

## Better Days Ahead

**The LORD will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies** (Isaiah 42:13).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 42:13-17

**Song:** “We’re Marching to Zion”

Local or world news can prove discouraging—political strife, growing national debt, increased crime . . . the list goes on. But one news outlet shows an uplifting segment called “Inspiring America.” During these few minutes, someone is highlighted who is making a positive difference locally, regionally, or globally.

God triumphed numerous times in Israel’s history, including freeing them from a 400-hundred-year stint of slavery in Egypt. Later, He delivered Judah from 70 years of exile in Babylon. But His most extraordinary deliverance for Israel and for the world came through a suffering Messiah. On a Roman cross, Christ purchased humanity’s salvation.

Our perspective makes a world of difference in how we live. We can experience better days right now by remembering that God is in control of our lives and in control of how history unfolds. But there *are* better days ahead. In a future new Heaven and new earth, God will eradicate all manifestations of sin. When we live with eternity in mind, God’s promises for a better future will brighten our days in the present.

**Father**, as I move through each day with You, remind me that better days do lie ahead. In Jesus’ name, amen.

---

September 23–29. **Martin Wiles** is a Christ-follower who is also a teacher, pastor, freelance editor, author, husband, father, and grandfather. He has authored seven books and has contributed to numerous publications.

## Be Patient

**Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains** (James 5:7).

**Scripture:** James 5:7-11

**Song:** "Have Thine Own Way, Lord"

As the end of the school year neared, I saw a sign on the science teacher's door. I didn't need to read it, though. I knew what it said. She had placed six eggs in an incubator. In 21 days, we'd see baby chicks. Sure enough, on the 20th day, one chick used its beak to crack the shell and emerge. By the next day, the other five peeked out. The following day, they were all chirping, eating, and drinking.

James instructed early believers to be patient as they awaited the Lord's return, which most first-century Christians believed was going to happen soon. Now, 2,000 years later, we are still patiently awaiting our blessed hope.

A patient spirit is important and serves us well in many other areas of life too. Patience makes our relationships healthier. What couple doesn't benefit when both are patient with each other and with their children? And patience gives us the fortitude to keep doing God's work, even as we witness the disturbing effects of sin in this world. Through time and experience, we learn valuable life lessons as we wait patiently, trusting God's wisdom. Today we can choose to be patient as we live out God's purpose for our lives.

**Father,** thank You for teaching me patience as I live out my earthly life and wait for my heavenly future. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Loving with Our Lives

**Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18).**

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 3:18-22

**Song:** “Down at the Cross”

As an elementary school teacher, the 25-year-old woman had lesson plans ready for the day, but all that changed when one of her 6-year-old students shot her once in the chest and once in the hand. Despite her serious injuries, she got her other students to safety, directing them to another room while she remained in the classroom until they were all out. Her injuries resulted in a two-week hospital stay and four surgeries. Later, the state’s governor recognized her as a hero.

Scenarios like this are becoming all too familiar as school shootings continue to occur. Some teachers caught in these tragic events have even given their lives to save students. But the greatest act of sacrificial love ever demonstrated was when Jesus died on the cross for the sins of humanity. And God the Father showed that His Son’s sacrifice was accepted when He raised Jesus from the dead.

Jesus affirmed that the greatest commands are to love God supremely and to love others as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). Jesus did this perfectly and is our example. Others need to see and experience genuine love, and who better to show them this love than those who have received it from Jesus? He loved with His life, and so should we.

**Father**, it’s my desire to honor Your love by loving others. Help me love well today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Trudging Through Trials

**The Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left** (Exodus 14:29).

**Scripture:** Exodus 14:21-31

**Song:** “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

I’d stopped at a remote part of Interstate 40 in the Great Smokey Mountains to jump on a hiking trail that would take me into one of the most remote parts of the Smokies: Cataloochee Valley in North Carolina. What I didn’t know is that this path doubled as a horse trail. Mud slithered over my boots and crawled halfway up my legs. As I picked up my feet, the mire tried to suck them down. When I finally reached my destination, however, I forgot the struggle of the hike. As I viewed the majestic mountain-surrounded valley, thoughts of my pain faded.

The Israelites trudged through some major trials on their way to the promised land: first the Red Sea and then the wilderness. But because of their disobedience, they spent 40 years in a trial that should have lasted only a few months.

We can’t always know why life’s trials come, but come they will. Remembering that God controls the trial itself—including its duration—can give us helpful perspective, reminding us that what we’re going through is meaningful. Trials are able to teach us important lessons. They are intended to grow us spiritually and provide experiences that allow us to help others through *their* difficulties. So let’s not waste our trials. Let’s learn and grow from them.

**Father**, as I trudge through my trials, help me keep my eyes on You and trust Your good purposes. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## All-Powerful God

**LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty** (Psalm 104:1).

**Scripture:** Psalm 104:1-9

**Song:** “Great and Mighty Is He”

The waterpower produced by the Augusta Canal in Georgia is impressive. Spearheaded by Augusta native Henry Cumming (1799–1866), the canal was built in 1845 and enlarged by 1875. In a period before electricity, this canal provided waterpower that led to various industries being established along its banks. A saw mill and grist mill came first. Several textile mills followed. Later, this same waterway was harnessed to generate hydroelectric power, transforming the surrounding businesses.

Our world has many powerful things and people in it, but none more powerful than God. The psalmist in today’s passage appealed to God’s power in nature as proof of His greatness, and the writer found comfort in this knowledge. Job, too, was reminded of God’s greatness displayed in nature. When questioning God about the reasons for his suffering, Job was never told why. Instead, God pointed to His power and wisdom displayed in the created world (Job 38—41).

God’s power can comfort us as well. Life is tough. Forces beyond our control—human and otherwise—often confront us. The world appears to tilt on an axis of chaos. But God *is* in control. Our part is to trust Him—trust that He loves us, controls everything, has our best interests at heart, and will one day right all wrongs. Let’s lean on our all-powerful God and give Him praise!

**Father**, I praise You for Your greatness and might. You are worthy of my trust. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Praise for Provision

**How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!** (Psalm 147:1).

**Scripture:** Psalm 147:1-12

**Song:** “I Will Praise Him”

College wasn't on my radar, but when God called me into ministry, I had to revamp my plan. Where the funds would come from, I had no idea. Through loans and grants, I would receive enough to cover books and tuition, but that money wouldn't come for two months after I arrived on campus. How would I live in the meantime? Then one Sunday after church, a friend handed me an envelope. When I opened it, I discovered a check for \$1,000—enough to get me by until the loans and grants came. I praised God for His provision.

Like the sun's first rays, the psalmist begins shining light on reasons to praise God for His provision. And this Hebrew poetry wonderfully touches on life's physical, spiritual, emotional, and social aspects. The Israelites had many reasons to praise God, and so do we.

We can praise God because He provides emotionally for us when we're down and out. When something or someone breaks our hearts, He takes us by the hand and sometimes even carries us. Our praise can also flow because we don't have to worry or be anxious. God promises to meet our every need and to give us peace in anxiety-producing moments. It doesn't take long to begin recognizing the ways God has provided for us along our way, so let's praise God today for His goodness to us.

**Father**, show me daily the many reasons I should praise You. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Good Wins

**Moses and the Israelites sang, . . . “You stretch out your right hand, and the earth swallows your enemies”** (Exodus 15:1, 12).

**Scripture:** Exodus 15:1-13, 20-21

**Song:** “Victory in Jesus”

In the plot for the movie *A Walk to Remember*, he was the bad boy, and she was the good girl. He succumbed to peer pressure because he cared what others thought about him. She, however, didn't care what others thought about her. His antics eventually brought him trouble. His punishment entailed spending time with the good girl, who won his heart. But his world crumbled when she told him she was dying. Even in the face of death, though, she maintained her belief in God and in good. She left him behind . . . but with a changed heart.

In today's passage, God's people celebrated the triumph of good over evil. God delivered them from their cruel taskmasters under whom they had labored for centuries. When the Egyptians tried to recapture them at the Red Sea, God caused the walls of water to drown them. Good won!

When we're tempted, we don't need to give in to evil. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear but will always provide a way of escape for us (1 Corinthians 10:13). As we resist evil, we can also celebrate what is good in our lives, remembering that, in the end, good will win out entirely as God wipes all evil from His new Heaven and new earth. Let's celebrate the good!

**Father**, thank You for giving me what I need to choose good over evil. In Jesus' name, amen.