



Meditations of Lent

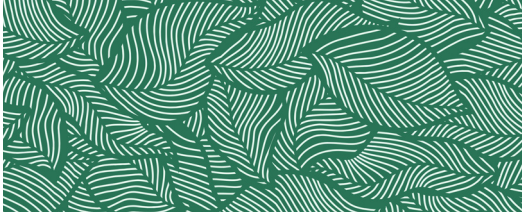
Prayer is the strength of every Christian. In the face of so many situations that hurt us and could harden our hearts, we are called to dive into the sea of prayer, which is the sea of God's boundless love, to taste His tenderness.

Lent is a time of prayer; of more intense prayer, more prolonged prayer, more intentional prayer. This devotional guide will lead you through 7 meditations on your journey of Lent; each with a Bible reading, a few contemplative questions, and excerpts of prayers and thoughts from Christians, pastors, and theologians of the past. We hope their words will offer fresh perspective and inspiration for your prayers.

After the readings, we invite you to express your thoughts in a personal prayer. For further inspiration, use the prompts below.

- *Reflect on new perspectives,*
- *Repent and confess exposed sin,*
- *Rejoice in a new understanding of Jesus Christ,*
- *Request growth as His disciple.*

Be willing to set aside time this Lent for prayer.



The following resources were used as resources in the creation of this guide:

Chester, Tim. *The Beauty of the Cross*. UK: The Good Book Company, 2019.

Chester, Tim. *An Ocean of Grace*. Turkey: The Good Book Company, 2021.

Gaiimo, Donna. *Lent with Pope Francis*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2014.



The Invitation

Scripture reading: Isaiah 55:1-2

What is my heart seeking this Lent?

Touching base with my deepest spiritual needs.

How is God inviting me to spiritual renewal and rebirth?

Come... come... come... come...

Like a street-seller, Isaiah raises his voice to cut through the noise. The world is full of propositions, all clamoring for our attention. Every advertisement we see promises satisfaction. But Isaiah's promise is of eternal satisfaction. The invitation goes to all nations, but many turn away. We opt for alternatives. We seek fulfillment in careers, possessions, health, relationships. They are all good, but poor substitutes for God.

What does God require? That you come. What's offered is beyond price; yet no price is demanded because it has been paid.

The gospel is so precious a thing that, if it is to be bought, the whole world could not pay for it. And therefore if bought at all, it must be without money and without price! It cost the Lord Jesus His blood – what have you to offer? What? Do you imagine that you can buy it with a few paltry works?

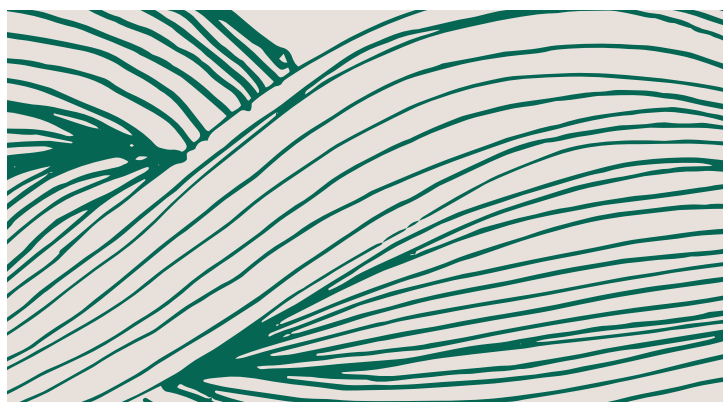
God Himself must become a man and bleed and die to bring pardon and eternal life to sinners! And do you think that your tears, bending your knees, gifts of money, and emotions of your heart can purchase this unpurchaseable blessing?

Oh, believe, because it is so rich, it must be given away if it is to belong to us!

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Father God, I ask You to fill me with the knowledge of Your will through all wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that I may live a life worthy of the Lord Jesus and please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that I may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to You, Father, for You have qualified me to share in the inheritance of Your holy people in the kingdom of light.

Prayer based on Colossians 1:9-12



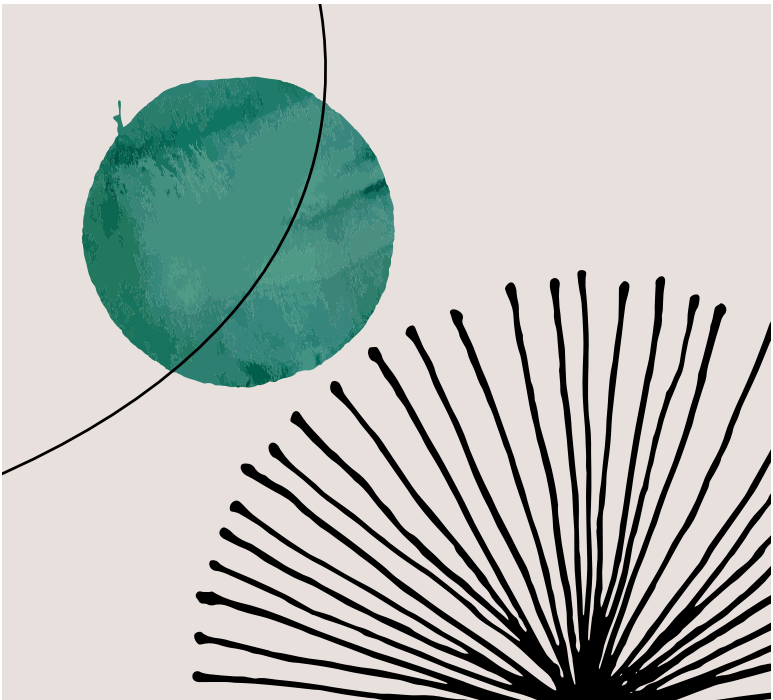
Lord Jesus, we come just as we are...

With all our failures, with all our transgressions, with all and everything that is what it ought not to be, we come to you. We bless You that You receive us and our wounds, and by Your stripes we are healed. You receive us and our sins, and by Your sin-bearing we are set free from sin. You receive us and our death – even our death for You are the One who was dead and is alive, alive forevermore.

We come and lie at Your feet, obedient to Your call: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Let us feel sweet rest, since we come at Your invitation. May some come that have never come until now. May others consciously come again, coming to You as to a living stone, chosen of God and precious, to build our everlasting hopes upon.

May we who love You, love You much more. You have been precious to us, Your name has been music to our ears, and Your love to us is inexpressibly strong. We have felt that we would gladly die to increase Your honor. We have been willing to lose our reputation that You might be glorified, and yet we do not always feel this passionate love. With all the capacity that there is in us, may we love our Lord in spirit and in truth.

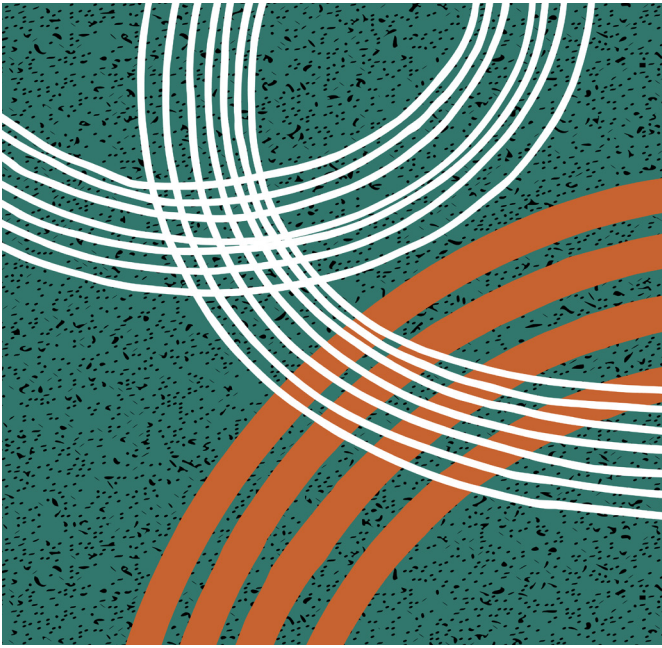
Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)



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Resisting Temptations

Scripture reading: Luke 4:1-13

How do the three temptations that Jesus experienced in the Gospel manifest themselves in my life?

What type of “power-struggles” am I engaged in? Am I overly concerned with the opinions and approval of others?

Turn your eyes to Christ.

He is our King, our Priest, our Prophet.
He is our justification, our sanctification, our wisdom, our redemption.
He is our peace, our mediation, our atonement, our reconciliation, our all in all.

Alas! I look on myself, and I see I am nothing;
I have nothing without Jesus Christ.
Here is a temptation; I cannot resist it.
Here is a corruption; I cannot overcome it.
Here is a persecution; I cannot endure it.
But Christ is mine...

So if I make my application to Christ,
I can suffer the loss of all things (Philippians 3:8);
I can do all things (Philippians 4:13);
I can conquer all things (Romans 8:37).
Oh, the joy this brings to my soul!
My soul is nothing but Christ, and therefore
I cannot but rejoice in Christ,
Or I must rejoice in nothing at all.

Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664)

Lord, we would begin again today by looking to Jesus Christ anew...

Dear Savior, if in the course of years we have tried to add anything to the one Foundation, if unconsciously we are relying now upon our knowledge, our experience, our effort, we desire to clear away all this heap of rags and get down on the foundation again. None but Jesus! None but Jesus! Our souls rest in none but Jesus.

We hate and loathe with our inmost nature the very idea of adding anything to what He has finished or attempting to complete what is perfect in Him.

Oh, this day, let Your people feel that there is now no condemnation for them.

Let them feel the completeness of the washing Christ has given, the fullness of the righteousness He has imputed, the eternal vitality of the life He has endowed, the indissoluble character of the union by which we are knit to Christ with ties that never can be broken.

May we today rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. May we write upon our hearts these blessed words: “filled [with] all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19).



May we know that we have all that we can hold. And may we pray to be enlarged, that we may take in even more of Christ than we have yet received. For He is all ours, altogether ours, and ours world without end.

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Eternal Father, this is love: that You gave Christ for us. This is the very flower of love: You gave Your precious Son to us when you delivered Him into the hands of justice to be punished, as condemned persons are delivered over to the executioner...

And now You give Your precious Son to us again, the application of all He purchased by His blood: our inheritance and portion, as bread to poor starving creatures, that by faith they might eat and live.

May I value the preciousness of souls as You do, seeing with what a high rate You value them: that You would give Your only Son as a ransom for them.

May I value my own soul – not selling cheap to the temptations of sin what You have paid so dearly to redeem.

May I, having received the gift of Your Son, now trust You for everything else.

John Flavel (1628-1691)



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Handwriting practice lines consisting of horizontal lines for writing.



Suffering

Scripture reading: Psalm 22

Have I felt how this psalmist felt?

Note the shift at the end of verse 21 when he says – “*You have answered me.*” Have I experienced God answering my suffering?

Thy works, not mine, O Christ,
 Speak gladness to this heart;
 They tell me all is done,
 They bid my fear depart.

Thy pains, not mine, O Christ,
 Upon the shameful tree,
 Have paid the law's full price
 And purchased peace for me.

Thy cross, not mine, O Christ,
 Has borne the awful load
 Of sins that none in heaven
 Or earth could bear but God.

Thy death, not mine, O Christ,
 Has paid the ransom due;
 Ten thousand deaths like mine
 Would have been all too few.

Thy righteousness, O Christ,
 Alone can cover me:
 No righteousness avails
 Save that which is of Thee.

To whom, save Thee, who canst alone
 For sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

Precious Savior, even before Your Passion reached the cruelty of death and the shedding of blood, what infamies of reproach You patiently heard, what mockings of contempt You suffered.

You crown martyrs with eternal flowers; yet for us You were crowned with thorns. You give victory palm branches to those who overcome; yet for us You were struck on the face with palms. You clothe us with immortality; yet for us You were stripped of Your earthly garments. You give us heavenly food; yet for us You were fed with bitter gall. You hold the cup of salvation; yet for us You were given vinegar to drink. You are guiltless, the just One; indeed, You are innocence itself and justice itself, yet for us You were counted among transgressors and truth was suppressed with false witnesses. You shall judge; yet for us You were judged. You are the Word of God; yet for us You were led silently to the slaughter.

When You hung on the cross, the stars were confounded, the elements were disturbed, the earth quaked, night shut out the day, the sun withdrew his rays that he might not be compelled to look upon the crime.

And after all these things, You still receive Your murderers if they will turn and come to You; and with a saving patience You close Your church to no one.

Those adversaries, those blasphemers, those who were enemies of Your name, if they repent of their sin and acknowledge their crime – You receive them, not only pardoning their sin but rewarding them with the heavenly kingdom. Who can be said to more patient, more merciful?

Empower us, who have placed ourselves in You by faith, who have clothed ourselves with You, who [walk] on You, the Way of salvation; empower us that we may follow Your example.

Cyprian (c. 200-258)



Now, Lord God, what shall Your servants say to You? For we are silenced with wonder... Oh, that the God of heaven and earth should condescend to enter into a covenant with His dust, and to take to His heart the viperous brood that have spat their venom in His face! We are not worthy to be Your servants. How much less are we worthy to be Your children and heirs, and to become partakers of all those blessed liberties and privileges which You have settled upon us! But for Your goodness' sake and according to Your own heart, You have done all these great things.

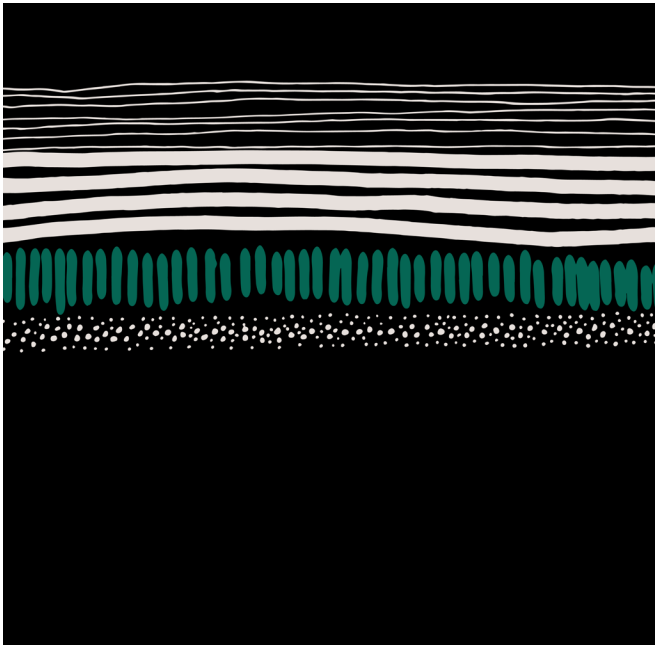
We are astonished and ravished with wonder. For the infinite break is made up; the offender is received; God and man are reconciled. A covenant of peace has been made; heaven and earth have agreed on the terms... Happy conclusion! Blessed conjunction! Shall the stars dwell with the dust? Shall the wide-distant poles, north and south, east and west, embrace together? But here an infinitely greater distance has been bridged.

James Janeway (1636-1674)

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Recognizing my sin

Scripture reading: 1 Timothy 1:15

What are the wounds in my life that need to be healed?

Does my life show tangible signs of the action of the Holy Spirit living within me, helping me to live in constant reconciliation and forgiveness?

Eternal God, as a loving Father, You have heaped on me innumerable blessings; and I have heaped up many sins... I count myself one of the most wicked and miserable sinners in the world because I have been so contrary to Christ, my Savior.

Christ was innocent and empty of all sin, and I wallowed in filthy sin and was free from no sin. Christ was obedient to You, His Father, even to the death of the cross, and I was disobedient and stubborn. Christ was meek and humble in heart, and I most proud and self-serving. Christ despised the world and all its vanities, and I made it my god because of its vanities. Christ came to serve His brothers and sisters, and I longed to rule over them. Christ despised worldly honor, and I delighted to attain it. Christ loved the lowly and simple things of this world, and I esteemed the most fair and pleasant things. Christ loved poverty and I loved wealth. Christ was gentle and merciful to the poor, and I was hard-hearted and unkind. Christ prayed for His enemies, and I hated mine.

Shall I fall in desperation? No, I will call upon Christ, the Light of the world, the Fountain of life, the relief of all careful consciences, the Peacemaker between God and man, and the only health and comfort of all true repentant sinners.

By His almighty power He can save me and deliver me out of this miserable state. For this is the life everlasting, O Lord, to believe You to be the true God, and Him whom you sent, Jesus Christ.

By this faith I am assured, and by this assurance I feel the forgiveness of my sins: this is what gives me confidence, this is what comforts me, this is what quenches all despair.

Catherine Parr (1512-1548)



Heal me, Lord, and I shall be healed. Save me, Lord, and I shall be saved. Oh, good Jesus, I confess my sins are great, but Your merits are much greater.

I am a sinner; but You are a Savior.
I am sick; but You are a Physician.
I am blind; but You are the Light of the world.
I am Satan's prisoner; but You are a Redeemer.
I am dead in sin; but You are the Resurrection and Life.

I am by nature a child of wrath; but You are by nature the Son of the living God.

*I am a daily offender; but You are a continual Mediator.
I am a breaker of the law; but You are the Fulfiller of the
law.*

I have brought about my own destruction; but You have brought me salvation by Your precious blood.

Oh most merciful Savior, though I find in myself nothing but sin, death and damnation, yet I find in You grace, mercy, favor, reconciliation, forgiveness and everlasting life.

*Take away therefore all that is mine, which is all nothing,
and give me all that is Yours, which is all good.*

Thomas Becon (c. 1512-1567)

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The Wonderful Exchange

Scripture reading: Isaiah 53

How will I accompany Jesus on His way to the cross this Good Friday?

What does the phrase – “God conquers in failure” change my understanding of personal achievement and success?

Look at the pronouns in verses 4-6: Look at what *He* did for us. He gets what we deserve; we get what He deserves. Martin Luther said – “Note the wonderful exchange: one sins, another pays the penalty; one deserves peace, the other has it... our sins, placed on Christ, are not ours; again, that the peace is not Christ’s but ours.” We expect God in His omnipotence to defeat injustice, evil, sin, and suffering with triumphant divine victories. Yet, in the cross, God shows us a humble victory that, in human terms, appears to be failure. We can say that God conquers in failure!

How then could God express simultaneously His holiness in judgment and His love in pardon? Only by providing a divine substitute for the sinner, so that the substitute would receive the judgment and the sinner the pardon.

At the cross in holy love
God through Christ paid the full penalty
of our disobedience Himself.
He bore the judgment we deserve
in order to bring us the forgiveness
we do not deserve.

On the cross divine mercy and justice
were equally expressed and eternally reconciled.

John Stott (1921-2011)

The Maker of man was made man,
That the Ruler of the stars might suck at the breast;
That the Bread might hunger;
The Fountain thirst;
The Light sleep;
The Way be wearied by the journey;

The Truth be accused by false witnesses;
The Judge of the living and the dead be judged by a
mortal judge;
The Chastener be chastened with whips;
The Vine be crowned with thorns;
The Foundation be hung upon the tree;
Strength be made weak;
Health be wounded
Life die.

He was made man
To suffer these and suchlike, undeserved things,
That He might free the undeserving,
For neither did He deserve any evil,
Who for our sakes endured so many evils,
Nor were we deserving of anything good,
Who through Him received such good.

Augustine (354-430)

What has Christ given? Not gold, nor silver, nor beasts, nor Passover lambs, nor an angel, but "Himself"! For what? Not for a crown, not for a kingdom, not for our holiness and righteousness, but "for our sins"!

Eternal Father, these words are thunderclaps from heaven against every kind of self-righteousness. But they are full consolation comforting fearful consciences exceedingly.

Eternal Father, all kinds of evil would have overwhelmed us, as they will overwhelm the wicked forever. But Christ, being made for us a transgressor of all laws, guilty of all our criminality, comes between us as mediator, embracing us wicked and damnable sinners. He took upon Himself all our evils, which should have oppressed and tormented us forever. They cast Him down, engulfing His head like water... So Christ has delivered us from everlasting terrors, and we shall enjoy an everlasting peace.

This we believe; help us to believe it more.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)



Do you understand me, sinful soul?

He wrestled with justice that you might have rest. He wept and mourned that you might laugh and rejoice. He was betrayed that you might go free. He was apprehended that you might escape. He was condemned that you might be justified. He was killed that you might live. He wore a crown of thorns that you might wear a crown of glory. He was nailed to the cross with His arms wide open to show with what freeness all His merits shall be bestowed on the soul that comes to Him, and how warmly He will receive it into His heart. All these benefits He offers to you freely.

He comes to you in the word of the gospel... to ask you to accept these benefits and so to be reconciled to God.

John Bunyan (1628-1688)

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[illegible]



An Act of Love

Scripture reading: Romans 5:6-11/Ephesians 3:17-19

The cross reveals self-giving love: a God who is willing to exchange the glory of heaven for the shame of the cross; a God who is willing to exchange the safety of heaven for the pain of the cross; a God who is willing to exchange the power of heaven for the weakness of the cross.

As I gaze at the cross of Christ, what personal significance do I find in this unparalleled act of love?

Lord Jesus Christ, Your graces shine brightest in Your bitter Passion. Your life was a gracious life, and You are full of grace. But as a lily seems most beautiful when among thorns, so Your graces are best seen in Your sufferings... that the most high God, the only begotten and eternal Son of God, should condescend so far as to be condemned, that You should be crucified upon a cross, between two thieves, as if You had been their ringleader. Oh, what humility was this!

Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664)

Oh, my soul, come here and put your little candle to this mighty flame. If you had ten hearts, all would be too little for Jesus Christ. Yet go as far as you can, and love Him with the heart you have; yes, love Him with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your might...

Come, love Christ, and not yourself;
Possess Christ, and not yourself;
Enjoy Christ, and not yourself;
Live in Christ, and not in yourself;
Comfort yourself in Christ, and not in yourself.

Say with the apostle, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

If you ever come to love Christ truly, you cannot but deny yourself, and all created rivals. This love will fix you high above the world, high above your flesh, high above yourself, and high above all other loves.

Nothing in heaven or on earth will be able to compete with Christ. Oh, for a soul filled up with all the fullness of God! Oh, for a soul stretched out to its widest capacity that it might truly enjoy God! Oh, for a soul "to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge" (Ephesians 3:18-19).

Surely if Christ be mine, if His death be mine, His resurrection mine, His ascension mine, His reign mine, His intercession mine, how should I but love Him with a singular love? Farewell world and worldly glory – when Christ comes into your room, it is time for you to vanish. I shall care little for a candle when the sun shines fair and bright upon my head...

Suppose, my soul, that you had been there with Christ when he washed His disciples' feet, and that He should have washed your feet. Would not your heart have glowed with love to Jesus Christ?

Why, Christ is now in glory, and now He takes your filthy soul and dirty duties, and washes (as it were) the feet of them all that He may present them to His Father: You cannot shed a tear without Jesus

washing it over again in His precious blood and perfuming it with His glorious intercessions.

Oh, what reasons you have to love Jesus Christ!
Oh, you that never loved Christ, come, love Him now;
and you that have loved Christ a little, love Him more.
Come to be warmed with the love of Christ, and with a love for Christ.

Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664)

How thankful we are, Father God, for a crucified Redeemer. Nothing in heaven or earth is such an amazing wonder as this; nothing can compete with it for excellence.

May all the many charms of sin be overcome by this ravishing love, which bubbles up in every drop of our Redeemer's blood. How can we, with thoughts of the cross alive in our hearts, sin against so much tenderness, compassion, and grace, and all other perfections of You, our God, which sound so loud in our ears from the cross of Jesus? Shall we consider Him hanging there to deliver us from hell and stain, and retain any desires to walk in the way which led Him there?

Can we take any pleasure in that which caused so much pain for our best Friend?

Can we love that which brought a curse better than Him who bore the curse for us?

Can we study Christ crucified and still walk on in sin, as if He suffered to purchase a license for it rather than the destruction of it?

May the consideration of this death incline our wills to new desires and resolutions. May it stifle that luxury, ambition and worldliness which harass our souls. May we not rush into iniquity through the wounds of Christ.

Hearing His dying groans, may we not cherish that for which He suffered.

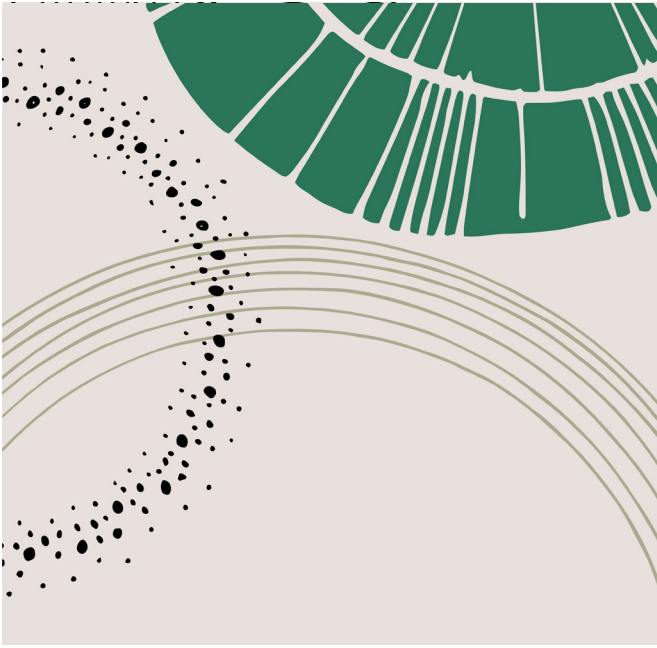
Martin Luther (1483-1546)



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The Victory

Scripture reading: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 55-58

What helps me to shine with the joy of the resurrection?

How is God inviting me to witness to the resurrection today?

***Eternal Father, we praise You,** for Christ leads us to heaven through the grave, just as Moses led the people to Canaan through the wilderness. Christ's resurrection is not only the object of our faith but the example of our hope. The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for us, preserves our bodies and souls into everlasting life. Did death kill Christ? Christ shall therefore kill death. He who this day rose from the clods of earth we expect one day from the clouds of heaven: to raise our bodies, to perform His promises, to finish our faith, to perfect our glory and to draw us unto Himself.*

Thomas Adams (1583-1652)

but in order that they might be thoroughly subdued by the power of the Word dwelling in the flesh, the nature of humanity thus being changed for good. So now when we feel overwhelmed by dread or grief or alarm, restore our courage with the truth of the word, and comfort our hearts through the Word made flesh.

Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376-444)

***Just as death was reduced to nothing by Your death,** and by Your death alone, so also, Christ our Savior, unless You had felt dread, human nature could not have become free from dread; unless You had experienced grief, there could never have been any deliverance from grief; unless You had been troubled and alarmed, no escape from these feelings could have been found.*

With every affection to which human nature is liable, we find the corresponding affection in Christ. The affections of Your flesh were aroused, not that they might have the upper hand as they do in us,



*"I am He who destroys death,
And triumphs over the enemy, and crushes Hades,
And binds the strong man,
And bears humanity off to the heavenly heights."
"It is I," says Christ.*

*I am the Passover of salvation.
I am the lamb slaughtered for you,
I am your ransom,
I am your life,
I am your light,
I am your salvation,
I am your resurrection,
I am your King.*

He it is who made the heaven and the earth,
And formed humanity in the beginning,
Who was proclaimed through the law and the prophets,
Who took flesh from a virgin,
Who was hung on a tree,
Who was buried in earth,
Who was raised from the dead,
And ascended to the heights of heaven,
Who sits at the right hand of the Father,
Who has the power to save all things,
Through whom the Father acted from the beginning
and forever.

*This is the Alpha and Omega,
This is the beginning and the end,
The ineffable beginning and the incomprehensible end.
This is the Christ,
This is the King,
This is Jesus,
This is the commander,
This is the Lord,
This is He who rose from the dead,
This is He who sits at the right hand of the Father...
To Him be the glory and the might forever.*

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[illegible]

Melito (circa 190 AD)