

Deuteronomy 30

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[0 : 00] Would you turn with me in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 30? If you're looking at one of the Bibles in the pew in front of you, it's on page 172.

Deuteronomy 30. As you turn there, let me ask you a couple questions. Where do you struggle to trust and obey God?

Is there some area of your life where you consistently fall short of what you know that God desires for you? Is there something that's a daily battle with temptation?

A daily struggle? The passage that we're looking at tonight has a word for us in any of those situations. And no matter what you're facing, what we see in this passage tonight can give us a powerful motivation to trust and obey the Lord.

So let's read together. These are Moses' words to the people of Israel in Deuteronomy chapter 30. He says this. And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I've set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today with all your heart and with all your soul, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.

[1 : 43] If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. And the Lord your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it, and he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.

And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. And the Lord your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you.

And you shall again obey the voice of the Lord and keep all his commandments that I command you today. The Lord your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your cattle, in the fruit of your ground.

For the Lord will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers when you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and statutes written in this book of the law, when you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say, who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it.

[3 : 01] Neither is it beyond the sea that you should say, who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it. But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

See, I've set before you today, life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, that I command you today by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply.

And the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you're entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall surely perish.

You shall not live long in the land that you're going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse.

Therefore, choose life that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.

[4 : 20] Well, this summer we've been looking at the book of Deuteronomy, and tonight is our second to last sermon in this series. Deuteronomy is Moses' last speech to the people of Israel, as they've spent 40 years wandering through the wilderness, and they're finally on the brink of entering into the promised land.

It's a time of looking back to the past, to the promises that they had made at Mount Sinai, and the covenant that they had entered into with God there, and also looking forward to the future, and what it would mean to love and be loyal to God when they enter into the new land.

Now, several weeks ago, we looked at the structure of the book of Deuteronomy, and for all of you who weren't here then, or for all of you who want a refresher, we're going to put it on the screen again tonight.

The book of Deuteronomy is structured, like an ancient treaty. Oh, we don't have it on the screen tonight. That's all right. You can just listen up. It's structured like an ancient treaty.

So we have historical records of treaties from the ancient Near East, and they're called suzerain vassal treaties. Basically, it means a treaty between a really powerful king and a self-sufficient nation, and a weak king, a dependent nation.

[5 : 29] And these treaties all follow the same structure. So it's a six-part structure. They had an introduction, and then they had a historical prologue, and then covenant requirements, blessings and curses, a list of witnesses, and succession arrangements.

Now, you won't be able to remember all those things. I understand that. But the book of Deuteronomy follows that exact same structure. So let me just briefly overview that. There's a preamble. So if you look at the first five verses of Deuteronomy, it's just a brief introduction.

It says, these are the words that Moses spoke to the people when they stood in the plains of Moab. And then there's the second part, which is called the historical prologue. And usually the powerful king would say, here's all the good things that I've done for you in the past.

Sort of trying to make the weaker king trust and love and want to serve him. Here's all the nice things I've done for you. I've helped your father. I've helped your grandfather, blah, blah, blah.

And God says, look, I've brought you out of Egypt. I rescued you from slavery. I led you through the wilderness. Even when you were unfaithful in the wilderness, I led you through. And then the third part is the requirements.

[6 : 33] What the people have to do. And in Deuteronomy, that starts with the Ten Commandments in chapter five. That's the heart of what it means for Israel to love and be loyal to God.

And we've looked at some of the rest of this section over the last few weeks. And this section goes from chapter five all the way to the end of chapter 26. It's the majority of Deuteronomy is laying out the law and what God requires of his people.

And then there are blessings and curses. Blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. And again, in these ancient treaties, the powerful king would say, if you obey me and if you're loyal to me and if you don't make any treaties with anyone else, I'll protect you and you'll have peace and prosperity.

But if you don't, if you're disloyal, if you're unfaithful, I'm going to come and annihilate you and destroy you. And in Deuteronomy, there's a similar pattern where God says, there will be blessings for obedience, but there will also be curses for disobedience.

And that's chapter 27 and 28. And then there's parts of the end, God calls upon heaven and earth. We saw this in verse 19 of this chapter as witnesses.

[7 : 48] In other words, God's saying, let the whole creation be a witness to what I'm doing right here. The promise that I'm making to you and the relationship that I'm establishing with you, my people, Israel.

Now, why was Deuteronomy structured like one of these ancient treaties? Well, the point was so that anyone who read it would see that God, the great king of heaven and earth, has entered into a covenant, a binding agreement, a relationship with the people of Israel.

That he is the powerful, self-sufficient king of all. And they are a weak, independent people. And yet he has promised to be their God and to protect them and to love them.

And in return, they need to promise to love and be loyal to him in return. So this is the big picture of the book of Deuteronomy. The big picture of the whole book.

Now today, we're looking at chapter 30. And the interesting thing about chapter 30 is the first half of the chapter is completely unique.

[8 : 57] It doesn't fit into the normal structure. If you read all these other ancient Near Eastern treaties, and there's a lot that historians have found. If you read all these other treatises, there's no section like verses 1 through 10.

Now what is verses 1 through 10? Well, look down at verses 1 through 10. Verses 1 through 3. Moses says, When all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I've set before you, and you call them to mind and you remember them among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you.

So he's looking ahead to a time when the people of Israel, they would enter into the promised land. And he says, You're going to experience many of the blessings that I promised.

Chapter 28, he promises blessings for obedience, a fruitful land, military success, large families, being on top of the world. He says, You're going to experience some of these blessings, but then you know what?

You're going to forget. You're going to forget me, and you're going to start going after idols. And you're going to latch on to substitutes and put them in place of me.

[10 : 05] And then I'm going to warn you, and I'm going to call you back. And you know what? And you're not going to listen. And eventually, I'm going to leave you in the hands of your enemies and let them take you away into captivity, and you'll be scattered throughout the whole world.

But then Moses said, After all that happens, I'm going to restore you and bring you back. It's a promise of future grace, future forgiveness, future restoration.

You see, no other treaties, no other agreements in the ancient world, no other king said anything like this. Now, if you look down at verses 3 through 9, God promises basically to restore everything that they've lost through their disobedience.

Verse 3, he says he'll have mercy on them. In verse 9, he says he'll delight in them, where he had been angry with them, rightfully angry. Like a spouse is rightfully angry if their spouse is unfaithful.

God was rightfully angry, but God says, I'll turn and have compassion and have mercy on you. And I'll delight in you and rejoice in you because I love you as my people.

[11 : 27] And then verse 3 and 4, he talks about gathering them back like a good shepherd, gathering his sheep that have been scattered throughout the world.

In verse 6, he says, I'm going to circumcise your heart. In other words, I'm going to give you a new heart, a soft heart instead of a stubborn heart to love and turn to me once again.

And then verse 9 says, where they've been exiled from the land, God would bring them back. But he wouldn't just bring them back. He would make them even more prosperous, even more numerous. In other words, God is saying, I'm not just going to restore everything as it was in the past.

I'm going to give you a life that is far better than anything you've ever seen or ever known. It's a pretty amazing set of promises. And you know, when the people of Israel listened to these promises, it probably would have seemed almost unfathomable, almost unbelievable.

How in the world could such things come to pass? You know, every ancient treaty had blessings and curses that if you obey and you're loyal, you'll be blessed.

[12 : 48] And if you disobey, you'll be cursed. And you know what? Most of the nations from the ancient world, most of the cities that you read about in the Bible, they don't exist anymore because they're buried under layers of desert sand because they were once destroyed and never rebuilt.

And so when the Israelites heard blessings and curses, it would have made sense to them. They would have thought, of course, God's just like all these other kings except he's more powerful and you can't hide from him either.

When they heard this promise, a future grace, they would have thought, who in the world is this? No one else has made such a promise.

No other king ever wrote such a provision into a treaty. But you know, it wasn't just unusual in the ancient world. You know, think of relationships today. Most relationships today don't operate on a principle of future grace.

So if you just signed a lease for an apartment for the next year, I'm sure that your lease included a bunch of penalty clauses, curses for disobedience, if you want to put it that way.

[14 : 00] If you break the lease and leave early in the middle of the year, you have to pay two months back rent. You have to pay two months rent as a penalty. If you paint the walls, you have to repaint them plain white before you leave or pay a fine.

If you damage the apartment, you forfeit your security deposit. Right? There's all these penalties that are written into every lease. And if you're a landlord, you know that you better include those penalties because otherwise you're liable to lose a lot of money from irresponsible renters.

Now, but think about what kind of relationship that makes between you and your landlord. Unless you have some other basis for a close relationship with your landlord, signing a lease with a bunch of penalty clauses will not make you love your landlord with all your heart and soul.

It doesn't even, wouldn't even give you a motivation to invite your landlord over for dinner, let alone to sacrifice. for him or her. It's a distant and formal relationship at best.

At worst, a bitter and adversarial relationship. I hope you don't have that if you're renting. But sometimes it happens. But think of the working world or even studying.

[15 : 30] Right? The patterns can be similar. If you perform well, you will be promoted. Maybe. Or at least, you'll hopefully get to keep your job. But in this economy, that's not even guaranteed.

If you perform well in your classes, your professors will write you a good recommendation. If you fail, there's no guarantees.

Even friendships, sometimes dating relationships, can operate completely apart from any future expectations. Right?

You have a relationship right now as long as both parties feel like they're benefiting. But there are no guarantees for the future. But you know, if you're in a relationship like that, you can never feel secure.

Because you're always trying to put your best foot forward. You're always trying to gain the other person's approval. You're always trying to please them. So they don't reject you and go off with somebody else.

[16 : 38] Now let me ask, how do you relate to God? You know, it's possible to relate to God in many of these ways. Is God your cosmic landlord?

So every month or every week, you come to church, maybe you throw something in the plate, and then you hope He'll leave you alone, pretty much. I'm okay, He's okay, we just don't bother each other.

Or is God your cosmic boss? And you're trying, you're always trying to find some way to gain His approval and acceptance and some kind of job security.

are you motivated to please God primarily by fear of future punishment? Now the Bible does contain warnings of God's future judgment on sin, both the Old and the New Testaments.

Jesus Himself warned of hell, eternal fire for those who do not turn to God. but at the same time, fear of future punishment from God alone will never give birth to true and lasting love for God in your heart.

[17 : 50] That's why 1 John chapter 4 in the New Testament says, perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

we love because He first loved us. The only way to have true and lasting love for God is to have a sense of His everlasting love for you.

His love for you in the past, His love for you in the present, and His love for you in the future. You see, it's only when a relationship is rooted in future grace that it becomes peaceful and loving and affectionate and genuine instead of tense and anxious and distant and fake.

Now, one of the few relationships in our world that does commonly reflect this principle is a parent-child relationship. Right? If you conceive or adopt a child, in that very act, you're making a promise.

You're making a promise to include that child as part of your family. You're making a promise to care for that child as long as they grow, until they grow up. In most cases, you give them your very own last name as a sign of including them in your family.

[19 : 09] Now, when my wife and I decided to come together and have a child, we didn't sit down with our son before he was conceived and say, do you want to be our son? And will you obey and love and respect us?

If you will obey and love and respect us, we'll be your parents. And if you won't, then we don't want you. No, it's completely ridiculous. That's not how a parent-child relationship starts.

There's no mutual agreement between the parent and the child. Simply the parents come together and decide to commit to the child.

We committed to be our son's parents long before he knew anything about us. And we're committed to be his parents as long as we both shall live.

Now, at the same time, we do expect our son to obey us and love us and respect us.

[20 : 07] In fact, because we have that past, present, and future commitment to him, we expect him to love and respect and obey us more than he does anyone else in the whole world.

More than any of you or anyone else as long as he's a child. We can be the primary authority figures precisely because we're committed to him in the past, in the present, and the future.

You see, this is what a relationship with God is meant to be. Rooted in God's past, present, and future grace. His covenant love, His steadfast love for us.

And as a result, he is the primary authority above all other authorities in our life. We love and obey him in response.

In a sense, you could say that parenting or raising a child does involve blessings and curses. There are sometimes punishments for disobedience and there are sometimes rewards for obedience. But you know, those are never the last word.

[21 : 14] Those are important for time, but they're never the last word in raising a child. Even when our son does something wrong and we have to correct him or discipline him, we also reaffirm our love for him.

That's what a parent-child relationship is supposed to be. Now it's possible, maybe you've never experienced that kind of love, even from your parents. Maybe you've experienced the pain of being abandoned or neglected or disowned.

Maybe your relationship with your parents was full of fear and anxiety and insecurity. But if that's you, turn to the, hear these words from Psalm 27.

The psalmist writes, My father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in. The Lord will receive me.

You see, what God is saying in these verses, in this first half of Deuteronomy 30, is that I, he's saying, I am your true heavenly father. I have loved you with an everlasting love.

[22 : 27] I loved you long before you knew a thing about it. And I will love you into the future, into eternity. and I love you not because of what you can do for me, not because of what you've done or what you will do, but simply because I love you.

And I'll love you forever. He's saying to the people of Israel, even after you mess up and totally wreck your life and refuse to listen, even after I have to give you over into the hands of your enemies and let you go into exile and you're scattered to the far corners of the world, even from there, I'll come and find you and bring you back home.

When you return to me, I will return to you. And it'll be even better than it was in the beginning. That's the promise that God is making right here in this chapter.

Now there's only a few places in the book of Deuteronomy where God makes such an amazing promise. You know, if you've been coming, you've been hearing all the sermons in this series. Someone said to me earlier this week, Deuteronomy has sounded really harsh because, and some parts of it do, because it talks a lot about God's holiness and God's sovereignty and our sin and judgment.

But you know what? It's not just saying those things just to be harsh. It's saying those things to show us that we really need a Savior. that we can't simply be right with God all by ourselves.

[24 : 06] That God is holy and we are sinful and He is a righteous judge. But here He promises that He will come and bring us back to Him.

He will restore us and redeem us and save us. So the promise is there. And the promise continues throughout the whole Old Testament.

I read a couple verses from Ezekiel at the beginning of the service tonight about God promising when the people were in exile, when they'd royally messed up and gone far, far, far away from God and He said, but I'll bring you back home and I'll give you a new heart and a new spirit.

And Jeremiah says, I'll make a new covenant with you where I'll write my law on your heart and on your mind and I'll forgive your wickedness and remember your sin no more.

That's what Jesus came to do. To bring in that new covenant. Jesus came to be the good shepherd who would reach to the forest parts, to the uttermost parts of the world to bring all His children home.

[25 : 23] Jesus told a story about a shepherd. He said He had 100 sheep and 99 of them were with Him but one was lost and He says He left those sheep to find that one that was lost. You know, verse 4 of this chapter says, if your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you.

Actually, it's singular. It's if you're outcast, if even one, if even one person is in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there, even from there, God can come to bring you home.

Jesus is the good shepherd of all His sheep and He will not lose one. Jesus came to give us a new heart and a new spirit and a new covenant sealed in His blood shed on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

You know, you can read these promises that Moses made in Deuteronomy 30 and see many of them fulfilled in the coming of Jesus and yet there are many promises that haven't yet been fulfilled.

In the New Testament, there's also many promises that God makes of future grace. So let me read three of them. Romans 8, 23-24, Paul says, we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies.

[26 : 49] In the future, God will resurrect our bodies and redeem even our physical bodies. 1 John 3, verse 3, says, we know that when He appears, when Jesus appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is.

And finally, if you read the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22, they give us a vision of the new heavens and the new earth, the ultimate promised land where God will dwell with His people forever.

Now maybe you hear some of those promises and like the Israelites, when they first heard what Moses said in Deuteronomy 30, maybe you think that's almost unbelievable.

That's almost unfathomable. I can hardly comprehend what that will be like. But you can look back.

You can look back to what God promised to the Israelites. And even though they could only see the future fulfillment dimly, if at all, God was faithful to fulfill His promise. Look at all the promises that God's already fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, in His death, in His resurrection.

[28 : 03] And in the same way, God will be faithful to fulfill all His promises that He has not yet brought to pass. He will be faithful. So 1 Peter chapter 1, 13 says, set your hope fully on the grace that will be given to you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Yes, God has poured out His grace in the past. You can look back to what Jesus Christ has done, to what God did for the people of Israel in the Old Testament. You can look back to God's grace in the past.

And you can receive God's grace in the present. He'll give you strength, sufficient for each day. And you can also trust His grace for the future. That He promises a future greater than anything you've ever seen or known.

Now, how are we to live in light of these promises? Well, that's what the second half of the chapter tells us.

Verses 1 through 10 is a promise from God of future grace. The second half of the chapter, verses 11 through 20, is a call to obey God in the present. Not just in the future, but in the present.

[29 : 13] Now, when you first read these two halves of the chapter, the first half is all about what God promises. And the second half is all about what He demands. And you might think they don't fit together.

They must not have been part of the same speech. But actually, no. It's very important that they're side by side. Because the foundation for the second half is the first half.

God's promises of future grace are the foundation for His call to present trust and obedience. Now, even in the first half, verses 1 through 10, it talks all about what God's going to do, but it also talks about the people returning to God.

In some ways, that's one of God's promises. He'll give them a new heart so that they will return to Him. God turns back to His people, and by His grace, His people turn back to Him.

So God's promise of future grace doesn't diminish His call to present obedience. On the other hand, the call to present obedience doesn't cancel out the promise of future grace.

[30 : 24] And it doesn't make it totally dependent on you, either. Because then that wouldn't be a promise. Now, let's look briefly at God's call to present obedience here in this chapter, and then we'll conclude by looking at a similar pattern in the New Testament.

So verse 11 through 14, Moses basically says, you have no excuse not to turn to God. Because turning to God is not some superhuman achievement. It's simply a response to God calling out to you in His Word.

And God's given you His Word. So turning to God is not like preparing to run a triathlon where you have to train for months and months, maybe even a year, and hope you don't get injured until you can finally accomplish this feat.

Now, turning to God is not some great feat. It's not like learning ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics or some other obscure language that is only taught at Yale or in three other places in the entire world.

It's not some epic quest that only a few people in the world have time and money to undertake. No. Verse 11 says, it's not too hard.

[31 : 41] Now, that doesn't mean that it's easy to obey God. But it does mean that it's not too hard to understand. God's Word is not written in some obscure language that nobody knows.

King James translates verse 11, it's not hidden from thee. In other words, it's not obscure. It's right here in front of you. And in a similar way, Moses says, it's not far off.

It's not too hard to understand and it's not far off. It's not way up in the sky. It's not halfway around the world. You don't have to take a sea voyage and try to get halfway around the world to the middle of Australia.

It's right here, written in this book. And in the New Testament, Paul quotes these verses in Romans chapter 10. And he says, and he quotes them in reference to the message about Jesus.

He says, Jesus has come to earth. Jesus has died on the cross. People saw him. He was crucified under the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. It really happened.

[32 : 50] And he rose from the dead. There was an empty tomb. People went to that tomb. They were expecting to find it shut and full, occupied, and they found it open and empty.

Paul says, Christ came to earth. He died for our sins. He's risen from the dead. Simply believe. Trust him. He's risen from the dead to give you life now and forever.

And Moses gives a similar call. Verses 15 through 20. He says, now is the time. Turn to God today. He says, I've set before you today life and good, death and evil, blessings and cursing.

Therefore, choose life that you and your children may live because the Lord is your life. In 2 Corinthians 6, the apostle Paul says, now, now is the time of God's favor.

Now is the day of God's salvation. So if you're here tonight, if you're not a Christian, let me say to you today that the message of the Bible is an urgent message.

[34 : 03] The Bible speaks about eternal realities, life and death, good and evil, blessing and curse, guilt and forgiveness.

Heaven and hell. It's not just an interesting academic pursuit. It's not just a nice hobby to explore when you have lots of spare time and nothing else to do.

If the words of the Bible are true, the consequences are enormous. It will alter, it will change the whole framework in which you live your life. And it will determine your eternal destiny.

So if you're not a Christian, consider, what is holding you back from turning to Jesus? Turn to him today.

Trust in him and you will have life. Now to those of us who are Christians, God's call to trust and obey him is an urgent call. It's not something to be put off until later, until a more convenient time.

[35 : 07] seeking to grow in holiness and Christ-likeness is not optional. And it's not just an interesting possibility, but it's a call.

It's an urgent, important, daily priority from your Lord and Savior himself. And it's a pursuit for which God strengthened us daily by his grace. So if you're a Christian believer, let me ask, how are you pursuing growth in holiness and obedience to the Lord?

Make that your priority. Now obedience to God, it's not easy because the world and the flesh and the devil all pull us in the opposite direction.

but one of the best motivations for obeying God and trusting him in the present is his promises of future grace. We've seen how this chapter begins with promises of future grace and ends with a call to present obedience and in the same way these New Testament passages.

Let me read these three passages that I've read earlier in the service. 1 John chapter 3 verse 2 and 3. We read earlier the promise when he appears, when Jesus appears we will be like him because we will see him as he is.

[36 : 25] And then John continues, and everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself as he is pure. When you look forward and see what you will be like, when you see Jesus face to face, when he will remove every stain of sin from your heart, when you will love him for all eternity, it's a powerful motivation to seek holiness and purity today.

Or 1 Peter 1, 13 where he says, set your hope fully on the grace to be given you in the future when Jesus Christ is revealed. And then he goes on and says, as obedient children, don't conform to the evil desires that you had when you lived in ignorance, but just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all that you do.

And finally, God's word from Romans 8, we eagerly await the redemption of our bodies. And later in that same chapter, Paul assures us, he says, nothing in all creation, neither things in the present nor things to come can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Wonderful promises about the future, and those are the foundation of what he says in Romans 12 where he says, therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy. Actually, it says mercies, plural.

Not just God's past mercy, but God's present and future mercies. In view of God's mercies, offer your bodies to God as living sacrifices.

[38 : 05] Knowing that one day, God will complete the redemption of your bodies when you will be resurrected and raised to life with him in the new heavens and the new earth forever.

And so today, offer your body as a sacrifice to God to be used for his holy purposes. You know, present obedience is not easy.

I don't know what your biggest struggle is. I don't know what's the thing that keeps tripping you up or the temptation that every day you have to face.

but as we look to God's promises of future grace, we're strengthened. Let me close with a quote from a Christian man who wrestles daily with a sometimes agonizing struggle.

It's from a book entitled Washed and Waiting. And he talks about how he finds hope in God's promises of future grace. He says this, so much of my life as a Christian has simply been learning how to wait, to be patient, to endure, to bear up under an unwelcome burden for the long haul.

[39 : 15] Taped onto my desk where I write is a small sheet of paper with a quote from a German poet, be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart. Having patience with your own weaknesses is, I think, something of what Paul was commending when he described the tension of living on this side of wholeness.

When God acts climactically to reclaim the world and raise our dead bodies from the grave, there will be no more weakness, no more disorder, no more temptation.

But until then, we hope for what we do not see, washed and waiting. That is my life, my identity, as one who's been forgiven and spiritually cleansed, and my struggle as one who perseveres with a frustrating thorn in the flesh, looking forward to what God has promised to do.

In light of God's promises of future grace, trust and obey Him today. Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you for the security that we can have as your children, adopted and included in your family simply by your grace, loved with an everlasting love.

Father, thank you for these promises that you give us, to give us hope and security and the promise of life in you.

[40 : 49] Lord, we pray that you would strengthen us by your grace to trust and obey you today, that we would not put that off, that we would not be distracted, but that we would fix our eyes on you.

Lord, you are our life. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.