

Good morning. My name is Michael Bleecker. I'm the worship pastor here. I'm so honored to be here and speak the truth over you and share what I think the Lord has given me to say. I'm really honored to be here because, for the last eight years, I have pleaded with you through song to get something. I've pleaded with you to get this – worship. And so today where we're going is talking about worship, more specifically worship in the midst of life, in the midst of trial, in the midst of suffering. It's inevitable for us, this suffering, these tears and pain. So what I want to answer is this. How do we worship in the midst of trial. We're about to read in 1 Peter that there is this inheritance that is coming for us, this salvation, but as we talk repeatedly here at the Village, we have this "already but not yet" piece. Salvation is here, but it's also coming when we're resurrected. So that's where we're going.

So let's read together 1 Peter 1:1-9. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. Born Again to a Living Hope. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

Let's pray together. "Father, You know the depth of my inadequacy this morning. You know the depth of my need for You and our need for You to move in power this morning and to bring power to these words, to our hearts and to our minds. We pray that Your Holy Spirit would move in power, pointing our faces to Your Son. We know, O God, that with the power of Your Spirit this morning, our time will be enlightening, eye-opening, heart-wrenching and life-changing as we meditate on this word. And we pray that You would be honored in all of it. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen."

Now where Peter was in this time, it was 63 A.D. He was living in Rome, the city he was crucified in. He was crucified by a wicked emperor named Nero. Nero became emperor in 54 A.D., when he was just sixteen years old. Nine years later, much of Rome burned to the ground. A mob thought that Nero burned Rome to the ground because he wanted a bigger palace. History tells us that Nero fiddled while Rome burned. So to divert some of that hatred off of him, he chose the already unpopular Christians of that day and enacted the only law that survived his reign – the banning of Christianity. So Christians were persecuted at that point and for another 250 years in the Roman empire. There was a myriad of ways they were punished and martyred. Christians were used as food for wild beasts in the arena. Christians were forced to act as characters murdered in plays. Christians were soaked in tar and sulfur and lit on fire in backyards of Nero's parties so that people could see. They were used as torches along the oldest road in Rome, the Appian Way. It is the oldest, most traveled road in Rome in that day. Nero would crucify or burn alive Christians and place them along this road. This is just an idea of what we think it might look like:

Can you imagine Peter walking this road and hearing the cries of his brothers and sisters? I can imagine him walking back to his home and penning the words that we just read. "Brothers and sisters, there will be various trials. It's all around us. But take great hope. And inheritance is coming. Salvation is coming, but it's not yet, already but not yet." And I can imagine Peter fishing one day when the Roman guards coming up behind him and dragging off to Nero and then being crucified on Vatican Hill.

So that's a little bit of history of what we just read. Now I want to read this again and divide a little bit of this and talk through some of this. As we read, I want you to think about what we talked about at the beginning, this already but not yet. We will endure suffering. It is coming for us. If it hasn't come yet for you, it's inevitable for all of us. Yet we're still called to worship. We're still called to rejoice with joy that is inexpressible. So as we read this, I want you to remember that you have salvation, you have hope. Is there blood-bought assurance for you right now that God is here, that He is present, that He has saved you, that He has created all things that we might see Him in it? Yes. So let's read this again. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, . . ." Now Peter is designating himself as an apostle or an authoritative messenger of Jesus, one who saw His resurrection and one who has been sent by Christ. ". . .To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion. . ." And he lists five places in the ancient world. These five places are in our modern Turkey. Now these exiles were dispersed or scattered. ". . .according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. . ." The Father always has known us and has chosen us, as Ephesians 1 says. So these elect exiles were chosen by the Father to scatter and to spread the good news, just as we were chosen by the Father to scatter in our respective cities and speak the good news. ". . .in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you." I love a couple things in here. I love the trinitarian nature of what Peter is doing here. You have the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And I think we leave out the Trinity a lot in our conversation and in our prayers. Matt has said it before that we love talking about the Father and the Son, but the Holy Spirit seems to be like this drunk uncle who we don't want to invite over to our homes or parties. And then the sprinkling with His blood piece was interesting. I had to look that up. In Exodus 24, Moses sacrifices an ox and sprinkles blood on the altar, and then he turns and sprinkles blood on those who were present in worship to signify this cleansing act of God, this atoning work. Verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" This Greek word for "blessed" is eulogetes. Eu- meaning "good" and -logos meaning "word." So it's this "good word." So when Peter is saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," he is in effect saying, "We ascribe greatness or we associate greatness to You." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. . ." So we have an inheritance. Romans 8 says, "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ." We are literally written into God's will. Christ filled out a last will and testament, and He put our names in it. The beautiful thing is that we can never be taken off of that paper. We can never be removed from the palm of His hands. We've sung about that for years. I love that truth. So we have this inheritance that is imperishable. All that we leave behind in our last will and testament will rust and perish, but not what the Lord leaves behind. It's undefiled. It cannot be stained or cheapened in any way. And it's unfading. It never grows old, because it's eternal. Verse 5, ". . .who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." So again there's this "already but not yet." The fullest extent of our salvation is coming. We're saved from sin now, but we still have that day when mortality will be erased. Verse 6, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, . . ." Go back to that picture and imagine that Appian Way. Imagine the crucifixion. Imagine the difficulties and sufferings. ". . .you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

So yes, there are trials that we would inevitably go through. It's necessary, Peter says. God will allow these trials that will bring sanctification of the Spirit and obedience to Jesus. I think through trials, our worship is tested and our identity is

tested. If you are for God, it's inevitable that people will be against you. Peter suffered, Jesus suffered, Paul, the elect exiles of this day absolutely suffered, just as we suffer. Now we have liberty here. So it doesn't look the same, but we do have these things that exist to day that very well existed in Peter's day. There are three things. I think we are grieved by trials of a fallen world. So when Adam and Eve bit that fruit, they began forever suffering, pain, sorrow and the fall of mankind. There were 126 people last Sunday who woke up in Joplin, Missouri who would never see Monday. We endure tsunamis, and we see the effects of this fallen world. We see it in Chandler and Bill Seal, our spiritual formations pastor in Dallas who just had a cancerous tumor resected on Wednesday. We see sickness, and we see disease as the result of this fallen world. Lee Lewis, our care pastor here at the Village, has suffered for years from Crohn's disease. His grandmother would always tell him, "Lee, I'm always praying for you, but the reality is you have a physical picture of what once was a spiritual reality. You have this physical picture of this disease that once was a spiritual reality given to you, and God has reconciled through Christ's blood your salvation. So it's not who you are. You are made new. The old man is gone. But I'll keep praying for your healing." Why does she keep praying? Because it's a fallen world. We see it all around us. Second, we're grieved by trials of our sinful nature. There are emotionally disturbed, severely abused children in our world who just don't even know how to function in life because the physical, sexual and emotional abuse they have endured. We saw it in Sarah's testimony this morning ([link](#)). There are addictions that plague some of us in this room. There are images of flesh that weigh on us and call to us from the computer and TV. There is anger that consumes some of us. There is fear, worry and anxiety that weigh on us so heavily. If you are enduring such trials, I would plead with you to run to our Recovery ministry here at the Village. There are support groups of people who have gone through pretty much what everyone has gone through, and they would love to wrap their arms around you, to pray for you and to listen to you. There are home groups that we have. I would encourage you to jump in one and be vulnerable in those. And thirdly, I think we're grieved by trials of spiritual forces of evil. Ephesians 6 says we wrestle "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." And if we kept reading to verse 20, we would know how to extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one.

So what do we do with all this suffering and all these trials. I think we know why we suffer. We read it in 1 Peter, and we're awaiting this day that these trials would result in praise, honor and glory. So I think we have the why answered, but how do we worship in the midst of suffering. Let's keep reading. 1 Peter 1:8, "Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." You obtaining, you are receiving the outcome or the finalized form of your faith on that day of the salvation of your soul. So the "already not yet" becomes "already." But let's go back to the "already not yet," because this is where we find ourselves today. So with all this suffering, with all the tears, with all the pain, how do we do this? We remember. We remember who He is and what He has done. He has given you creation so you would clearly see His eternal power in divine nature (Romans 1). He has given you the complete forgiveness of all your sins, and you have that right now. He has given you the robe of righteousness and clothed you with the garments of salvation that you are wearing now (Isaiah 61). He has given you access to Him at all times, in all places, being ever-present, eternal. And He has given you all that He has, namely His Son Jesus. So we remember these things and rejoice. As Augustine has said, He has not just handed you a cup of cold water; He has given you the whole well. He has taken you to the fountain and given you the well itself. So I think we can look back in Genesis 22 and see why Abraham was able to bring his son up to that mountain to the altar. Because he remembered the provision and greatness of God. I think we can see why the three young Hebrew men walked through that fiery furnace with confidence in the book of Daniel. I think they remembered that God delivers souls from the dead. We can look at Paul who is continually boasting in the Bible of God's greatness, nearness and sufficiency of grace. So he's able to suffer with a thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians).

I think there are two ways that we respond in these sufferings. One who forgets the greatness of God will say, "Where are You? Do You not see my tears? I can't hear You. I can't see You. Where are You?" They forget. They have forgotten

His salvation, His ever-presence, His created order. But I think the one who remembers God's greatness goes through trials and remembers things like His creation. "You have left me with evidences of Your existence and character. I have seen the things that have been made. Your creation bears witness to You through its beauty, complexity, usefulness and design." Romans 1 says, "His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived." I think the one who remembers God's greatness in trials remembers things like His salvation. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). I think the one who remembers God's greatness in trials remembers His ever-presence, His eternal nature. He is present everywhere, at all times, before the foundation of the world and through all time for all eternity and even right now as we sit. Psalm 46, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling." You are an ever-present help in trouble. You are ever-present and eternal. And to those who have forgotten, I plead with you to remember. I'm pleading with you to remember His salvation, His created order in seeing those things. Now you may need to get out of Texas to see those things. And remember His ever-presence, that He will never leave you. He's always here. Psalm 145 says, "They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness." So again, how is it that we can suffer so greatly in the midst of all this? We remember. We remember that He is Creator. "Let there be light," God shouted in Genesis 1. When God spoke these words, creation began its song, "You are great, You are God, You are clothed in wonder and awe." Psalm 119 says, "The heavens declare Your glory and the sky above proclaims Your handiwork." God has left in creation these evidences of His existence and His character.

In Job 36, Elihu reminds his friend of God's greatness as Job suffers. He points him to God's created order. He says this, "Remember to extol his work, of which men have sung. All mankind has looked on it; man beholds it from afar. Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable. For he draws up the drops of water; they distill his mist in rain, which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly. Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of his pavilion? Behold, he scatters his lightning about him and covers the roots of the sea. For by these he judges peoples; he gives food in abundance. He covers his hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark. Its crashing declares his presence; the cattle also declare that he rises." So God is whispering, "Remember. . .see and remember and worship." But Elihu doesn't give up there. In the next chapter, he continues to point his friend to God's created order, to remember. He says, "God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend. For to the snow he says, 'Fall on the earth,' likewise to the downpour, his mighty downpour. . .that all men whom he made may know it." God is whispering, "See My creation? Remember and worship."

An anonymous author has written: "I have been asked by some how I can be so certain in the existence of a good God, and I have asked them in return if they have eyes to see. God has woven himself irretrievably into Nature; left his fingerprints behind to show us where he's been. His signature is smeared into the curls of the Milky Way, forever circling above the rim of the world. God has scattered fragments of himself all about the earth like a father hides eggs in the yard before his son's very first Easter; hiding behind a tree with laughing eyes and waiting to see which of the treasures his child will uncover first. God is crying out all around us. He is present in the breathless silence of the snowmottled mountains; he is dancing with the sunlight that shatters on the ocean's waves; he is hiding in the decaying moss and lichen and crumbling shale in the old forgotten places in the world. No jagged mountain throws its sharp weight against the sky that is not a testament to his goodness. The entire sum of Creation, each private and individual act of nature, is God waving hello." Augustine said, "God's goodness shines in every sunbeam, glitters in every dewdrop, smiles in every flower, and whispers in every breeze. Earth and sea and air teeming with innumerable forms of life, and are full of the greatness of our God. Sun, moon and stars affirm that the Lord is great, and all terrestrial things echo the proclamation." Genesis 9 says, "I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and you and all

living creatures of every kind." So when you see a rainbow, you don't just see a rainbow, right? There is more. There is a message there. There is a covenant that God has made. Just like if you're given a letter, you don't just hold the paper and say, "Oh, this is paper. See the thickness. It's white with black marks on it." No, there's a message written on that letter to you. And there is a message that God is giving us in creation. I want you to feel your pulse right now. Just hold it for a second. Did you jump start that? No. God, in His wonderful created order, made that to beat. When you went to sleep last night, did you continue to breathe? No. Did J.J. Barea knock on the wall of his mother's uterus and ask to be 5'11"? No. I know Matt always uses Shaq, but I'm 5'6", so I've got 5'11" to hope for. I'd be thrilled with just five more inches. But creation is singing and shouting about God's greatness, so be looking and you'll see Him there. So He is Creator.

Second, He is Savior. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." So right now, we have no righteousness of our own. It is all in Christ Jesus, who is seated at the Father's right side right now as we worship here today. So we respond, "You are great in Your salvation." Charles Spurgeon has said this: "Why is this done for me? A sinner?? So guilty and so deserving of wrath. That God should be good to any of His people shows His mercy, but that He should make me one of His and deal so well with me, here His goodness exceeds itself! That God Himself should bless his people, that He should come in the form of human flesh to save His people, that he should dwell in us, and walk with us, and be to us a God, a very present help in trouble, is a miracle of love. Is not this great goodness? It is great goodness since it visits persons so insignificant, so guilty and so deserving of wrath. Blessed be God that He is good to persons so ungrateful, to persons who cannot even at best make any adequate return, who do not even make such return as they could. Ah, Lord, when I consider what a brutish creature I am it is easy to confess the greatness of Thy goodness." In the late 1800's, a man named Horatio Spafford, who was a business man and a lawyer in Chicago, had a lot of real estate along the banks of Lake Michigan. Then the great Chicago fire happened in 1871 and burned much of his real estate. He lost most of everything that he had. So a physician encouraged him, his wife and his four daughters to take a trip. So they knew that his friend Dwight L. Moody would be preaching in an evangelistic tour in England, so they booked some tickets on a ship. Due to business, Horatio had to stay behind. His wife and four daughters went on ahead. As they approached the coast of Newfoundland, an English ship smashed into theirs, sinking their ship in twelve minutes along with his four daughters. His wife made it to Wales, and she cabled him the two words, "Saved alone." So he got his things together and jumped on the next ship to England. He asked the captain to drop anchor where they thought his daughters had died. When they got to that place, he went down to the cabin of the ship, grabbed a piece of paper and penned these words: "My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blest assurance control, that Christ has regarded my helpless estate, and hath shed his own blood for my soul. It is well with my soul. It is well, it is well with my soul." How? How can you write those words? As a father, I can't even imagine just days later being above my children as they are drowned in the sea and taking such hope in His salvation, that He is so much better than anything else in the world and penning those words. I think he remembered. I think that's how. I imagine him as he prepares for his Sunday school class that he taught at his Presbyterian church many years before, maybe in his preparation he was reading words from John Owen. "When someone sets his affections upon the cross and the love of Christ, he crucifies the world as a dead and undesirable thing. The baits of sin lose their attraction and disappear. Fill your affections with the cross of Christ and you will find no room for sin." I imagine John Owen writing those words because he read the words of Paul in Romans 5. "But God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

The Bible compares the Lord to a shepherd, so we are compared to as sheep 189 times. Now before you think that's kind of cool, you need to know that sheep are dumb, defenseless and dirty. Sheep have been known to lag behind their shepherd, they're prone to wander off and they're apt to grow weary. But the shepherd protects them. Some of them are strong in the Lord, and others are weak in faith. But He is impartial in His care for His sheep. The weakest lamb is as dear to Him as the most advanced in the flock. Praise God! He finds newborn souls like young lambs ready to perish,

and He nourishes them. He finds weak minds ready to faint and die, and He consoles them and gives them strength. If you are a son or daughter here this morning, I plead with you again to remember. He is good in His salvation, He delights in you and He allows you to run into His arms, where the riches of His love are always enough. Isaiah 53 says, "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement (or punishment) that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . He bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressor." We've all turned to our own way. We do it constantly. Yet just like the prodigal son, the Father says, "Run!" The Father sees us walking back with our heads down in shame because of our sin, and the Father goes, "No, lift your head. I'm running to you." And He wraps us up and shows us compassion, throws a huge party for us and invites all the angels together, because His son, His daughter is returning. I will plead with you again to return.

So He is creator, He is Savior and He is also ever-present and eternal. God has always existed, is here right now and will always be. Psalm 23 says this, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters." Some of the rivers in that day rushed pretty heavily, so the shepherd would cut off a little stream off of the river so that the sheep could be led beside the still waters. "He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even 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." The rod and the staff of the shepherd were used to fend off attackers and animals. It was also used when the sheep would wander off. He would break it's leg, bind that leg and hold the sheep on his shoulders. When that sheep heals, he puts it down and it never leaves his side from that moment. So His rod and His staff hurt, but it is comfort. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." In those days, before a shepherd would allow his sheep to graze, he would go into the field and look for a lot of things, mainly adder holes. If the sheep graze too close to these holes, the snakes might bite them on the nose and the sheep would die. So he would anoint those holes with oil and allow the sheep to graze right there in the presence of their own enemies He goes before us to prepare the way. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. I will fear no evil, for you are with me."

So why do we still forget? Maybe altogether we forget that He's here. I think some of us have even become callous. We can just take Him or leave Him sometimes. There was a day where all some of us thought about was God. He was easy to find. We saw Him in His created order, we remembered Him in His salvation and we remembered that He is ever-present. Some of us have just become bored with the Creator. Some of us have become bored with the sinless Savior who died that we might live. Like this guy:

This is Adam and God. This is a famous painting by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel. I was able to go to Rome when I was in college and see this. I had a different view of probably how Michelangelo thought about it. This is called The Creation of Adam, but some scholars call it The Endowment of Adam. As we remember this ever-presence of the Lord, look at this picture. Adam is reclining in this lazy pose, but look at God. He is stretching out to meet him. I think Adam has already been saved. This is a child of God. He is very much alive. His eyes are open. So I'm choosing to see this as just us. This is me and this is you as a child of God. In our daily lives, the Lord reaches out and says, "I'm right here." And Adam is just in this lazy, indifferent pose. If he would just lift up his finger he could touch the hand of God. I think maybe he's just not interested. Maybe he has no interest in making that connection. Maybe we don't. Maybe he assumes that God will close the gap. There's just that little gap there. And He does. Praise God! But I think he's forgetting James 4 here. I think he's forgetting to draw near to God and He will draw near to you. But how different are we? We're not. I think we casually reach out to God. I think a lot of times we're indifferent. I think there are these days where we just taste and see that He's good, but I think we've been bored. I think we look for something or someone else to satisfy our longing.

So we chase things that look like Him. We become distracted. For some of us, this has happened for years. We develop these thick cataracts and become callous to the greatness of God. I think some of us have become absolutely distracted and you have a hard time telling the difference between God and your idols that surround you.

Everybody is familiar with Where's Waldo. Waldo is this guy with black-rimmed glasses and a red and white striped sweater. They say he's on every page, but I have spent an embarrassing amount trying to find him with no luck on some pages. You have to be willing to look for him. And when you find him, there's this sense of joy and accomplishment. I think developing the capacity to look for him is the book. If it were too easy, if every page was Waldo's face just huge, then no one would buy the book. That wouldn't be fun. The difficulty of the task is what increases the power of discernment. There is purpose in the author placing Waldo in certain spots where you can't find him. The author says he hides Waldo so children can "be aware of what's going on around them. I'd like them to see wonder in places it might not have occurred to them." But it just takes time to find him, right? It demands patience. Early in the book, he's easy to find. As you flip a couple pages, there are things like sea creatures and giants, but Waldo is still there. You can still pick him out. But as you get to the end, there are all these pseudo-Waldos. There are all these people who look like Waldo. And you can actually be looking right at the face of Waldo and just pass right by him. The author has put in these distractions. And I think we can look for God in our life, and some of us have placed so many distractions in the way. There are these lookalikes, virtually identical but not, in our world. So He's already in every moment. God is there. The Scriptures tell us He's there on every one of the pages of our lives, but the ease in which He may be found varies from one page to the next.

As John Ortberg says, we have rainbow days and we have ordinary days. On rainbow days, God's presence is hard to miss. On rainbow days, your children could scream all day long, and for some reason it sounds like angels singing to God in heaven. On rainbow days, you pray constantly and feel as though God is right there with you. The words of the Bible just leap off the page on those days. God made a covenant with Noah as we read earlier in Genesis 9 and gave him the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. So every time Noah saw it, he remembered the covenant. He also makes a covenant with Abraham a few generations later So He says, "Abraham, I've got this covenant. I want to make this covenant with you. Every male among you shall be circumcised." I can imagine Abraham going, "Come on, God! Noah got the rainbow. Why do I get circumcision? Can't we just have like a secret handshake or some other sign?" So I'm sure back in Abraham's day, the sign of the covenant was a little more painful than Noah's, but God must have been so clear on that day. And then there are ordinary days. There are days when your best friend succumbs to a horrible cancer. There are days when there are tears and there is loss. And there are also days where there is just indifference. Maybe everything just feels mechanical or routine. There aren't major sins that we can see, there aren't obvious problems and everything just feels comfortable and mechanical. On these days, we feel the burden of all we have to do for that day. Prayer is like fifth on the list. And we may be doing all the right things on the outside, but inside we're just not clicking those days. And like Waldo, God is still present in those days, but I think we've just forgotten to seek Him, we've forgotten to remember. And we can find Him if we remember to look. So there is a day where we felt His every move, we heard His whisper. Yet for some reason, we don't feel Him like we once did. When He saved us, we couldn't stop talking about Jesus. Some of us couldn't put our Bible down. But because we put other gods before and we busy ourselves with things that aren't eternal, we've just forgotten He's there. So we should seek Him in the rainbow days but also in the ordinary, daily, mundane days. And how do we do it again? We remember. You've been given an inheritance that will never rust or perish. Your name is written in His will and in the palm of His hands. The Bible says there's nothing you can do to erase it. But until that day, it's inevitable that we will suffer and endure various trials. And we will endure them by remembering.

Let's pray, "We are amazed O God. You are here, a very present help in trouble; a comfort to the hurting; a river for the thirsty; a Father to the fatherless, a Protector of the neglected and the abandoned. We await the day when the

perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality. On that day, death will be swallowed up in victory. So we say, 'O death, where is your sting? O hell, where is your victory?' Thank You, O God, that You give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we pray that Your Holy Spirit would stir our affections for Christ and give us a greater awareness of the greatness of You. We know that when we remember Your mighty acts: Your salvation, Your creation Your eternal nature, we worship. So may we come every day to the fountain, and every day be washed anew, though trial and tears, that we may worship You always in spirit and truth. In Your Son's name we pray. Amen.

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