

Podcast 283 Beloved Son

Steve: How are you today?

Scott: Good. I woke up and started my day – I've been starting my day a little differently lately with a prayer called "St. Patrick's Breastplate." It's not every day, but I've done it a couple of times now, and it's been a really powerful way to start the morning.

Steve: I like it! I'll just read the first two stanzas. "I arise today through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity, through belief in the Threeness, through confession of the Oneness of the Creator of creation. I arise today through the strength of Christ's birth with His baptism, through the strength of His crucifixion with His burial, through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension, through the strength of His descent for the judgment of doom." And that is probably about one tenth of that prayer. Powerful stuff!

Steve: Thank you. Let's pray. Father, thank You for saints of old who have taught us and continue to strengthen us by their faith and their writings and their prayers. And we do arise today in the strength of Your Oneness and belief in Your Threeness, and we draw near to You and trust that You'll draw near to us this morning. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Steve: Jesus received these powerful words of affirmation from His heavenly Father, "Thou art My beloved Son, Who brings Me great joy" – that's putting a few translations together.

I believe those powerful words from God the Father to His Son stood Him in good stead, especially when He was about to endure 40 days of temptation. And the devil attacked Him on those very points. He said, "**If** You are the Son of God." So, our last podcast, we talked about, "Thou art My Son" in Psalm 2.

This passage is also referenced many times in the Gospels. It's vitally important that we know that we are God's child, because of Jesus. We have been adopted, because of Jesus, into God's family. We are His son. We covered that. But we are also His **BELOVED** son, and that's even better.

We are loved. We are cherished. We are affectionately looked at by our Dad. I'm going to read an excerpt from a newsletter that was written by Elisabeth Elliot. I've talked about her before. In her life, she went through several deep valleys. She had a difficult life. She lost two husbands, one from a spear and one from cancer. Yet she remained steadfast. She stood fast in her faith.

Here's what she writes in her newsletter: "Hymns will get you through the night. In January of 1956, when five women were waiting with bated breath to find out whether our husbands were dead or alive, I lay in bed in Nate Saint's home, my little daughter Valerie sick in a crib beside me. The hymn "How Firm a Foundation," with those magnificent words taken from Isaiah 43:1-2, sustained me, especially stanzas 2, 3, and 6, memorized when I was a child in our daily family prayer time."

I heard her relate that when she was growing up, their family would gather for their daily prayer time. They would sing one hymn. They would often begin January 1 with #1 in a hymnbook, and they were disciplined enough to follow through and sing most of the hymnbook in a year while their mom or their dad – I believe they were both pianists – would

play the piano. They would sing one hymn, then they would read one chapter of Scripture, and then they would pray, then the kids would go off to school.

As a child, she sang this hymn. I'll read verses 2, 3, and 6 – although I know you're wishing to have me sing it. "Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed, for I am thy God and will still give thee aid. I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.

When through the deep waters I call thee to go, the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow, for I will be with thee, thy trials to bless, and sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to his foes. That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake."

She not only sang those as a child; she believed them. Those truths became part of her foundation, which enabled her to endure those periods when she had to go through the night.

I believe there's a difference between talking about God's love, even giving assent to it while affirming it in songs and prayers and hymns, and believing it right down deep in our innermost heart, the core of our being, which, to me, is where our foundation is. We can say, "I believe this, I believe that," but if we haven't taken that knowledge right down into who we are, when we go through those times in the night, we're going to shake a little bit.

We each need to build a firm foundation to be our bedrock. We know that the cornerstone for this foundation is no one else but Christ Himself. Christ is the cornerstone. Christ is our Rock. Christ is our fortress. So, I'm going to make an exhortation that we would pray, and I'm going to close with several Scriptural prayers, prayers that we've been talking about in the last several podcasts, prayers according to His will.

My personal breakthrough happened when I prayed a certain prayer. I've mentioned many, many times, as I was reading John 15:9 nine years ago this spring. "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." I knew God loved the world. I knew God loved Jesus, and I knew God loved John and Peter, and I know God loves Scott. I know God loves my wife. But my difficulty was believing that God loved me.

I think it's important that we don't let go of God. We need to be like the Gentile woman who said, "Please, heal my child." Jesus relied, "I can't. I came for the children of Israel. I can't give you their bread." However she kept at Him. "Well, give me the crumbs." And He looked at her and smiled and said, "Your faith has healed you."

There was that determined woman that reached through the crowd and got a hold of His garment and was healed. She kept pushing her way until she touched Him.

There were blind beggars hollering out, "Son of David!" And people were saying, "Hey, hey, don't make a scene!" And they just kept hollering, "Son of David! Heal us!" We can all use some divine chutzpah to lay hold of God and to not let Him go until He makes us know, down in the core of our being, that we are His beloved son. That's my appeal.

When I was going through the wringer in the spring of 2012, I was hurting. Desperately. I reached out to brothers in Christ and asked them to pray for me, because I didn't know where

to go for help. I didn't have the tools to help me process my struggles. I was drowning. And those dear people of God came alongside me and began to pray for me and bear my burden. God wonderfully answered their prayers and my own.

A few nights ago a friend and I were meditating and praying together, and I read Isaiah 30:20. He stopped me, and he said, "Read that again." Here it is: "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide Himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher." Then it goes on to say, "And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.'" After I read it we both comprehended that when we are given the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, then we hear Jesus!

I experienced that verse in 2012 when I reached out to those brothers and sisters in Christ for help. I was at my lowest point that I have ever been, and they began to pray. Two days later, I was in my kitchen – it still breaks me up just to say it – and God was behind me, just like that Scripture says, He "will not hide Himself anymore." And I didn't see Him, but I heard Him. And I didn't hear a voice, but He communicated, He spoke to me, a sentence, which I'm not going to relate, because it was just for me.

In that one sentence, He packed so much meaning into it, He made me know that He liked me for who I was, that He's the One that had made me. Because at that point I was so low and suffering over the pain that I'd caused my wife and my kids, the people that were closest to me, that I was thinking that I needed to go and reinvent myself, or have a personality transplant. I felt I needed to do something because I didn't want my own issues to hurt those people. And God made me know in one sentence that He liked me just the way I was.

As I soaked in that sentence, I started beaming and, oh, such joy in my heart! God had communicated to me. I remember thinking, "How could He pack so much into one sentence?" Then I read Psalm 139.

I recognize now that I had been believing a lie, and this lie was keeping me from embracing God's love and affection. The lie was that I believed I had secrets and knew stuff about me that nobody else did. I had no trouble believing that He loved others, but I had trouble believing He loved me because of what I knew about me. But that day, God made me know, "Steve, I not only know you; I created you to be you, and I love you just the way you are." That knowledge changed my life.

Psalm 139 backs this up. "O LORD, You have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, You are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand" – this is powerful stuff – "Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,' even the darkness is not dark to You; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is

as light with You. For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in Your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are Your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with You."

I was out walking those dogs yesterday, and I was singing a hymn to my Creator, I was giving thanks, I was blessing Him, those principles that are found in Psalm 100, and God made me know He loves me, and I love Him. He knows me, and I know Him. This communion that we have now is so precious.

This restored fellowship with God is what Jesus died to give us. He came to restore and renew our vital, life-giving connection with the Father. Our sins that had separated us from God, He took away. He took away not only our sins, our guilt, but our shame. Now there's nothing to keep us from coming into His presence.

What I've found is that it takes time in the truth to renew our minds. It takes time in His presence to, as the Psalmist says, "Taste and see that He is good." It takes being open to the work of the Spirit, Who's the One Who pours out the love of God into our heart and whispers to us that we are God's beloved child.

Each of us, though, has our own journey until that happens. I've shared mine, but I do it just to whet your appetite and stimulate your faith. David said, "This I know, that God is for me." Psalm 56:9. I remember decades ago, a Bible school teacher, a committed Christian, who'd been following Jesus faithfully since he was a kid, stood up and he said, "I just became convinced that God is for me." I never forgot that.

It takes time for this knowledge to work its way down from our head to our heart. And then I thought about John, the disciple who identified himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He wrote in 1 John, "God is love."

Paul in Romans 8 says, "Nothing can separate us from His love." Hebrews says, "I am the same yesterday and today and forever." He never changes. You know, those three truths are an integral part of my testimony. I've kind of put together my own little quilt, if you want, or my own little patchwork quilt where I love what John says, "God is love." Not "loving" – He is love. Every part of His being is love. Paul: "Nothing can separate me from His love." Nothing! And then the writer of Hebrews – "and He never changes!" Those three truths are essential parts of my foundation.

We've been talking about praying according to His will, and we've also been talking about the need to keep praying and keep seeking and keep asking and knocking until we get the answer. Divine chutzpah, I call it. Listen to Paul as he prays for the Ephesians.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend" – see, that, to me, is getting

right down to having it in your heart – “with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” – see, it goes way beyond your head – “that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

We need to be so filled with the love of Christ that we will be filled with all the fullness of God. Romans 8:35, 38-39. Again, Paul really makes his point. I’m going to read three verses.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?” Thirty-eighth verse. “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Jude. “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” Strong exhortation. This prayer in 2 Thessalonians, “May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.”

I believe Paul had it. I believe John had it. I believe Jesus had it. And I believe God wants us to have it. He wants us to be convinced. He wants us to have a knowledge that surpasses head stuff and gets right down into the core of our being – that God is for us, that God loves us, while knowing us completely and thoroughly. Amen?

Steve: Let’s pray. Father, thank You for these holy words, and thank You for how you have helped saints of old – from Saint Patrick, to Paul, John, Your Son – You’ve made people know with something that goes so deep that it surpasses their head and goes right down into the core of their being that You are for them, that You are for us, that You are for me. And I pray that you would help all who are listening today. Help us. Take this feeble attempt on my part and help us to, by Your Spirit, through Your Word, transform our thinking and transform our hearts, and help us to get it right down into the real us, into our heart of hearts, that You are for us, that You love us, and that You know us. In Jesus’ name, amen.