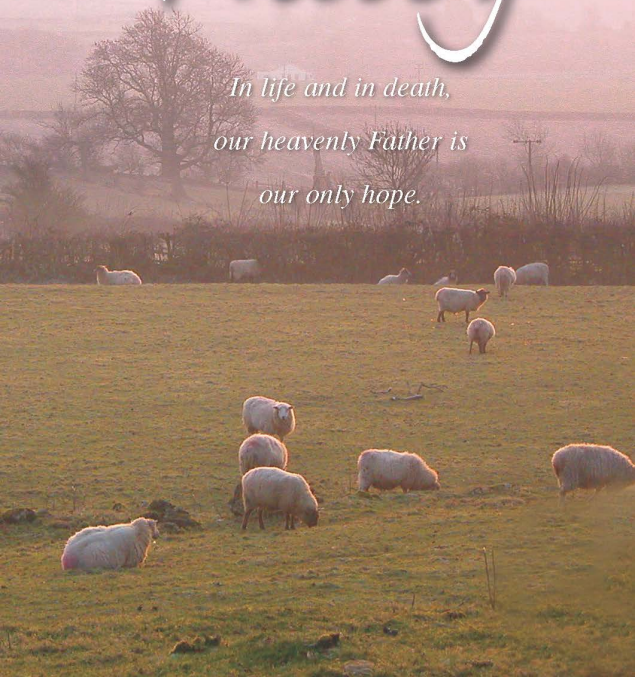


View from the Valley

*In life and in death,
our heavenly Father is
our only hope.*



View from the Valley

In the 23rd Psalm, David beautifully expressed the sorrow and comfort that join hands with us in times of grief and loss. He wrote:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. —Psalm 23:4

All of us will spend time in “the valley of the shadow.” When a loved one is taken in death, we may struggle with regret, anger, and a deep sorrow we cannot give words to.

We need not endure these intense struggles alone. David showed us how to face the valley’s shadow. In pain, he reached out to the God of heaven in words that still resound with our cry to the Shepherd of our own hearts today: “You are with me.”

We cannot escape the grief of the valley or the ache of the shadow. But we do have a Helper to walk with us through the pain. In your time of loss and grief, we extend to you the care of that Helper.

It’s our prayer that as you walk in the valley of the shadow, you’ll experience His comfort and care in ways you never dreamed possible. May the Shepherd of David—our Shepherd—bless and keep you in the days ahead.

These selections from *Our Daily Bread* are intended to help you find the love, care, and encouragement of the Lord our Shepherd. If you have enjoyed these articles and would like to receive the *Our Daily Bread* devotional, just complete the request form on this brochure and return it to us. Our materials are offered at no cost. We are supported by the freewill donations of our members and friends.

UNEXPECTED GRIEF

READ:

2 Corinthians 1:3-11

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.

—2 Corinthians 1:3

Since 1988, I've enjoyed writing several *Our Daily Bread* articles each month. I've felt blessed to dig into Scripture, observe life, and provide spiritual help in this publication.

But on June 6, 2002, I found myself unable to offer help. On the last day of her junior year of high school, our 17-year-old daughter Melissa was killed in a car accident.

In one horrible instant, everything we knew about God and the Bible and heaven was put to the test. We needed the Christian community to guide us toward hope as we stood at the funeral

of a beloved young woman who had touched so many lives with her smile, her godliness, her love of life, and her care for others.

For many weeks, I couldn't write. What could I say? How could I find words to help others when my family—when I—needed so much?

Now, months later as I begin to write again, I can say that God has not changed. He is still our loving heavenly Father, the "God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3). He is still the source of hope in the face of unexpected grief. I write of Him with a renewed sense of my need for His touch, His love, His strength. Broken, I write of the only One who can make us whole. —Dave Branon

*I have been through the valley of weeping,
The valley of sorrow and pain;
But the God of all comfort was with me,
At hand to uphold and sustain. —Anon.*

**When God permits trials,
He also provides comfort.**

SUSPENDED JUDGEMENT

READ:

Lamentations 3:1-24

**"The Lord is my
portion," says my
soul, "Therefore, I
hope in Him!"**

—Lamentations 3:24

A mother wrote me that she had prayed daily for the safety of her son, but one day he was killed in an accident on the job. "For the past 4 years," she said, "I have been searching for the answer to why."

In another family, a sudden heart attack snatched Ray from Sylvia's side, leaving her to face life alone. When my wife and I visited her at the funeral home, we were met by a woman who was grieving but not asking God for an explanation.

What made the difference? Was it wrong for that mother to question God? Not at all! Sylvia too must have wondered about God's purpose in this tragedy. But from experience she had come to know Him to be completely trustworthy. She could suspend judgment. "I don't need to ask why," she told us.

Jeremiah expressed much the same response in today's Scripture. Everything looked as if God had abandoned him, yet he said, "I hope in Him." His faith was no irrational leap in the dark. Sound reasons based on experience backed it.

To suspend judgment when God is silent honors Him because it refuses to charge Him with being unjust. Those who express such faith are strengthened by God's Spirit and learn how strong and good God really is.

—Dennis De Haan

*Though trials come, though fears assail,
Through tests scarce understood,
One truth shines clear—it cannot fail—
My God is right and good. —Hager*

Trusting God's faithfulness
dispels our fearfulness.

GOD ABOVE THE STORM

READ:
Psalm 29

The voice of the LORD
is powerful; the voice
of the LORD is full of
majesty.
—Psalm 29:4

As a boy, I was fascinated by the sights and sounds of a storm. They always made me think of God. In the roar of the thunder, I imagined I was hearing His chariots rumbling through the sky. In the flashes of lightning, I felt a sense of awe mingled with fear and trust.

When I was a seminary student, my wife and I used to take a drive when we saw a storm approaching so that we could experience its wonder more vividly. I am less adventurous today, but storms still make me think about God's majesty and power.

Psalm 29 describes a storm in all its violence as it sweeps in over the Mediterranean, swoops down the mountain ranges, rushes through the wilderness, and pours out its refreshing rain upon the land. Towering over the scene is God. The elements of the squall are described as the "voice of the LORD."

The psalm closes by assuring us that the God who was in control when He sent the flood in judgment is also in control when the rain comes as a blessing. Through it all, He is working to give strength and peace to His people. The powerful, majestic God behind the storm has our eventual good in mind, and He will achieve His goal. Isn't it comforting to know that this God loves and cares for us! —Herb VanderLugt

*The lightning of a summer storm,
Its thunder roaring in reply,
Reveal to us an awesome God
Whose power we cannot deny. —Sper*

We experience peace—not panic—
when we trust the power of God.

THE DEATH OF DEATH

READ:

1 Cor. 15:20-28

The last enemy that
will be destroyed
is death.

—1 Corinthians 15:26

When I was about 8 years old, I tried to deny the reality of death. It happened at my grandmother's funeral. Seeing her lifeless body in the casket, I recall thinking, *If that should ever happen to me, I'll just get up and walk away.*

I am now more than 70, and I look at death differently. I've officiated at many funerals. I've said farewell to both of my parents, all of my aunts and uncles, and many friends. I can no longer deny the harsh reality of death. It rips apart life's closest bonds, leaves hearts broken,

ushers in loneliness, and opens floodgates of tears. Using pleasant-sounding words and calling funeral services "celebrations" do not change that.

There is a greater reality, though, that can give us the will to go on living with hope. Jesus Christ broke the power of death. He did "get up and walk away" from the grave. And one day this "last enemy," as Paul called it, will be destroyed forever (1 Corinthians 15:26). He said it like this: "'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (vv.54-57).

Praise God! The death of death is sure!

—Dennis De Haan

Oh, death of Christ—the death of fear!

The death of condemnation!

Oh, life! His gift to trusting souls—

Eternal, free salvation! —Hess

Because of Christ's empty tomb,
we can be full of hope.

KEEP TALKING ABOUT JESUS

READ:

1 Cor. 15:51-57

**I am the
resurrection and the
life. He who believes
in Me, though he
may die, he shall live.
—John 11:25**

Pastor Eloy Pacheco said at a funeral for a believer that Jesus is the only lasting source of comfort. Afterward a woman said to him, “You preachers are all alike. All you talk about is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!”

“That’s true,” he replied kindly. “What comfort do you have to offer the grieving family?”

She was speechless for a few moments, and then she said, “You’re right. At least you have Jesus.”

Sooner or later someone dear to us will die, and we’ll want to be comforted. A hug, a kind deed, shared tears, and the pres-

ence of a friend may ease sorrow’s pain just a bit. But these gestures won’t answer our most urgent questions: What’s beyond the grave? Where is the person now? Will we be reunited in heaven? How can I have the assurance of eternal life?

For the answers to those questions, we must look to Jesus Christ. He is the One who defeated sin and death by dying on the cross for us and rising from the grave (1 Corinthians 15:1-28,57). Because He lives, all who put their faith in Him will live forever with Him (John 11:25).

When a believer in Christ dies, we who are left behind can find comfort and confidence in Him. So let’s keep talking about Jesus. —Dennis De Haan

*We have hope, for Christ has risen,
Death was conquered by God’s Son;
May we gently share that message
With some hurting, grieving one. —D. De Haan*

**In life and in death,
our only hope is Jesus.**

A HAPPY LIFE

READ:

Revelation 21:1-17

**There shall be no
more death, nor
sorrow, nor crying.
There shall be no
more pain, for the
former things have
passed away.**

—Revelation 21:4

Cornelia Dobner was 90 when she died and went to her home in heaven. Her life had been characterized by hard work, self-sacrifice for her family, and loyalty to God and her husband.

Soon after the funeral, two of her great-granddaughters put their feelings into words by writing notes to her. One of them, in the clear block printing of a 6-year-old, wrote, “I hope you have a happy life up in heaven.”

That child’s hope for her great-grandmother is an unquestioned certainty for every follower of Christ who dies. The Bible describes our eternal home as a place where there is no more

suffering, sorrow, crying, pain, impurity, disease, nor evil (Revelation 21:4,27). It also tells us what is there: the Lamb (Jesus), the redeemed, the river of life, the throne of God, the tree of life, the light of God (Revelation 21:22; 22:1-5).

Jesus said that He would go and prepare a place for us (John 14:1-3). And the apostle Paul described it as the place where “we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). If that’s not happiness, what is?

Yes, like Cornelia Dobner, every believer in Jesus can look forward to “a happy life up in heaven.”

—Dave Egner

*Beyond earth’s sorrows, the joys of heaven,
Beyond earth’s shadows, a glorious dawn;
Beyond earth’s battles, sweet peace unending;
Beyond earth’s sunset in heaven’s morn. —Gilmore*

**To be with Jesus forever
is the sum of all happiness.**

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