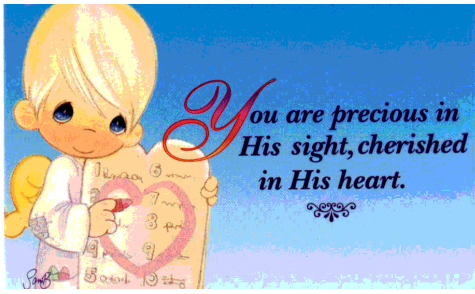


A Beautiful Place To Live



How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty. Happy are those who can live in your house, always singing your praises. Happy are those who are strong in the Lord, who set their minds on a pilgrimage. When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs, where pools of blessing collect after the rains! They will continue to grow stronger and each of them will appear before God. The Lord God is our light and protector. He gives us grace and glory. No good thing will the Lord withhold from those who do what is right. O Lord Almighty, happy are those who trust in you. (Psalm 84)

Beauty is found wherever God resides. Although God rules with great power, God also cares for the seemingly insignificant things in our lives. True blessing and joy come to us when we choose to live in God's presence. The security, peace, and love that God offers are greater than anything we could receive from other sources. We often try other things to give us pleasure and satisfaction but we soon realize that they fall short of what we are longing for. As we entrust our life to God and do our best to follow God's will for us, we will discover the blessings of living in the presence of our righteous and loving God.



For many people, when troubles pile up and difficulties seem overwhelming they assume that God has left the scene. In reality, the opposite is true. God knows that we live in a broken world and that unjust things happen. God's nature is to come close to those who need help and need a safe place during the storms of life. We often reject the help that God can give by telling ourselves that God has forgotten us instead of reaching out in faith and offering ourselves to God who loves to care for our anxieties and show us a new and loving way that has no hidden long term harm.

We often feel that we know what the solution is to our problem. We ask God to give that to us. Sometimes, in God's goodness, that thing doesn't happen, doesn't happen when we want it to, or doesn't happen in the way we expected. Often, at those times, we get angry and complain to God that He didn't help us. God alone knows all of our lives, past, present, and future. God always acts in love and always acts to support what is good and what will lead to more freedom for us. God is willing to risk being unpopular with us in order to build our lives in ways that are healthy and satisfying. Our part is to welcome God's blessing in God's way into our lives. That will require seeing something new and being willing to act in a new way. That will involve trust in the presence of a loving God who is with us every minute of every day and who is committed to our well being. As we realize these truths, we should place their confidence in God.

God has spoken plainly, and I have heard it many times: Power, O God, belongs to you; unfailing love, O Lord is yours. Surely you judge all people according to what they have done. I wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor come from God alone. He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me. (Psalm 62)

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What keeps me from being happy?
2. How do I respond when trouble and difficulties pile up in my life?
3. How does God help to turn a place of weeping into a place of blessing?
4. What makes it difficult to believe that God will not withhold anything good from me?
5. What can I do to make my life more open to the good things that God wants to do for me? Do I need to wait longer? Do I need to choose for trusting rather than fearful thoughts? Do I need to take responsibility for my own choices rather than blame God and then together work on the problems before me? Do I need to receive healing from God rather than holding onto pain and bitterness for wrongs inflicted on me?