



prayer *life!*

Weekly Prayer Focus

July 28, 2024

In God's Presence

O LORD you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. ... He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." —Isaiah 25:1, 8-9

When I was just a little guy, I went with my family to the circus. There was a lot going on—highwire acts, floor shows, clowns, animal trainers. It was overwhelming—hard for a young tyke to take in. When I heard there was pink elephant, naturally I wanted to see, but I couldn't pick the place where they'd put the pink pachyderm.

It's notoriously difficult to see the proverbial elephant in the room, but in my case, it was the literal truth, even when my Dad pointed and said, "It's right there!" Finally he put both his hands on either side of my head and turned my attention—and my head—to point at the main attraction. "Oh! There it is!"

There's a lot going on in the world. It's easy to miss what God's up to. He's better focused and has a much longer attention span than His earthly children. The show, which must go on as they say, is going exactly according to His plan, but the horizon of history is too vast for our tiny human abilities to take in—much less grasp with understanding. But God's plan still keeps faithfully unfolding, as He pursues His agenda.

For you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and true (25:1). God's ages-old plan to *swallow up death forever (25:8)* was unfolding in Isaiah's day, and it continued until Jesus, the Lamb of God, died for sin on the cross and rose from the grave. Man's hope lies with God and His faithfulness to His people—Israel in Isaiah's day, and the Church today. That hope is the "elephant in the room" that God's people need to stay focused on.

But God and His people have enemies. Moab and other nations surrounding Israel were military, political, and spiritual rivals that vied with Israel for political control. More subtly, they struggled for social prominence and tempted the Lord's people with earthly lusts that lured them to worship other gods. The things of earth always seem somehow to be more real than the Maker of all things. The stories of God's people recount countless times of temptation and spiritual decline, followed by miraculous deliverances, as their Lord proved Himself *faithful and true* in the life of His people—even when they themselves were not.

Enemies surrounded God's people. They always have and always will. Our heads naturally swivel in search of rivals outside of us and all around us, but the true battle is within, and our hope is above. Distractions abound. The world we live in thinks it operates independently from God. They're blind to His existence, ignorant of the real problem, and dead to divine hope. Don't let them distract you.

The "city of man," as Augustine called the world, is like a *fortified city* fighting to stay free of God's lordship. The world we live in so comfortably is alien soil for God's people. Hope for abundant life—hope found only in God—is scrupulously excluded from view, by entertainment, enticing pleasures, *the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches* (Matthew 13:22). Victory only comes with surrender to the Lord.

Lurking within the stuff of daily life are ruthless spiritual forces—*the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life* (1st John 2:16)—that make us susceptible to control by the world around us. Rejecting God's righteous rule, our world sees death as inevitable, embracing the valiant fight against it, along with the hopeless grief inherent to a godless world. Christ alone *will swallow up death forever*. Focus on Him.

The praises we sing exalt the LORD our God who is *faithful and true*. This Sunday, defy the world's darkness and celebrate the God of life. We're His people, who direct the world's focus away from the morass of the world's distractions to the God who leads us to *rejoice in his salvation*.

To the Praise of God's glory.

Continued Daily Bible Reading

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Bible in 1 Year	Isaiah 19-21	Isaiah 22-24	Isaiah 25-27	Isaiah 28-30	Isaiah 31-33	Isaiah 34-36	Isaiah 37-39
Year 1	Deuteronomy 1	Deuteronomy 2	Deuteronomy 3	Deuteronomy 4	Deuteronomy 5	Deuteronomy 6	Deuteronomy 7
Year 2	Psalms 61-63	Psalms 64-65	Psalms 66-67	Psalms 68	Psalms 69	Psalms 70-71	Psalms 72
Year 3	Jeremiah 22	Jeremiah 23	Jeremiah 24	Jeremiah 25	Jeremiah 26	Jeremiah 27	Jeremiah 28

Prayer for This Week

Praise is no glib denial of reality. Praise focuses on realities that lie beyond our immediate perception. Faith doesn't ignore evidence. It looks beyond the evidence in the same direction the evidence points. Faith lives in the real world in light of eternal reality and celebrates eternity in the midst of daily life.

Sunday (Church): *Through Jesus then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name (Hebrews 13:15). Relinquish any sense of self-importance and enjoy the freedom that comes from glorifying God.*

Monday (Home and Family): *I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD (Psalm 116:17). Take time to "count your blessings" and give the Lord the praise He deserves for the things He does that typically go unnoticed.*

Tuesday (Job/School): *Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate (Psalm 127:3-5). Praise God for the blessing of children—both yours and others'. Trust Him to make them a blessing to you and to the world.*

Wednesday (Neighborhood and Community): *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High (Psalm 46:4). Rejoice in God's blessings on our community and your neighborhood. Every good thing comes from the Lord.*

Thursday (Our Nation): *God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns (Psalm 46:5). Ask God to make America the people of the Lord once again.*

Friday (The World): *Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD (Psalm 117)! Praise God that His Word is going into all the world, bringing His salvation and truth to the end of the earth.*

Saturday (Praise and Rejoicing):

"Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the earth hear His voice.

"Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice.

"Oh come to the Father through Jesus the Son,

"And give Him the glory. Great things He has done!"

—Fanny J. Crosby

Prayer for Our Leaders

- Our Pastors and Directors:** Tony Chute, Taylor Mendoza, Tamene Menna, Terilyn Brown, Steve Dahlgren, Amber McEwen, and Tyler Van Horssen; Interns: David Kludt, Noah Gauderman, Cade McRitchie.
- Our Lay Elders:** Woody Armstrong, Steve Flood, Perry Schaefer, and Vinoj Zechariah.
- Our Church Staff:** Analiese Alfonzie, Michele Balga, Bob Brown, John Cordill, Carolee Jefferson, Corie Saunders, Dani Tiqui, Micah Valdez, Christina Vasquez, and Holli Worthington.