of Baal, he says, "You call upon the name of your god, and I'll call upon the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, well then he's God." That's pretty bold. And they say in response, "And all the people say, 'It is well spoken.'" In other words, bring it on. They say, okay, let's do that.

Now, there's a lot of oppression. There's a lot of opposition. There's a lot of pain. There are a lot of things that come from our society and culture where they're like, you know, your God is dumb and I think, well, your god is dumb, and we're at this, you know, this inevitable crossroads of conflicting worldviews. And I'll tell you one thing I don't have the faith to do is to go on the spot in public and say, "I'm going to pray right now and God's going to answer me. Just right now I'm going to pray and he's going to answer me." I mean, maybe the new Christian feels that way. Maybe the person who is always going around saying, I feel so blessed. But in reality we don't often have the faith to think, well, I'm going to pray and God is going to answer. And you know why? Because we're experienced Christians. And all it takes is a little time following Christ to know when we come to him and lean on him as our refuge, we want the storm to be calm, we want the disease to go away, we want the relationship to be fixed, we want the finances to stretch further, we want something to go better and we realize, just like Paul when he was sick in Second Corinthians 12 and he says, take this thorn in my flesh away and God says, no, no, no. When that happens enough you're not going to sit there in front of an audience and say, "Hey, watch everybody. I'm going to pray and God is going to immediately answer." We all love to tell that Sunday school story because exactly what you might hope would happen, happens. And he calls on God and God responds. And the prophets of Baal call on Baal, and Baal does nothing. And I think, well that's great.

But you know what? There are a lot of godly people. Let's think of someone who God boasted about being so close with. He had conversations as though he was face-to-face. And that's Moses. And Moses at the end of the book of Deuteronomy is praying to God as he sits across the Jordan Valley looking across at the Promised Land, and he sees the Promised Land and he says, "God, let me go in. God, let me go in. God let me go. And God let me go in." And God finally says, "Stop asking me that. The answer is no. I don't even want to hear you praying about that again." Here's a man who is tight with God and guess what? He feels rejected by God. He's mourning. He got right to the finish line. The whole point was to bring



them out of Egypt and to lead them into the Promised Land. And he's not even able to do it and he pleads with God, he begs God. And God says, no, no, no. I don't know if you're praying for a baby, I don't know if you're praying for job. I don't know if you're praying for peace in some relationship, but whatever you're praying for when you hear no from God it is hard. And I'll tell you, you're going to start to say, I don't know if I want to pray anymore. I'm not interested in leaning into my prayer life. Well, you need to lean in your prayer life. As it says, and I love this psalm, I quote this all the time. Psalm 62:8 we need to pour out our hearts to God, even if it sounds a lot like Psalm 43:1 and 2. God it isn't going well. God, I need to talk to you about the fact that I'm not getting my prayers and so I feel rejected by you. We need to talk to God. We need to be honest with God. Because whether it's Paul or whether it's Moses or even I just quoted Job, even if it's Job, Job was praying and he was saying, please God, please God, fix this now. And we are early in this book and it's not until Chapters 38, 39, and 40 where God starts to step on the scene and respond to Job. That's a lot of waiting. That's a lot of feeling of rejection. That's a lot of questions like we saw in our Job reading this morning. How long, Lord, are you going to stand by and not answer me? How long?

So if you feel like that and when someone asks you in small group this week, how are you doing? And you don't feel like saying blessed. Well, you're in good company because there are a lot of us that feel like it ain't going so well. I have a lot of desires that I think are godly desires and they're not being met. There are a lot of goals that I've set in ministry that just haven't been achieved and I just think this is what I just see in your Word. I see this is what you want to do in the world. Let's do it. It is hard for us to have a batting average, even like Elijah, who calls on God in the moment in public with all these people looking on with 450 against one and God answers him, but he can't even get through Chapter 19 if you know the story without feeling like his prayers aren't answered. He comes off the hilltop experience in Mount Carmel and he's running out into the wilderness because Jezebel wants to kill him. And you know what he wants? God, I want her to be put away. I want Ahab and Jezebel to be punished. He wants recompense of God to come down on them and God's not... It's not happening. So guess what he does? Because God won't answer his prayer he sits down by a tree and he says, just kill me. He's suicidal. He doesn't want to keep going. So before you start envying the Elijah of First Kings Chapter 18, you need to think about First Kings Chapter 19 and realize even our heroes of faith often feel like the psalmist in Psalm 43. God, I feel rejected. God, I feel like this isn't going well.

I'll take you to at least one passage here just to drive this point a little further and to elucidate this. Romans Chapter 8. I know it's a familiar passage but let's start in this text in this recurring theme that might help us realize that there's a lot of groaning in the Christian life. A lot of groaning. And the groaning in our Christian life, which is really the point of Romans Chapter 8, how to deal with the groaning. It's a lot like Psalm 43. It starts now in this discussion of groaning by saying it's like the personification of the inanimate object of creation. Right? Creation is not a person. And yet it says it's like creation is groaning because creation wants to do this beautiful thing to glorify God. And God has put a cap on it. It's been frustrated by God. It's been "subject to futility." And he says it's like creation as though it were a person and it's groaning because it wants things to go right and God just blocks that. But



one day it's going to be relieved. And he says, it's like you. Now let's pick up the story there. Romans 8:23. Let's start in verse 23. It's "not only the creation, but we ourselves," we as Christians, "who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly." Why? Because of the word that's coming up, "As we," here's the word, "wait." That's the problem in Psalm 43 verses 1 and 2. I want you to fix the injustice. I want you to fix this unjust man. I want you to turn things around. The liars are winning. I don't like it and I want it fixed. But God says, no, I'm not going to answer that right now. Wait. We "groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons."

Because when all of that happens, as he previously explained, when creation is done groaning, then everything for the children of God is going to be great. And when we're adopted formally, we've been adopted now forensically. But when we're formally inaugurated in our adoption status with new bodies, the redemption of our bodies, well, then everything's going to be great. And salvation, by the way, is all about that. It's hope, a hope in the future. "For in this hope," verse 24, "you were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope." We've quoted this passage a lot recently. The point is if you can see everything that God promised and you can get it here and now, and if Joel is right that it's your best life now, then oh, that's fantastic, but it's not. Right? It is not your best life now. If it is your best life now you should check whether or not you're saved, right? Because it's a whole lot better. The promises, the hope are in the future. If you have what you hope for, well, then it wouldn't be hope, he says. "But if we hope," verse 25, "for what we do not see, then we wait for it with patience." And by the way, the topic has already been redoubled in the passage. It's patience, but it's groaning patience.

Now again, the Psalms are trying to fix our attitude. The Psalms are trying to get us out of the mire and quagmire of the emotional desert. So it's not like we just are happy about that. It's not like that groaning is great. It's having patience start to move us away from the groaning. Speaking of groaning, this is the key now. This is the whole point of point one on our outline. "Likewise, the Spirit helps our weakness," verse 26. "For we do not know what to pray for as we ought." Okay. That's a super important truth before we get past the comma. "We don't know what to pray for as we ought." Moses should stop praying about going into the Promised Land. Paul should stop praying about better health. Job should stop praying about this thing being rectified right now. It's not time right now. All of these prayers, even Elijah, I want Jezebel and Ahab to be put out of office. Well not yet. They're not praying for the things they ought to be praying for. So look at the interesting shift here from creation groaning for redemption, for Christians groaning for redemption. Now it says the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. Why is the Spirit groaning? Because the Spirit would like us to have our redemption. The Spirit would like things to be made right. But the Spirit knows that we're praying wrongly. So in a sense the Spirit himself is groaning because our prayers are off base. We're aiming at the wrong stuff.

You're driving. It seems like they're... Thankfully, I hope it'll be done soon. All this construction on I-5. If you get on I-5 here with the multiplying lanes. And thank God for multiplying lanes. But as I merge onto I-5 going north, I think of that in particular, right? You never know now, so it's like all new freeway to us. We're trying to figure out how this works. You merge on and we're all used to as we drive the freeways every day with all of those lines, those dash lines



that separate the lanes. But if you've just merged on and you're in that farthest lane away from the middle of the freeway, and all of a sudden your nice little dash lane becomes one of those lanes that's dashed, but it's dashed like really short, really fast. Then your tires go bump, bump, bump... Now, unless you're 16 or 15.5, you may not know what that means, young people, but what that means is... What does it mean? This lane is going away, right? This lane is going away. And if you pay attention to signs and why would you? (audience laughing) But if you look for signs you would see a diamond-yellow sign at some point. And what it does not show, where it doesn't even show two black lines that merge into one with an arrow. It shows one to the left of you that goes straight and you better merge left because your lane is going away. Okay. We have a lot of prayers for a lot of things. We want "the deceitful and unjust men" to go away. We want all the problems to be fixed. We want our bodies to be healthy. We want everything to happen on our timeline. And here's the Spirit groaning to get you into his lane. And the reason you cannot lean away from prayer when your prayers are not answered, God wants you to persist in prayer, because what he is going to do for you is going to start to move your prayers in line with his. Just like Paul was moved in line with his, just like Job's was moved in line with his. Just like Moses, his prayers were moved in line with God's and finally he could say, I'm handing the baton off to Joshua, and Joshua is going to lead you into the Promised Land. That's God's plan. And the Spirit is groaning to get our prayers aligned with his and his are much more mature, much better. Why?

Because verse 27, "He who searches hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." The Spirit knows where to go, he knows what to pray for, and he is interceding for us with the right prayer request when we are trying to jam down this lane that's going away and he's saying get in my lane, get in my lane, get in my lane. Keep praying. If you don't keep praying, you don't even have that opportunity to realign your heart to the Spirit. You've got to keep persisting in prayer when your life is hurting and your life is hurting if you're a Christian because God isn't fixing it the way you want, when you want. And I understand all that. In essence, as the subtitle of the sermon says we need to draw near to God. And I understand in James Chapter 4 it seems like, well, he's drawing near to us. Well, he is in this sense. One more passage, Psalm 34. Here's how he draws near to us. He draws near to us in this sense. He's not changing his plan, he's trying to get us aligned with his plan. He's going to move us to start praying as we ought. But here's the truth, verse 15 Psalm 34, "The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous." Now I'm not righteous, you're not righteous, but praise God, in Christ we are considered the righteous. Now they said that in a relative sense in the Old Testament because our fruit should make us relatively more righteous than the non-Christians. But we are righteous in Christ so praise God for that. Reading this with a Christian-centric view of the fact that we are righteous in Christ and that's great. What does it say about the righteous in Christ? "His ear is toward their cry." There's not a single plaintive cry that you cry to the Lord and say, God, this isn't working out, I feel like you're my enemy and he doesn't hear it.

"The face of the Lord is against all those who do evil." Now we do evil, but praise God, there's no condemnation for those in Christ. But if you don't repent, right? You're storing up for yourself wrath for the day of God's judgment so you are going to incur that and he's going to

"cut off the memory of them from the earth. "But when the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears," and here's the thing, "he delivers them out of all their troubles." Verse 17 is a short verse but there's a giant gap between the first phrase and the second phrase because sometimes in our lives it can take a month, it can take a year, it may take a lifetime until your body gets lowered in a plot at the cemetery, then you finally get the thing that you've been praying for. I'm just telling you the big perspective is he does deliver all of his children. But here's the way in which he draws near to you. Ready? Verse 18. "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and he saves the crushed in spirit." That's really the goal of this sermon. How do I change my broken spirit? How do I change my crushed heart? How do I do that? How do I get out of this mire, this funk of feeling out of step with God like God's my enemy? Well, number one, you persist in prayer and God is going to do some things if you continue to persist in prayer. Don't be a petulant child saying, "We got to do it my way. I got to do it my way God." Eventually you'll get what Moses got. Stop praying that prayer and you got to be more like Paul who only has to pray three times begging God and God finally adjusts his prayer life. It may take us 33 times, but eventually we have to say, okay, God, I'm starting to recognize you're good in this. And as Romans 8 finally crescendos into, "All things are going to work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose." So we must continue in prayer. Keep persisting in your prayer life.

Back to our passage. Psalm 43 verse 3 now. "Send out your light and your truth." Now truth is very literal here, we got the truth of God and it has been revealed. God has revealed his truth. Light is a metaphor of that. It's like Psalm 119 as I said, "It's a lamp to our feet, a light to our path." And it's supposed to lead us. Now lead us. Now we need to read the Psalms Christologically, I get that. We need to see this in light of the New Testament truths. I need to read the Psalms as a Christian. But before I read the Psalms as a Christian, I got to understand how the Jews would see this in the 10th century B.C. When the Sons of Korah wrote this and they were singing this song centuries ago before Christ. Right? They thought of this very literally and of course that's how it was meant. "Let them bring me to your holy hill." That was a coordinate on a map in Jerusalem. It was part of the city of Jerusalem on which they had built the temple, "to your dwelling." Even back in Deuteronomy, find that place where the Lord's going to set his name. Seek it. I will show it to you. And there you will worship me. That's the point. I want to go there. And "Then I'll go to," a particular thing, "an altar," a literal altar, a giant altar. And you go there, the altar of God, and go to God. And he will be. Here's the thing, "My exceeding joy," when I draw near to him physically in this sense. And it may be a mile, maybe two miles, maybe 35 miles, it may be 100 miles. This man has to go to get there. And then he says, I know "I'll praise you with music with," a guitar, "with a lyre," with a harp, "O God, my God." I just love that. He moves from just persistent praying in his disappointment to saying what I need is your truth to lead me to be close to you. And the truth is going to be like a compass to get me where I need to be and it's going to draw me near to you.

Now, we read this metaphorically because of course you know the New Testament. But I want to drive this home from the New Testament. So go with me before we ever write down this second point to John Chapter 4, so you can clearly understand why we don't go to a particular coordinate on the map. We're not like Muslims bowing down to pray toward a



particular place on the map. Why is the map no longer relevant to our worship? Here's why. In John Chapter 4, Jesus, as you might remember, didn't have any convention like the other Jews to go around the area of Samaria. Now remember, he was conceived and actually that the incarnation formally took place, technically took place in Nazareth, which is up north around the Sea of Tiberius also known as the Sea of Galilee up north. If you know your map, if you don't go to the back of your Bibles and hopefully you have one there, and you have up in the top in the first century a lot of Jews living around the Sea of Galilee, a lot of Jews, a lot of Jewish villages, a lot of Jewish enclaves there, a lot of synagogues. Down south you had Jerusalem and the surrounding environment of Judea, like the tribe of Judah. And there you had two Jewish enclaves, right? You had these power places on the map. In between you had the Samaritans and the Samaritans were so called because the area which even today is called by Jews Samaria, is the section between and it was filled with people who were descendants of the ten northern tribes.

The problem was the Jews of the North and the Jews of the South they hated them because when in the 7th century, the 8th century, 721 B.C., the Assyrians came in and Sennacherib came in and they decimated the ten northern tribes. What often they did in compromise and surrender is they went ahead and did what we read in Ezra and Nehemiah they weren't supposed to do, they intermarried with the foreigners. Right? And it's not because God is some kind of racist about ethnicities, because God was going to do something through the descendants of Abraham keeping those 12 tribes intact, which of course he did, in his providence there was a remnant. But many of these northern tribes intermarried with the Assyrians and the Jews, who knew that their heritage was important and their lineage from Abraham and the 12 tribes was important, they knew that this was a sellout and they could not forgive them for that. They wouldn't let them worship in Jerusalem and they avoided them. They would go... If they were going to go as often needed to happen the Jews in the northern, the devout Jews in the northern area of Israel had to get to Jerusalem if they're faithful at least three times a year for a pilgrimage feast, they had to go there for one of the major festivals. And they would go on the side of Perea, which is modern-day Jordan. They'd have to cross the Jordan Valley and they went around Samaria because they didn't want to pass through it.

But, you know, as Jesus is going from Judah, Judea, Jerusalem up to Galilee, his hometown, and his base of operation in Capernaum, he decides to go straight through it. Now, maybe he's just a pragmatist, right? I know it's more than that. But he doesn't want to walk further [farther] than he has to and he doesn't care that they're Samaritans. And of course, in the end, his love and election for Samaria, he's going to save a lot of Samaritans. And this is case in point in John 4, when he walks through the middle of Samaria, which most Jews would avoid, and he sits down in Sychar, outside of Sychar, at Jacob's Well, and the woman at the well, as we call her, is there. They have this discussion. He starts to talk to her about repentance. He's going to use her to save a bunch of people from the city of Sychar. You know the story that the disciples go into town to buy some lunch and he's having this conversation. He starts to reveal that he is the Messiah to this gal, and one of the ways he does it is by telling her that she's a sinner and he does it in some very revealing ways. He talks about her sexual life. Right? You've had a lot of husbands. The guy you're living with now is not your husband. And so all of this comes out and instead of saying, you're right,



you're the Messiah, I'm a sinner, I repent, and all of this goes the way we'd want it, she does what a lot of people do in our evangelism when they get convicted, they obfuscate and they redirect the conversation.

So let's pick it up there in John Chapter 4. That was a long lead into John Chapter 4. But verse 20 she comes out with, okay, it seems like you're a prophet in verse 19. So the first question that pops into her mind, I guess, is the whole thing about where to worship. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain. Now not far from Sychar at least on the horizon you could see Mount Gerizim. Mount Gerizim was their version of Mount Zion because they said, well, you're not going to let us into Jerusalem to worship. We're going to build our own worship center in Samaria. So on Mount Gerizim they'd set up an altar and they set up an alternative tabernacle. Well, you weren't supposed to do that. The Pentateuch was very clear about that but they did it anyway. And she said, we're Samaritans. "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem," because we know you're a Jew, right? You are a faithful northern Jew from Galilee, but you're also there trafficking in Jerusalem. "You say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." And Jesus said to her, let's get back on topic. Stop talking about that. Let's talk about your life. No, he doesn't, he says, let's just answer your question as long as you brought it up. Jesus says, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain," Mount Gerizim, "nor in Jerusalem," on Mount Zion, "will you worship the Father. You worship what you don't know," because you shouldn't even be building alternative temples in Gerizim, you shouldn't, "but you worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews." You'd be faithful to what God wrote in his Word. And salvation is going to come through that fidelity to God's roadmap of salvation in the Bible.

"But the hour is coming, and is now here." This is the transition of the gospels. Hard to read the gospels. You've got to be hermeneutical smart in reading the gospels because we're transitioning from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. And he says, "now here," well, it's not quite here technically, because it will technically come when the temple veil is torn the moment he breathes his last breath on the cross. But we're here. We're in the zone of when this is changed. "Is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth." It's not about Gerizim or Zion. It's not about the coordinates on the map. It's about you being right in your heart before God, which is you being faithful to say what God says about your sin. It's called confession. She's going to struggle with that with a second theological question, but she is under the conviction. And he says, what we need is honesty before God. We need you to be sincere. Just like the writer of Psalm 43 is saying, God, I feel like you're opposing me. Here he's pouring out his heart, as Psalm 68 says, he's pouring out his heart in honesty, integrity, and he's seeking God in his spirit. And that's, Jesus says, how people are going to do it. And in truth, because you can't just make up the facts about who God is or where to worship him in that Old Covenant and in the New Covenant, you better be governed by the truth of who God is. "For the Father is seeking such people to worship him," and that's amazing. It used to be we had to seek out the Mount Zion. We had to seek out the tabernacle to worship. We had to seek out to bring an animal and sacrifice it on the altar with the guys that were dressed funny, the Levites doing all their thing. We had to seek the place to worship. Now Father is seeking people all the way to the other side of the planet in the 21st



century, looking for people in this weird place they didn't even know about in Southern California, to find worshipers that will "worship him," as it says, "in spirit and in truth." That's how we're supposed to worship God.

Now you know I hope from New Testament study that because God draws close to us in the third person of the Godhead, we're now so in enclose with God, the prepositions change from the Spirit being WITH us to the Spirit being IN us. That's how close and connected and owned we are by God if we're Christians. In repentance and faith I become his child. I'm owned by God and God is so close to me it's as though he's in me. And because of that, Paul makes this point very clear. He does it in his letters. He does it to the Corinthians. He does it to the Ephesians. He says, we are the temple, the building, God now for us both individually and as a church, we become wherever we are on the map, we become worshipers of the living God. You no longer have to bow toward a particular place. You no longer have to go to a particular place. It's not about the place. It's about you in the place where you're at worshipping God. That's huge.

And so when we read this passage, back to our text now, when it says, "Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. And then I'll go to the altar of God," where I sacrifice, where I give, where I bring my offerings, "with exceeding joy." Where there's music and praise and praise with instruments, stringed instruments like guitars. "O God, my God." I'm going to find joy in that. This is the great thing. The truth of God is going to lead me to that. It's going to lead me to connect with the living God. I draw near to God in prayer and I draw near to God in truth and that draws me to God. The kind of connection with God that is governed by his truth. Number two, this is the thing that helps us when we feel like our prayers are hitting the ceiling and we're not feeling it in the Christian life. Number two, we need to "Dig Into God's Word for Encouragement," a great word. And I say it's a great word because in the Greek New Testament, as we often say, this compound word coupled with a preposition is the word "Paracletos." "Para" is "next to." "Kaleo" is "called in alongside." And as I often say, and I get this from the book of Hebrews, when our knees are feeble and we're feeling shaky in our Christian lives, we need paracletos. We need something called in alongside of us to shore us up. And the bolstering, shoring up of what we need is the paracletos that comes from the truth. And the truth is going to bring us close to God. And frankly, it's going to bring us close together with each other, assembling in places all over the world to worship together, to bring our offerings and to sit under the instruction of God's Word. And that parallel is real clear in the Bible.

Let me take you to one more Old Testament text to drive this home. Go to the book of Malachi with me. Malachi Chapter 2. In Malachi, go to Matthew and turn back one book if you've got the old-fashioned Gutenberg-style Bible. Matthew, go back to Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament. God's going to get one more corrective into his people before he goes into 400 years of silence. We're going to wait until the birth of John the Baptist to refire up all of God's revelation. I'm going to get 27 books in the divine-inspired library but right now we're closing out the 39th book before we hit this period of silence. They had come back, the southern tribes, from the Babylonian captivity and now they've resettled under the Zerubbabel then Ezra and Nehemiah and they were there building a new temple and they were there to



serve God. And what was important is to get those Levites together to lead the worship. And as they do he's giving this charge, as you can look at, glance through the first few verses, he's giving a charge to the priests to get it right. Get it right and keep it right until we meet up again 400 years later and I visit you with the prophets and the apostles. But it says here in this text, look at it with me in Malachi Chapter 2 start in verse 5, "My covenant with him," right? Aaron was the first high priest, the brother of Moses from the tribe of Levi. But this priesthood, this covenant with Levi, ultimately goes back to the sons of Abraham, this chosen tribe, "My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them," I gave him life, I gave him peace, I gave it "to him. It was a covenant of fear," right? Great respect for God. Right? "And he feared me. He stood in awe of my name."

Now all of that's true. He's got no land. He doesn't harvest the fields. He's there facilitating worship in the worship center, first in the desert, and then ultimately the Tabernacle turned into the temple in the 10th century B.C. and we have now Solomon's Temple. And there is the headquarters for service. It's all about the ceremonies but there's something that goes beyond the ceremonies that relates to light and truth. And here it is, verse 6. "True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips." The priesthood was about telling the truth. It was about teaching. "He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity." How? Through the teaching. Verse 7, "For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." Now what kind of messenger is he? Is he a new prophet bringing new prophecy? No. Right? The priests of the Old Testament were to take the prophecies of the prophets and reiterate them and instruct them so the people of God who came to Jerusalem could learn it, and they would even be dispersed to the villages and set up synagogues and teach. The centerpiece of the people of God meeting together was instruction. They were to be taught the truth. You had to seek God in truth. And the truth as you can see this parallel to why we call our church Compass Bible Church and to say this is our theme verse is because at the church that should be the primary function in every classroom all over this campus. The main thing we do, yeah, we play on the stringed instruments. Yes, we have fellowship. Yes, we pray. But the main thing the assembled church does is sit and listen to the instruction of God's Word. And so it's about the truth of God's Word. And the thing we need is not to stray from our prayer life, point one, and not to stray from the assembled church and the teaching of God's Word.

Can you do that on your own with a Bible on your lap at the beach? Yes, you could. But you can't do it the way you can do it when we assemble together and the people of God, the congregation of the redeemed, join together in a particular place to have the experience we're having here this morning. We need more of that. We need more of that "all the more as we see the day drawing near." We need to know that the truth of God is going to bring that bolstering encouragement and particularly when like a pinball machine, the truth bounces through the various lives of people who we meet with at church, right? We get strengthened, we get encouraged, we get through the funk of the Christian life when we can't say we feel blessed, when we feel like I can't get this job, I can't have this baby, I can't deal with this relationship, and we're struggling. We need to get together, be instructed and be governed by



the truth. We need to "turn from iniquity" because a good teaching of the Word, that's what we need. And God says, I will encourage you through that.

One more passage before I leave this second point, go to Romans 15, please. Romans 15. This is the word *paracletos* in a great context. Look at verse 4. "Whatever was written," Romans 15:4, "in former days was written for," here's the word we've found over there in Malachi 2, "for our instruction that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Do you see that one phrase pulling everything together? It's all being brought together. We need endurance. We need perseverance. We need to hang in there. Right? We need hope. We need to get out of this funk. Well, the encouragement, the *paracletos*, the strengthening of the writings, the encouragement of Scripture, we can have hope. "And may the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another." This is not a solo project, get together with other Christians, "in accord with Christ Jesus," all of us submitted to the Lordship of Christ, "that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And I cannot deny the whole intention of the psalmist here in Psalm 43 verse 4 is a corporate experience of being strengthened together, having joy in the corporate worship and singing and playing an instrument, being under the instruction of God's truth, and being drawn to get close to God to get through the difficulties of unanswered prayer.

And he talks about God's redemptive plan, but drop down to verse 13, before we leave Romans 15. Romans 15 verse 13, "May," I just love the way this is put, "May the God of hope," he's so connected with what he wants to give you, he is the God of hope. "May he fill you," this is the opposite of the problem of the psalmist in Psalm 43. "May he fill you with all joy and peace," here's the key, "in believing." Believing what? Believing what he wrote. Believing what he says. Believing what the prophet said. "So that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." And guess what? When you abound in hope, you start to get out of that emotional desert. You start to feel like God didn't answer my prayer. But God's changing my prayers, changing my perspective and I'm filled with hope and joy and peace because my faith is being strengthened. You need that. You need more truth of God's Word. And I would say the focus is on publicly taught, even though it does not exclude the private instruction of God's Word. You should instruct yourself in the Word and as a good Berean you should check everything you hear publicly. But you ought to go to a place I trust that can say we're going to let these guys work full time at spiritual leadership, studying the Scriptures and coming and delivering, even up to an hour of instruction to us, to help us live the Christian life for another seven days, and to get out there and do this with the kind of strength and joy and peace that we need that comes from God's truth. Such a great text, such a great thing. We cannot neglect the Word of God if we expect to be encouraged through our unanswered prayer or the kinds of lack of joy or whatever it is that we're feeling.

One more verse in all this and it all relates to the word we've seen both in verses 1 and 2 that ultimately get to the point. Where the point of prayer is we need hope, the point of God's Word it's to give us hope. Well, in verse 5 the psalmist is finally there in his mind. And so he says, listen, soul, you're feeling bad, I get it, but I got to get my feelings to catch up. "Why are you downcast, O my soul," Psalm 43:5, "and why are you in turmoil within me?" Well,



circumstantially I see it in verses 1 and 2. But theologically, verses 3 and 4, I can see where I can start to tell my turmoil in my heart to go away. I can tell my soul there is hope in God. There's our word, there's our keyword, "hope in God," believe his promises and hope in God. And he says this, "For I shall again praise him, my salvation, and my God." And even he in this context is probably miles away from the Temple Mount. But he's thinking of going there, and he's thinking of the truth of God's Word being taught to him. And he's thinking of digging down deep into the truth of the Scriptures and holding on by faith and saying, I know I'm going to have hope. I know I'm going to praise him. I know I'm going to have that joy of my salvation restored. This is hope. This is truth that brings hope. And all of this will one day be realized. For him he's thinking about the experience when he gets there. But you know that even when we're here, we keep talking about the "then and there." It's about getting to the end of the road.

So you need to, number three, you want to get through your funk, "Redirect Your Thoughts to Our Victory." That's what's coming. The victory and vindication which started this whole passage. Right? "Vindicate me." When is that going to happen? It may never happen in this lifetime. Your physical problems may never go away. Your relational problems may never go away. Your relational desires may never be met, right? But the issues of your employment may never get ironed out the way you want in this life. But I guarantee you the whole point of God's promises, it's about the "then and there." And ultimately, God will give you the endurance and joy and faith in believing me to have the kind of peace that will get you to the end of this highway.

Two passages on this. Turn to Isaiah 40. Isaiah 40. All history is moving toward the kingdom of God, and it really intertwines with everything we've said already. And I just want to show you this great confluence of these concepts in Isaiah 40. Isaiah 40 is something you might think of come Christmas time if you got a traditionalist family that occasionally might play in the background, or who knows, maybe you go to a performance of the oratory of Handel as he writes that Messiah and it's very inspirational, such a great musical experience. But we'll hear this in one of the verses of that great oratory, as he says in verse 4 here, Isaiah 40, he lifts these words right from Scripture when it says, "Every valley shall be lifted up." Now the valley here, of course, this is all going to be used as a personification, as an illustration, as a metaphor of God fixing problems. Because some people may like valleys. "I love a valley, I'd like to build a house in the valley," but we're not talking about that. We're talking about the valley of the shadow of death. We're talking about the valley of difficulties. We're talking about the valley that we know the psalmist is feeling in verses 1 and 2 of our passage. And those valleys are going to be lifted up. And mountains, you may love mountains because you got a 4x4 and that's great. But mountains in the ancient world, I don't want to climb the mountains. High mountains might have been good for military purposes or whatever, but I mean, we're talking metaphorically about a problem. We've got a bump in the road, a big bump in the road. And that mountain now, it's going to be "made low, and the uneven ground," may make your horse stumble, "it's all going to be made level the rough places," hey, it's going to "be plain." Why? Because all of that, metaphorically speaking, is about all the things that are wrong. "And the glory," the greatness, the grandeur, "of the Lord shall be revealed." Is it revealed now? Nah, there are scant points here and there of God's glory. And Psalm 19 I see the glory



in creation. In Romans 1 I do see God's attributes, but it's not like it will be. The glory of the Lord shall be," will be, "revealed, and all flesh will see it together."

There's the key of vindication every deceitful person, every unjust person, every militant atheist, everybody who is there just grinding our reputation into the ground. Everyone who is against biblical Christianity, everyone who mocks everything in the Word, everybody who sits there and says we're completely, ridiculously wrong for following Christ. Everyone, all flesh will see it together. To add another layer to this, Philippians 2 says every one of those people will be forehead down on the ground, groveling at the feet of the Lord when he returns, "every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth." Everyone. Christians, non-Christians, like we're going to bow, "and every tongue will confess." They will say you're right, Jesus is right. Everything he said in his Word is right. All of his promises are true. He is the authority. I was running my own life, my philosophy was wrong, he was right. "Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is," the King, is the boss, "is the Lord," and it will glorify God the Father "to the glory of God the Father." That is coming. And he says, "All flesh will see it together." How do I know that? Because of the book that sits there on your lap, "the mouth of the Lord has spoken." We've seen it throughout our study of Acts. We will have some statement, a quotation of Isaiah and then it'll say, as, "the Holy Spirit said through Isaiah the prophet," as the Holy Spirit spoke through David, and it'll quote the Psalms. These are the words of God. The prophet, even the word "prophet" in Hebrew, "Nabi," the Hebrew word nabi, it means a mouthpiece. It's God speaking through the apostles in the New Testament, the prophets in the Old Testament. He's speaking his truth. And when we have it, the mouth of the Lord has spoken. That's how I know this is all going to be vindicated. So what should we do? Verse 6. Hey, "A voice says, Cry," yell. Yell what? What shall I yell? "What shall I cry?" Well, you should yell this: "All flesh is grass," it comes and goes and all its beauty, all the fancy people, all the celebrities, all the beautiful people, they're like the "flower of the field." Yeah. You're head and shoulders above the grass, I get that, that's kind of cool. But here's the thing. "The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it," and you're dead. It's over. "Surely the people are grass, and the grass withers and the flower fades," but the mouth of the Lord has spoken, and therefore the Word of God, the recorded truth of God, it "will stand." How long? "Forever."

I know everybody, and it's really cool to think and it's biblical to think and I'm not against thinking this way that Christ is going to come back soon. But Christ may not come back for another two years. He might not come back for another 20 years. Christ may not be dispatched for another 200 years. Hey, frankly, it could be another 2,000 years. Get this now. It could be 20,000 years from now that Christ is not dispatched to get to his Church. But I know this the Church will survive. There will be a group of people, a remnant, who will survive and they will still be reading this promise here. "The glory of the Lord will be revealed. All flesh will see it together." Because God has spoken, the Word of God is going to stand forever. If Christ doesn't come back for 20,000 years, they're going to be reading this text and they're hanging their hat on the belief, the truth that God has said he would do it and therefore he's going to do it. So what do I do? Verse 9, "Go up on a high mountain, O Zion, herald the good news," right? Zion was a mountain in Jerusalem, a hill. "Herald the good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of

Judah, 'Behold your God!'" This, by the way, was written 26-2,700 years ago and it still hasn't happened. Think about it. I mean, there might have been a palpable excitement in year two of the book of Acts. They're all like, "Yeah, Christ says he's coming back. I can't wait." Then it became year 20, then it became year 200, then it became year 2000. And here we sit. Do not doubt the Lord's promise. The Word of God has said it therefore we have hope and the victory is coming. It is forthcoming. It is pending. So "lift up your voice with strength." Don't doubt it. "O Jerusalem, herald the good news; lift it up, fear not; say to cities of Judah, 'Behold your God!'" Well, he's not here yet but one day you'll see him. "Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him." Not yet. Right now it's the weirdos of the world leading our world. But one day, "his reward," is going to come to his people, right? "And his recompense" is going to come to his enemies, right? "He will tend his flock like a shepherd." How great will it be to be in his flock? "He will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them," in his chest, "in his bosom, he will lead those who are with young like a gentle leader." It's going to be an amazing reality that is coming whether it's two days from now or whether it's 20 years or 2,000 years or 20,000 years, or, who knows, 200,000 years from now. It's going to happen and you can bank on it because every promise that God made about his first coming came true, and every promise about his second coming will come true. And we need to believe it. The victory is so sure your mind ought to be set on it.

One more passage with this we'll be done. John Chapter 14. You need to know here's how Jesus put the essence of Psalm 43. The whole gist of Psalm 43 is right here. You're feeling down. You don't feel blessed. You don't feel like your prayers are being answered. You don't feel like you know everything's going your way in your Christian life. Okay, here's what he says to us, "Let not your hearts be troubled." John 14:1. Don't be troubled. I know you're feeling troubled but let's get to the end of that. "Believe in God." Now, this is not the belief of James 2 where the demons believe and shudder. The word "Pisteuō" here in the Greek New Testament should be hardened in this particular verse because we know what we're talking about and Jesus would never exhort us just to mentally assent to the truth. He wants us to TRUST in God, trust in God the Father and believe. "Trust also in me." Why? Because "In my Father's house" there are a lot of places for people, right? He's got a place for you. "And if it were not so, would I have told you that I'm going to go and prepare a place for you?" I never would have said that if it weren't true. Of course it's true. "And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." It was a long time ago he said this. And here we sit with iPhones in our pockets. Think about this. And he still hasn't done it. But the truth of what God has said either is believed to be true and is true, or whether you believe it not to be true, but it's still true, and you need to get your heart aligned with the victory that God said is coming for those who trust in him. Now that's the theme of this chapter.

Drop down near the end of the chapter and he now puts this together. A nice inclusio we call it. Here's a connection, bookends on this. Verse 27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives." Now the world gives a kind of peace it is right here you can see it, touch it, feel it, smell it. It's right in front of you. You can see it. The peace of God is the kind of peace that Paul kept talking about, "We walk by faith and not by sight." We hang our hat on a promise, not on the realization like, oh, I'll believe it when I see it, but I know that



God's truth is true. It's been proven true in the past. It's going to be true in the future. So I'm going to take peace in something I don't even see in front of me. "Let," verse 27, "let not your hearts be troubled," there it is again, the refrain, "neither let them be afraid. For you heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' And if you loved me, you would have rejoiced", because you know how great it's going to be for me, right? "Because I'm going to the Father and the Father is greater than I." I mean, his glory is amazing. "And now," verse 29, "I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe." Now they got to see the Ascension which was half of this promise. The other half is just as you saw him go. He's going to come back. They didn't get to see that one. And who knows, maybe we'll get to see it. And if we don't see it from earth's perspective, we're going to see it from heaven's perspective, because we're going to come with him and his angels, and we're going to take the remnant Church whether it's two years from now or 20,000 years from now, and God is going to fulfill his promise. Get your mind stuck on the victory that's coming. Get your mind so fixated on the fact that God is going to keep his promise.

It's much like going into a tunnel because you see with brilliance, right? Let's say you're taking a cross-country journey and it's the middle of the day. Sun is shining bright and you get in, maybe up in the Rockies, you go through the Interstate, you go through a long tunnel. You've probably been through some of those. And they just have those little lights up at the top. Maybe they haven't updated yet with all the bright lights. It's just a dark tunnel. And you get into that and then if you have the kind of car, which I hope you do, all of sudden the lights come on, the photo sensor goes off and the lights come on. Now, the lights you can't see like you saw going in. But when you went in, you could see the opening, it was bright, the trees, the rocks, the highway, the paint on the ground. You could see it all. But now that you're in the tunnel, you need those headlights that come on and I hope you got some halogen headlights because it's hard to see in there and your eyes haven't adjusted yet. And all you can do is look at what you can see as the headlights give you the next 50 yards, maybe. And all you're trying to do is hang on to that steering wheel and make sure you stay in lane. You don't want to hit the side of this tunnel. You don't want to go in the other lane of traffic. You want to keep looking ahead at what you can see, but you can't see anything like you could when you went into the tunnel. And I hope all of you have come into Christianity because you've looked at the facts. You know this is reasonable and rational as Paul said to Festus, this is true. I bought it by faith and now I'm in the dark tunnel. And you know what? Some days in the dark tunnel it's going to be hard. You're going to hear horns honking. You're going to see weird things in the tunnel. It's going to get dark. Days are going to be when we're not feeling so blessed. But at the end of this tunnel is the bright light. And around the turn who knows when we're going to turn a corner and there it will be, the bright sunlight of the other end of this. The thing we've been praying for from the beginning, "Your kingdom come."

We want Christ to return, and we will because we've held tightly to the truth and the light of God's Word to lead us to this kingdom. It's coming. You've got to have the faith and the confidence, the absolute assurance that God does not lie to us. He kept every promise of the first coming, all of it predicted in Scripture. The second coming, all those promises are just as clear as the Old Testament promises. We're waiting for that. We cannot give up on our prayer life. Don't lean away from prayer. Lean into prayer. You cannot give up on Bible study,



particularly corporate Bible study together in a room, not in front of your computer screen, but here in this room studying Scripture together. And all throughout the week, "all the more as we see the day drawing near." And always remember it's about the "then and there," not the "here and now." We're focused on the end of this tunnel. Can it get dark? It can get dark. There will be sections where the lights are all off. But we're going to get through this thing, get through it together. We're going to get into the kingdom. Make sure you're on the right path. Make sure you trust God because he never lies.

Let's pray. God, help us in our day when we feel like the psalmist thinking you're against us. I think of those three verses of Lamentations Chapter 5. It's just they felt the same way. Maybe you've rejected us forever. Maybe your anger is going to reside forever. And yet they prayed in their pain. The lament of Lamentations, Jeremiah says, hey, God restore us, bring us back, get us through this. And it was to be 70 years for them. It's been a lot more years for the Church, but for us, I mean, I don't know how long we've been Christians 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, maybe some in the room 50 years. But we've been made to wait for the fulfillment of your promises. But you never would have told us these things if it were not so. So we believe it. "You're going to prepare a place for us and you'll come again to receive us unto yourself, that where you are we will be also." God, we wait for that day. "We walk by faith and not by sight." But one day, as you say in First Corinthians 13, our faith will be sight. It'd be so good when all these promises are fulfilled. We look forward to that with great anticipation.

In Jesus name, Amen.