

Watchful Care

Lisa Samra



“Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the Lord. [Jeremiah 23:24](#)

Read: [Jeremiah 23:20–24](#)

Bible in a Year: [Psalms 33–34](#); [Acts 24](#)

Before he raced out the door to school, I asked my son if he had brushed his teeth. Asking again, I reminded him of the importance of telling the truth. Unmoved by my gentle admonishment, he half-jokingly informed me that what I really needed was a security camera in the bathroom. Then I could check for myself if he had brushed his teeth and he wouldn't be tempted to lie.

While the presence of a security camera may help remind us to follow the rules, there are still places we can go unnoticed or ways we can avoid being seen. Although we may evade or trick a security camera, we fool ourselves if we think we are ever outside the gaze of God.

God asks, “Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?” (Jeremiah 23:24). There is both an encouragement and a warning in His question.

The warning is that we cannot hide from God. We can't outrun or fool Him. Everything we do is visible to Him.

The encouragement is that there is no place on earth or in the heavens where we are outside the watchful care of our heavenly Father. Even when we feel alone, God is with us. No matter where we go today, may the awareness of that truth encourage us to choose obedience to His Word and receive comfort—He watches over us.

Lord Jesus, thank You that there is nowhere I can go that is outside of Your loving gaze. Knowing You see me, help me to honor You with my words and actions.

We are never outside the watchful care of our heavenly Father.

Jesus Knows Why

Alyson Kieda



*When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching. **Matthew 7:28***

Read: **Mark 8:22–26**

Bible in a Year: **Psalms 35–36; Acts 25**

I have friends who've received partial healing but still struggle with painful aspects of their diseases. Other friends have been healed of an addiction but still struggle with feelings of inadequacy and self-loathing. And I wonder, *Why doesn't God heal them completely—once and for all?*

In Mark 8:22–26, we read the story of Jesus healing a man born blind. Jesus first took the man away from the village. Then He spit on the man's eyes and "put his hands on him." The man said he now saw people who looked "like trees walking around." Then Jesus touched the man's eyes again, and this time he saw "everything clearly."

In His ministry, Jesus's words and actions often amazed and baffled the crowd and His followers (Matthew 7:28; Luke 8:10; 11:14) and even drove many of them away (John 6:60–66). No doubt this two-part miracle also caused confusion. Why not *immediately* heal this man?

We don't know why. But Jesus knew what the man—and the disciples who viewed his healing—needed in that moment. And He knows what we need today to draw us closer in our relationship with Him. Though we won't always understand, we can trust that God is working in our lives and the lives of our loved ones. And He will give us the strength, courage, and clarity we need to persevere in following Him.

Dear Lord, thank You for knowing us so well and for providing what we need most. Give us eyes to see You and a heart to understand Your Word.

Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus. Robert Cull

Perfect Imperfection



Monica Brands

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being. **Ephesians 3:16***

Read: **Ephesians 3:8–19**

Bible in a Year: **Psalms 37–39; Acts 26**

A college professor of mine, picking up on my perfectionism-induced procrastination, gave me some wise advice. “Don’t let perfect be the enemy of good,” he said, explaining that striving for perfect performance can prevent the risks necessary for growth. Accepting that my work would always be imperfect would give me the freedom to keep growing.

The apostle Paul explained an even more profound reason to let go of our own efforts to perfect ourselves: it can blind us to our need for Christ.

Paul had learned this the hard way. After years striving to perfectly obey God’s law, encountering Jesus changed everything (Galatians 1:11–16). Paul realized that if his own efforts were enough to be whole and right with God, “then there was no need for Christ to die” (2:21 nlt). Only by letting go of—*dying to*—self-reliance, could he experience Jesus living in him (v. 20). Only in his imperfection could he experience God’s perfect power.

This *doesn’t* mean we shouldn’t resist sin (v. 17); but it *does* mean we should stop relying on our own strength to grow spiritually (v. 20).

In this lifetime, we will always be works in progress. But as our hearts humbly accept our constant need for the only perfect One, Jesus makes His home there (Ephesians 3:17). Rooted in Him, we are free to grow ever deeper in the love “too great” to ever “understand fully” (v. 19 nlt).

Lord, so often we exchange the joy and freedom of life with You for the burden of relying on ourselves. Help us to humbly rely on You instead.

We are free to grow in Jesus’s love.

Unselfish Service

Randy Kilgore



*If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness. **Isaiah 58:10***

Read: Isaiah 58:6–12

Bible in a Year: Psalms 40–42; Acts 27:1–26

A small collection of people stood together, dwarfed by the size of the huge tree lying on the lawn. An elderly woman leaned on her cane and described watching the previous night's windstorm as it blew down "our majestic old elm tree. Worst of all," she continued, voice cracking with emotion, "it destroyed our lovely stone wall too. My husband built that wall when we were first married. He loved that wall. I loved that wall! Now it's gone; just like him."

Next morning, as she peeked out at the tree company workers cleaning up the downed tree; a big smile spread across her face. In between the branches she could just make out two adults and the boy who mowed her lawn carefully measuring and rebuilding her beloved stone wall!

The prophet Isaiah describes the kind of service God favors: acts that lift the hearts of those around us, like the wall repairers did for the elderly woman. This passage teaches that God values unselfish service to others over empty spiritual rituals. In fact, God exercises a two-way blessing on the selfless service of His children. First, God uses our willing acts of service to aid the oppressed and needy (Isaiah 58:7–10). Then God honors those engaged in such service by building or rebuilding our reputations as powerful positive forces in His kingdom (vv. 11–12). What service will you offer this day?

Thank You, Father, for the acts of others You use to lift us up, and for calling us to do the same.

Selfless service to others brings honor to God.

Lavish Expressions of Love

Xochitl Dixon



*You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion. **2 Corinthians 9:11***

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:6–15

Bible in a Year: Psalms 43–45; Acts 27:27–44

On our wedding anniversary, my husband, Alan, gives me a large bouquet of fresh flowers. When he lost his job during a corporate restructure, I didn't expect this extravagant display of devotion to continue. But on our nineteenth anniversary, the color-splashed blossoms greeted me from their spot on our dining room table. Because he valued continuing this annual tradition, Alan saved some money each month to ensure he'd have enough for this personal show of affection.

My husband's careful planning exhibited exuberant generosity, similar to what Paul encouraged when he addressed the Corinthian believers. The apostle complimented the church for their intentional and enthusiastic offerings (2 Corinthians 9:2, 5), reminding them that God delights in generous and cheerful givers (vv. 6–7). After all, no one gives more than our loving Provider, who's always ready to supply all we need (vv. 8–10).

We can be generous in all kinds of giving, caring for one another because the Lord meets all of our material, emotional, and spiritual needs (v. 11). As we give, we can express our gratitude for all God has given us. We can even motivate others to praise the Lord and give from all God has given them (vv. 12–13). Openhanded giving, a lavish expression of love and gratitude, can demonstrate our confidence in God's provision for all His people.

Lord, please help us trust Your abundant love and generosity, so we can give to others as You so faithfully give to us.

Generous giving displays courageous confidence in God's loving and faithful provision.
