

Blessed ~ This One Life

“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:12

“When we're persecuted because of Christ or because we're trying to do what's right before Him, don't be surprised, don't be discouraged. Instead, rejoice and be glad because it shows you are in the company of the righteous throughout human history...‘For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ What reward will we receive for enduring the world's insults and ostracism and all of those other things? The first reward that you will receive in heaven is the praise of the Lord. The other part of the reward is a greater capacity for service in eternity...Can you imagine what it would be like to stand before Jesus Christ, the Lord of the universe, and hear Him say, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant?’” *Pastor Tom Pennington*

***Praise Prayers ~ Heavenly Father, we are so blessed to enjoy these lives You have given us! It is while living with the sinful flesh that we learn the beauties of a crucified and risen Savior, the Prince of glory and our soul's delight. One day soon, we will see the look of love in Your eyes and find where our names are written on Your nail-scarred palms. It will be so wonderful when our eyes close in death—then open again to a triumphant entrance and a rich welcome into the eternal glory of Your kingdom! What eternal joy awaits believers! But life today is also grand and glorious, because You abide with us and intercede for us! Your Holy Spirit dwells within us to comfort our souls and guide all our service for Your kingdom purposes.**

We are accepted in the beloved, and Your banner over us is love.

This one life is the measure of our faith and hope, the only life that we live as sinners saved by grace. This life is our opportunity to wage war against our flesh while abiding in You! We have victories to celebrate as we live for You, speaking of Your worth and excellency—to make Your great name known. Bolster our confidence in Your care as we praise You from Psalm 16. Grant us contentment as we entrust ourselves to Your perfect will.

***Psalm 16:1-2 ~ Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You. I said to the LORD, “You are my Lord; I have no good besides You.”**

Almighty God, the great I AM, it is good to believe in You and find rest in Your generous help. Your throne is in the heavens, but You are the strong defender and protector of those who live on earth and trust in You.

***Psalm 16:3-4 ~ As for the saints who are in the earth, they are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied; I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood, nor will I take their names upon my lips.**

Those who love many gods have many sorrows, but Your saints have had enough of that old life. Jesus paid a high price for our redemption and prays for us still. May it be our joy to love the ones that You dearly love.

***Psalm 16:5-6 ~ The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.**

Our portion is the Lord God omnipotent who fills the heavens and the earth. We may be satisfied with Your perfect providence for our lives. May we know the hope of our calling and the riches of Your glory!

***Psalm 16:7-8 ~ I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. I have set the LORD continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.**

*All the secrets of our souls are laid bare before Your all-seeing gaze. We bless You for Your commandments and the counsels that unite our will with Yours. **This I know, that God is for me.** Psalm 56:9*

***Psalm 16:9-10 ~ Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.**

Whatever trials or insults lie before us, this promise sustains our faith—the Christian is eternally secure because Christ has triumphed over death! We long to hear, “Well done!” as we remain Your prisoners of hope.

***Psalm 16:11 ~ You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.**

We are pilgrims on a journey far from home, yet we travel with a good guide on Your excellent path. In the prospects of heaven and the everlasting pleasures of God, there will be no more evil, suffering, danger, or pain.

***Confession** ~ *Lord of hosts, there is a great battle between the Lamb and the dragon. Your saints, saved only by Your grace and Jesus' blood, are assaulted with trials, slanders, and all manner of persecutions. Flaming arrows are aimed our way to bring our faith in Your almighty power and sovereign rule to dust and ashes. The enemy seeks to wear out Your faithful servants and tempts them to lay down their arms and abandon their spiritual gifts in despair. Hebrews 11 speaks of men and women of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, dwelt in caves and holes—destitute and ill-treated—yet they held fast in faith, while never receiving what they hoped for in their one earthly lifetime. But what they did gain was Your approval, and now they form the great cloud of witnesses whose heroic lives of trust line our way.*

You know the wounds that we have received. May we lose nothing in the furnace but the dross of our sinful ways. Through our silent and humble confession, we commit to stand firm and bear every insult with patience, for You are worthy to wear the crown as Lord over our minds, wills, and affections.

I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah. Psalm 32:5

***Thanksgiving** ~ *Your steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in You. And blessed is the one whose rebellion and lack of faith are forgiven—whose sins have been covered by the blood of the Lamb.*

***Men's Intercession** ~ *Lord, bless the men with the faith that prevails and receives Your praise.*

Hebrews 12:1–2

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

***Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us,** ~ *Remind these men that it is their turn to run the race of faith. Give them assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not yet seen.*

***let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us,** ~ *May they fight against their own sinful nature and find victory in laying down the burdens of their sinful habits at the foot of the cross.*

***and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith** ~ *Let Jesus be desirable to them. Grant them faith to see You as their conquering champion. Grant them the fortitude to run their worthy race with joy. By the Spirit's power, strengthen their inner man.*

***who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame,** ~ *May they sow to the Spirit and not to the flesh. Grant them intimacy with the width and length, depth and height of Christ's surpassing love.*

***and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** ~ *May all his attitudes, hopes, and dreams sift through the grid of this eternal perspective—Christ's saving work was finished on the cross, and You reign!*

***The Congregation** ~ *May we never neglect our spiritual gifts but be zealous to serve You and complete our prepared works. Give us the courage to press on, press through, and be helpers to each other's faith.*

PrayerSHOP Warriors ~ *It is our privilege to spread our needs before You. Keep us hopeful as we wait and watch for You to do wondrous things beyond what we could ever dream. May we pray in Your power with joy.*

***Benediction** ~ **Hebrews 11:16** ~ **But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.**

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

Exalted Lord, may we know that You are faithful and live with the expectation of the life that is to come. Help us to be heavenly-minded and live in this one life with unwavering hope! In Jesus' glorious name! Amen!