



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Corinthians 12: 1-6

Summer 2025

"Paul In Paradise"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. We are in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, and we're going to look at the first 6 verses. 2 Corinthians 12.

Paul takes up the subject, at least initially, that's familiar to us by now, as we've studied through these latter chapters, that of *boasting*. He writes;

12 Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. ³And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—⁴was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. ⁵On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to *my* weaknesses. ⁶For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain *from this*, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees *in* me or hears from me.

2 Corinthians 12: 1-6

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time together. Let's pray.

Father, it is a great privilege to be with Your people. It's a great privilege for each and every one of us to come here, open our Bibles, and read Your Inerrant Word. It's a privilege to sing hymns of praise to You; but praise must be grounded in truth, and truth is Your Word. And so as we study it, and as we learn it, we are able to praise You more effectively—and we are able to take a hymn, such as the one we have sung, and sing it with zeal, and vigor, and conviction.

You're a great God, the Triune God who has saved a people for Himself, an innumerable multitude. And Father, we thank You that You chose an innumerable multitude. You sent Your Son to purchase them, and the Spirit has drawn us to Him, and we look at that and we consider it, and we realize it's all of grace, all of sovereign grace. And that should motivate us and encourage us, to sing with vigor, and to live a life of hope.

We have a text that reminds us of that, with a vision of the apostle Paul that taught him, reminded him routinely of the glory that's before him—and it's before all of Your people. So may our time together help us to understand that better, that we have great hope; and that's where our hope lies, in the future, not in this world.

And as we consider this world, as we consider our nation at a time like this, and the violence that has occurred and seems to becoming something of a pattern. We pray for this land that You would bring peace to it. We are a divided nation...we've really always been that way, but it's becoming more pronounced it seems. And so we pray that the Spirit of God would move across this land and bring people to the only solution there is to any problem—and that is Jesus Christ; He's the Savior. And without Him it doesn't matter how well-ordered our nation is, it's all coming to nothing...He's the one that gives us hope.

Thank You that we have that hope in this assembly, and we will speak of it this morning, so bless us LORD, build us up in the faith.

We pray for those that aren't here. They may be sick or they may be traveling, bless them. Bless those who are grieving.

And again now, bless us as we continue our service. Prepare our hearts for a time of serious consideration of this text and build us up in the faith.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) I suppose most of us at some time or another have someone take us into their confidence and tell us a secret. It may be a dark secret that they feel they must confess to someone; or it may be something happy, some good news, like an engagement, or an impending promotion at work. I had a friend, (I visited with him couple of years ago), and he informed me that he was going to be retiring in the next year... 'But don't tell anyone!' (And so I didn't, he is a minister at a large church.) We can get secrets like that, or something like a personal, spiritual experience.

Paul had such a secret. It was an incident that, as far as we know, he never disclosed to another soul, even though it was the kind of thing that most people could not keep from boasting about. Not Paul. No, this was something very personal. And he would have kept it to himself except for some boastful men who had made it necessary for him to reveal it to the Corinthians.

He makes it known to them in the first six verses of chapter 12 of 2 Corinthians. He "boasts", (that's what he calls it in verse 1), but he says it, "is necessary" for him to do that. He was forced to do it because some teachers had entered the church and claimed to be apostles, but preached a false gospel and supported their claims by 'boasting about their experiences'. They were charismatics—and they had a real influence on the Corinthians, (you can imagine that they would, if you know a little bit about the Corinthians). They were enamored of 'signs and wonders', and the spectacular, as many people are. So when these men claimed to be visionaries, and prophets, and apostles the Corinthians were naturally drawn to them—just as many today are, when ministers make such inflated claims about themselves.

Often it's the case that saints are drawn to such people due to a lack of knowledge...naivete due to a failure to study the Word of God. So, if I seem to emphasize

and exhort you in that way to be students of Scripture, it's because it is so, so necessary. And we see the reason for that right here in 2 Corinthians.

Back in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 2, Paul told them that, 'He gave them milk, not solid food, because they were unable to receive it.' They were not growing; they were "fleshly", ("carnal" is the word that's used in the King James Version). 'Fleshly', 'immature', 'worldly'...they had no discernment.

So to rescue them from these charlatans Paul had to do some boasting of his own. He was reluctant to do that, he called it "foolishness". (2Cor 11:17). Boasting is uncharacteristic of an apostle, but these false teachers not only boasted about their visions, they attacked Paul's authority by denying that he had their qualifications, that he had had, 'their experiences'.

So he had to answer them on their own ground. As one of the commentators put it, "Paul was taking Solomon's counsel and, 'answering fools according to their folly.'" (Pro 26:4). In Chapter 11 he did this by talking about his Hebrew heritage, and his service to Christ, (and in both areas he more than eclipsed these teachers).

Now he begins chapter 12 by talking about *visions* and *revelations*. I think we can assume that he's responding to things that they had said, and claims they had made... that they had 'revelations', they had 'visions'. Well Paul is saying, 'I had them, too!', (and the difference is, his were real). But again, he moves on to this subject reluctantly; "Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable;" he said, "but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord." (vs1).

Paul did have visions, and he talked about them to his closest colleagues when he felt that it was necessary. And Luke records some of them for us; of course, there's 'The Damascus Road experience', where he actually saw Christ in a blinding light. I don't know that we call that 'a vision', for he saw Him and spoke with Him.

But he had other visions. He had one in the temple that Luke mentions in Acts 22, (vs17f), that occurred earlier in his life where Jesus appears to him, warns him,

tells him to leave Jerusalem...and he did. And there's the vision at Troas, of "a man in Macedonia" asking for Paul's help, "Come over...and help us." he said. (Acts 16:9).

Luke gives us some of these, but Paul said very little about them in his letters. One reason for that is given here, (vs1), he didn't feel it was "profitable" to do that: It 'puffs up'; it inflates people's reputation...but it does little else.

And there's a lesson in that, and there's a warning in that: Men or women who claim to see visions and talk about them, are not following Paul's example. (And I think that that's a red flag that should go up whenever we hear or meet such people.)

Paul was very reluctant to talk about himself and his most personal, spiritual experiences. But here, he was forced to do it, so he moved on to visions and revelations. He says in effect, 'All right, I'm going to tell you something I've never told anyone. It's a very personal experience that I had 14 years ago. I was caught up into heaven where I saw and I heard things that are unlawful to speak. So contrary to what these so-called apostles say to you, I have had visions and revelations, and a vision greater than anything anyone has ever had. I went to Paradise!' (See verses 2-4).

Now that's the point Paul makes, but he doesn't put it quite like that. He says in verse 2, "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago...was caught up to the third heaven." Verse 7 makes it plain that he is that man, because he says he was given, "a thorn in the flesh" due to the heavenly revelations that he had received. But why does he speak so indirectly and refer to himself in the third person?

The reason, again, is humility; he was very reluctant to speak about this experience and to boast about it. He knew what people can do with things like this and didn't want them to elevate him to the status of a 'super Christian', so he says it happened to one who is simply, "a man in Christ", (vs2), a believer. And since it was all of grace, there is no ground for boasting. Paul wanted to avoid any hint of that, so he speaks of himself in the third person, 'he's just a man, a Christian'.

It happened, he said, "fourteen years ago". 2 Corinthians was written around AD55—which would put that vision in, 'those silent years of his ministry', (which were

roughly the years AD35 to 45). So it happened around the year 41 or 42, when he was living in Syria and Cilicia, (he speaks of that in Galatians 1, verse 21). This was before Barnabas brought him to Antioch and before he had what we would consider 'his public ministry'...his three missionary journeys, and on.

They were 'silent years', but they were not inactive years. He was ministering during that time as he wrote in Galatians chapter 1, verse 23; The people of "Judea", and that area, were "hearing" about it 'and praising God for it'. So, there was activity going on during this time. Many of the tribulations that he records in chapter 11, (the beatings, the imprisonments, the shipwrecks), may have occurred during that period.

Luke didn't record every detail about Paul and the other apostles in the Book of Acts—because the Book of Acts really isn't '*The Acts Of The Apostles*'. [That is the title that's been given to it, but that's late, that's a Second Century title that was attached to it.] So, it's just *The Acts Of*, (probably), *The Holy Spirit*.

Some have said *The Acts Of Christ*, (it's, 'The acts of the Lord through these apostles.'). So, we really know very little about their lives, the lives of the apostles. Very few of them are mentioned...and the primary two, are Peter and then Paul. What we do learn, though, is that they suffered.

But we learn here in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, is another of the biographical passages in 2 Corinthians that fills in these details about Paul's life that we would otherwise not know. We learned about his sufferings in chapter 11. We now learn about this vision that otherwise we would not have learned about, in chapter 12. And the vision is one significant event in Paul's life that we can, in a sense, thank the false teachers for because we learn of it. He's reluctant to speak about it, but he gives us here some very basic details about it...and we profit from it. But they're basic details; he doesn't want to speak a great deal about it, so he says he, "was caught up to the third heaven", (vs 2b), (which he calls "Paradise" in verse 4.)

The Jews of that time spoke of different levels of heaven. The number varied; some spoke of as many as 10 levels of heaven, but the number 7 was most common. Paul speaks only of a "third heaven". Since he identifies it as "Paradise", that is the limit of the levels..."the third heaven" is the highest heaven:

The first heaven is the sky with the clouds.

The second heaven is space, 'the final frontier', with planets and stars and all of that—outer space, deep space...'Space'!

And the third is the highest heaven—where the throne room of God is. That's 'outside' of the universe. I say that because 'the second heaven' is the universe; but the third heaven is beyond that.

He, (*Paul*), wasn't sure how this occurred, whether it was an in-body or an out-of-body experience, and he makes quite a bit of that. It could have been either. There are two examples in the Old Testament of people being taken up to heaven *bodily*—Enoch, and Elijah. In Luke 24, and Acts chapter 1, Christ ascended into heaven *bodily*. And the physical, bodily, rapture of believers in the Lord will occur at the Lord's return. Paul taught about that in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 52, and 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 15 through 17. So, that might have happened to Paul.

Or, it could have been an event in which only his spirit went to heaven, and the body was left behind. Paul didn't know, and it really didn't matter to him...either way, he was really there.

And what he saw was indescribable. I think that's part of the glory of all of this: 'How great is heaven? So great you and I can't comprehend it!' And Paul makes that point. But it was indescribable, and he says that in verse 4, where he wrote he "was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak."

So, there were two restrictions on Paul:

First he was restricted from explaining his experience because he wasn't able to do it. He didn't have the words for it; he didn't have the concepts to communicate.

Imagine trying to explain the modern world to a tribe of primitive people, who live deep in the jungles of Borneo and that have never ventured out of it. They have lived in what people today would call, 'The Stone Age'.

You can only explain things by analogy, by making comparisons, so you might be able to explain an airplane by comparing it to a bird that was flying over the treetops. But it would be a lot more difficult to explain television and electricity. How do you do that? What is electricity? Well, it's energy, but that really doesn't explain it. We know it; we live with it; we see the effects of it every day; we don't even think about it. Even trying to explain it to ourselves, when we sit down to do that, is not easy. It's very difficult, almost impossible to explain it to people who have no concept of it. Well, that was Paul's problem.

But it was really even more difficult than that; the things he saw and heard were way beyond our experience, beyond anything that we can relate to. He didn't have the words to describe it. He didn't have things or experiences with which to make comparisons or analogies. No one had experienced what he experienced. No one had seen or heard what he saw and heard. It would be like trying to describe a fourth dimension to us who live in a three-dimensional world. It's impossible. [Or, if we lived in only two dimensions, in a world of length and width, it would be impossible to explain a third dimension of height. How do you explain 'up' and 'down'? Well, you can point ... No, you don't 'know' that...you don't know 'up' or 'down', you don't have this 'category' to do that. So it's a difficult thing...an *impossible* thing. So Paul said that, 'he heard inexpressible words', and it would be true to say he saw 'indescribable sights'.

Now he does call heaven, "Paradise", and that is a word picture. *Paradise* is a Persian word for *garden*, which gives a sense of heaven being a place of beauty and a place of peace, of rest. The Persians would lay out magnificent 'Pleasure Gardens' with rivers and trees, places of shade and refreshment; and they would fill them with wild animals, not lions, but deer and such things...and have hunts. You might think of a place like Versailles, outside of Paris, with its 'Grand Palace', and beautiful gardens that

cover acres of land with groves of trees, pools of water, fountains, and flowers, and lawns—a magnificent place. So, there's some analogy between heaven and earth: It's like a magnificent garden men plant, which is just a faint echo of the paradise that man lost, Eden.

Fortunately, heaven has not been lost to us. It's beautiful; it's a place of peace and rest. 'It is home for the saints'; that's how Paul describes it earlier, you remember. In chapter 5, verse 8, he spoke of, "...to be absent from the body...", (meaning to die), is "...to be at home with the Lord". The moment we're gone from this place we're there... in a far better place. It's where Christ is; it's where His throne is. It's where we will see Him and enjoy fellowship with Him and reunion with the saints...and a place of joy.

We could go on and on about it. We have another description of it in Revelation chapter 16, verse 17. [One of the blessings of studying the Book of Revelation is there's so many descriptions in various ways of heaven, and that realm, and what's to come.] Now there, it's described metaphorically, but we get the impression of it from what John reveals there.

Well Paul was there—actually he "was caught up" as high as "the third heaven". He entered it; he went into 'God's garden', as it were, and saw things that left him speechless. In fact, he wrote, back in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 9, (no doubt having this experience in his mind), of heaven and our inheritance there as being, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and *which* have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." In other words, 'It transcends human experience. It is another dimension. It's beyond our capacity to comprehend. The glory is unimaginable!'

Again, you might think, 'Well, it would be nice to really know what it was like.' But the very fact that we cannot, that we don't have the capacity to do that, elevates the greatness of it; it's beyond anything we can comprehend. So Paul couldn't describe heaven; and as I say, 'His silence speaks volumes. —It's glory beyond words!'

And that's something to live for, to sacrifice one's life for in this brief time that we have in this world.

But in addition to the restraint that a lack of language and common experience put upon Paul's ability to describe these things, it was also *unlawful* for him to do it. That's what he says; that is the *second* restriction he gives. He "heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak." (vs4b). F. F. Bruce wrote that, "Paul gave no information on 'Paradise', (*heaven*), other than it was, 'Impossible, as well as impermissible to describe'."

The experience was not given to him so that he could reveal it to the church. This was a private revelation that was given to Paul for his own benefit. The experience, as I say, was not given to him for us, but I think we see the significance of this vision that he had, as we look back on Paul's life and upon his conversion.

You'll remember that just after his conversion he sat in a house in Damascus, blind, waiting on the Lord. The Lord sent Ananias to him, and He told Ananias that Paul was 'His chosen instrument', (Saul at that point), 'who would carry His name to the Gentiles, to kings, and to the sons of Israel.' Then He said, "I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." (Acts 9:15-16). The man who had caused much suffering for the church would suffer much for the church. (Now, He didn't say *why* that would be the case. One reason is because by the sufferings of this life we are matured, we're sanctified; it's a difficult way to be sanctified, but that is part of it).

Chapter 11 gives us some of the examples of what Paul suffered, (we covered that last week). Calvin described Paul's difficulties as, "Being enough to break a thousand hearts." Calvin himself had suffered greatly throughout his life and his ministry, but that's a good way of putting it, "Enough to break a thousand hearts."

No one has ever endured more for the cause, (for any cause for that matter), than Paul did for the Gospel. And I say this with some trepidation but, 'No apostle or Christian ever suffered the amount or the degree that Paul suffered for Christ.' (Now I don't know how everybody suffered, and there are some saints that suffered terribly, so perhaps that needs to be qualified in that way, but he, (*Paul*), did suffer greatly for the Lord.)

That was God's purpose for Paul. He laid out a hard path for him, one of intense suffering, fiery opposition, and daunting challenges. So, in order to fortify him for this service, the Lord, whom Paul earlier called, "the God of all comfort", (chapter 1, verse 3), gave him *comfort* by giving him this glimpse of the glory to come. And this great vision would be an anchor for his soul when life got rough and became almost unbearable. It was for Paul, personally; it was his secret.

And it would have remained a secret ... he wanted it to stay private ... but circumstances dictated that he should disclose it to the Corinthians. And the church has been blessed for it because indirectly we have been given a glimpse of Paradise. And we too, need this, we're pilgrims; we're passing through this world. Life is temporary; this is not our home. Though we're tempted to think of it as our permanent dwelling place...that this is everything that there is...we need to remember, that is not the case; and that we always have 'the hope of heaven' before us, to encourage us to stay on the pilgrim path.

All the saints have had that. We will study in the future, I hope, (at least I'm planning on it), the Book of Hebrews. And in Hebrews chapter 11, we have this great chapter on, 'The men and women of faith'. There we are told about Abraham, (and a great bit of the chapter is devoted to him), and how he lived, "...looking to the city... whose architect and builder is God." (vs10). He was always looking to the future with his mind on the promises that had been given and the glorious future that was his...as is all the saints.

Paul got to go in that city; and because he did so, it is now revealed to us, (providentially), because of false teachers. So Paul was led to tell about that—and that should be, as I say, an encouragement to us to know this and to be living for it...to be living for Paradise. And it kept Paul encouraged in his difficulties.

It was a unique experience for Paul. No one, certainly not the false teachers, had such a revelation. But Paul wouldn't brag about it; and in verse 5 he repeats his determination, 'to boast only in his weaknesses'.

He did say, "On behalf of such a man I will boast...", (vs5a), which is a way of emphasizing the greatness of the honor that had been given to him to have this vision. But he added, "...I will not boast, except in regard to *my* weaknesses." (vs5b). Paul knew that there was nothing in him that merited this great experience. It was all a gift—everything is. Everything we have, you and I experience as the apostle experienced, everything is a gift of grace. So self-glorification is not only "foolish", (as Paul describes it in this book), it is false. Paul knew that to be true, so he believed firmly in the principle stated in chapter 10, verse 17, "He who boasts is to boast in the LORD." God alone deserves all the glory.

Paul was genuinely self-effacing; he was genuinely humble, and truly embarrassed about all the boasting that he had to do. Now how different that is from most people. Don Carson points out that, "Most people spend their lives in fear that others won't think highly enough of them. Paul's fear was that men would think too highly of him."

That was the principal reason he did not want to reveal his vision of heaven. It might influence people to elevate him in their thinking...to the level of a 'super' saint, and he didn't want that.

That's what he says in verse 6; 'He could boast, it's all true, what he said'. "...but...", he said, "...I refrain *from this*, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees *in* me or hears from me." (vs6b). Paul is simply a man in Christ; he is simply a man saved by grace.

Look at the lives of the apostles...that's true of all of them. What do you see when you see the apostles? As you go through *The Gospels*, (and they are then 'the disciples'), they are *ordinary* men—some fishermen, a tax collector, maybe some laborers...or in the case of Paul, a highly educated minister saved out of self-

righteousness and error, (heresy). They all became *extraordinary* men, when God transformed them by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But it was God's grace, not their ability. He does transform us. Paul spoke of that in chapter 3 of this book, verses 17 and 18, 'He is presently transforming us', "from glory to glory"...that's your experience.

But all of us, like all of them, are just 'earthen vessels' in and of ourselves. Fragile 'clay pots', but vessels filled with grace—filled with the message of truth that the world needs to hear...and made able, (to allow those people around us to hear it and see it), by the extraordinary things that the Holy Spirit is doing in us.

It's not about Paul, it wasn't about Peter...wasn't about John...it's not about us.— It's all about Christ. And that is what Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand and to rest on: Grace alone, not human merit.

But men can't help themselves. They love to exalt man because in exalting others, they're really, in a sense, exalting themselves...exalting human nature. By God's grace there are exceptions to that; there are humble individuals like Paul or that follow his example.

A few years ago, my wife and I were invited to go on a Dallas tour of homes. And you get the opportunity of seeing some very nice homes. And on that tour, we went to one of the nicest in Dallas—a house...a large house, opulent house, full of works of art and historical artifacts, a lot of American historical artifacts. But of everything there, the one thing that really caught my attention ... it just happened to catch my attention ... was sitting on a table. It was the death mask of Oliver Cromwell, the Puritan who became a great general, and then Lord Protector of England.

One of his best-known statements was made while he was sitting for a portrait. The artist had painted a very flattering picture...but when Cromwell looked at it, he objected. He said, "I desire you would use all your skill to paint my picture truly like me, warts and everything. Otherwise, I will not pay a farthing for it." And sure enough, as I looked at that mask that's what I looked for, and there were these indications of warts.

Well, that's Godly humility. And that was Paul's character who said in verse 6, that he wanted, "...that no one will credit me with more than he sees *in me*..." And what would they have seen in Paul as they considered his words and they considered his behavior?

Well, I think what we see here...a man of real, genuine humility; a man also who bears the fruit of the Spirit, a life of righteousness. That's what they would have seen. And they would have seen all of that, because it is supernaturally the work of the Holy Spirit in his life...and in your life, and my life by God's grace.

Now, that's a man to be trusted, a humble man who exalts the LORD, not himself. That's the opposite of these false teachers, full of false stories of their great 'sacrifices' and 'achievements'. They were self-promoters because their hope was not fixed on heaven, on Paradise, or on the world to come either—but on this present world, (that's what they lived for). And that's the reason they lived as they did, boasting about their so-called 'achievements'.

What we believe about the future affects the way that we will live in the present. If there's no heaven, no hell, no future beyond this present existence, then there's no meaning to life—no purpose to life. A person may as well live for the present and for the moment and for self-gratification, (and we probably see a lot of that in our nation and in the world today). But living for self...is self-destruction.

There is a future, and a glorious one for the saint, for the believer. Paul saw it. It was given for him, (not for others), to affect his attitude and encourage perseverance through the hardships of his life and ministry. But since he revealed it here, it's now our vision, as well. It's for us to help us in persevering, but not persevering in the sense, 'of just enduring the trials and the difficulties, of just kind of holding on, of grinding on', but persisting in faith, persisting in service, joyfully, triumphantly. "We are more than conquerors," Paul tells us. (Rom 8:37).

It's doubtful that any of us will suffer as Paul did; but hardships will come, discouragements will come. We live in a fallen world; they come to everyone in this life. Fortunately for God's people, they have a purpose...they serve an end. But they're difficult. Discouragements come, and there's always the temptation, as we look around at the world, to follow after the world. It seems so glorious and glamorous.

So, we need to be reminded continually of the glory to come. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things God has prepared for those who love Him." (1Cor 2:9). Now that's glory beyond our imagination; and the knowledge of it should remind us, (in the words of Romans 8, verse 18), "...that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

Knowing that, believing that, will keep a person faithful, and obedient, and active in the faith.

One final thing, Paul was given access to the third heaven, first of all, because he is, was, a man in Christ. Only those who are in Christ will enter heaven.

We become in Christ by believing in Him.

Have you done that? Have you trusted in Christ as your Lord and Savior, as God's eternal Son and the only sacrifice for sin? If not, look to Him, believe in Him. The moment you do;

You are forgiven of all your sins,

Your guilt is wiped away,

You are immediately a child of God, adopted into the family of God,

...And given life everlasting.

May God help you to do that, if you have not.

And for you who have, (I hope it's everyone here), rejoice in what you have... what you have now—which is a protected life, a life guided by the Lord through all the difficulties, and a glorious future that's certain.

(Closing prayer) What a good thing to sing, Father, and how true it is; 'Our hope, our only hope is in Christ; it's in Jesus.'

We thank You that You, in Your goodness,
Your grace,
Your infinite eternal love for the lost,
Sent Him to purchase us,
To make us Your children,
Adopt us into Your family,
With all the rights and the privileges of the sons of God, now and forever.
We have that glorious future before us, "world without end". (Eph 3:21).

But in the present, we have Your grace and Your mercy, 'holding us tight within Your hand', as it were, holding our hand and leading us through this world. You will never forsake us.

We thank You for that. We praise You for that.

And now,
The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine on you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance on you,
And give you *shalom*. Peace.

In Christ's name,
Amen.

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