

Soaring to the Heights



Function

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Soaring to the Heights – Function

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Contents

Introduction to devotional series “Soaring to the Heights”	5
Function 1 Isaiah 6:2	9
Function 2 Isaiah 31:5	11
Function 3 Isaiah 34:4	12
Function 4 Isaiah 34:11	13
Function 5 Isaiah 38:14	14
Function 6 Isaiah 40:9	15
Function 7 Isaiah 40:26	17
Function 8 Isaiah 40:31	18
Function 9 Isaiah 51:6	19
Function 10 Jeremiah 8:7	20
Function 11 Jeremiah 10:2	21
Function 12 Jeremiah 14:22	22
Function 13 Jeremiah 17:11	24
Function 14 Jer 30:23	25
Function 15 Jeremiah 48:28	26
Function 16 Jeremiah 49:22	27
Function 17 Lamentations 3:41	28
Function 18 Ezekiel 1:10	29
Function 19 Dan 9:21	31
Function 20 Hosea 2:18	32
Function 21 Hosea 2:21	33
Function 22 Hosea 7:11	34
Function 23 Hosea 8:1	35
Function 24 Joel 2:10	36

Function 25 Amos 4:13	38
Function 26 Jonah 1:4	39
Function 27 Obad 4	40
Function 28 Nahum 3:16	41
Function 29 Habakkuk 3:11	42
Function 30 Zechariah 5:1-2	43

Introduction to devotional series “Soaring to the Heights”.

I have been asked to develop a series of devotionals related to becoming involved in missions. The premise of this material is what we can learn by looking at what is involved in soaring in the heavens and applying that to God’s call to mission.

Why this idea? It is because no matter what actual form of transport we use, whether we walk, ride in a boat, car, or plane we need to keep our eyes on God. In a sense to soar so that we can keep our focus on God and on the mission we have been called to participate in.

There are many ways to reach those people. We can walk or maybe ride a horse or donkey. We can ride in a cart or in a boat. These were the primary avenues of reaching people for so many years. More recently we can now ride in a vehicle and can fly. Options that have increased our ability to reach people. In all of these a critical factor has been a vision of going where God calls. And an ability to soar, to let God open our eyes and hearts to all that is possible when our focus is heavenward.

There will be five sets of devotionals in this series. Here is the list and the focus of each. The overall theme for them is taken from the process of entering air or space, which in many ways is not much different from entering a remote location on the planet.

Here is a description of each of the five sets of devotionals.

Soaring to the Heights: Motivate— In any endeavor a key element is motivation. What motivates our choice to become involved.

This series of devotionals is to provide time to focus on, think through, and review all that will be or has been part of the process to encourage a person to choose to heed God’s call to missions and its related ministries as an avenue of service in the kingdom of God.

The scriptures for this section are drawn from the Pentateuch and the Books of History

Soaring to the Heights: Mobilize – At some point is time to commit ourselves. It is time to take all we have learned and put it into action. It is a scary exciting moment. It is filled with all kinds of emotions, fears, worries, and hopes. It is like the moment when you are accepted into school. It is like the moment when you sign a contract for a job. It is like the moment when a bride and groom say “I DO.” It is about the moment when you say YES to the Lord’s call on your life.

This series of devotionals is for the purpose of reflecting on those decisions, whether taken in the past or being taken now. It is about reviewing the consequences of such a decision and the reality that, once the decision has been made, life will never be the same. It is about facing the fear and the joy of choosing.

The texts for this section are drawn from the books of Poetry

Soaring to the Heights: Function – The idea of soaring is about learning to live at a new level spiritually. In some ways it is similar to what a plane deals with when taking off. There are several factors that come into play and need to be dealt with. These have to do with weight, amount of fuel, and final destination. If we do not care for them properly then we will fail. As in all endeavors in life our actions involve choices and how they will affect our plans and our ability to function. When we handle all those choices correctly then we will be able to soar, able to carry out the work that we are given. These choices also affect how long it takes to arrive at our destination. We choose to go to school after secondary school. We choose an occupation. We choose a place to live and so on. The choice of marriage and kids - depending on the person. The choice of hobbies and activities. I can go on. All are part of how I function in the role God has given me.

This series of devotionals is for the purpose of allowing time to reflect on past choices, current decisions, and thinking about the impact of any other choices that may be necessary. Learning to make wise choices is critical as we move from one phase of life and enter into the next phase of life – or, in this context, as we move forward in the mission of God

The texts for this section are drawn from the Prophets

Soaring to the Heights: Validation – We all want to know that all we have done has a point and will bring about the desired results. It is when we begin to see the fruit of all that has been done and being able to accomplish the goals that have been set.

In life, all the choices have this focus, they are designed to bring us to the point of carrying out specific goals and accomplishing key responsibilities. In life it is finding employment or raising a family. In the church it is becoming engaged in the mission of God.

This series of devotionals is for the purpose of, as before, reflecting on what happens when you have found the place where God wants you to serve. It is about reflecting on what it means to use the lessons learned, the skills obtained, and the relationships developed in carrying out what God has called you to do.

The texts for this section are drawn from the New Testament

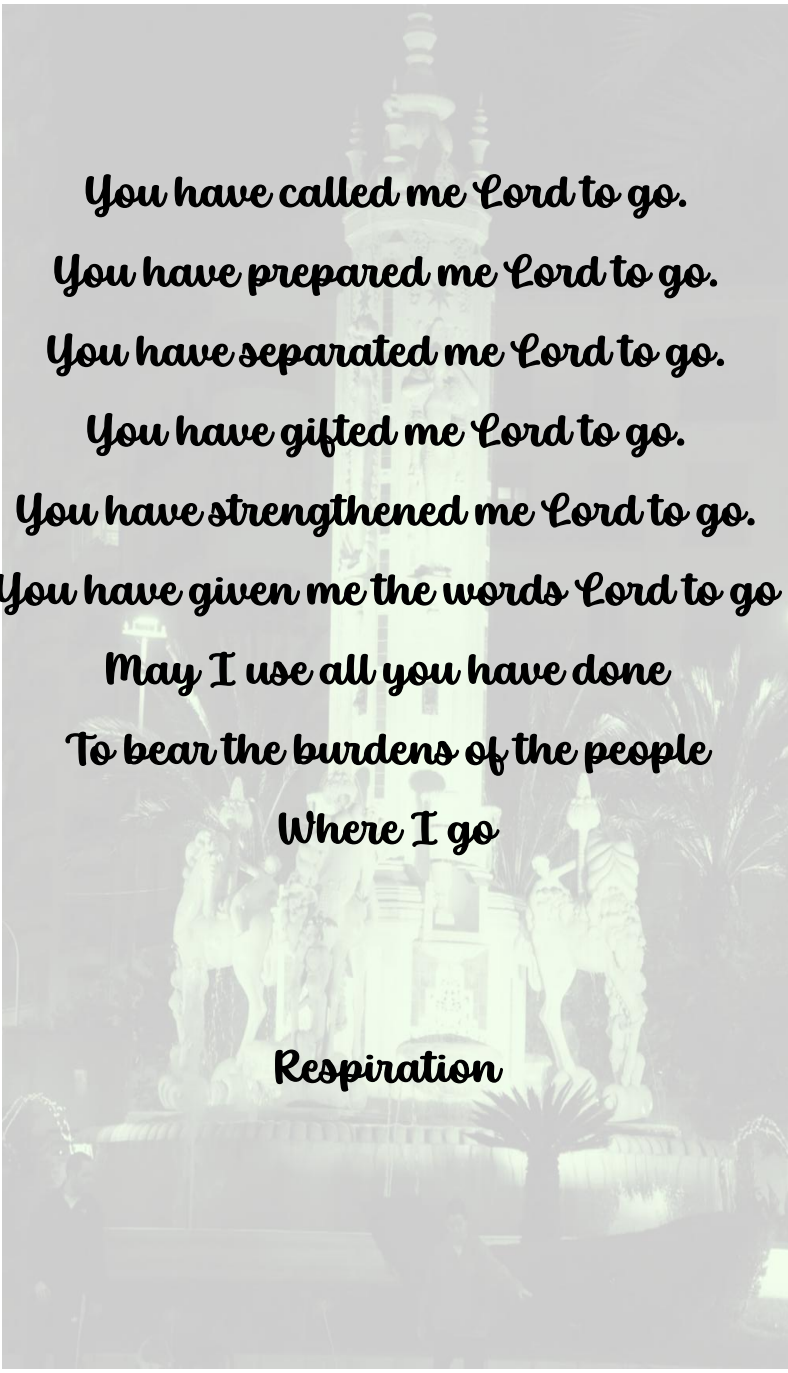
Soaring to the Heights: Mission – Consider this. Every rocket sent into space has a mission. Some are for communication. There are exploratory satellites. There are manned missions, like the space station and moon. There are military satellites. There are weather satellites. So many kinds and each designed to carry out a mission. There is also often a set time and location for the mission. Some satellites have a short-term purpose and limited location. Some, like voyager, are sent off on long journeys with a vast purpose. Some study the earth, and others study the beyond.

It is the same in life. We all have a mission. We all have a time and place of service. The goal is that all of us, in carrying out our portion of the mission, can work together to accomplish a greater mission, the call of God to proclaim the good news to all tribes and nations.

This series of devotionals is for the purpose of reflecting on how you fit into that greater mission. It is about thinking through the value of what you do, no matter how small or unseen, in making the mission possible. We often don't realize how important everyone is to the work being done. In mission aviation, it is the same. We need each other. We need people who keep things functioning. We need people to communicate; we need people to explore. We need people to carry out specific work at specific times. We need people who commit to long arduous efforts and we need everyone in between.

The texts for this section are from references to the heavens found in all of scripture.

May God use this series of devotionals to encourage and inspire you as you play your part in carrying out the great commission. May God richly bless you as you spend time in meditation and reflection. May you sense, over and over, the truth that God has called and that when God calls, He provides all you need to do what He has called you to do in His service.



You have called me Lord to go.
You have prepared me Lord to go.
You have separated me Lord to go.
You have gifted me Lord to go.
You have strengthened me Lord to go.
You have given me the words Lord to go
May I use all you have done
To bear the burdens of the people
Where I go

Respiration

Function 1 Isaiah 6:2

Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.

So what do you see when you find yourself in an airplane and seated by a window? Do you see the horizon? Do you see the clouds? Do you see the earth below?

What do you see? Next, what do you expect to see? Do you hope to see a sunrise or sunset? Do you hope to see the formation of the clouds? Are you expecting to see lightning? Do you hope to see some evidence of God?

Now that is a question to consider. What does it take for us to see God?

There you are, suspended in the heavens and looking out. Ask yourself what your heart is tuned to see?

On the day of this passage, Isaiah was not expecting to see God. Yet he did. He did not expect to be confronted by the reality of his sin. Yet he was. He did not expect to be permitted to stand before God. But there he was.

There he was, a sinful man. There he was in the presence of God. There he was with a question to answer. Would he be willing to serve this God, this holy God? Would he be willing to go and tell others about God? He was warned that it would not be easy, that they probably would not see or hear.

His answer, Here am I, send me.

So, as you look out the window, do you realize you are in the presence of God? Do you realize how sinful you are? Do you realize you have been forgiven and in that act called to go?

What will you do? What price will you pay so that others, too, can see and hear God?

Function 2 Isaiah 31:5

Like birds hovering overhead, the Lord Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will 'pass over' it and will rescue it."

Hover. Now there is a word with a lot of meaning. Truthfully, there is only one set of birds that can truly hover: the hummingbirds. Others can pause for a moment but cannot sustain it. A hummingbird can do so for as long as it desires. It does this mainly to obtain food, and though it can maintain its position, it cannot do so indefinitely.

In the modern world, we have two concepts where the word hover is used. A helicopter can hover. This is a useful action when dealing with landing in small spaces, observing what is happening in a given place, effecting a rescue, and dropping or collecting supplies in areas where there is very limited access. Again, as above, while it is possible to maintain for a longer period of time, it is still dependent on key factors such as fuel.

The other is the action of a mouse on a computer screen. You move the arrow and let it hover over any number of icons, spaces, objects, and so on. You can leave it there for as long as there is a power supply. The key issue is that nothing will happen until you click the button and activate what the button is linked to.

None of these is permanent, nor can they provide a shield from whatever may happen to disrupt their action, such as wind, rain, power, external forces, and so on.

God is the only person, object that can truly hover indefinitely. No need for a power supply. No need for protection from external forces. No need for stealth or any other action to prevent access or disruption of activity.

Do you believe God is hovering to shield you and so able to do whatever is needed whenever? Do you act accordingly?

Function 3 Isaiah 34:4

All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved, and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.

While we may wish that nothing will come to an end, it all will. While we may wish that we didn't have to constantly take care of and maintain the tools, machines, and buildings that are part of our lives, there is nothing in all of creation that doesn't need constant care and maintenance.

If there is no input and care, everything will run down and stop. Even the universe.

We are responsible for the care of everything. We were told this in the garden, and it was part of our role as the one created in the image of God. Okay, not everything. We can't take care of the sun or the moon. We can't take care of our galaxy. We can't take care of a nebula, and on it goes. But we are responsible for caring for what we can take care of. This is so critical. But in all honesty, no matter how good we are at carrying out our responsibility, eventually it will all break down. From the smallest item to the entire universe. They all have a use-before date on them, an expiration date.

Have you started thinking about what this means and if it is the truth? Have you started wondering why you spend so much time caring for anything? Good, but don't carry that process too far, or you will end up with fatalism, and you will lose sight of why God created you.

Now consider the blessing hidden in taking care of all that God created for you to enjoy and how that action honors him and

allows him to perfect you for eternity with him. Something that will never require further maintenance once begun.

Function 4 Isaiah 34:11

The desert owl and screech owl will possess it; the great owl and the raven will nest there. God will stretch out over Edom the measuring line of chaos and the plumb line of desolation.

One of the dangers of our world is that which causes desperation and disillusionment. The decades, the centuries, the millennia pass by, and our history is always filled with them. Empires rise and fall. People come and go. Mountains rise and fall. Stars come into existence and then go nova or just die.

Even the universe is running down. There is a limit to how long it can expand and grow. Someday, it too will have to yield and begin to fall back on itself.

It is a depressing reality and one we need to face. Why? It is because only one thing in all of this was ever intended to not decay and fall into ruin. Only one thing was not intended to simply appear and disappear into oblivion. Everything exists in chaos except one thing.

The problem is that we can get caught up in the desolation and disillusionment and not see all the beauty created to help us see this truth.

So, do you see chaos or order? Do you see the symmetry around you or the chaos? What do you use to measure what was, is, and will be? What is it that is not doomed to desolation and disillusion?

You will have to answer those questions. It is in the process of doing so that you will see.

What is it that God works so hard to accomplish? What is your place in all of this

Function 5 Isaiah 38:14

I cried like a swift or thrush, I moaned like a mourning dove. My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens. I am troubled; O Lord, come to my aid!"

What makes you groan and moan? What makes you cry out to God? In fact, what causes you to talk to God at all?

In this passage, Isaiah records the cry of Hezekiah as he is considering death, even imminent death. He cries to God. At another point in time, we have the story of Hezekiah proudly displaying all his wealth to a group of strangers. No crying.

The message he received from God was about how all would be lost at a later date. Something that should have caused some type or level of moaning and groaning, but it didn't. Why?

It is a sad truth that when things are good, we don't see beyond this moment and consider what could be just around the corner. We too often think that as long as it doesn't affect me, then life is good and I don't need to worry about what lies beyond my life. We don't think about consequences, good or bad. We just live in the moment.

If there is a struggle, we cry. If all is peaceful, we disregard the need to consult and maybe cry to God for wisdom to prepare the route for those who will come after. Consider how many Psalms are about times of struggle. Now take time to consider how many of them have as their main focus joy and thankfulness and a desire for the next generation to know how to learn from what I do, say, and reveal about God's presence in every moment.

Paul said it so well. I lay a foundation, and another person builds on it. So when you come before God, are you only thinking about this moment or the path you may be creating for those who come after you?

Function 6 Isaiah 40:9

*You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain.
You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"*

So what is it about climbing up a mountain and then shouting? I mean, if it is truly a mountain, then how will they hear what I have to say?

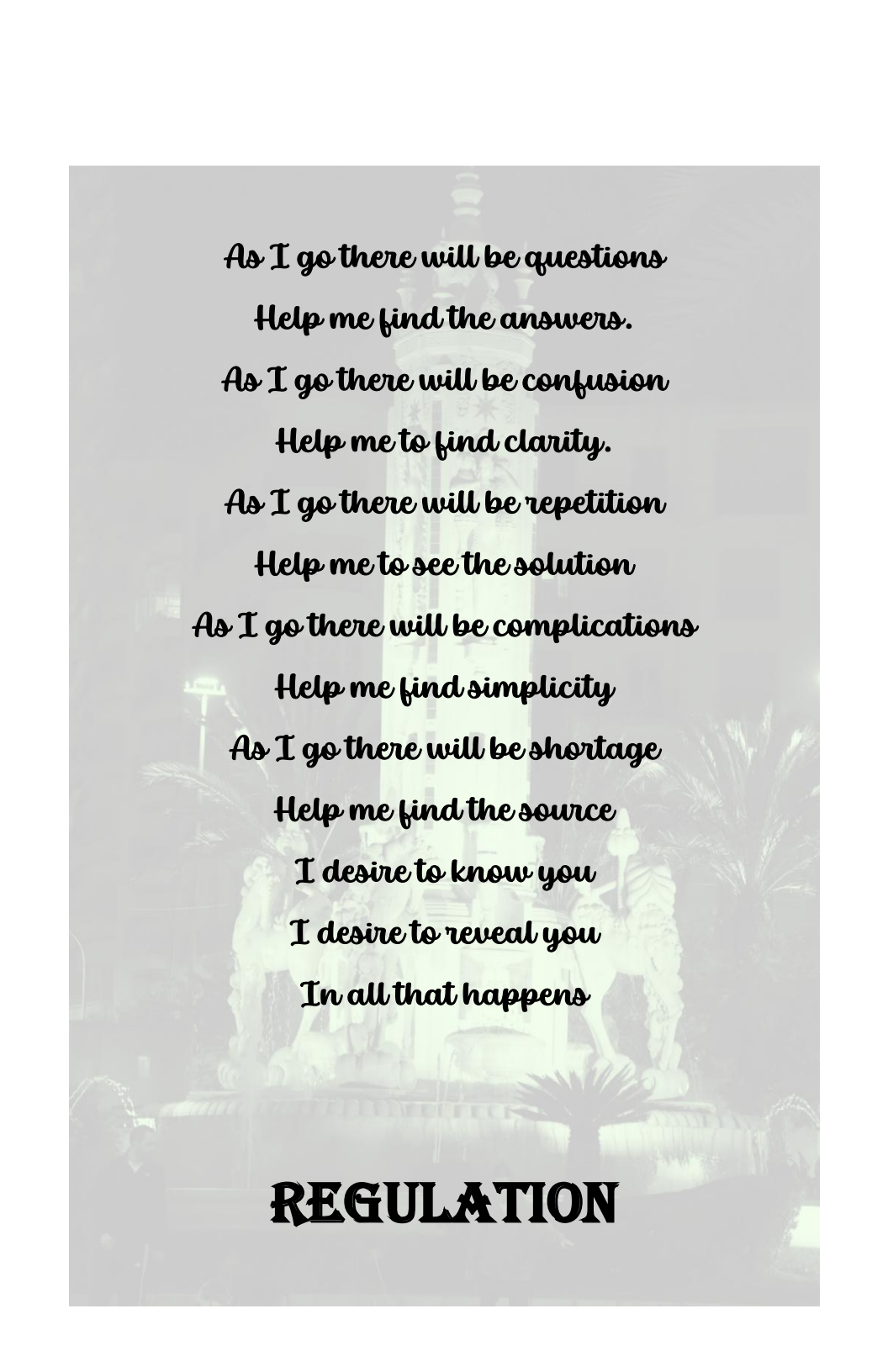
I often wonder this when they climbed the two mountains to pronounce the blessings and curses after entering the promised land. Who really heard besides those selected to shout?

I understand the principles of an amphitheater. The problem in that situation is that the person is at the base and shouting to those at the top. The amphitheater's design acts like a megaphone. Most old-style theaters were built on this concept and were designed acoustically to aid in that process.

But to climb a mountain and then shout to those below. Why?

Pause and consider this. While not all will hear, all will see. Those closest will confirm what the purpose of such an action was and if the person did indeed truly speak the words they promised to speak. On a mountain, there is no place to hide. There is no place to escape to. Everyone can see you. Everyone is watching. It is not so much about the mountain but about being visible for all to see your commitment.

It is not about hiding away. It is not about acting in secret. It is about proclaiming visibly and conspicuously your commitment to what you have to say. Where are you standing today, in a hidden valley or on a mountain?



As I go there will be questions

Help me find the answers.

As I go there will be confusion

Help me to find clarity.

As I go there will be repetition

Help me to see the solution

As I go there will be complications

Help me find simplicity

As I go there will be shortage

Help me find the source

I desire to know you

I desire to reveal you

In all that happens

REGULATION

Function 7 Isaiah 40:26

Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

Did you know that scientists have discovered places in the universe they say are giving birth to new stars? They do forget to tell you when they were born or the fact that it has taken millions of years for their light to reach us. Still, it is an interesting idea and makes one wonder.

God set the universe in motion. He established laws to guide the process and knew exactly what would happen. Yet we are amazed. Why? It is because we really don't understand what cause and effect are. Oh, we have a small idea. We know what happens when two objects collide. We know that over time, water erodes and changes the shape of things. We know that glaciers move and alter everything below them. But do we really know? Those are all physically observable events. Some occur over a period of time, and some are sudden. The difference between the erosion of wind and water and the result of the sudden collision of two objects.

Here is the real issue. We want to see the results now. We are impatient. Oh, so impatient. God is not. God is committed to the long view and preparation. Even what appears sudden is not. Prior processes and decisions have been at play to bring us to an event. It is like the birth of stars. We see it now, but it has been in process for ages.

So do we realize the value of actions that may not bear fruit now when we see the result, but actually bear results long after we are gone? God did and planned for millennia so that when Jesus came, it would be visible. All the past, present, and future of what was.

Function 8 Isaiah 40:31

but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

We have all heard of the term, second wind. It is when your body reveals that you have hidden resources. Well, not hidden, but your body has the ability to access energy supplies you don't normally access. Why? Because when we feel tired, we usually stop. It is only those people who make the choice to push through, as they say, that experience this new level of resource and ability to continue.

To get there, you have to exhaust what is readily available, struggle with a sense of exhaustion, and know that you can't go on, but you do. It is then that your body opens up the reserves.

Be aware that when those reserves are exhausted, you will pay for the extreme effort you have exerted. Nothing comes without a price. Sore, crampy muscles for days. Pain and fatigue for days. Hunger for days.

It is a good thing that this is not the point of this passage. It is not about our pushing through to find strength. It is actually about giving up on ourselves, not trusting in our resources, and clearly not depending on who we are. Those will all run out.

This is about realizing that since the work belongs to God, then all the strength we need, all the capability to continue, all the will needed to finish cannot be supplied by who we are and what we have.

It is about knowing when to give up on ourselves and let God take over. That is when we will soar. That is when we will not become weary. That is when we will never faint.

Function 9 Isaiah 51:6

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out as a garment, and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever; my righteousness will never fail.

What do you depend on? Israel depended on a promise from God that the land would be theirs forever. They forgot one critical item in that. They forgot to reflect on the life of the founder of the nation and why the land and much more were promised to him. He was faithful and believed God.

He believed when God told him to pull up his tent stakes and move to a place he had never seen. He believed God, although a bit shaky at first, that his wife, Sarah, would have a child. He believed that God would restore the promise even if it meant sacrificing his only son. He believed.

The problem with Israel at this point is that they no longer believe. Here is the interesting twist. God does not say he will take the land away from them, but take them away from the land. The land will remain, but they will not get to enjoy it until they learn to believe. Some did and were allowed to come back. Until then, the Lord held the land in trust.

So what do you depend on? Are you depending on the promises of God? That is good, but make sure you believe them and use them to guide you in how you should live.

Depending on the legs of a chair is good, but until you sit in the chair, you do not really believe they can support you.

Do you believe that God called you? Do you believe that God will provide what you need? Do you believe that God can use you? Good for you, but until you put action to your belief, nothing will happen, and you may not enjoy the blessings of the promises. Belief only happens when we act.

Function 10 Jeremiah 8:7

Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift, and the thrush observe the time of their migration. But my people do not know the requirements of the Lord.

Do you know what the most difficult question to answer is in life? I will help you. It is the question of when. Finding the answers to the questions of why, what, how, and where is easy by comparison. In fact, until we answer them, we will not be able to answer the when.

You may know why you do something but be completely at a loss as to when to do it. You may know how to do something, but that doesn't tell you when to make use of what you know. You may know what needs to be done, and again, not have any idea of when to do it. Finally, you may know where you need to be to accomplish a given task. And again, the when sits there causing confusion.

When it comes to deciding when. Did I just use the same word in trying to define the when? You see how complicated it can get. We may have all of the other answers, or maybe none of them. Either way, until we resolve the answer of when, nothing will happen.

To make this even more confusing, we are told that even the storks, doves, swifts, and thrushes already know the when in their life. Why? Because they depend on God. It is simply instinctive. Oh, that we would let what God has put in our hearts and minds function according to his purposes. Then, like the birds above, we will not be flailing about trying to know when. We will simply know, and everything else will follow as he intended.

Truthfully, everything we need to know has already been supplied by God. We just need to trust the source and obey.

Function 11 Jeremiah 10:2

This is what the Lord says: "Do not learn the ways of the nations or be terrified by signs in the sky, though the nations are terrified by them.

Why are signs so important to us? Why are we so worried about confirmation?

Well, if you are like me and everyone else, you don't like to make a wrong decision. A wrong decision can be costly. It can be difficult to overcome its results. It can be humiliating. The last one is the one that is most frightening. Why?

Humiliation is a frightening concept. It reveals how weak we are. It reveals who we are. It reveals what we don't want revealed, which is different in every person.

So the nations want signs. The leaders want signs. The people want signs. Individuals want signs. We want something that we can turn to just in case we make a wrong decision and take the wrong path, and make mistakes.

The other side of this coin is that we want others to believe in us and believe we know what we are doing. So we point to a sign, an event, or even a person, something that will validate what we are doing. That's what false gods and idols are. They are the attempts of people to validate their choices and behaviors or excuse them if they are counter to the truth.

Is it wrong to seek a sign? That is a significant question and one each of us must consider. The issue is, am I doing this because it is right and follows all God has taught? Something that should not be necessary.

Now the question is, where does the call of God fit in this? Is this not a sign we all seek? What difference will it make in serving God? Yes and no. Think about how this affects what you choose to do or not do.

Function 12 Jeremiah 14:22

Do any of the worthless idols of the nations bring rain? Do the skies themselves send down showers? No, it is you, O Lord our God. Therefore, our hope is in you, for you are the one who does all this.

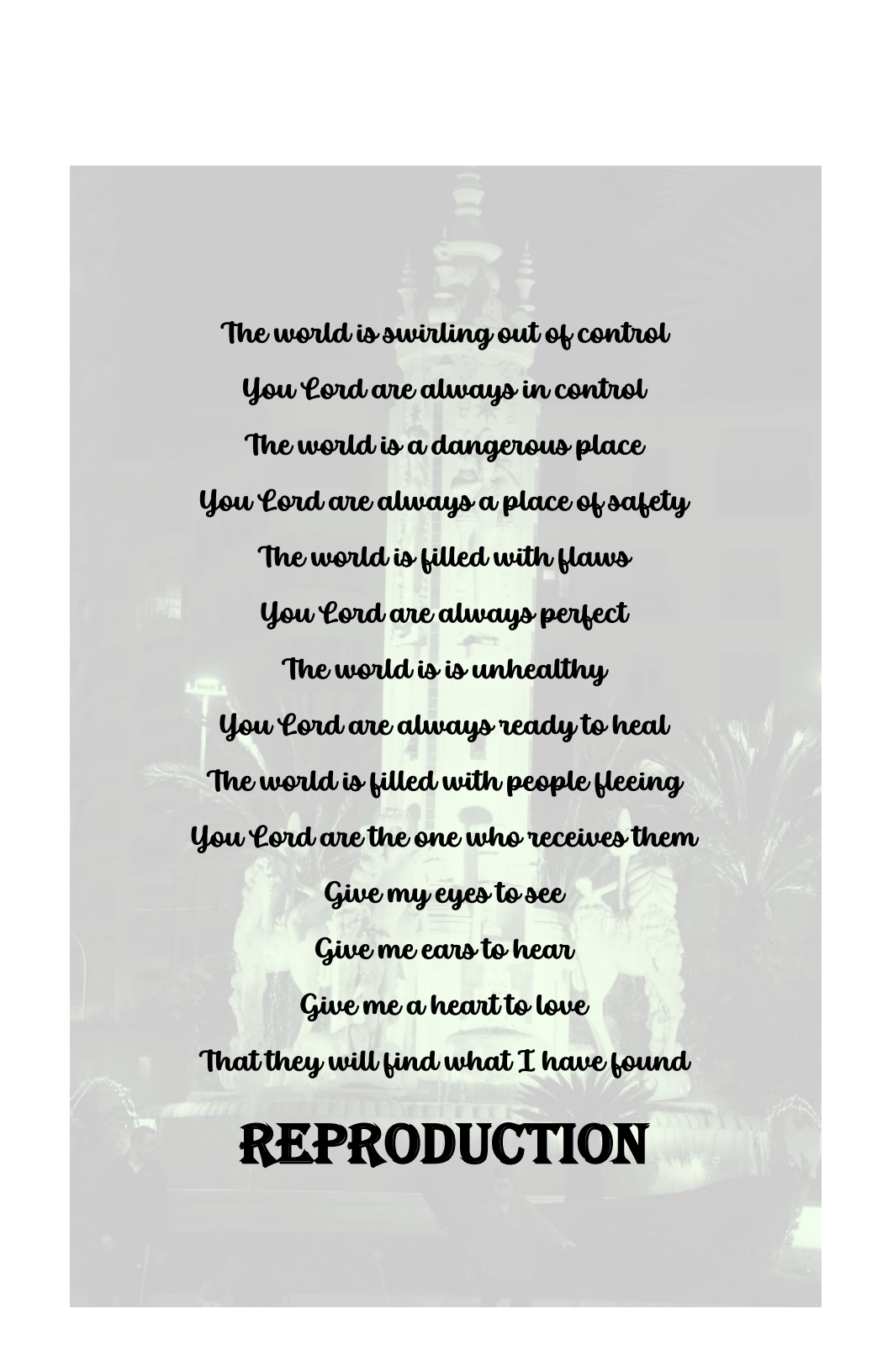
Today, we have the marvels of weather satellites and radar. The masters of these devices are constantly viewing and reviewing all the information. Then they study the data from multiple mini weather stations that check wind velocity and direction, barometric pressure, humidity, and temperature. They don't do this just once in a while, but constantly. They don't look to idols. They don't even look at the skies.

After they do all of that, they start to predict what the weather may or may not be. They tell us how sunny it will be, what the temperature could be. They tell us the wind direction. Finally, they start to predict precipitation, how much, what form, and where. The interesting part is that when they do this, they start using percentages. The percentage is about how much of an area can expect to have precipitation.

Keep in mind that this is not about weather control. It is about predicting what weather may be possible and who might experience that weather. It is useful information and can help us make decisions about our plans, clothing, and activities for a given time and place.

It is not about weather control. We wish it were. We wish that there were such a thing so we could avoid severe weather, drought, and anything that would adversely affect our plans and needs. To that end, people worshipped idols hoping to gain this control. We use technology to at least guide us.

The question for our consideration is, where does God fit in this? Do we allow our technology to take control of how we live, or do we trust God to guide our decisions and activity?



The world is swirling out of control
You Lord are always in control
The world is a dangerous place
You Lord are always a place of safety
The world is filled with flaws
You Lord are always perfect
The world is is unhealthy
You Lord are always ready to heal
The world is filled with people fleeing
You Lord are the one who receives them
Give my eyes to see
Give me ears to hear
Give me a heart to love
That they will find what I have found

REPRODUCTION

Function 13 Jeremiah 17:11

Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay is the man who gains riches by unjust means. When his life is half gone, they will desert him, and in the end, he will prove to be a fool.

In the prior verse, we are warned that God examines the heart and rewards accordingly. That is followed by this verse. Interesting, and one wonders what the connection is. Let me suggest something for all of us to think about.

First, a question. Have you ever received a gift you did not deserve or earn, or received praise you did not fully deserve? Maybe I should put it this way. Did you ever do something you didn't really want to do to gain someone's approval and support?

I wonder how many people have chosen to go to the altar just because others were doing so. Or how many people declared they wanted to be a pastor or missionary just to please others.

How long do you think it will take for others to realize this and withdraw their approval? How long before those seeking such approval realize this and admit it to themselves and others? Too long because of the fear of being found out and having to deal with the fallout that is sure to come.

Choosing to serve God to gain the approval of others will not work. Not because others will find out and be upset, but because God knows the truth and will respond.

It is the wise person who takes time to be sure their desire to serve God is for the correct reasons. It is because they seek to be obedient to God and be a part of the mission of God, no matter what others think. The truth is, the only approval that matters is God's. It is the only riches that cannot be lost.

Function 14 Jer 30:23

Have you ever caught in a downpour? No, that is not quite right. A downpour where the winds are at least 30 miles per hour. Have you ever been caught in that?

I have, and usually they happen suddenly, almost without warning. Not that you can't see them coming, but most of the time we are not paying attention to what is happening, and suddenly there is a shift in the temperature, a shift in the wind, and things get dark and quiet, but only for a moment. Then the storm is upon you, and the wind drives the rain almost on a horizontal line. It pierces, and everything seeks shelter from it.

If you are paying attention to the weather, then many times it is possible to anticipate this. You can look up at the sky and see the evidence of what is about to happen. The clouds pile up in the sky, and they become dark. Sometimes you can actually see the squall line, which is what it is called, marking where the change occurs.

What is not as visible and harder to anticipate is whether this sudden change in the weather will become even more dangerous. Will it become a tornado and even more destructive? Is it the first sign of a hurricane or typhoon, destruction on a much larger scale, and harder to evade?

When it comes to spiritual storms, are we paying attention to the warnings that God has given us, or do we get caught unprepared and unable to see the warnings?

For the weather, we now have warning systems in place, and those who are wise pay attention. For the spiritual world, we have God's word. Are you using it and paying attention?

Function 15 Jeremiah 48:28

Abandon your towns and dwell among the rocks, you who live in Moab. Be like a dove that makes its nest at the mouth of a cave.

This passage is a warning to Moab. It is a warning that God is coming and will exact judgment. The people of this nation are told to flee like a dove that seeks out places that are unassailable, like the rocks above the openings of caves. To further define this, I thought I would share a list of words to better illustrate what that word means.

synonyms: impregnable, inviolable, secure, strong, unattackable, invulnerable. immune to attack; impregnable. adjective. without flaws or loopholes.

This is quite a list of words and creates quite an image for us of this place where the birds are to flee. It seems like it is possible to find a place where one can escape God and his response to man's sin and opposition to the truth.

They are told to flee. But is that even possible? They are told to escape, but is that possible?

In all honesty, we all wish we could find such a place. We do this for two reasons: 1. Like Jonah, we don't want to go where God sends us and think we can find a place that is immune to God's presence. 2. We don't want to have to face God and deal with all that is wrong in our lives. We think that we can find a place where it will be alright and we will not be called to account.

We want to fly like the dove to an out-of-the-way place and not have to face God. Well, that is not possible.

It is better to stand and face God. It is better not to run and so find grace, restoration, and our true place in the kingdom of God.

Function 16 Jeremiah 49:22

Look! An eagle will soar and swoop down, spreading its wings over Bozrah. On that day, the hearts of Edom's warriors will be like the heart of a woman in labor.

Have you ever watched an eagle swoop down? Not just coming in to land but to catch its prey. It is a terrifying sight and deadly. They fly high, spot their prey, and lock on with their large and sharp talons. Once they have them, it is very hard to get free. I once had an owl lock onto my hand. It penetrated the leather gloves I was wearing, and it was quite a challenge to get free.

Now answer this question. What is the most difficult part of a flight? I have read over and over that it is the landing. Why? You are basically in a controlled fall. If you don't have precise control of the rate of descent, of the approach to the landing strip, and of your speed, then you will crash.

Eagles do this, capture their prey, and then fly off, making the whole process look quite simple. What is of interest to me is that they are not trying to make a soft landing like a plane. They come swooping down and basically slam into their prey, and then off they go. The peregrine falcon is a master at this, descending at 200 mph to slam into its victim, set its claws, and just fly away.

Now imagine that God is like the eagle flying high above, watching over you and ready at an instant to swoop down and carry off your enemy.

The key to this is that we need to be where he wants us to be. Why do you think that is so? Consider this. The eagle soars where it expects to find its prey.

Obviously, you are not the prey, but how does where you are and what you do relate to God's protection of you, his child?

Function 17 Lamentations 3:41

Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven, and say:

So when you lift up your eyes to God, what is the first thing that comes to mind? What is the first thing that you want to say?

Do you say thank you for all he has done for you? Do you praise him for all the wonders he has created? Do you rejoice in his presence? Do you bring to him your concerns and questions? Do you ask for what you need or think you need based on what he desires for you? So many options. So many things come to mind. What do you think Jeremiah told everyone to say?

Take a moment and reflect on what Moses did when he saw the burning bush. Consider the response of Isaiah and John when they saw the Lord. Consider the focus of Daniel's prayer. These are but a few of the examples that exist for us to consider, and none of them are about thanking God, praising God, or rejoicing in God. Before any of that can occur, there is one thing that must be said before any of those can be uttered. Something that we must realize and speak before we are allowed any other utterance.

That is to ask God's forgiveness. That is the focus of this verse. Jeremiah tells the reader that they should lift up their hearts and hands and seek forgiveness. And that from a beloved prophet of God.

Paul calls himself the worst of all sinners. That was after he had seen the Lord on the road to Damascus and had a vision of the heavens. Even with those incredible events, he still declares he is the worst of all sinners and that God forgave him to be an example to us all. Take a moment to seek the pardon of God. It is the beginning of all that comes after.

Function 18 Ezekiel 1:10

Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a man, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle.

Angels fascinate us. Why? What is it about them that attracts us?

There are incredible beings, and there are different kinds of angels. But keep in mind that this same thing is true of demons, who are fallen angels. They can appear as angels of light. So would you know the difference between them if you saw one?

We are also told that they can appear like humans. They are also powerful and dangerous. An angel with a sword guards the entrance to Eden. There was a destroying angel that carried out the punishment of Israel when David foolishly counted the fighting men. There was a great army of angels ready to protect Elisha and fight if needed.

For the most part, when they appeared, they caused fear and awe in those they appeared to. In art, they are presented as having wings and with a brightness about them, and they always seem to float just off the ground. But not all angels have wings, and clearly, they are not bound by the laws of nature as we are.

Ezekiel saw strange beings on several occasions. Why was he given that opportunity? Why are we fascinated by angels? For one thing, those who did not fall are free to come into God's presence. They are always available to do God's bidding. They will have a role to play in all that God plans to do.

Do you realize that we have the same privileges if we choose to confess our sins and allow God to restore us? Interesting.

The world has set its priorities

Help me to put you first

The world has taken control

Help me to give you control

The world has buried the truth

Help me to hear your truth

The world has created its law

Help me to learn your law

The world believes it is right

Help me to know what is right

Guide me to your side

Guide me to your love

Guide me so I can guide others

GROWTH

Function 19 Dan 9:21

while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice.

Gabriel is an archangel, a special messenger of God. He is sent to bring a message to Daniel. It says he came in swift flight. What does that mean? He swooped down like an eagle, he darted in like a swallow, or what? Did he have wings? Did he come running to you? We talk about running when someone is in flight from trouble.

Actually, none of that matters, but I did this to show you how easy it is to get wrapped up in the unessential. Instead of focusing on what is critical, we all too easily get sidetracked into the mundane and unimportant.

What is more important here? Well, for one thing is the fact that Daniel is in prayer. The more important thing to consider is why he was in prayer and what the focus of his prayer was. Another thing to consider is the fact that God took the focus of Daniel's prayer seriously and sent a response.

Another question is, did Daniel expect God to respond to him? Did he believe that God would answer?

Are you following what I am doing here? How often do we mouth our prayers more out of a sense of acquiescence or compliance with what we are expected to do? We do not expect or maybe even desire a response; we are just complying with what is expected of us. If so, then it becomes unlikely that God will respond, and if he does, we might not realize it because we were not anticipating the possibility of a response.

Daniel prayed because he knew God would respond.

When you pray, do you know God will respond?

Function 20 Hosea 2:18

In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety.

What is it you hope to accomplish by serving the Lord? Ah, now that is an interesting question.

There is a mistake buried in many of the answers to that question. Probably the most common one is that people will hear the good news and come to the Lord to find forgiveness and restoration.

Consider this fact. The people who received this message were already called the people of God. They already knew the law. They already had a means to deal with their sin. They had already been given a place to live and an inheritance as the seed of Abraham.

So why this covenant with the beasts, birds, and creatures that crawl?

Consider this as well. In spite of all they already had, they were missing one important piece that made all of the above functional. Truthfully, though they had all the truth, they were not enjoying it one bit. They were suffering. They were under constant pressure from without and within. Pressure to abuse and misuse all they had for their own personal pleasure and benefit.

So what do you hope to accomplish by serving the Lord? Think about this. Knowing and proclaiming the good news has no value or lasting impact unless the first thing that you do is to take care of your relationship with God. If you are focused on that, then the rest will follow.

Function 21 Hosea 2:21

"In that day I will respond," declares the Lord— "I will respond to the skies, and they will respond to the earth;

How will you know if God is blessing your life and your obedience? How do you know if you are, in fact, walking in the path he has chosen for you?

This passage talks about the normal cycle of life. Rain falls and helps the ground produce. That produces plants and their process of transpiration, makes possible the formation of clouds, and that, in turn, rain. And so the cycle of life operates.

Ultimately, God has control of the entire cycle, for as creator of all the mechanics involved, he can alter it at will. In the same way, the cycle of confirmation and blessing flows. It is not about grand revelations, incredible signs, or powerful events. It is about the natural flow of life that exists in a relationship.

How do you treat your family? Your friends? Those close to you? That is the first element. The second element is how do you know how they feel about the way you treat them? Is there some evidence that indicates whether the cycle is flowing as it should?

So how do you treat God? How do you know when he is pleased? The answer is not as complicated as it seems. Think about how a cycle works. Both sides have input, and both sides have output. When all is in order, it works. When any little thing is out of order, it fails. You have control of your end, and God has control of the other end.

Take a moment and make a list of what scripture says you should be doing, and then a list of what God does. Now consider why either side would fail to do what is expected and short-circuit the cycle of blessing and blessing.

Function 22 Hosea 7:11

"Ephraim is like a dove, easily deceived and senseless — now calling to Egypt, now turning to Assyria.

I find this interesting. So often the dove is presented as a symbol of peace and tranquility. Here, it is described as easily deceived and senseless. How can this be? Somehow, the concept of peace does not suggest someone who is unaware of the world around them. Although there are people who choose this path so that they don't have to deal with the world around them. They isolate themselves from others. Some even go so far as to decide to disconnect completely and disappear into the wilderness. They believe that they can avoid contact with others and so be at peace.

If that is what they think, then they are involved in a serious problem of self-deception and are truly senseless in regard to how life functions. In the wilderness, there are dangers and threats that must be faced and dealt with. You have to do all that is needed to feed yourself. You need to provide for shelter. You need to deal with the unexpected realities that are part of the wilderness. And most critically, you will have no one to depend on to help you if you are in trouble.

One other thing. All the tools and supplies you used to get to the wilderness and provide for your needs meant you had to depend on someone else. You are not as isolated as you think, and if you need more of the same, then you will have to make contact with the world you seek to avoid to obtain those supplies.

True peace cannot be found in isolation. It is found in understanding the world around you. That is only possible if you trust in God. Turns out that doves are easily confused. Don't be like a dove and let the world confuse you about peace and where to find it.

Function 23 Hosea 8:1

"Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle is over the house of the Lord because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law.

Do you remember the phrase, "the eagle has landed"? This was followed shortly by another well-known phrase, "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

The eagle has landed. The conquering bird has captured its prey. One step for a person that represented the culmination of a great deal of planning and work.

The passage here is either about the coming of Assyria to conquer Israel or of Babylon coming to conquer Judah. Which it is is irrelevant. What is relevant is that after years and years of sending prophets to teach and warn the people, the end has come. The one last step is being taken.

What we often forget in all that has happened is all that has gone before. The truth is, the landing was the result of years of effort, trials, and failures. Finally, the day has come. We have gained the desired result. The second phrase keeps things in perspective. What we accomplish today is the result of the efforts of many people over, often years, even decades, of planning, trials, and failures.

In this case, the judgment has come. But please don't forget that not everyone failed to listen. In the time of Ahab, we learn that there was a significant number who had not bowed to Baal.

Today, we are reminded that judgment is coming. For those who are caught in its claws, so to speak, feel the shock and to them its suddenness. But to those of us who have faithfully served, we see all that has gone before. We know the warnings that have been given. We know all God has done before that day arrives. Our job is to serve until the end.

Function 24 Joel 2:10

Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine.

In my life, I have seen the sun and moon darkened by clouds and dust. I have heard thunder that rocked the ground and shook my house. Storms so fierce that they cause one to tremble in their presence.

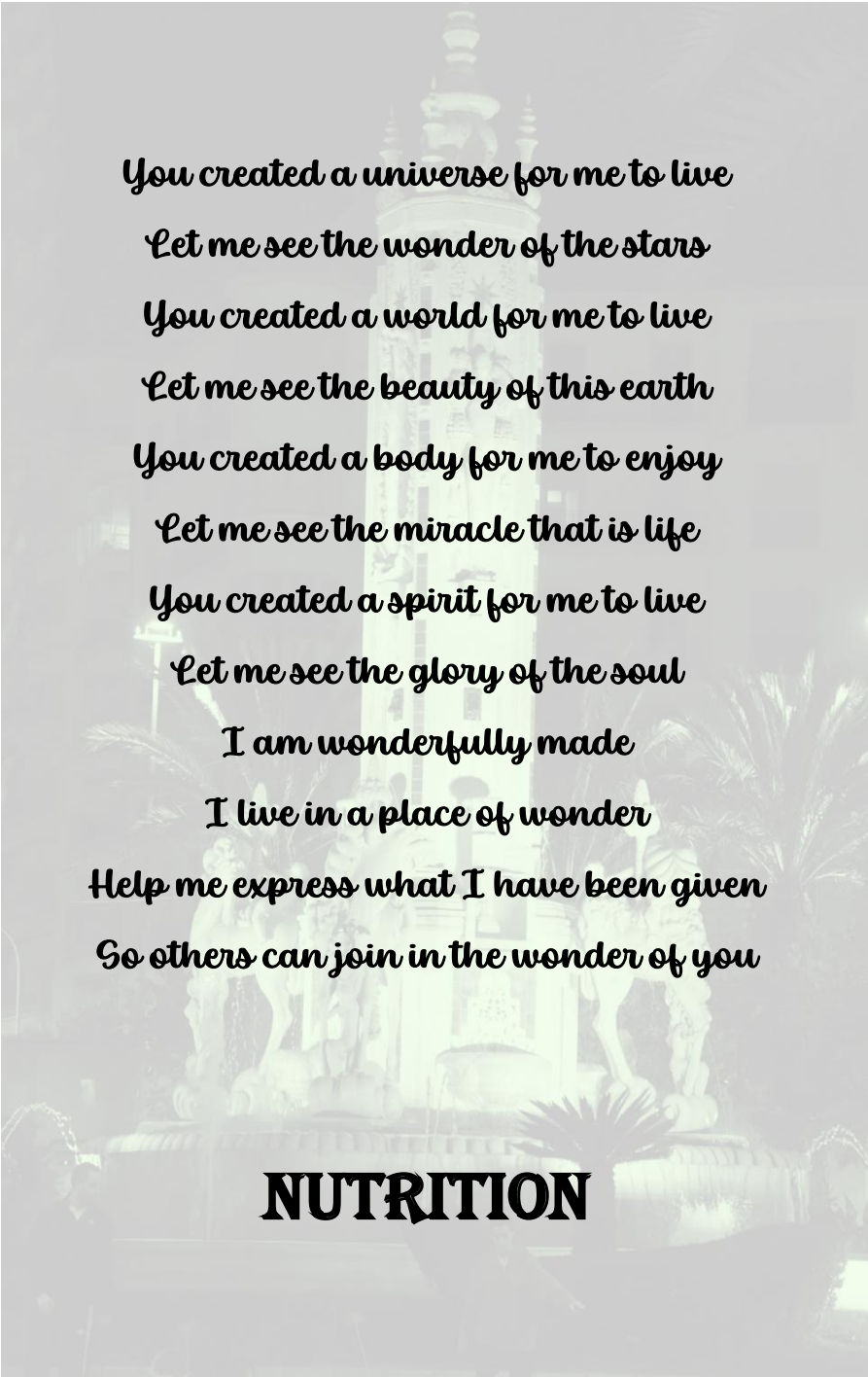
I have been fortunate not to experience the most severe of these events, a tornado (which I have seen at a distance) and a hurricane.

What I have never seen is a cloud of insects so dense that it blocks out the sun and moon, and skies. A cloud that doesn't simply damage crops and property but wipes them clean and removes the hope of life. May I never experience such a destructive force.

We have warning systems for these, sirens, and weather announcements. All that is becoming more effective because of technology.

But when it comes to the Day of the Lord, there is no siren, there is no weather system, there is no technology for this. This is because it is not based on visible indicators. It is based on a time prepared and determined by the Lord, and we are told and warned that it will come suddenly.

But there is a warning system. God has given us his word. He has given us prophets and their teaching. He sent his son to prepare us for that day, which certainly will come. It is all there. All that is lacking is the voices to vocalize what has been given. Who will vocalize all this for the world and give the warning? We who are followers of Jesus are the warning system. We are the ones called to proclaim and prepare the world.



You created a universe for me to live
Let me see the wonder of the stars
You created a world for me to live
Let me see the beauty of this earth
You created a body for me to enjoy
Let me see the miracle that is life
You created a spirit for me to live
Let me see the glory of the soul
I am wonderfully made
I live in a place of wonder
Help me express what I have been given
So others can join in the wonder of you

NUTRITION

Function 25 Amos 4:13

He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, he who turns dawn to darkness, and treads the high places of the earth — the Lord God Almighty is his name.

We can explain the mechanics of the formation of mountains and the wind. We can explain how night and day come and go.

We also know that none of our explanations would function if there were no laws to depend on. If there were no predictable patterns that we could observe and see what governs their reality.

What we cannot explain is how God exists. We do not know where he is. We cannot examine his being and create laws to govern his actions and determine where we might experience his presence and capture his thoughts. We cannot control God.

Here is the strange thing: because we can define the laws, we falsely believe that in some way we have control over them when, in fact, they are what is in control. Gravity makes everything fall, and we use that to decide on the best tires for a car. Aerodynamics control flight, and so we use that to build planes for different purposes.

This passage is a reminder that we don't have control over how mountains are formed. We don't control the movement of air as wind. We clearly don't have control of the Earth's rotation, which creates the change from daylight to night. For certain, we do not have any control over the thoughts and plans of God.

If we are wise, we will take heed of this and yield our foolish concepts of control to the one who truly has control.

Function 26 Jonah 1:4

Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.

How do we know when God is trying to tell us something? Actually, more important is whether we are listening so that he can speak to us.

We hope for the dramatic. A vision, a voice, an angel, something that we cannot mistake as God talking to us. The truth is that it is not how God does it all of the time. Yes, he does do the burning bush thing. Yes, he does send angels. Yes, he does incredible things, things that cannot be explained by any other words than the hand of God.

But let's be honest. Most of the time, he doesn't. We, like Elijah on the mountain, expect him in the thunder and lightning, in the moving of the earth, or the wind. Instead, he comes quietly and softly. He comes to us in his word. He comes to us in the comments of trusted people like parents, pastors, teachers, and friends.

Why?

I believe it is because God wants to teach us to listen not just in the times of struggle but in the everyday stuff of life. He wants us to be paying attention and attuned to his thoughts. He wants us to spend time with him so he can speak. Actually, not so he can speak, but so we will pause and listen to what he has been saying.

Stop waiting for clashing symbols. Stop waiting for a miraculous intervention. Stop waiting for anything you think should happen. Stop and let the spirit within speak. Stop and hear the words

already spoken. Stop. Just stop. So you can hear. Don't wait until he has to shout at you.

Function 27 Obad 4

Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down.

So who are you? Who do you think you are? Who do you want other people to think you are? What does your title or position mean? How do you expect to be treated?

These are all questions that deal with pride. It was a serious issue for the people of Israel. You see it in many places how they felt that because they had the title, chosen people, they deserved more. Besides that, they believed that it didn't matter how they acted; they were the chosen people.

Yet over and over again, God warns them that their pride in their name, their title, would not protect them from paying for their sin, especially the sin of idolatry.

We all face this reality in our lives. Or its opposite, wishing we had a certain name or title so we could be proud and respected by others. They are two sides of the same coin, pride.

What we forget is how our true value is determined. It is not by our position, a title, success, or any other idea defined by the world's concepts of value and what we deserve. Honestly.

We don't want to hear the truth about our efforts, nor the truth about what God considers true value and deserving of his recognition and blessing.

Servanthood. A desire to help others over myself. A desire to sacrifice so that others can live. A desire to walk with God and not soar with mankind.

Be watchful that you do not overstep and seek what is not of value. Seek God first, and then what you need will be given.

Function 28 Nahum 3:16

You have increased the number of your merchants till they are more than the stars of the sky, but like locusts they strip the land and then fly away. The world makes many promises and then flies away with all our hope.

One of the temptations we must all face is that we, by our abilities, choices, and actions, have somehow made it possible for us to be who we are and able to do what we do.

And to a certain point, that may be true. The key is learning where what I can choose and what I can do are determined by factors that I have no control over.

I am often saddened by the teaching of so many that if you work hard enough, you can be and do anything you want to be. This is an incredible lie. What is closer to the truth is that you can be or do what lies within the scope of who you are and what you can do. I am sorry, if you are a midget, you will not be selected to play in professional basketball. That is an extreme example, but it highlights the realities.

There will always be a need to be honest about who we are and what we have accomplished. Who we are and what we can do are bound by factors outside of our control, such as birthplace, family history, physical traits, and so on.

Even more important is to learn that God has a place and a ministry for everyone. That ministry fits exactly who we are and what can be done by and through his presence in our lives.

If we fail to learn this, then we will find ourselves in the place of Nineveh, dependent on our abilities and so doomed. Doomed to lose the one thing of eternal value. Doomed to trust in things that

will not last. Doomed to depend on ourselves. Doomed to live life without God.

Function 29 Habakkuk 3:11

Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear.

For centuries, there have been those who worship the sun and moon. In many ancient cultures, they were often two of the most important deities in the heavens. They ruled day and night realities that were critical to their existence.

Many of these cultures studied their movements intensely and learned how to develop calendars. I have seen the evidence of this in the Incan and Mayan cultures. Calendars that were incredibly precise, and all without the science of the modern world. And we think we are so smart.

Over time, man grew up, so to speak, and realized that those bodies were simply objects that were part of a much bigger universe. Miniscule dots in a grander universe.

Habakkuk knew some of this because of his relationship to the creator of the universe. He tells us as much here and reveals the foolishness of man when he worships any object or no object. the one because it is, the other because it isn't.

Both are dependent on his ability to perceive what is or is not. Both to worship or not to worship. The problem with both is that he is still a smaller dot, and while the sun and moon are not worthy of worship and bow to the king of heaven. Man is no more worthy of such honor.

We may have learned to see farther into space and deeper into inner space (the atomic world), but the answer is always going to be the same, whether we admit it or not. And until we separate ourselves from the beliefs and philosophies of this world and bow

to the one who created it all, we will be blind to what is deserving of our worship.

Function 30 Zechariah 5:1-2

looked again — and there before me was a flying scroll! He asked me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a flying scroll, thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide."

Wow, a flying scroll. It is huge - 30 feet long and 15 feet wide. Hmmm, about the size of a C-130 transport plane. They are not small, and I have flown in one. Have you?

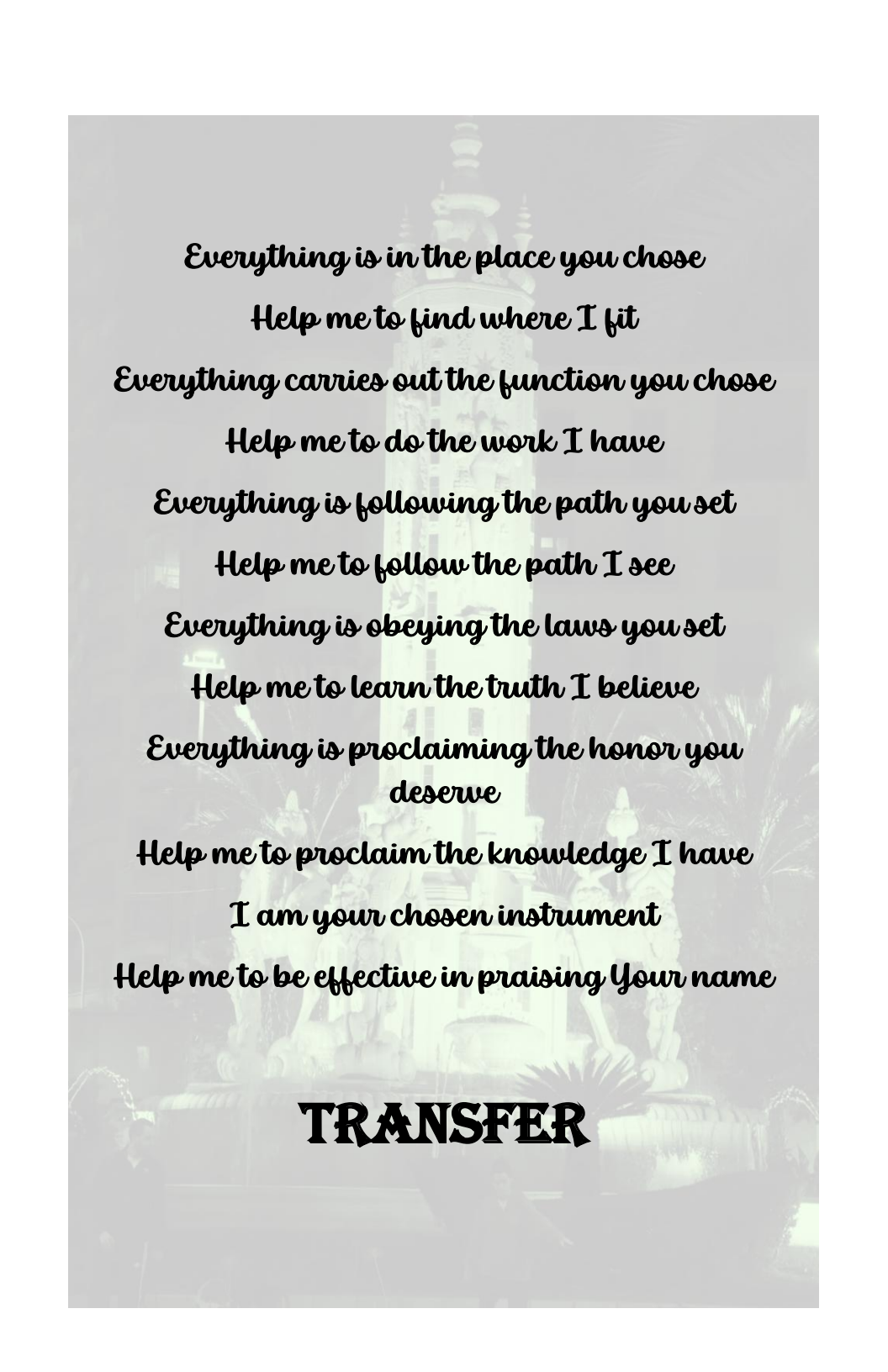
But here is this flying scroll, and according to the passage, it carries on it the sum of all the curses being pronounced against the people. Further, the idea that it is opened to its full length and visible for all to see and know what they are.

We have in our possession these words, and they are found in the bible. We have the means to carry these words to all of the world. We have the task of making them known to every tribe and nation.

The C-130 is a military plane. It was designed to carry out military missions. In a sense, to bring military action against the enemy. But even though that may have been what its designed purpose is, it is also used in all kinds of humanitarian efforts. My family and I were on that C-130 as part of an evacuation due to a military coup in the country where we lived.

Three months later, we returned on a 747 and 727 to continue doing one thing, sharing the warnings of the scroll of God's word. We were doing this not to carry out judgment but so that those who heard could choose another path for their life. They could choose God and find the blessings that are also written down in God's word.

We are called to use whatever means available to make the word of God visible and known to all. We are called to warn them of the curse so that they can choose the blessing.



Everything is in the place you chose
Help me to find where I fit
Everything carries out the function you chose
Help me to do the work I have
Everything is following the path you set
Help me to follow the path I see
Everything is obeying the laws you set
Help me to learn the truth I believe
Everything is proclaiming the honor you
deserve
Help me to proclaim the knowledge I have
I am your chosen instrument
Help me to be effective in praising Your name

TRANSFER

