

21

DAYS OF PRAYER



CHRIST
COMMUNITY

Introduction

Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

Joshua 21:45

For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

2 Corinthians 1:20

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

2 Peter 1:3-4

A promise is a powerful thing. When we make a promise, we're obligating ourselves to something or someone. When a promise is kept, it can bring about positive change for generations. And when a promise is broken, it can have devastating consequences for years to come. Unfortunately, most of us have grown accustomed to promises being broken, which causes skepticism of others. But the Bible paints a different picture. It tells the story of a promise-making, promise-keeping God. As we learn to stand on his promises, we find hope and courage for daily life.

As you begin these 21 days of fasting and praying, use this simple devotional to reflect on God's promises each day. It's designed as an appetizer, whetting your appetite to feast on the banquet of God's promises that line the pages of Scripture. As you read, ask God to help you both understand and believe his promises. When you do, you will come to realize the promise, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!" (Psalm 34:8)

Day 1

*And you shall be my people,
and I will be your God.
Jeremiah 30:22*

We all want to belong. We long for a tribe, a community, a people. The popularity of ancestry searches is just one piece of evidence showing how we want to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. But, it's only when we come to God in faith that we really find where it is that we belong. Israel didn't deserve to be God's people. After all, they had completely forsaken the Lord, and as Jeremiah wrote his prophecy, they were exiled from the land and living in bondage. Yet, God promised to deliver them from their self-induced misery, and to keep his promise that he had made generations before: they would be his people, and he would be their God. Why would God make a promise to such a rebellious people? Because, as the Lord revealed to Moses out of the fire on top of Mt. Sinai, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6). Do you trust that God is who he says he is? Do you see yourself as a member of God's people? Does hope rest in the fact that God claims you as his own?

Prayer

Spend time praying for our church. Pray for us to have:

- Unity of purpose in our church
- A commitment to the mission of reaching the lost
- An experience God's power in our worship services

Day 2

*This God—his way is perfect;
the word of the LORD proves true;
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.*
Psalm 18:30

"I can do it by myself!" You've probably heard a young child exclaim these words before. Bent on being self-reliant, the child rejects your offer of help. Pretty soon, however, the child ends up in tears because of his frustration. If only he had trusted that your way really was better! In a similar way, life with Christ is an on-going struggle to take God at his Word, trusting that his way is better than our way. In fact, as David makes clear, God's way is perfect. But don't confuse perfect with comfortable. God's directions for our lives rarely come easy, but they always lead to his glory and our ultimate good. In fact, for all those who trust and obey him, God promises to be their shield, to protect them through the trials of life. Though God's way is the harder way (from a human perspective), we'll find ourselves with hot tears rolling down our cheeks if we try to handle life's challenges by ourselves. It's good to remind ourselves that David penned this psalm during his flight from Saul in the wilderness. Being faithful to God doesn't mean life will be a bed of roses, but it does mean enjoying God's refuge when the storms of life hit. Do you trust that God's way is perfect? Are you enjoying his protection?

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Day 3

*fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*
Isaiah 41:10

There's nothing quite as terrifying as being alone. As relational beings, we find courage and comfort from simply being with others. We need relationships especially when we walk through challenges and hardships. But as terrifying as it is to live alone, it's even worse to face the judgment of God alone. Without a mediator, there's no hope for us. As God pronounced judgment on the nations surrounding Israel through the prophet Isaiah, he comforted them by his promise that he would be with them, that he was their God, and that he would strengthen and sustain his people by his sovereign power. Knowing God's promise, then, the people were to not fear. Just as God's judgment passed over his people on the eve of their exile from Egypt, so God would spare his people during their exile in Babylon. How good it is to know that, no matter what we're walking through, our God is with us and for us! And the reason we can trust that this is true is because Jesus bore the wrath of God for us at the cross. Because Jesus suffered God's judgment in our place, we can "fear not." He is with us through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, and he will one day bring us safely home. Do you trust that God is with you? Do you know for certain that you have been spared God's judgment?

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Day 4

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:26-27

Wouldn't it be nice if your refrigerator replaced your groceries whenever they were used up? Just think of it: You're in the middle of preparing a delicious meal for your family, not realizing that you're out of a crucial ingredient. No worries! Your refrigerator knows what you need, even when you don't. You're able to continue cooking, even though you weren't fully aware of what you needed. While this is a silly illustration (but it would be nice if it were real!), it's true spiritually! If you've turned from your sin to trust in Christ, you've been adopted into the family of God and filled with the Holy Spirit. Even so, we all still wrestle with sin and feel the affects of living in fallen world. Sometimes, because of our struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, it's difficult to know what exactly we should be praying for. But thanks be to God, the Spirit himself prays for us! He knows exactly what we need and what the Father plans for us. And the Father always answers "yes" to the Spirit, because he prays according to his will. This promise should encourage us to pray all the more, because prayer is a sign that we're trusting God, and even when we fail to pray as we should, the Spirit always gets it right. Do you trust in God enough to pray? Do you believe the Spirit is praying for you?

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Day 5

*Delight yourself in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.*
Psalm 37:4

Context is a very important thing. For example, a lawnmower is a wonderful tool, but not if it's being used on the living room carpet. Having coffee or tea to begin the day is nice, but only if it's in a mug, not on your shirt. And who doesn't enjoy a stroll down the beach... unless of course, it's a deserted island. You get the point. To truly enjoy or understand something, we have to know the context. So when Psalm 37:4 tells us that God intends to give us the desires of our hearts, it's most certainly true! But, we must understand the context. And if we read the whole psalm, we come to see that the person whose desires are met is the person who treasures the Lord and is committed to living according to his wisdom. The psalmist knows that it's tempting to emulate the wicked person's ways in order to prosper. But the godly person commits himself to walking the narrow road, even when it's difficult and unpopular. Why? Because his delight is in the Lord, not the stuff that he can get from him. When Christ is our greatest treasure, then our desires correspond with his will. In that case, we can rest assured that God takes pleasure in whatever we ask. Do you delight yourself in the Lord? Are your desires shaped by his Word?

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Day 6

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6

A new year means new resolutions for many people. Some resolve to lose weight. Others commit to journal each day. Some people even make it their goal to run a marathon. While some people push through, many fall by the wayside shortly after they've begun. Whether it's new year's resolutions or the bathroom renovation you'll get to "one day", humans have a profound ability to stop what they've started. Thankfully, that's not how the Lord works. Whatever he begins, he always finishes. Paul makes this abundantly clear in his letter to the Philippians. God will not fail to bring to glory those whom he has saved by his grace. Isn't it good to know that our salvation is wholly dependent on his strength and reliability? What fear we would live in if God treated our salvation like we treated our weekend chores! Because Jesus Christ entered our world, bore our sin, and gave us access to the Father, we can rest assured that he will bring us safely home. And until that time, God's promise to preserve us gives us the courage to keep trusting and obeying. Are you trusting in his strength or your strength for your salvation? How should you live in light of the assurance of his promise?

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Day 7

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1

We have a strange way of avoiding the root issues of life. Take a tooth ache for example. You feel a painful sensation every time you bite down on food, but instead of going to the dentist, you try a toothpaste you hope will take the pain away. Or maybe you feel super tired each day at work, so you drink more coffee or energy drinks to give you a boost, rather than turning off Netflix in the evening in order to go to bed earlier. The same is true spiritually. We think our greatest problems in life are anger, lust, or greed, while the real problem lies beneath: we are sinners by nature, and as a result, we are enemies of God. The only way to alleviate the problem isn't by reading another self-help book, or promising ourselves we'll never do "that" again. Only when we turn from our sin and look in complete dependence to Jesus Christ can we experience true, lasting change. When we trust that Christ alone can forgive and heal us, we are counted right in God's eyes, so that, instead of seeing us as his enemies, he sees us as his beloved children. The result? Lasting peace with God through Jesus. It's when we have this peace with God that we begin to experience the inside-out change by the inner-working of the Holy Spirit. But we'll never experience it if we're applying spiritual band aids to our soul-cancer. Have you trusted in Christ alone to save you from your sin?

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Day 8

*I, I am he
who blots out your transgressions for my own sake,
and I will not remember your sins.*
Isaiah 43:25

There's something magical about snow. That might sound strange, since it's just frozen water falling from the sky. But the cumulative effect of all those frozen crystals is breath-taking. The world as we know it is transformed, blotting out the normal landscape, and creating a new reality (if only for a few hours!). How amazing is it, then, that the God who knows everything past, present, and future with crystal-clarity chooses to blot out all our sins and remember them no more! In a moment, the landscape of our souls takes on a whole new reality in his eyes. Not that we've done anything to better our condition. God, in his grace, chooses to pronounce us holy. And why does he do this? "For my own sake," says the Lord. He does it because it brings him glory to show mercy to underserving sinners. God didn't look down the corridors of eternity to see our moral potential, or our spiritual ability. No, we're dead in our sins apart from his life-giving grace. Rather, God looked down the corridors of time to see the life, death, and resurrection of the perfect, spotless lamb, Jesus Christ. Through his blood, our sin-stained souls have been cleansed once and for all. And unlike the snow that melts away, our right standing with God will never change. Do you believe God has truly forgiven you? That he chooses to not remember your sins?

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Day 9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

You've probably seen a dad standing in the pool and encouraging his child to jump to him. You know the parent will catch the him, the parent knows he will catch him, and the child has no reason to distrust his father. Nevertheless, the fear of the moment clouds out sound reason, and the child refuses to leap to his father. The same is true for God's children. Christians are called to live with hope-filled contentment ("joy") and to walk in loving wisdom toward others ("reasonableness"). But we often choose to live with anxiety and fear rather than trusting that the Lord is near to us now and will soon return to rescue his children ("the Lord is at hand"). This is why prayer is so crucial. Prayer is less about asking for stuff and more about drawing near to the one who can be trusted in all circumstances. When we run to the Lord in prayer, God's peace cuts through the fog of our fearful unreasonableness and guards our hearts and minds, so that we can see our Father's loving arms reaching out to us and hear his voice say, "I'll catch you." Are you experiencing the peace of God?

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Day 10

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

A dishwasher is a wonderful tool, except when you don't load it the right way. At first glance, it appears that everything is sparkly clean. But half way through putting all the dishes away, you notice that your bowls, while clean on the outside, are still covered on the inside with last night's spaghetti. Something got in the way of the sprayer reaching the inside of the bowl. And now you've got a sink filled with dirty dishes that will have to wait their turn... again. That's what happens to people's lives apart from the gospel. Trying to be a good person or even a religious person does a nice job of cleaning the outside of person's life, but it only gets in the way of the inward cleansing that must take place for a person to be saved. That's why God, hundreds of years before Jesus entered our world, promised that he would bring about the inward change and cleansing needed for a person to be right with him. It's only when the Holy Spirit gives a person a new heart that she is able to turn from her sin, trust in Christ, and obey God's Word. Apart from this inward change, a person's "good works" amount to nothing more than cleaning the outside of the bowl. Have you experienced this inward change?

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Day 11

And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD. Hosea 2:19-20

Brides usually don't wear black dresses on their wedding day. For one, black just isn't the style of most weddings. More importantly, a white dress is suppose to signify a bride's purity. It stands as a symbol that a bride has saved herself sexually for her husband. Such was not the case for God's bride in the book of Hosea. The prophet Hosea was commanded to marry a prostitute, who was unfaithful to him. Nevertheless, Hosea went after her, purchased her out of her self-induced slavery, and brought her back into his home. This scenario was a living illustration of God's relationship with his people. Though God had made an eternal covenant with Israel, she chose to give her love to false gods and worldly pleasures. Rather than abandoning her altogether, God went after his people, pursued them relentlessly, and renewed his covenant with them. His covenant was defined by his righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness. It seems natural to ask, "Why would God have anything to do with his people after they had been so unfaithful?" The answer is Jesus. God looked forward to the day when his own Son would bear the penalty for the spiritual adultery of his people. And as a result, the bride who deserved to be clad in black would be clothed with garments of white and enjoy a relationship of love with the Lord forever (Revelation 19:8). Do you believe that the shame of your sin has been removed? Do you live in light of your unbreakable relationship with God?

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Day 12

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. John 6:35

Imagine how wonderful it would be if you never had to pull over on a road trip to fill up your vehicle with fuel (or to stop for a bathroom break!). Think of how much work you could get done if you never had to sleep. Or think of how much money you would save every year if you never had to eat. Of course, we know that none of these scenarios are true. No matter how hard we try to be self-sufficient, we are reminded on a daily basis that we are needy people. We long to be filled because we were made to be filled! Our souls cry out for fulfillment, for something to satisfy our deepest longings for relationship, love, and meaning. That's why what Jesus says in John 6:35 is so staggering. If we receive him and his words, Jesus says that our souls will never hunger or thirst again. Think of that! Jesus is the answer to our hearts' cry for more. The question is, will you take him at his Word? Will you trust that Jesus can soothe the aching of your soul. Will you stop looking to earthly pleasures and empty treasures to do what only Christ can?

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Day 13

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Kids don't like getting splinters pulled out (whether the kids are young or old!). As uncomfortable and painful as it is to have a splinter sticking in your skin, there's just something about the thought of the tweezers pulling it out and knowing there will potentially be more pain before there's relief. "It'll only hurt for a second," or, "It will be over before you know it," doesn't really compute in the mind of a child. Nevertheless, there won't be any relief apart from removing the foreign object. In a similar way, many people are living with unconfessed sin in their lives. They long, for relief from the spiritual, emotional, and spiritual pain they feel, but are unwilling to expose their sin to the light. Maybe you find yourself in such a situation. There's no doubting that exposing our sin to the light of God's holiness and to the accountability of others is painful, but there's good news: God promises to forgive and cleanse us of our sin! God desires for you to walk with him in the light of holiness and to know the freedom that's found in obedience. He's guaranteed that he'll accept you, sinful past and all. But you must be willing to hold out your proverbial hand to let him remove the splinter. Will you let him? Will you trust him? Yes, it will be painful for a moment, but joy, gladness, and peace will follow.

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Day 14

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

John 11:25-26

As much as we try to avoid thinking or speaking of it, death is a constant reality. Thankfully, Jesus didn't shy away from hard topics. You'll notice as you read John 11 that Jesus doesn't try to comfort Mary and Martha about the death of their brother with patronizing statements meant to soften death's sting. He acknowledges the reality head on. Everyone will die someday. For those who cling to Christ in faith, however, death is not the end, but the gateway to eternal glory. Notice the irony of Jesus' statement, "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." We will all die, but some of us will never die. That is, everyone will die physically, but not everyone will die spiritually. Why? Because they've put their hope in the One who is the resurrection and the life. We don't help ourselves, or anyone else for that matter, to skirt around the topic of death. What we need is to see death through the lens of the gospel and with our hope set on the One who defeated death once and for all. And when we do, though the means of dying may be fearful, death itself is faced with courage. In Christ, we know that this short life, though of inestimable value, is but the prelude to the joy we'll know when we stand before Him. To quote Jesus, "Do you believe this?"

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Day 15

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 6:14

Imagine a man who had been convicted of murder when he was young. After serving most of a life sentence, he was set free. While most of his life had passed behind bars, he had an opportunity to live as a free man. But instead of enjoying his freedom, he allowed his former bondage to dictate how we would live. So, he rented an apartment, moved in, and never left. Though legally free, he was functionally in bondage. Sadly, this is the case for many Christians. Though they've been set free from the dominion of sin through faith in Jesus Christ, they don't enjoy the freedom they've been given, because they choose to live as people who are still bound to their old ways. But as Paul reminds us, we're no longer under the power of sin, because Christ kept the law in our place. Every attempt to keep the law produces one of two results: either we try to earn our righteousness through obedience to the law, or our sin takes advantage of the law to produce in us anti-law living. It's only by grace that we can be liberated from our bondage to sin, and given the ability to live as free men and women (Titus 2:11-14). You don't have to keep living the way you are! Will you trust that you really are free?

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Day 16

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
Romans 8:1

Visiting your hometown can be an interesting experience if you've not been there for some time. Perhaps you left after high school, went to college, got a job, started a family, etc. You're not the same person you were. But those you grew up around only know pre-leaving-town-you. And so with every encounter, a wave of memories, both good and bad, wash over you. You suddenly realize why you left in the first place: you didn't want to be boxed in. You feel condemned to be the person you once were. Most of us have felt this way spiritually at some point. Though we've been given a new identity through our being united to Christ by faith ("in Christ Jesus"), we struggle to see ourselves this way. We're constantly tempted to see ourselves as we were before we met Christ. If we're to live according to our new identity, however, we need to think more highly of how God sees us rather than how we see ourselves. In the end, it won't matter what your parents, siblings, coaches, classmates, or your ex-whatever thinks of you. We'll all stand before God on that final day and give an account of our lives. And the only thing that will matter is whether or not we're in Christ Jesus. Maybe the old saying's true after all: it's not what you know, but who you know that counts. And if you know Christ Jesus, or rather, you have been know by him (Galatians 4:9), that's what matters most.

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Day 17

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
Galatians 5:16

Rush hour is a major pain. You've got places to go, things to do, and people to see. But so does everyone else on the road, and to make matters worse, there are traffic laws that prohibit us from getting where we need to be in the way we want to get there. Imagine, however, if everyone chose to ignore the traffic signals. What if we acted like red lights just weren't there, or yield signs were mere suggestions, or the speed limit was a matter of taste? Chaos and pain would be the result. Not to mention, you still wouldn't get to work on time. Now, when God saved us, he graciously gave us his Holy Spirit to live in us. The same power that raised Christ from the dead dwells in us! Coupled with his Word, we have everything we need to live for him. But in the rush of life, we're often tempted to live according to our own rules, rather than listening to the Spirit as he brings his Word to our minds. He neglect the Word for our word, and the result is chaos and pain. God's promise to us is so good, though. If we will walk in step with the Spirit's leading, we won't seek to satisfy the desires that are natural to our sinful selves. Will you yield to the Spirit, or to your own desires? Will you put God's Word in your heart, or will you settle for your own wisdom?

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Day 18

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."
Romans 12:19

Revenge seems so natural. After all, it's the stuff of every blockbuster movie and novel. The bad guy gets what's coming to him, and the good guy rides off into the sunset with his girl. We've grown accustomed to "getting even" when we feel slighted, left out, or downright hurt by others. To be sure, there is a right time and place for anger. If we saw a child being abused by an adult, and it didn't make us angry, we might have a moral-screw loose. But there's a major difference between righteous anger and getting even. When we seek revenge, we place ourselves on God's judgment seat, rather than trusting the Ancient of Days to do what's right. You see, God's wrath is different from our wrath. His anger is a fixed disposition against sin, in which he always applies his judgement fairly. Our anger is often irrational, biased, and arbitrary. So when we choose to leave vengeance to God, we're functionally trusting him to administer justice as only the perfect judge could. Evil is real, and chances are, you've been legitimately hurt by someone. God has provided authorities and resources that we are to use in order to protect ourselves and others from being hurt. Nevertheless, we must trust the good promise that God will repay every evil one day. And thankfully, for all those who've run to the cross of Christ for mercy, God's just wrath has passed over them, because it fell on his Son. Will you trust him with your hurt?

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Day 19

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

James 1:12

The summer Olympics are just around the corner. Athletes from nearly every nation on earth will compete in a myriad of events to see who's the best. And for every athlete that wins gold, there's that one, magical moment, when they stand on the podium, a gold medal is hung around their neck, and their country's national anthem plays as the flag is raised in the background. But behind that one inspiring moment are years of grueling work and training. Often completely unnoticed, the practice and planning involved in winning the gold is mind-boggling. Nevertheless, each athlete knows that if they're to experience the joy of victory, they must endure the pain of training. The same is true of the Christian life. We short-circuit true joy when we don't persevere in obedience. And as James implies, obedience to God equals love for God (John 15:10). Every true Christian must persevere in obedience, but thankfully, every true Christian will persevere in obedience because it's God working in them to both will and to work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13). God promises to award eternal life to everyone who endures through the trials of this earthly journey, and they will do so, not because of their own strength, but by grace and through faith. And when we stand before our Lord on that final day and hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," we will know that every moment of pain and suffering was worth it. Will you endure pain in order to experience eternal joy?

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Day 20

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

Which kind of doctor would you rather have: one that knowingly inflicted pain because it would lead to ultimate healing, or one who simply treated symptoms without any sort of plan for your long-term health? My guess is that you would choose the former. No one enjoys pain, but we're better able to endure it when we know there's purpose behind it. Now imagine that God were only able to respond to the circumstances of your life, that he had no real control over what came about. How confident would you be in walking through pain and suffering? But if we believed what the Bible says of God, that he really is completely sovereign over everything, then we could be absolutely certain that every facet of our lives is being orchestrated by an all-wise, all-loving Father. And even if his plan includes pain, we know that he's working it for our ultimate good, since he called us to be his children from before the foundations of the world (Ephesians 1:11-12). Of course, life doesn't always make sense from our perspective. We're finite creatures, who's view from the mountain top is obstructed by the fog of sin. But the Everlasting God sees everything, past, present, and future with perfect clarity. And with a loving hand, he's molding and shaping us for an eternity free of sin and uncertainty, all of which has been made possible by the One who suffered the worst so we could enjoy the best.

Prayer

Spend time praying for our church. Pray for us to have:

- Unity of purpose in our church
- A commitment to the mission of reaching the lost
- An experience God's power in our worship services

Day 21

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!
Revelation 22:20

When you're young, and it seems like there are decades and decades ahead of you, you sort of balk at the idea of Jesus coming back. "But I want to get married," some might retort. "But I want to travel the world," someone else might exclaim. Our dreams, as good and right as they might be, can obscure our vision of what lies on the other side of this earthly pilgrimage. For those who have a little more "life experience," the thought of Christ returning takes on a new sense of delight. Because, as we read God's perfect Word and walk through a sinful world, we come to see that every delight on this side of eternity is actually meant to birth in us an even greater expectation of what God has stored up for those who love him and await his return. Then, and only then, will we know the reality of things rather than mere shadows. Heaven and earth will be renewed and we will physically dwell with our Savior in a world we were meant to enjoy before the entrance of sin. So as you approach a new year, may you hear Christ's sweet promise of, "Surely, I am coming soon," with a renewed sense of joy, expectation, and faith, because: as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him"

1 Corinthians 2:9

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