



AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD

Words of Comfort
from the Bible



SATURATE BIBLE RESOURCE

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GOOD NEWS TRANSLATION



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Introduction

Many families in our nation have been affected in some way by disease, disaster, discrimination, or violence.

Families struggle with difficult emotions, feelings, and fears: anger and outrage, the sense of helplessness, loss, and alienation, and the fear of abandonment and death.

Throughout the Scriptures there is a theme that runs strong and sure: even when life seems to betray us, when others turn away from us, and when we feel most alone, our loving God stands by us. God is faithful and persists in loving us, accompanying us even in the most frightening situations. God's love and loyalty can be counted on. Whatever happens, as Paul says, "nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus."

As you read the biblical passages presented in this booklet, reflect on God's redemptive love and offer of hope and comfort to all who are suffering and hurt.

God Deeply Loves Each One of Us

The Bible consistently affirms that God cares for everyone, without regard for physical or spiritual condition, or standing in society. Moreover, the Bible reveals the special love and concern God has for those whom society ignores or excludes. Jesus himself made this loving care evident through what he taught, what he did, and how he lived.

Jesus Came into the World to Be Its Savior, Not Its Judge

Jesus said in a loud voice, “Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in him who sent me. Whoever sees me sees also him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. If people hear my message and do not obey it, I will not judge them. I came, not to judge the world, but to save it. Those who reject me and do not accept my message have

one who will judge them. The words I have spoken will be their judge on the last day! This is true, because I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has commanded me what I must say and speak. And I know that his command brings eternal life. What I say, then, is what the Father has told me to say.”

John 12.44-50

Jesus' Love Includes the Excluded

Jesus left that place, and as he walked along, he saw a tax collector, named Matthew, sitting in his office. He said to him, “Follow me.”

Matthew got up and followed him.

While Jesus was having a meal in Matthew's house, many tax collectors and other outcasts came and joined Jesus and his disciples at the table. Some Pharisees saw this and asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with such people?”

Jesus heard them and answered, “People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. Go and find out what is meant by the scripture that says: ‘It is kind-

ness that I want, not animal sacrifices.’ I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts.”

Matthew 9.9-13

Jesus Calls Us His Brothers and Sisters

“I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me. Those who do not remain in me are thrown out like a branch and dry up; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, where they are burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, then you will ask for anything you wish, and you shall have it. My Father’s glory is shown by your bearing much fruit; and in this way you become my disciples. I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you. The greatest love you can

have for your friends is to give your life for them. And you are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because servants do not know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I heard from my Father. You did not choose me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures. And so the Father will give you whatever you ask of him in my name. This, then, is what I command you: love one another.”

John 15.5-17

In his life on earth Jesus made his prayers and requests with loud cries and tears to God, who could save him from death. Because he was humble and devoted, God heard him. But even though he was God’s Son, he learned through his sufferings to be obedient. When he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him.

Hebrews 5.7-9

God is Always with Us

God is always with us, regardless of circumstances, though sometimes we must struggle to discover that abiding presence.

God Is with Us Even in the Deepest Darkness

The LORD is my shepherd;
I have everything I need.
He lets me rest in fields of green grass
and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.
He gives me new strength.
He guides me in the right paths,
as he has promised.
Even if I go through the deepest darkness,
I will not be afraid, LORD,
for you are with me.
Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

You prepare a banquet for me,
where all my enemies can see me;
you welcome me as an honored guest
and fill my cup to the brim.
I know that your goodness and love will be
with me all my life;
and your house will be my home as long
as I live.

Psalm 23

God Is with Us When We Feel Trapped and Hopeless

From deep inside the fish Jonah prayed to the
LORD his God:
“In my distress, O LORD, I called to you,
and you answered me.
From deep in the world of the dead
I cried for help, and you heard me.
You threw me down into the depths,
to the very bottom of the sea,
where the waters were all around me,
and all your mighty waves rolled over me.
I thought I had been banished from your
presence
and would never see your holy Temple
again.

The water came over me and choked me;
the sea covered me completely,
and seaweed wrapped around my head.
I went down to the very roots of the
mountains,
into the land whose gates lock shut
forever.
But you, O LORD my God,
brought me back from the depths alive.
When I felt my life slipping away,
then, O LORD, I prayed to you,
and in your holy Temple you heard me.
Those who worship worthless idols
have abandoned their loyalty to you.
But I will sing praises to you;
I will offer you a sacrifice
and do what I have promised.
Salvation comes from the LORD!"

Jonah 2.1-9

Nothing Can Separate Us from the Love of God

In view of all this, what can we say? If
God is for us, who can be against us? Cer-
tainly not God, who did not even keep back
his own Son, but offered him for us all!

He gave us his Son—will he not also freely give us all things? Who will accuse God's chosen people? God himself declares them not guilty! Who, then, will condemn them? Not Christ Jesus, who died, or rather, who was raised to life and is at the right side of God, pleading with him for us! Who, then, can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble do it, or hardship or persecution or hunger or poverty or danger or death? As the scripture says,

“For your sake we are in
danger of death at all times;
we are treated like sheep that are going to
be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us! For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below—there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8.31-39

God Offers Acceptance and Love to Everyone

Pain and suffering are sometimes accompanied by guilt which may lead us to feel that God has turned away and no longer cares. But this is far from the truth, for God is always eager to offer forgiveness and to accept us in love.

The Lord Is Abounding in Steadfast Love

Praise the LORD, my soul!
All my being, praise his holy name!
Praise the LORD, my soul,
and do not forget how kind he is.
He forgives all my sins
and heals all my diseases.
He keeps me from the grave
and blesses me with love and mercy.
He fills my life with good things,
so that I stay young and strong like
an eagle.

The LORD judges in favor of the oppressed
and gives them their rights.
He revealed his plans to Moses
and let the people of Israel see his
mighty deeds.
The LORD is merciful and loving,
slow to become angry and full of
constant love.
He does not keep on rebuking;
he is not angry forever.
He does not punish us as we deserve
or repay us according to our sins
and wrongs.
As high as the sky is above the earth,
so great is his love for those who
honor him.
As far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our sins from us.
As a father is kind to his children,
so the LORD is kind to those who
honor him.
He knows what we are made of;
he remembers that we are dust.
As for us, our life is like grass.
We grow and flourish like a wild flower;
then the wind blows on it, and
it is gone—
no one sees it again.

But for those who honor the LORD, his love
lasts forever,
 and his goodness endures for all
 generations
of those who are true to his covenant
 and who faithfully obey his commands.
The LORD placed his throne in heaven;
 he is king over all.
Praise the LORD, you strong and
mighty angels,
 who obey his commands,
 who listen to what he says.
Praise the LORD, all you heavenly powers,
 you servants of his, who do his will!
Praise the LORD, all his creatures
 in all the places he rules.
Praise the LORD, my soul!

Psalm 103

God Has Poured Out Love for Us All

Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He has brought us by faith into this experience of God's grace, in which we now live. And so we boast of the hope we have of sharing

God's glory! We also boast of our troubles, because we know that trouble produces endurance, endurance brings God's approval, and his approval creates hope. This hope does not disappoint us, for God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to us.

Romans 5.1-5

Through Jesus, God Offers Us Rest

“Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light.”

Matthew 11.28-30

God Identifies with the Rejected

Throughout the Scriptures God has shown special concern for the unprotected and vulnerable—widows, orphans, refugees, and foreigners. And so today his love and loyalty for those that society rejects continues with steady intensity.

God Sees That the Unprotected Are Cared For

The LORD your God is supreme over all gods and over all powers. He is great and mighty, and he is to be obeyed. He does not show partiality, and he does not accept bribes. He makes sure that orphans and widows are treated fairly; he loves the foreigners who live with our people, and gives them food and clothes. So then, show love for those foreigners, because you were once foreigners in Egypt. Have reverence for the LORD your God and worship only him. Be faithful to him and make your promises in his name

alone. Praise him—he is your God, and you have seen with your own eyes the great and astounding things that he has done for you. When your ancestors went to Egypt, there were only seventy of them. But now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Deuteronomy 10.17-22

Jesus as God's Suffering Servant Was Despised and Rejected

The LORD says,
“My servant will succeed in his task;
 he will be highly honored.
Many people were shocked when they saw
him;
 he was so disfigured that he hardly
 looked human.
But now many nations will marvel at him,
 and kings will be speechless with
 amazement.
They will see and understand
 something they had never known.”

The people reply,
“Who would have believed what we now
report?

Who could have seen the LORD’s
hand in this?

It was the will of the LORD that his servant
grow like a plant taking root in
dry ground.

He had no dignity or beauty
to make us take notice of him.

There was nothing attractive about him,
nothing that would draw us to him.

We despised him and rejected him;
he endured suffering and pain.

No one would even look at him—
we ignored him as if he were nothing.”

Isaiah 52.13–53.3

The Rejected Stone Was Important to God

Come to the Lord, the living stone
rejected by people as worthless but chosen by
God as valuable. Come as living stones, and
let yourselves be used in building the spiritual
temple, where you will serve as holy priests to
offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices to God

through Jesus Christ. For the scripture says,
“I chose a valuable stone,
 which I am placing as the cornerstone
 in Zion;
 and whoever believes in him will never
 be disappointed.”

This stone is of great value for you that
believe; but for those who do not believe:
“The stone which the builders rejected as
worthless
 turned out to be the most important
 of all.”

1 Peter 2.4-7

Our Hope in God Reaches Beyond Death

Illness makes us sharply aware of our own mortality and ultimate death. But the Scriptures proclaim the even greater reality of life beyond death.

A Tent on Earth and a House in Heaven

For this reason we never become discouraged. Even though our physical being is gradually decaying, yet our spiritual being is renewed day after day. And this small and temporary trouble we suffer will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble. For we fix our attention, not on things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts forever.

For we know that when this tent we live in—our body here on earth—is torn down, God will have a house in heaven for us to live in, a home he himself has made, which will

last forever. And now we sigh, so great is our desire that our home which comes from heaven should be put on over us; by being clothed with it we shall not be without a body. While we live in this earthly tent, we groan with a feeling of oppression; it is not that we want to get rid of our earthly body, but that we want to have the heavenly one put on over us, so that what is mortal will be transformed by life. God is the one who has prepared us for this change, and he gave us his Spirit as the guarantee of all that he has in store for us.

So we are always full of courage. We know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord's home. For our life is a matter of faith, not of sight. We are full of courage and would much prefer to leave our home in the body and be at home with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 4.16–5.8

Death Is Defeated

For just as death came by means of a man, in the same way the rising from death comes by means of a man. For just as all

people die because of their union with Adam, in the same way all will be raised to life because of their union with Christ. But each one will be raised in proper order: Christ, first of all; then, at the time of his coming, those who belong to him. Then the end will come; Christ will overcome all spiritual rulers, authorities, and powers, and will hand over the Kingdom to God the Father. For Christ must rule until God defeats all enemies and puts them under his feet. The last enemy to be defeated will be death.

. . .

Listen to this secret truth: we shall not all die, but when the last trumpet sounds, we shall all be changed in an instant, as quickly as the blinking of an eye. For when the trumpet sounds, the dead will be raised, never to die again, and we shall all be changed. For what is mortal must be changed into what is immortal; what will die must be changed into what cannot die. So when this takes place, and the mortal has been changed into the immortal, then the scripture will come true:

“Death is destroyed; victory is complete!”

“Where, Death, is your victory?”

Where, Death, is your power to hurt?”

Death gets its power to hurt from sin, and sin

gets its power from the Law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

So then, my dear friends, stand firm and steady. Keep busy always in your work for the Lord, since you know that nothing you do in the Lord's service is ever useless.

1 Corinthians 15.21-26, 51-58

No More Pain and No More Death

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth disappeared, and the sea vanished. And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared and ready, like a bride dressed to meet her husband. I heard a loud voice speaking from the throne: "Now God's home is with people! He will live with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared."

Revelation 21.1-4

God Is the Only True Source of Hope

In the Bible hope is an expression of certainty because it is based on God's promises rather than our own wishful thinking. And so, when we place our hope in God, it means we are assured that God will finally prevail over evil and give us a share in the victory.

God Is Our Shelter and Strength

God is our shelter and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble.
So we will not be afraid, even if the earth
is shaken
and mountains fall into the ocean depths;
even if the seas roar and rage,
and the hills are shaken by the violence.

There is a river that brings joy to the city of
God,
to the sacred house of the Most High.

God is in that city, and it will never be
destroyed;
 at early dawn he will come to its aid.
Nations are terrified, kingdoms are shaken;
 God thunders, and the earth dissolves.

The LORD Almighty is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come and see what the LORD has done.
 See what amazing things he has done on
earth.
He stops wars all over the world;
 he breaks bows, destroys spears,
 and sets shields on fire.
“Stop fighting,” he says, “and know that I am
 God,
 supreme among the nations,
 supreme over the world.”

The LORD Almighty is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Psalm 46

For Now There Is Mercy and Grace

For we have a great High Priest who has gone into the very presence of God—Jesus, the Son of God. Our High Priest is not one who cannot feel sympathy for our weaknesses. On the contrary, we have a High Priest who was tempted in every way that we are, but did not sin. Let us have confidence, then, and approach God's throne, where there is grace. There we will receive mercy and find grace to help us just when we need it.

Hebrews 4.14b-16

But God's mercy is so abundant, and his love for us is so great, that while we were spiritually dead in our disobedience he brought us to life with Christ. It is by God's grace that you have been saved. In our union with Christ Jesus he raised us up with him to rule with him in the heavenly world. He did this to demonstrate for all time to come the extraordinary greatness of his grace in the love he showed us in Christ Jesus. For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it. God has made us what we are, and in our

union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.

Ephesians 2.4-10

Then We Shall See Clearly

Love is eternal. There are inspired messages, but they are temporary; there are gifts of speaking in strange tongues, but they will cease; there is knowledge, but it will pass. For our gifts of knowledge and of inspired messages are only partial; but when what is perfect comes, then what is partial will disappear.

When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child; now that I am an adult, I have no more use for childish ways. What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror; then we shall see face-to-face. What I know now is only partial; then it will be complete—as complete as God’s knowledge of me.

Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13.8-13

God Promises Eternal Life to All Who Believe

All who are born on this earth must one day face death. But for all who believe in Jesus, that dark shadow is overcome by a light which reveals the way to eternal life.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life

“Do not be worried and upset,” Jesus told them. “Believe in God and believe also in me. There are many rooms in my Father’s house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am. You know the way that leads to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going; so how can we know the way to get there?”

Jesus answered him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me. Now that you have known me," he said to them, "you will know my Father also, and from now on you do know him and you have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father; that is all we need."

Jesus answered, "For a long time I have been with you all; yet you do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Why, then, do you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe, Philip, that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I have spoken to you," Jesus said to his disciples, "do not come from me. The Father, who remains in me, does his own work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. If not, believe because of the things I do. I am telling you the truth: those who believe in me will do what I do—yes, they will do even greater things, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father's glory will be shown through the Son. If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it."

John 14.1-14

Present Sufferings and the Future Glory

I consider that what we suffer at this present time cannot be compared at all with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. All of creation waits with eager longing for God to reveal his children. For creation was condemned to lose its purpose, not of its own will, but because God willed it to be so. Yet there was the hope that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that up to the present time all of creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth. But it is not just creation alone which groans; we who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan within ourselves as we wait for God to make us his children and set our whole being free. For it was by hope that we were saved; but if we see what we hope for, then it is not really hope. For who of us hopes for something we see? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 8.18-25

What Really Matters

I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it all as mere garbage, so that I may gain Christ and be completely united with him. I no longer have a righteousness of my own, the kind that is gained by obeying the Law. I now have the righteousness that is given through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is based on faith. All I want is to know Christ and to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings and become like him in his death, in the hope that I myself will be raised from death to life.

Philippians 3.8b-11

A Prayer on Behalf of All Who Hurt

May the Lord himself, who is our source of peace, give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you all.

2 Thessalonians 3.16

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