

Turn Around, You Are Being Chased

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the unfailing pursuit of God's goodness and mercy in the lives of believers, even in the midst of trials and tribulations. It highlights the need for Christians to trust in God's compassion and love, acknowledging His discipline as a form of care and guidance. The speaker encourages a deep faith in God's promises, reminding listeners of the eternal love and grace that will follow them all the days of their lives.

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Scripture: Psalms 23:6, Hebrews 12:6, Genesis 50:20, 2 Corinthians 1:4, Romans 8:28, Isaiah 41:10, Psalms 63:1, Romans 2:4, Psalms 107:10

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Description

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Transcript

Well, amen. Praise God we have something to shout about, to sing about, to praise about. Let's pray.

Father, Lord, we do just thank You for Your incredible mercy. Lord, it's a drum that we can keep beating and it never grows weary to hear of Your goodness. And Lord, forgive us the times that, Lord, the old, old story does become something that's old and it's not new, it's not fresh.

Lord, keep us just riveted by the cross and what Your Son has done. Lord, we're thankful that we don't look at the cross. As Jeff said, it's not something foolish to us.

Lord, it's something that's our eager expectation and hope that we will not at all be ashamed to proclaim. And Lord, we're thankful to have You. And Lord, through many trials and tribulations, many of us have come, and even just hearing before the meeting, Lord, we're talking to Jeremiah.

Lord, we're thankful that Jeremiah has been here today. And we pray, Lord, that You would do a deep work in his soul. And Father, just hearing Jeff mention that their son John would have been 40 today.

Lord, just a reminder of that trial. And then talking to Lord Nancy and hearing it's been a year since her brother died. And Lord, Franny's grandmother has passed away.

Father, we face death and trials, and yet, Lord, we're thankful in You that the stain of death, Lord, has been removed, that we have victory, Lord, when we face the grave. And Lord, do comfort those in the midst of different sorrows and trials. And Father, I just pray that You'd make what I'm going to share on right now to be a living Word.

Lord, that it be a thought, a promise from Your Word that these dear, precious saints would enter into an intimate friendship with this verse, with this idea from Your Word. Father, I pray that You'd let it really stick. Lord, that it wouldn't pass over them, that it wouldn't even pass over me as I'm the one preaching, but Father, allow it to be driven home.

And so I ask for Your help. Again, I pray You'd be with Craig and Austin and all that's happening there. Lord, strengthen him.

And so, Lord, we just look to You. Be with us right now. In Christ's name, Amen.

Well, before I tell you where to turn, you're going to have an opportunity to guess where I'm going to turn, but I have three questions. Number one, are any of you currently being pursued and chased by someone? Are any of you currently being pursued and chased by someone? Or you could ask it this way, have you ever been hunted by someone? Or you could ask it this way. You could even say this.

What is an entire group of people that is currently being pursued, chased, and hunted by someone? Do you know any people groups like that? Now, it's kind of a troubling thought, right? What makes it troubling in part is the words I used. Pursued, chased, hunted. But I use those words for a reason because the text we're going to look at if you look at the definition of the very word in the text, guess what? That's what comes up.

Those type of ideas. And to help illustrate before we look at the text, to help illustrate this point, let me read just a few verses that have the same root word and hear how this comes across. Listen to this.

Deuteronomy 1. You don't need to turn there. Deuteronomy 1.44, Then the Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased. Chased you as bees do, and they beat you down.

In Seir, as far as Hormah. Do any of you want to be chased by a swarm of bees and be beaten down? No, I don't want that to happen. I don't want that to happen.

But you see the word is used in what type of way? The pursuer is doing what to the individual it is pursuing? What is he doing? He's seeking to destroy it. Inflicting that which is negative upon the individual. Jeremiah 50.17 Israel is a hunted sheep driven away by lions.

First, the king of Assyria devoured Israel. And now at last, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, has gnawed Israel's bones. Do you want that? Do you want a lion to pursue you, take you down, eat you and gnaw on your bones? No, we don't want that.

That's again, a very negative reality there. Genesis 31.22 Laban, while angry at Jacob, it says this, he pursued Jacob for seven days. Pursued.

And he followed close after him. You can almost picture it, right? You're trying to get away from your father-in-law as Jacob was doing, and he's coming after you. Someone is coming after you.

In the last verse, 2 Samuel 22.38, David says this, I pursued my enemies and I destroyed my enemies. I did not turn back until my enemies were not able to rise. Would you want to be pursued by David? No, no, you wouldn't.

So, the word chased, hunted, pursued, it usually refers to a man or a group pursuing someone for the purpose of making war or getting revenge on that individual. And so all those verses do exactly that. And someone coming after us to take revenge could make it hard to sleep at night.

Right? That could be a troubling thought. Or being chased by a swarm of bees, unless what? What would make it good to be chased by a swarm of bees? It's very unrealistic, but what if they were actually carrying a big thing of honey to drop it off to you, right? That would be a good type of getting chased by a swarm of bees. Okay, what's my text? Who knows their Bible? Yeah, Psalm 23.6. So turn to Psalm 23.

I am, for today, skipping verse 5. I'm going to get back to that. But verse 6 I felt like has been made alive to me. And so this is, I think, my sixth sermon on this Psalm of David, right? Where he speaks about the Lord being a shepherd.

I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You're with me.

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil.

My cup overflows. And then listen to verse 6. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow. That's the word.

Surely, goodness and mercy shall pursue, shall chase after me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. So what's pursuing the psalmist, or more importantly for you and I, what's pursuing the Christian and hunting you and chasing after you, it's something good, right? It's not a swarm of bees.

It's not a lion that's seeking to gnaw your bones. It's goodness and mercy who is hunting and pursuing after David. And what's goodness and mercy? What's this speaking about ultimately? Who is ultimately pursuing David? Yeah, it's the Lord, right? It's the shepherd.

You don't want to just think of goodness and mercy, goodness and mercy, goodness and steadfast love and kindness. They're attached to a person and their character, right? And that person is the Lord. It's not just some feeling floating out there.

This is ultimately speaking about the Lord, but it's emphasizing these two specific characteristics. So look, if you're in this people group, if you're one of the sheep in this great shepherd's flock, this is really good news. You've got a shepherd who his loving kindness, his mercy, his steadfast love, it's actually chasing after you and pursuing you.

You should find some comfort there. And this is obviously a word picture, right? He's making a word picture. He's kind of drawing with words that are representing something.

Kind of like tonight, they're going to be out there stenciling a picture. Well, the picture that they're going to put on the wall in the kid's play area, it's representative of something, right? It's supposed to speak in a certain way. And that's what he's trying to get this imagery here.

He's wanting you to know, Christian, God's steadfast love and mercy towards you. I mean, do you ever think about it? Like, He's chasing you to show that steadfast love and mercy to you. Do you visualize it in that way that it's pursuing after you? Or this word could also be rendered persecuting after you.

I mean, do you ever think about His love? It's that intense towards being sought to be shown to you and to me. This doesn't say surely goodness and mercy, you know, it's lagging behind after me like a turtle in the sand by the beach. That's not what's happening here.

And so the Lord is wanting to show us His love, His steadfastness, His care. And you know, the Scriptures, they constantly speak in this way about God's goodness, His mercy, His steadfast love. Listen to Exodus 34.6. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed.

The Lord. The Lord. A God merciful.

A God who is gracious. A God who is slow to anger. A God who is abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

A God who keeps steadfast love for thousands. A God who forgives iniquity and transgression and sin and who will by no means clear the guilty. So He is a God of justice too.

But you hear that? Forgiving sin. Kind of like I tried to emphasize in the last message about the Lord even being with you in the deep darkness and if you define that as you rejecting the Lord and leading you into deep darkness like Psalm 107 said, I wanted to leave you with the reality that even there, Christian, the love of the Lord and His mercy to forgive you, it's not far off, right? It's there even chasing after you. Nehemiah 9.17, it says, you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and you did not forsake your people.

When you hear that, that's the Lord that we have. Is God a God of love? He is. He really is a God of love.

And we don't want to lose that reality in our own souls. And obviously, goodness and kindness, as I've said, this is ultimately pointing to the Lord, to the shepherd, to a person, but you could really read this wrong if you just kind of pictured it as merely some attitude or emotion, right? Goodness and kindness are acts that are actually shown to an individual. It's the character of the person.

If they have a good and a kind character, it's gonna manifest itself in a clear way to you and I. And so David, you could say right here in verse six, even, one of the closing verse here in this chapter, saying, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me. Obviously, a lot of why he's even proclaiming this reality is everything that he has already said. He's already said very similar things throughout this Psalm right here.

He's already said, as we looked at in verse four, even though I walked in the shadow of the valley of death, I will fear no evil. Why? For you are with me, right? So the Lord is with you. His love and compassion and steadfast love, it's chasing after you.

The Lord is very, you could say, intentionally shepherding over your soul, right? And He's intentionally showing love to you as a Christian. Right, that goes back to just the rest that you and I should have as

Christians and God's control over our circumstances. The Lord is intentional in His goodness and His loving kindness.

And so it's one thing to realize the Lord is with you, but for David to say to us, these two characteristics, His goodness and His mercy, they're chasing after me. Brethren, that is a glorious reality. And how long does this pursuit last? How long is goodness and mercy chasing after you? All the days of my life.

All the days of my life. Make me think about Psalm 103, 17. But steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him.

I mean, everlasting to everlasting is the steadfast love of the Lord. And you know, some of the verses I mentioned earlier, one said this, it mentioned they pursued close for seven days. Is that the steadfast love of the Lord? Pursues you for seven days here, and then it kind of draws back for a couple of weeks, and then the steadfast love of the Lord pursues again seven days.

Is that what happens to you, Christian? You might feel like that's happened. It's not happened. The Word makes it clear.

Don't trust your feelings and your distorted perspective that might have come from grieving the Spirit. Trust what the Lord says in His Word. This is where we have our authority.

Or another text with the same word. It mentioned when David was pursuing the enemies, and it said 200 of his men got exhausted and were unable to continue. Has that ever happened to you? Has the Lord ever got exhausted in showing you steadfast love and He's just not continued? Have you felt like that's happened before? I was reading Rosalind Goforth's, not Goforth's, A Thousand Miles a Miracle about the Glovers.

And one of the quotes in there that really stood out was the wife who after a thousand miles of fleeing the persecution in China, she hinted on that reality of the temptation to view her circumstances through the lens that this promise was not really true and being fulfilled. And she recognized she had to fight that thought and believe the promise, believe the Word, not let the circumstance alter your perspective on God and His promises. Because His character does not change.

We have a God who never lies. A God who never gets exhausted. A Lord who's not just closed for seven days, and then well, His goodness and loving kindness is pursuing another Christian.

We have a God who is all powerful and able to pursue every one of His children with such an incredible love. And this is an incredible thing to have the Lord sending His love and His compassion. And He is a Person to be chasing after us.

And so, David did what, right? I pursued my enemies and I did not turn back. Christian, the Lord's not going to turn back His love for you if you're His. His love is never going to turn back from you.

And the Lord's never going to miss tracking you to where He can't care for you because you've got two minutes ahead and whatever, that's not going to happen. There is someone who is faithfully showing you their love and their kindness. Now, one thing here, you could wrongly get this idea in this word picture of what? If the idea is His steadfast love is chasing you, what could be a wrong idea you could come away with? Like, it's back there and it's not catching up to me.

You know, the steadfast love of the Lord, it's lagging behind or something like that. That's not His point. His point is not to think that you're here and the steadfast love of the Lord is over there.

I mean, David's already said, He's with me always, right? The Shepherd's always with you. So don't read the imagery to think that His love is lagging behind and you have to keep stopping for His love to catch up and His goodness and His mercy never reach you. Right? That's not the idea.

But you know what? You could take that imagery and think of it this way. You've just sinned. You've forsaken the Shepherd.

You've gone into a darkness. You've intentionally sinned. You know what's right there? God's ready to forgive you.

And He's ready to show compassion to you that you rise up and you don't have a pity party. You rise up and you follow the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, or I thought about this.

I won't mention the brother, but maybe you've heard this a while back. But there's a brother, he had his stepfather died and he got an inheritance. And part of that was a motorcycle and some guns and some ammo, right? So he goes up north to get his inheritance.

And on the way back on the motorcycle, he had put in the saddlebags, the bullets and the bullets were all facing down. And at some point on the ride, the amount of heat back there started igniting some of the bullets. Now, thankfully they were shooting down, but this is where the illustration, what I'm trying to illustrate.

You know what happened to him? He pulled over on the side of the road with that motorcycle as it's getting on fire. And you know what happened? Some guy in a truck was right behind him, pulled right over, took out a fire extinguisher and put the fire out just like that. You see, the Lord doesn't have that delay.

There was a delay there, but that's the idea. Goodness and mercy are pursuing after you just like kind of like what Evan brought up in the first hour, right? They're in Nepal, the truck is stuck. And John says, have faith, let's trust the Lord.

And what did he mention happened? Some guy with an excavator on the mountain comes right down and gets their truck out of the mud. You know why people are there at the right time? Because God, right? You should expect in your life things happen at the right time. Because that's the Lord doing that.

He's pursuing you. There should be something in you where you expect the mercy and the goodness and the kindness and the patience of God to be shown to you. The text does not say, surely condemnation and guilt shall follow me all the days of my life.

It doesn't say that. It says His goodness and His loving kindness. So yeah, that brother could get out of the, you know, off the bike or he's already off the bike, is burning and the guy gets there and he could say to him, man, you're at the right place at the right time, right? But that is the Lord.

And you should expect that, Christian, in your life. And you know, it's amazing, isn't it? The Bible often focuses on you and I's pursuit of the Lord. And that is vital.

Even as having talked about in the first hour, you need to be walking with Him, right? Your walk with Him is essential. But we've got an encouragement here, not just of my need to walk with Him, but the Lord's

pursuit of you, right? And so both work together. Draw near to God, He'll draw near to you, right? You have both of these realities for the Christian.

You know, years ago, I did a sermon called God's Manhunt. And just let me read that verse. It's a similar idea.

2 Chronicles 16, 9, for the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless towards Him. Let me see it. The Lord's looking.

He's ready to help. Call upon Him in the day of your trouble. Call upon, remember the cross after you've sinned, Christian.

I mean, we're talking about the steadfast love of the Lord. What is the greatest manifestation you could say of the steadfast love of the Lord? It's the fact your sins are forgiven. I mean, having your sins pardoned.

What a manifestation of love from the Lord. Strong support is right there. It's to be had.

You know, Jesus looks at all of us and He says, I'm with you always to the end of the age. And you got to believe that. We've got to trust that of our Savior.

I mean, His pursuit of us, you know, it's thinking, right? The word could be rendered persecute. When you think how someone is trying to persecute you, they're seeking to do you harm. Well, this is the type of persecution you want to be happening.

And this type of persecution, Him pursuing you and chasing you with His steadfast love and compassion, it's happening all the time. He's not backing off the pedal. Even in the valley, what did we find? He's there.

You've got to trust this. You're being tracked, Christian. And some of you, you've got a fear of what's chasing you, but it's actually something good.

It's His goodness and mercy. Don't interpret even your trials in your life to mean that God's goodness and mercy is not tracking after you. I mean, whatever the Lord is bringing, it's not ultimately to hurt you.

It's not ultimately to tear you down. It's to build you up and make you more like the Lord Jesus Christ. And to strip you of idols, to strip you of competing affections with Christ, and to get your heart continually, solely feeding and feasting on Him, the Bread of Life.

And so, I want to think for a moment. I want to emphasize to you how important it is you should be convinced of such a promise like this. Because having a promise in the Bible or having Psalm 23 on the bathroom wall or having it memorized or hearing me preach it now does absolutely no good if you don't believe it.

If you don't practically believe it when you need it, right? Satan, in a way, wants you to view this check that you could say is a billion-dollar check. He wants you to think it's counterfeit in order to never get you to cash in on it and go to the Lord and trust Him by faith in the midst of your trial. Or you know what the devil wants to do? He wants you to look at the small print.

You know, this says it's purified water, right? I mean, is there some small print on here? Oh, this is not actually pure. It's only 95% pure. I mean, Satan wants you to do that with the promises in the Word.

I'm not saying there aren't promises where he clearly, like Psalm 84, 11, no good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. There's a condition. I get that.

The Scriptures speak that way. You don't have a condition here, right? You don't have God's love for the Christian. Is it conditional or unconditional? It's unconditional.

If you're His sheep, He is loving you with an everlasting love now and to the end of eternity, which eternity has no end because it's eternity. Every day, every moment, for the rest of my existence, which is forever, there's a steadfast love of the Lord sustaining me and being poured into my life. And all you can just say is we are absolutely unworthy of such incredible love.

And so the promise doesn't say goodness and mercy will follow you except in the dark valley, except when you despise the Word of the Lord. No, that's not what it says. Even there, the Lord is willing to show you love and compassion, forgive your sins, pull you out of that, and allow you to press on for Him.

Brethren, there is no expiration date on this promise. I mean, that's something to just remember, to believe. And you might say, well, there's no small print.

What about Romans 8.28? Well, Romans 8.28 isn't small print when he says everything works together for good for those who are called, who love the Lord. That's not small print. That's obvious print.

If you're not a Christian, you should not expect goodness and mercy are following you all the days of your life. The promise isn't for you. The promise is for the people who have put their trust in Jesus Christ.

Right? Romans 8. Those who love God. I mean, if you're a Christian, your great love in your life, it's the Lord. It's not a person.

It's not a thing. It is a person. I'm sorry.

It's Christ. It's not a person in the world, but it's the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, if you're lost, the Lord will have steadfast follow you all the days of your life.

He's very willing to show that towards you. But you first need to trust in the clearest manifestation of His steadfast love. And that happened on the cross of Calvary.

Right? If you won't trust in that and you despise that and look at it as foolish, you're missing out not just on this promise, but thousands of promises in the Word of God. And I'd even say to the unbeliever, you know, something's hunting you too. What's that? What text talks about what's chasing you if you're not a Christian? Flee from the wrath to come.

Isn't that interesting? The lost are being pursued by the wrath of God that abides over them. The Christian is being chased and pursued by the steadfast love and the goodness of the Lord. It's a no-brainer.

Which category would you want to be in? If it's really a no-brainer, then don't do what the rich unruler did and hold on to your little idol, the one thing. You let it go and you surrender to Christ. And you follow Him.

You follow the Lord Jesus Christ. And so yes, God is a holy God and His righteous anger is absolutely after the wicked. And as they reject Him, His wrath all the more fully comes upon them.

They're being given over in Romans 1 to do things that ought not to be done. And His wrath just increases on them all the more leading up to that day when for all of eternity, that wrath is going to be poured out upon them in hell forever. And God's justice will be rightly displayed there.

So, you know what happens though? Just as some believers fall into unbelief about how loving the Lord is towards them, unbelievers fall into unbelief while they're in unbelief, but they don't believe God's wrath towards them. You see, those can be two extremes, right? When you're lost, you don't recognize the anger and the holiness of God and His wrath towards you. Well, then you get converted and what happens? You don't recognize enough the love of the Lord for your soul.

And so the lost need to be convinced of the wrath that abides over them. And the Christian needs to realize and be convinced of God's love for them. Isn't that one of our greatest plights as Christians? Not recognizing the loving care that the Lord has for His sheep.

Titus 3.5, He saved us. Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His mercy. You hear that? Mercy, right? Surely, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of this life.

But according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, who He poured on us richly. We have the Spirit richly as Christians. We've been saved not because of anything that we have done.

Not what my hands have brought. Nothing in my hands I clean. It's simply to the cross I clean.

That's our boast. It's what Christ has done on that cross. That is sufficient.

That is the ultimate mercy we're trusting in. And all the other manifestations of mercy and forgiveness in our lives and His love and what He gives to us and how He sustains us, all of it is so small compared to that great act of love of God loving the world and slaughtering His Son as an atonement for His people's sins on that tree. So again, the text does not say, Christian, guilt and condemnation follow me all the days of my life.

It says His goodness and mercy shall follow me. And so what should that cause you and I to do? Draw near to Him. Right? I mean, you say, I want this.

I want to experience this more as a Christian. Hebrews 4, let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we might receive mercy. Wait, but I thought mercy was pursuing me.

It is. It's right there. Ask the Lord.

Draw near by faith. Ask for mercy. And you will find grace to help in the time of need.

I mean, back to the Nepal thing. What happened? John says have faith, believe in the Lord. He asked for help.

What happened? The Lord's there. He's willing. He's right there ready to help us in all of our trials, in all of our circumstances, in all of the areas where we might despair.

The Lord is able to deliver us. And He promises to do that. He's committed to us.

We are His people. None are going to pluck us from the Father's hand. So most objections to this promise, something that could keep you from believing it, they deal with often an inability to by faith realize God's purposes in our suffering.

Not understanding suffering often leads to not believing specific promises. So let me again just try to convince you of something that this really is true. This really is true.

Let me test you. If you know the book of Job, you know what Job went through. Lost a business.

Lost the children. My perspective, life turns against him. He's saying curse God and die.

Lost his physical health. All these things are happening to Job. You look at the significance of his trial.

Okay, if you were to describe the Lord's conduct towards Job, how would you describe that? Without knowing how the Bible describes it. If you heard, if you read about all Job went through, would you even think to describe that with the words of Psalm 236? Would that even cross your mind? Like, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life? James 5.11, Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job.

You have seen the Lord's purposes. How the Lord is compassionate and merciful. What? How the Lord is compassionate and merciful? That can't be right.

He's talking about a different Job, right? He's got the wrong... There must be multiple Jobs in the Bible. Is that what's happening here? No, brethren, we can be way too humanistic and exalt man. You read the book of Job, you better believe Job got far better than he deserved.

And that's the same with you. Yes, the Lord was compassionate and merciful to Job. I mean, you get to the end of those chapters, you don't know what justice looks like.

It looks like the Lord responding to Job by opening the earth up and consuming them down to the pit. And the Lord didn't do that. The Lord strongly rebuked Him there.

Yes. But sadly, I think many would look at the book of Job and they wouldn't come away stating such a reality because they're too humanistic in their thinking and they just miss the reality of how kind the Lord really is to us. The fact we're not dead and in hell right now is infinite mercy and grace.

And so you might be sitting here and you believe you deserve better treatment. You don't realize how kind God has been to you. I mean, we have to change our thinking completely when we go to the Word of God, when we go to the Scriptures.

We have to make sure we're thinking like the Lord. Even in Romans 9, right? What's happening in Romans 9? You hear about Jacob I loved and Esau I hated. And obviously, what did Paul know the audience's response was going to be? They were going to find fault with God.

And Paul says to them, who are you, O man, to find fault with God? You see, that's man's issue. They're wanting to find fault with the Lord. And if you and I try to find fault with God and we actually start to believe the Lord has wronged us by allowing something in our life, even a very, very, very significant trial, then you're not going to be able to believe this promise.

Because you have something in your mind where you don't trust the character of God. And you know where that could end up? It's going to end up progressively into more and more darkness spiritually. So even think here.

What we have here is another verse by which you and I should interpret the happenings in our lives. Right? That's exactly what David's doing. Look at the text again.

David is speaking and saying, surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. Is he dead yet? No. He's looking at all in the past.

He's looking at the shepherd's care of him. And he is letting you and me into how he's thinking. And how does David approach and perceive life at this moment? What's he saying? Surely, in view of the shepherd's care, in view of me not wanting, in view of him being with me even in the deep darkness, in view of him preparing a table before me in the presence of my enemies, surely in view of all of these glorious realities of him, this loving kindness and steadfast love, it's going to follow me all the days of my life.

It's always going to be there. David's letting you know how he interprets the happenings in his life. This is a key to his interpretation of it.

So you're saying, David, whatever happens in my life, steadfast love and compassion, there's something there involved of God's involvement with those characteristics of God. And David is saying yes, that is true. When you think about it, David is basically confidently talking about having future grace in his life.

You and I need to be able to say this verse. Can you say it? That's a good question for application. Can you say confidently yourself, can you write it down, looking on into the future as you look back on the past, can you say, surely, goodness and mercy are going to follow me all the days of my life? That's what he's doing.

He's confidently plowing on into the future believing this glorious reality. Do you? Do you? And like I mentioned, what leads him to make this assertion? I mean, you have all these previous verses and all of these kindnesses that are being shown to him by the Good Shepherd. And here, they overflow this confident expectation of goodness and mercy chasing after him because obviously he looks back at his life and he's seeing that's what's happened thus far.

You look back on your life. However long you've been saved. Can you look back and accuse God as a Christian since you've been a believer that goodness and mercy haven't been pursuing after you? Or can instead you look back and you see examples of how His goodness and His steadfast love and His patience and His kindness and His long-suffering and His forgiveness has been shown to you? And what gives David confidence going on into the future? Does he mention in here his own integrity? No, it's the character of the Lord.

We have a God who is unchangeable. A Lord who is full of goodness. And even as I just considered the last time I spoke, even in the valley of the shadow of death, which again, Psalm 107 gives any light on that and that's talking about a man who's despised the very Word of God and gone into sin.

Even there for the Christian, that might be the place you'd least expect the Lord to show you mercy is after you've sinned. Brethren, the Bible says He wants to show you mercy. He's forgiven you and He's calling you to rise up and to follow Him, not to have a pity party, not to have guilt and condemnation follow you all

the days of your life, but to trust in Christ.

And that grace is all the more a motivator to not sin in the future. Because the love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my all. And the text, it goes on to say, not just all the days of my life, but He says I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

This is an eternity of love from our Lord. Think of this. One of the greatest struggles I've seen people have is they fall into anxiety about the what-ifs.

What if this happens? What if my spouse dies? What if the lump on my child's neck is cancer? What if we have another miscarriage? What if this happens? What if this happens? Does verse 6 talk about the what-ifs? Surely, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. It doesn't say what-if. This is a certainty.

The loving kindness of the Lord, it does not relent. It does not get exhausted. He as a person, as a shepherd, does not relent.

He does not get exhausted. And so in other words, the expected outcome for us, in every trial I will face the rest of my life, interpreting life through not my feelings, but the lens of the Word of God and what David says, I can go forward trusting in whatever comes. One of the things that's clearly coming and one of the things that's clearly chasing after me is the steadfast mercy and kindness of the Lord.

And what is love? You're interested in the interest of others. The Lord's interested in you, Christian. It's astonishing that He would even be concerned about us, His adopted children.

He loves us as He loves His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It's unbelievable. And so, goodness and mercy, they're as close to you as the shadows are behind you.

They're right there. And so, as one said, goodness and mercy of the Lord, they are inescapable attendants until life's end. You're stuck with them.

You're stuck with these two bodyguards, Christian. And they're with you all the way to the end. And you know what? You try to run away from them.

I mean, there's movies. They have like the stubborn kid, the rich kid who has bodyguards and he's trying to evade the bodyguards or something like that. Maybe that's a bad illustration.

You try to get away from the Lord's love. You try to go sin. You go and sin.

You give in to something. You know what? The Lord's after you. You're not going to get away.

He's tracking you. He's not a step behind you. He doesn't slow down.

This is His care, His concern for us. And David himself is saying this. This is not the Lord saying this here.

It is one of His people saying it here. The Lord is saying it to us through David saying it, led by the Spirit, that as he looks forward, he sees what's chasing him, pursuing him, persecuting him, hunting him down. It is the steadfast love of the Lord.

It's incredible. These inescapable attendants in our lives. After you've sinned, mercy is still pursuing you.

And you know what? Trials, right? The trials, they'll let up. But even if you have a trial and it feels like it never lets up, the steadfast love of the Lord, that for certain is not letting up. Often for Christians, trials are seasonal.

Right? You have a real significant trial. Some lesser trials. Maybe it seems like no trial.

They're seasonal. They come. Maybe they're for a whole long time.

The season might be 40 years. But the steadfast love of the Lord, it's not seasonal. It's not in and out.

It's 24-7. The Lord is fully active and involved in shepherding your life. Just like the shepherd watching over the sheep, even by night, as the Scriptures speak about.

That is the Lord's concern for you. That's why you can get up in the middle of the night and you can pray to Him in the middle of the watch night because He is there. And He delights to hear your voice.

And as Solomon says, you go to Him, His heart even beats faster for you. At one glance of your eyes to the Lord, the Lord is that concerned and caring and loving for you as a Christian. He loves you with the love, as I said, that He loves His own Son.

Again, being a Christian, you're as justified before God as Jesus is because you have Jesus' righteousness. I mean, if God would allow you to be as right before Him as His own Son, what shouldn't you expect in your life except all this love, compassion, care, and concern from this glorious Savior? And again, trials, they're not condemning you, but they are purifying you. You remember what David said up here? Your rod and your staff, what does the rod do? Comforts.

Whew! Is that how you feel when you get disciplined? Man, it was really comforting. I hope you do. Wow! I sinned and I wasn't going to tell anyone about it.

My conscience pricked me. God's hand was heavy on me. He exposed me.

Wow! That was so comforting that God was concerned about not letting me drift further. If that didn't comfort you, I don't know what will because the Lord easily could have just backed up and that's it. That's amazing comfort.

The rod doesn't bring abandonment when God puts it on our back. It brings holiness and comfort. Even think of this.

I read at the beginning how Israel's bones were gnawed like a lion. Well, who allowed the lion to gnaw the bones? The Lord! Why? Why would God allow that? Part of it is judgment, right? Judgment on rebellious people. But part of it even is discipline for those who are real.

Is this goodness and mercy following? Listen, I'm going to read this. Tell me, is this goodness and mercy? I kept silent. My bones wasted away.

I groaned all day long. Your hand was heavy on me. My strength was dried up as the heat of the summer.

Is that goodness and mercy pursuing Him all the days of His life? Yeah, you know what He says at the end of that psalm? Steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord. If you don't view God's discipline in that way, then yes, you won't believe the promise. You won't.

Hebrews 12.6 The Lord disciplines the one He loves. So if I don't get disciplined, you're saying God doesn't love me and I'm an illegitimate child? That's what He goes on to say. He chastises every son whom He receives.

This can't be right, James. What about the horrible things that I've suffered as a child at the hands of wicked people? This can't be true. Again, the world is real wicked.

The world is full of wicked people. God didn't have to show any mercy to anyone. And in my lost state as a child, far more wicked things could have happened to me in the 21 years I was lost than did.

And how many of us could have been dead and in hell, and yet God has given us His grace? The wickedness on the earth should not make you cry out where is God to allow all of this. It should actually make you cry out how on earth would the Lord love me or anyone in view of such darkness on the earth? Not finding fault. The issue is not I should have more kindness from the Lord.

The issue is how on earth would a holy, loving God show His enemies any kindness at all? That's the disturbing thing. Is that right for God to do that? You know why it's right for God to do that? Because His Son died to pay our price. And so He can now love us freely because the price has been paid so He's not justifying the wicked, but we are now no longer legally wicked because Christ's righteousness has been given to us.

And so God can freely love us and He's not an evil judge. He's a just judge because He slaughtered His Son as our payment. You know, having the Lord's goodness follow the believer is not a promise that bad and wicked things won't happen to us in this world.

Instead, it is a promise that even though those things happen, God will show us goodness and mercy in the midst of it. And brethren, when it's all been said and done, we're going to say like Paul, this life momentary affliction, it's nothing compared to the eternal weight of glory that waits for us that is beyond all comparison. And Paul said that when he was alive.

And so you too, we need to think like that. Yes, suffering can be hard. Loss of a child can be incredibly hard and difficult.

Loss of a brother. All these things are real significant trials, but it's all incredibly light come eternity. Where was the Lord when a young man named Joseph in the Bible was sold into human trafficking? Where was God? Was goodness and mercy following Joseph? You could say, well, when was Joseph converted? Did he love God? When was he saved? I don't know how much we want to think about that question.

You know one thing that stood out to me with Joseph recently? We had this in our family devotions. Reuben comes to Joseph, or to the brothers, and what's he trying to convince them to do? Not to kill Joseph, but to do what? Sell him. But then Reuben goes away, and the brothers are still going to do what? Kill Joseph.

Right? And he's in the pit, and you throw your brother in the pit and you start eating food together. I guess that's the heart and heart thing to do. Where was God in that whole situation? What kept Joseph from dying? God.

What did God do practically? They're sitting down there out in the middle of nowhere. Not in the middle of nowhere, but out there. You know what happens right at the exact time they need it? A caravan going to

Egypt.

To Egypt! Comes right by, and one of them says, okay, let's go ahead and sell him now. If that caravan didn't come, you know what would happen to Joseph? He's a dead man. God sent the caravan.

God had a purpose. The psalmist says the Word of the Lord, it tested Joseph. It tested Joseph.

Listen to Genesis 50. I mean, all this is finished and Joseph is revealing himself to his brothers in the incredible words of Genesis 50. He says to them, as for you, you meant evil against Me.

People will mean evil against you and I. They will do evil things to us. But Joseph looks and he says, God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today. Did the people mean evil against you? They did.

But God has a purpose and that purpose involves His goodness and mercy being shown to you in the midst of that. You see what I'm trying to say here? Even when you and I think the Lord is not in the right place at the right time, He actually is in the right place at the right time. It might seem like goodness and mercy sure isn't pursuing me.

Well, maybe it's the goodness of His rod that disciplines you and you're not getting the point and that's why it feels so hard in your life because the Lord's hand is heavy on you and He's trying to get you to acknowledge your sin, acknowledge your idolatry, and you don't do it. That's His love. That's not God hating you.

That's God loving you. God hating you would be to, oh, I'm not going to put my hand heavy on them just so they can go do what they want. That's hatred.

The Proverbs say, who spares the rod hates the child. And if God spares His rod on me, He hates me. Joseph can look back and say, even in the valley, who was with him? Even in the prison, who was with him? Even in the pit, who was with him? The Lord.

Goodness and mercy did follow Him. And brethren, you know one thing you could apply from Joseph here? The past trial that you've had for Joseph, what was it intended for? For future good. For who? Others.

You hear that? Past significant trial, being sold into human trafficking, being gone. I'm using that term because that's kind of a modernized term. And that's basically what happened.

Them sold by your brothers. That trial happened, and goodness of God was not just upon Joseph, but the trial happened, the suffering happened, to equip Joseph to help others at a later point. You see, 2 Corinthians 1, that reality.

We get so caught up in our trials and why me? And we miss the lesson God's trying to teach us to help others in the future. Many were kept alive because of what He went through. So yes, did He have to suffer greatly to end up benefiting others at a later date? Yeah, He did.

Well, guess whose footsteps He followed in? Who also got sold by His brethren? The Lord Jesus Christ. Who also got thrown, you could say, into the pit and tortured? The Lord Jesus Christ. Who also got raised up? The Lord Jesus Christ.

Who also had a position of power by which He could give us the bread of life that we would not die in our sin? The Lord Jesus Christ. Can it be good that I was afflicted? The psalmist says it is good. It is good for me that I am afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

Because He says, before I was afflicted, I went astray. But now I keep Your Word. God might be afflicting you right now in your life in order to get you to keep His Word in one specific area.

And praise God, He keeps afflicting you to get you to that point where you obey. Or maybe He's afflicting you and it has nothing to do with any of your disobedience. It's just preparing you for a future date when you're going to help others with the suffering with which you're going through.

Either way, A or B, guess what's there? Surely, goodness and mercy are following me all the days of my life. So are you cashing in on this check? Do you believe it's the real deal? Or do you look at it and think it's a counterfeit? Can't really be what it says. Can't really be applied to my life.

Don't do that. Believe the truth. Believe what it says.

And I'd ask you, what are you pursuing? The Lord pursues His people. An obvious outcome for us is to pursue Him. We want to know Him more.

The psalmist said, you have said, Lord, seek my faith. In my heart, it says, Your faith, Lord, I seek. David said in Psalm 63, O God, You are my God.

Earnestly, I seek You. My soul it thirsts for You. My flesh faints for You.

As in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Well, I think that's it. One more quote.

Bonar says this, And shall any member doubt of his persevering to the end, since he has loved to the end with love that first loved him? So don't doubt this love until you become a guest forever in your Father's house. Kind of like Evan said. Bob getting out there and saying, alright boys, let's go home.

You know, that type of thing. That's going to happen to us one day. And you want to have full confidence as you live in this life that heaven is your home, earth is not.

John Stevenson said, These two attendants on either side shall cheer my spirit and invigorate my heart as I journey to my heavenly home. The one shall obtain for me full supply for all my necessities, and the other shall assure me of full forgiveness for all of my sin. And brethren, failure there can never be because God is the one who's pursuing you.

He will not fail. And so like David, can you look back on your life as a Christian even and go on into the future from this point onward believing surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. Amen.

Well, Father, Lord, we thank You. This is unbelievable. Father, if we're just honest, I feel like my mind is so... My heart, Lord, I want to know You more.

Just incredible the love that You have. Lord, if we even saw this on a human scale, if we just saw someone searching all over for someone, like that father in China years ago, 15 years trying to find his missing son. It's on the news.

He's driving everywhere the picture of his son. And people look and say what an incredible pursuit. This man's trying to find his son that was abducted as a child.

Lord, that's nothing compared to Your love for us. It's beyond that. You didn't seek for your son.

You sought for your enemies. And then You slaughtered your son to pay for our sins. And then You continue to show us goodness and mercy all of the days of our lives.

Lord, we want this promise to be our own. Lord, we want to walk in You by faith as we heard in the first hour, and yet believe as we walk that You're chasing. You're chasing after us, Lord.

Your steadfast love, Your kindness. Lord, even Your kindness is meant to lead us to repent. Father, I think of those who don't know You.

Lord, maybe one thing that could have been added was just how kind You are to the lost, and that kindness is meant to lead them to repentance, to turn, to acknowledge their sin. Lord, I pray more people here would experience Your steadfast love pursuing them. So Lord, I just commit this word to You and what You've said here, and I pray You'd make it real in our lives.

In Christ's precious name, Amen.

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