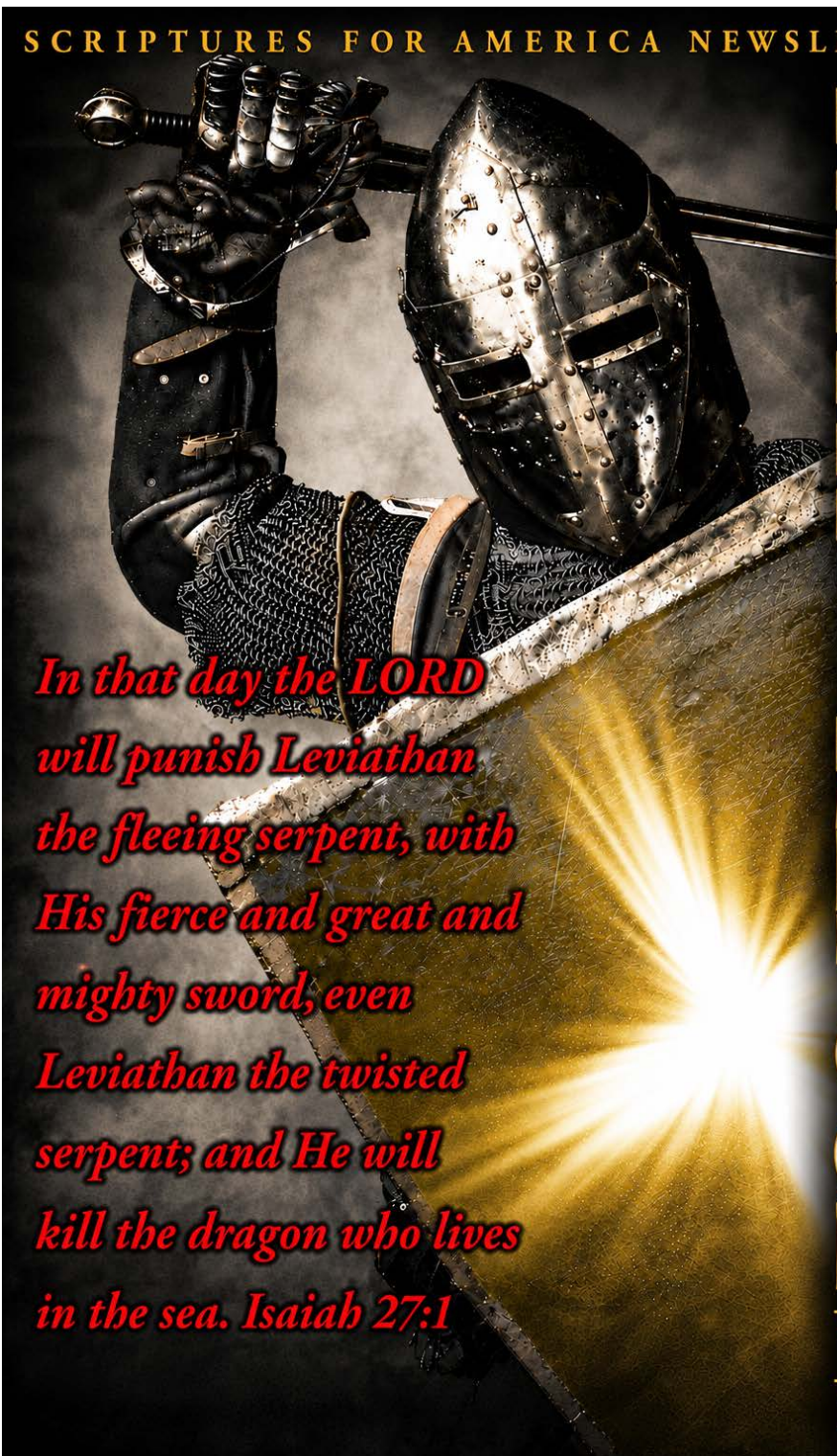
SCRIPTURES FOR AMERICA NEWSLETTER



FAITH AND REFUGE

In that day the LORD will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, with His fierce and great and mighty sword, even Leviathan the twisted serpent; and He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea. Isaiah 27:1

Vol 6
2026

A Letter from the Editor

Dear Remnant,

I have been thinking and talking a lot about faith. I don't mean faith as a vague feeling or a Sunday habit. I mean the faith that holds when the ground shakes, that stands up when the news is grim, and that keeps a family steady when the world seems to be losing its footing. In this issue I have included two articles that I pray will be faith-building tools in your hands, your home, and your community.

The first, "Faith and the Refuge of Psalm 91 in Difficult Times," goes back to one of the most beloved passages in all of Scripture. "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!'" (Psalm 91:1–2, NASB). Generations of believers have prayed these words over soldiers going to war, over children in sickbeds, and over nations in crisis. Psalm 91 does not promise that trouble will never come. It promises that trouble will never have the final word over those who dwell in the shelter of God. The psalm continues, "You will not be afraid of the terror by night, or of the arrow that flies by day" (Psalm 91:5). That is not wishful thinking. It is a declaration from people who knew where their refuge was.

The second article, "The Faith That Crossed an Ocean," tells the story of the Pilgrims. In 1620 a small band of men, women, and children boarded the Mayflower and crossed a cold, dangerous Atlantic toward a land they had never seen. They had no guarantee of safety, comfort, or success. About half of them did not survive that first brutal winter. Still, before they ever set foot on shore, they put their names to a compact declaring that their undertaking was "for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith." They did not wait for the fear to pass before they acted in faith. They acted in faith, and the fear lost its grip. Their courage became part of the foundation of this nation, and their story still speaks to us today.

As I have studied and written on this subject, one thought keeps returning to me, and I want to share it plainly:

A faith-filled person has no fear, and a fear-filled person has no faith.

Faith and fear cannot sit in the same seat at the same time. One will always push the other out. When the disciples were caught in the storm on the Sea of Galilee and woke Jesus in a panic, He calmed the wind and the waves and then asked them a piercing question: "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:40). Jesus treated their fear as a symptom of something missing. The storm was real, but the Savior in the boat was

more real.

The apostle Paul told young Timothy the same thing: “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7). Fear is not from God. It is a thief that steals our peace, our clarity, and our boldness. Faith restores all three.

So how do we grow in faith? Scripture gives a clear answer: “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). Faith is not manufactured by positive thinking. It is built, line upon line, by hearing and receiving the Word of God. That is why I fill these pages with Scripture. Every verse is a brick in the wall of your refuge.

We are living in uncertain times. Many Americans feel anxious about the direction of our country, the stability of our economy, the safety of our communities, and the future our children will inherit. I understand those concerns. But I want to remind you that God has not stepped off His throne. The same Lord who carried the Pilgrims across the ocean, who guided our founders, and who has sustained this nation through war, depression, and division is still faithful today. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD” (Psalm 33:12).

The promise still stands: “If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). Notice that healing begins with His people.

My hope for you is simple. I hope you gain faith in the times we are living in, not in spite of them. Dark days are the very days when the light of faith shines brightest. The Lord said to Joshua as he stood at the edge of an uncertain future, “Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). That word is for you, too.

As you read these two articles,“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

Stand firm, friends. Trade your fear for faith. Dwell in the shelter of the Most high

In His service,

Jason S. Junker

Faith and the Refuge!

Faith and the Refuge of Psalm 91 in Difficult Times

By Jason S. Junker

Dear remnant, difficult times call for settled faith. When the household is under pressure, the future appears uncertain, and another burden arrives before the last one has been lifted, we need to know where our strength comes from.

The Scriptures give us men and women who faced those very questions. Their circumstances differed from ours, but the God they trusted remains faithful today. We read their accounts because we need more than admiration for their courage. We need to learn how faith works when a person must wait, make a difficult decision, endure injustice, or face danger. Abraham had to leave what he knew. Joseph had to remain faithful where he had been wronged. Esther had to accept responsibility when silence would have been easier. Daniel had to pray when prayer carried a penalty.

These people were human. They experienced fear, grief, disappointment, and weakness. Some made serious mistakes. Their lives teach us to bring our weakness before the Lord and respond to His Word with obedience. Hebrews 11:1 declares, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Faith rests upon the character and promises of God. It gives us reason to obey before we understand how everything will unfold. It steadies a father who must provide for his family, a mother praying for her children, and a believer whose strength has been worn thin by prolonged hardship. We can take the next faithful step because God is worthy of our trust.

Abraham and Sarah and the discipline of waiting

Genesis 12 records the Lord calling Abram to leave his country and his father’s household for a land God would show him. Hebrews 11:8 remembers his obedience: he went without knowing where he was going. He had a command and a promise, and he began the journey.

That kind of obedience searches our hearts. We often want a complete explanation before we will move. We want to know how the bills will be paid, whether others will approve, and how long the difficulty will last. Abraham’s example teaches us to place God’s revealed instruction ahead of our demand to control the outcome.

Yet Abraham’s story also contains years of waiting. The promise of a son did not reach fulfillment immediately. Genesis records the aging of Abraham and Sarah, their questions, and their failures along the way. They tried to manage the promise through their own arrangements, and the consequences brought suffering

into their household. Waiting exposed places where their trust needed to grow. Hebrews 11:11 nevertheless remembers Sarah's faith and her judgment that the One who promised was faithful. The birth of Isaac testified to God's power. His purpose was never dependent upon the ordinary possibilities they could see.

Some readers are living in a long season of waiting. You have prayed for a child, for reconciliation, for direction, or for relief from a burden that has continued for years. Bring those desires honestly before God. Keep obeying what He has made clear. Abraham and Sarah teach us that delay cannot, by itself, tell us what God is doing.

Joseph and faithfulness when life is unfair

Joseph's brothers sold him, and he was taken to Egypt. Later, after refusing his master's wife, he was falsely accused and imprisoned. Genesis 39 emphasizes that the Lord was with him. His circumstances were painful, yet he continued to have responsibilities to fulfill.

Joseph's faith became visible in his conduct. He worked faithfully, resisted temptation, and served others while his own future remained uncertain. When he interpreted the cupbearer's dream, he asked to be remembered, but the cupbearer forgot him. Genesis 41 records another two years before Pharaoh's dreams brought Joseph's name forward.

We should linger over those years. A person can endure a sharp crisis and then become exhausted by the waiting that follows. Joseph had to live faithfully through ordinary days in an unjust situation. He could not see the eventual outcome from his prison cell.

His story speaks to anyone who has been misrepresented, overlooked, or betrayed. Keep your conscience clean before God. Do the work you can do. Resist the temptation to let another person's wrongdoing decide the character of your own life.

When Joseph later confronted his brothers, he recognized God's providence without excusing their evil. Genesis 50:20 distinguishes their harmful intention from God's purpose to preserve life. Faith enabled Joseph to see beyond revenge and use his authority to provide for people in need.

Moses and the courage of a mother

The story of Moses begins with a family living under a murderous command. Exodus 2 describes his mother hiding him, preparing a basket, and placing him among the reeds by the Nile. His sister watched, and when Pharaoh's daughter found the child, the sister helped arrange for his own mother to nurse

him.

Hebrews 11:23 remembers the faith of Moses' parents, who hid him and refused to be governed by fear of the king's edict. Their faith included practical care, resourcefulness, and courage. A mother's attention and a family's willingness to act mattered in the preservation of that child.

This account should encourage parents who feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of raising children in a troubled world. Your influence may receive little recognition, but it matters. Teach them Scripture. Watch what shapes their thinking. Pray with them, correct them patiently, and make your home a place where truth is practiced.

Moses later had to choose his own allegiance. Hebrews 11:24–26 tells us that he refused the identity offered by Pharaoh's household and chose to identify with God's people despite the suffering involved. Faith affected what he was willing to gain and what he was willing to lose.

At the Red Sea, the people faced an army behind them and water ahead. Exodus 14 records Moses' call to stand firm and see the Lord's salvation, followed by God's command that the people move forward. Their deliverance required dependence upon God and a response to His direction. We likewise must listen carefully, pray earnestly, and act when the duty before us is clear.

Ruth and the strength of faithful commitment

Ruth's account begins with bereavement. Her husband died, and Naomi had also lost her husband and sons. Their future was difficult. Ruth chose to remain with Naomi, leaving familiar surroundings and committing herself to Naomi's people and God.

Ruth 1:16 records that commitment, and the following chapter shows its practical expression. Ruth went into the fields to glean. She worked to help provide for the household. Her loyalty had hands and feet; it appeared in the labor she was willing to undertake.

This is a form of strength that deserves honor. Some of the bravest people we know keep caring for others while carrying grief of their own. They get up, fulfill their responsibilities, and continue loving when life has become harder than they expected.

Ruth could not see the full significance of her decision. She would become part of the family line leading to David, and Matthew 1 places her in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Her daily faithfulness belonged to a purpose larger than she could then understand.

For the person rebuilding after loss, Ruth offers encouragement. Begin with the

faithful work available today. Accept help with gratitude. Keep your heart open to God and to the people He places around you. The next chapter of your life may begin through humble responsibilities rather than a dramatic announcement.

Esther and the responsibility to speak

Esther faced a threat against her people while occupying a position that gave her a possible opportunity to intervene. Approaching the king without being summoned carried grave risk. Mordecai challenged her to consider whether her royal position had been given for that particular hour.

Esther 4 records her request that the Jews in Susa fast, her own commitment to fast with her attendants, and her resolve to approach the king. She understood the danger and accepted responsibility. The following chapters describe her careful actions and the exposure of Haman's scheme.

Her example challenges the belief that someone else will always carry the burden of speaking. Sometimes we have knowledge, access, or influence that creates a responsibility. We should seek wisdom about how to use it, especially when vulnerable people need protection.

Christian courage requires judgment as well as resolve. Esther acted deliberately. She did not treat the seriousness of the moment lightly. We can learn to prepare, choose our words carefully, and use the lawful opportunities available to defend others.

We need that character in our homes, churches, and nation. Love of country should move us toward honest service and the defense of conscience. Concern for our neighbors should move us to speak when their rights or safety are threatened. Faithful citizenship includes prayer for those in authority and the courage to seek accountability.

David and courage learned before the battle

Before David faced Goliath, he had tended sheep. In 1 Samuel 17, he explained how he had defended the flock against a lion and a bear. He remembered the Lord's deliverance and trusted Him as he faced the Philistine. His confidence drew upon experience with God in earlier responsibilities. The care of sheep had prepared him for an encounter that seemed impossible to those watching. Small duties can train the character needed for greater trials. A young man who learns honesty when a lie would be easy is preparing for future responsibility. A father who keeps his promises when he is tired teaches his household that his word can be trusted. A believer who makes prayer a daily habit is learning where to turn when trouble becomes severe.

David also knew fear. He prayed, "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in

You" (Psalm 56:3). That confession is useful because it tells us what to do with fear. We can acknowledge it before God and entrust ourselves to Him.

David's later failures warn us to remain humble. Courage in one season does not remove the need for watchfulness in another. When confronted about his sin, he had to repent. Strong faith includes accepting correction and returning to God with a truthful heart.

Daniel and conviction under pressure

Daniel 6 describes a decree forbidding petitions to any god or man except the king for thirty days. Daniel knew the document had been signed. He continued praying to God as he had done before, giving thanks in his customary place of prayer.

His faith had already established a practice. The decree tested that practice, and he continued it. He was eventually thrown into the lions' den, where God preserved his life. The danger was real, and the deliverance was God's work.

Daniel's conduct gives us a serious question to consider. Are we establishing habits of obedience now? A person who continually avoids small duties may find himself poorly prepared when a costly decision arrives. Daily faithfulness strengthens the heart for such an hour.

Daniel's friends faced a related trial in Daniel 3. They refused to worship the image and affirmed God's ability to deliver them. They also made clear that their obedience would remain even if He did not rescue them from the fire. That is mature trust. We ask confidently for deliverance while placing our lives in God's hands. Hebrews 11 records both extraordinary rescues and the suffering of faithful people. We honor the whole testimony when we remember that God is worthy of obedience in either circumstance.

Dwelling in the shelter of the Most High

These accounts prepare us to hear Psalm 91. Its opening words invite us into a life of dependence: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1).

Dwelling suggests remaining. The psalm calls us to make God our refuge throughout life. We turn to Him in daily prayer, receive His Word, and learn to trust His character. That relationship gives substance to our prayers when danger approaches.

The next verse declares, "I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!'" (Psalm 91:2). These words give the troubled believer a confession to speak. We can bring our household, our work, and our fears before the God in whom we trust.

The psalm speaks directly about threats: a trap, deadly pestilence, terror at

night, and the arrow by day. It recognizes dangers we can see and dangers hidden from us. God's protection reaches beyond our ability to understand every risk.

Verse 4 gives a tender picture alongside strong assurance: "He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark" (Psalm 91:4).

The shelter is personal, and the defense rests upon His faithfulness. We can ask Him to preserve our lives, protect our children, guard our homes, and direct our steps. Such requests belong naturally in the prayers of His people.

Some of our heaviest fears arrive after dark, when the work is finished and the mind returns to every unresolved problem. Psalm 91 speaks to that hour. Turn the anxious thoughts into prayer. Name the burden before the Lord, then remember what the psalm says about the One who watches over you.

Protection and the promise of His presence

Psalm 91 describes striking deliverance and the care of God's angels. Verses 11–12 assure the reader of His command concerning angelic guardianship. We need not see every means of His protection to give thanks for His watchful care.

We should also read this psalm alongside the rest of Scripture. In Matthew 4:5–7, the devil quoted its angelic promise while tempting Jesus to throw Himself from the temple. Jesus refused to put God to the test. Trust receives God's care and follows His wisdom.

That matters in everyday life. We pray for protection and exercise responsible judgment. We can seek shelter during dangerous weather, obtain needed care when we are ill, and take reasonable steps to keep our households safe. Such actions can express faithful stewardship of the lives entrusted to us.

The psalm itself includes this promise: "He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him" (Psalm 91:15).

Notice that God promises to be with His servant in trouble. This gives hope to people whose prayers have not yet brought the relief they seek. His presence continues through the difficult hour. We can call upon Him while the burden remains.

Faith and the Refuge!

Faithful believers sometimes suffer deeply. We must never use their suffering as an excuse to accuse them of inadequate faith. Joseph's imprisonment and the suffering recorded in Hebrews 11 remind us to treat hurting people with compassion.

We may boldly seek physical protection and deliverance. We also trust the Lord when His answer takes a form or arrives at a time we did not expect. Romans 8:35–39 assures us that tribulation, persecution, and even death cannot separate His people from His love in Christ.

Remaining strong in the difficulties before us

Many households are contending with financial strain, illness, conflict, and uncertainty. We should take those burdens seriously and respond with practical care. A church strengthened by faith becomes a source of help to people carrying them.

Read Scripture in your home. Pray with your family. Let children hear their parents ask God for wisdom rather than hearing only expressions of alarm. Speak honestly about difficulties while also teaching them where your hope rests.

Christian men should provide steadiness through dependable conduct. Work faithfully, listen to your household, and accept responsibility for your words. Strength includes the humility to ask for help and the patience to lead without anger.

Honor the women who carry heavy responsibilities with perseverance. The biblical accounts give us mothers, widows, and women placed in positions of influence whose faith mattered greatly. Their courage deserves encouragement and practical support.

Pay attention to the people around you. Someone may need a visit, help with a task, or a quiet opportunity to speak about a burden. Galatians 6:2 directs us to bear one another's burdens. Our hands may become part of the answer to a prayer we have offered.

Guard what you continually allow to shape your thoughts. Stay informed enough to fulfill your duties, but give Scripture and prayer a rightful place in your day. A steady diet of alarming reports can leave a person exhausted and poorly equipped to serve anyone.

We can love our country and work for its good without allowing uncertainty about its future to govern our souls. Pray for leaders, defend liberty through honorable conduct, and teach the next generation to value truth. Our allegiance to Christ gives direction to those responsibilities.

Psalms 91

PSALM 91

NASB

1 One who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
Will lodge in the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress,
My God, in whom I trust!"

3 For it is He who rescues you from the net of the trapper
And from the deadly plague.

4 He will cover you with His pinions,
And under His wings you may take refuge;
His faithfulness is a shield and wall.

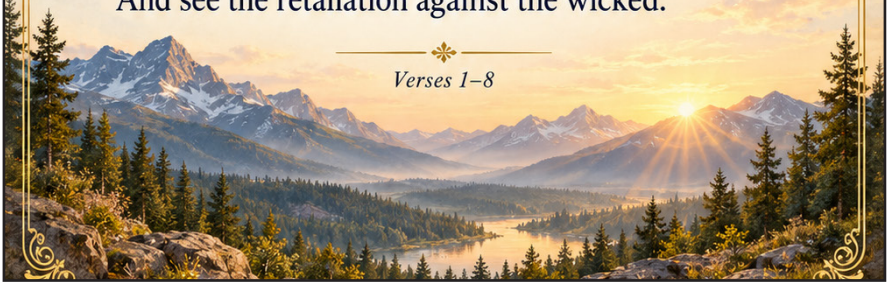
5 You will not be afraid of the terror by night,
Or of the arrow that flies by day;

6 Of the plague that stalks in darkness,
Or of the destruction that devastates at noon.

7 A thousand may fall at your side
And ten thousand at your right hand,
But it shall not approach you.

8 You will only look on with your eyes
And see the retaliation against the wicked.

Verses 1–8



Psalms 91

PSALM 91

NASB

9 For you have made the Lord, my refuge,
The Most High, your dwelling place.

10 No evil will happen to you,
Nor will any plague come near your tent.

11 For He will give His angels orders concerning you,
To protect you in all your ways.

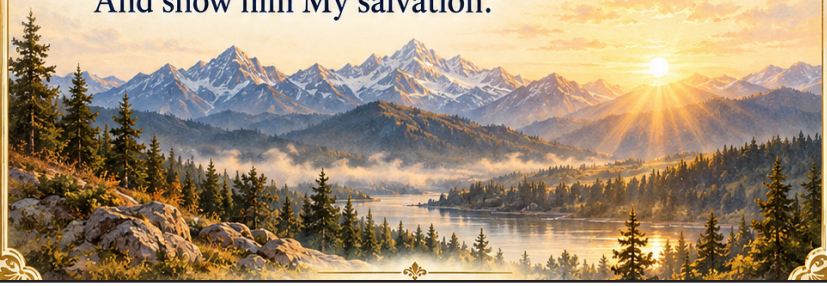
12 On their hands they will lift you up,
So that you do not strike your foot against a stone.

13 You will walk upon the lion and cobra,
You will trample the young lion and the serpent.

14 "Because he has loved Me, I will save him;
I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name.

15 He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.

16 I will satisfy him with a long life,
And show him My salvation."



The Faith That Crossed an Ocean

The Faith That Crossed an Ocean
Faith and Refuge, Part Two — Continuing "Faith and the Refuge of Psalm 91 in Difficult Times"
There are times when looking back helps us find the courage to move forward. When the burdens of life grow heavy, when the future seems uncertain, and when we wonder how we will provide for our families, we need to remember that we are not the first generation to face difficult days.
Long before we were born, men and women faced decisions that demanded faith. They worked with tired hands, prayed over their children, struggled with financial obligations, and stepped into circumstances they could not control. They had no guarantee that their plans would succeed. Yet they believed that serving God and preserving a faithful household were worth sacrifice.
Among those people were the Pilgrims who crossed the Atlantic aboard the Mayflower.
We often remember their story through a peaceful picture of a ship, a settlement, and a Thanksgiving table. But behind that familiar picture were years of labor, separation, betrayal, sickness, and grief. Peter Marshall and David Manuel, in their book The Light and the Glory, spend several chapters on these people because they saw in them something our generation badly needs: ordinary believers who decided that obedience to God was worth whatever it cost. Their story deserves more than a passing remembrance. It challenges us to examine the depth of our own faith.
What are we willing to endure for what we profess to believe? What are we willing to build for our children? And when obedience becomes costly, will we continue to trust the Lord?
Psalm 91 speaks directly to the heart that must answer those questions:
“My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!” —Psalm 91:2, NASB
That confession belongs in the workshop as surely as it belongs in the sanctuary. It belongs beside the family table, beside the sickbed, and

in the heart of a father wondering how he will meet tomorrow's obligations. It belongs wherever a believer faces an uncertain future and chooses to trust a faithful God.

Faith Before the Voyage

The Pilgrims' test of faith began more than a decade before they boarded a ship. Members of the Separatist congregation that met at William Brewster's manor house in Scrooby, England, faced harassment, fines, and imprisonment because of their religious convictions. Some had their homes watched day and night. Their pastor, John Robinson, and their elder, Brewster, led them to a hard decision: they would leave England for the Netherlands, where they could worship more freely.

Leaving was itself a crime. In 1607 the congregation hired a ship captain at Boston, in Lincolnshire, to carry them across secretly. He took their money, then betrayed them to the authorities. Officers searched them, took their goods, and paraded them through town before the leaders were jailed.

The next spring they tried again from a lonely stretch of shore near the Humber. The men were rowed out to the ship first. Before the women and children could follow, armed men appeared on the shore. The captain raised anchor and sailed away with the husbands and fathers aboard, leaving their wives and little ones weeping on the beach. A violent storm then drove the ship off course toward Norway. William Bradford, who later became governor of Plymouth, recorded that even the sailors despaired of their lives, while the passengers cried out to God for mercy. After about two weeks, a passage that should have taken days, they reached Amsterdam. The women and children, meanwhile, were hauled from one magistrate to another until the authorities, not knowing what to do with them, finally let them go. By ones and twos the families were eventually reunited.

Consider the weight of that. A father standing on a ship's deck, watching soldiers close in on his wife and children, with no power to return to them. Every promise he had made to protect

his household seemed to be slipping away with the shoreline. All he could do was pray.

Religious freedom in Holland did not make earning a living easy. In Leiden, many worked in cloth trades and other demanding occupations for long hours and low pay. Bradford, raised as a farmer, learned to work as a fustian maker. Supporting their households required hard labor, and even children worked.

It is easy to speak boldly about faith when faith costs us little. The test comes when conviction affects our comfort, our income, our reputation, or our plans. These believers had to consider those costs. They had children to feed and daily responsibilities to meet. They could not simply live on the memory of yesterday's courage. Faith had to be exercised again when they rose for another day of work.

There is encouragement here for the Christian who feels that his life consists mostly of labor and responsibility. A faithful life is often built through ordinary obedience: getting up, doing honest work, providing for a household, keeping a promise, and refusing to surrender one's convictions.

The hands that work can also be hands lifted in prayer. A worn body can house a steadfast spirit. A household with limited means can possess great spiritual wealth. We should never assume that because our work is difficult, God has forgotten us. Sometimes the very place where we feel most pressed is the place where patience, discipline, and dependence upon Him are being formed.

Stepping Stones for Others

After about twelve years in Holland, the congregation faced another decision. Bradford gave their reasons plainly. The hardness of life there discouraged others from joining them. Their older members were wearing out before their time. Some of their children were being bent under the weight of labor, and

others were being drawn away by the loose ways of the youth around them. A truce between the Netherlands and Spain was also nearing its end, and war threatened.

Above all, Bradford wrote, they cherished a great hope of advancing the gospel of Christ in remote parts of the world, even if they themselves should be only stepping-stones for others to perform that great work.

That phrase deserves to be read slowly. They did not expect to see the full harvest of their sacrifice. They were willing to be the stones that others would walk across.

Not everyone could go. Most of the congregation, including their beloved pastor John Robinson, remained in Leiden, intending to follow later. Robinson never did; he died in Holland in 1625. In July 1620 the travelers went down to the harbor at Delfshaven. Robinson knelt with them on the dock and prayed, and friends wept as the ship pulled away. Bradford's description of that parting has been loved for nearly four centuries:

"So they left that goodly and pleasant city which had been their resting place near twelve years; but they knew they were pilgrims, and looked not much on those things, but lift up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits." —William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation

That is where the name "Pilgrims" comes from. It echoes Hebrews 11:13–16, which speaks of believers who confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth, seeking a better country, a heavenly one.

In The Light and the Glory, Marshall and Manuel draw attention to this willingness to let go. In their telling, the Pilgrims were bound together not merely by shared opinions but by a covenant with God and with one another, and that covenant made them willing to lay down personal comfort for the sake of a calling. They argue that this kind of surrendered,

covenant-keeping faith is exactly what American Christians have most often lost and most need to recover.

Whatever we think of every conclusion an author draws, that challenge is worth hearing. Are we willing to be stepping-stones? Will we pray, work, and sacrifice for a future we may never see, trusting that God will finish what He began through us?

The Price of Passage

The journey to America required far more than enthusiasm.

The settlers' own resources were insufficient, so they entered an arrangement with English investors known as merchant adventurers. The original undertaking joined the investors and settlers in a company whose assets were to be divided after seven years.

Even that agreement shifted beneath their feet. Shortly before departure, the investors changed the terms. The settlers lost the two days each week they had expected to work for their own families, and even their houses and gardens were to become company property. The Leiden leaders objected, but there was little room to bargain. Before they could leave England, they were forced to sell some of their own provisions, including butter they would sorely miss, simply to settle debts in port.

Financial troubles continued after arrival, and the debt was later renegotiated. Pilgrim Hall Museum records that the colonists eventually repaid an agreed £1,800, a heavy sum for a struggling colony.

Their voyage carried a price that reached into the years ahead.

That is an important part of their testimony. They were willing to undertake labor whose full reward they could not immediately enjoy. Their hopes extended beyond the next meal or the next season. They wanted to establish a community in which their families could live and their faith could take root.

Our circumstances differ from theirs, but many of us understand the burden of working toward something that seems painfully slow to arrive. We know what it means to finish one job and discover another expense waiting. We know the strain of carrying responsibilities that cannot be put aside simply because we are tired. Some of us also

know what it is to be treated unfairly by people who hold more power than we do.

Faith does not make such burdens imaginary. It gives us somewhere to bring them. We can ask God for provision while continuing to work. We can seek wisdom before making commitments. We can face an obligation honestly and pray for the strength to fulfill it.

The Christian should be a person whose faith reaches into his conduct. Trust in God should strengthen our willingness to act responsibly, treat others fairly, and keep our word, even when others have not kept theirs. A profession of faith becomes visible when it governs what we do with the responsibilities placed in our hands.

Faith on Troubled Waters

The voyage brought further trials before it truly began. The smaller ship, the Speedwell, leaked so badly that both vessels had to turn back to England twice. At last the Speedwell was abandoned, some passengers stayed behind, and the Mayflower sailed alone from Plymouth in September 1620, already dangerously late in the year. Aboard were 102 passengers, crowded below deck for more than two months with little light, little privacy, and food that grew worse with every week.

Bradford records that one young sailor took pleasure in cursing the seasick passengers, telling them he hoped to throw half of them overboard before the journey ended. Before the halfway point, he was struck by a grievous disease and died, and his body was the first thrown into the sea. Bradford saw in it the hand of God.

Midway across, fierce storms battered the ship. One of the main beams amidships bowed and cracked, and some of the crew wondered aloud whether they should turn back. The passengers had brought from Holland a great iron screw, and with it the beam was forced back into place and secured. They pressed on.

In one storm a young servant named John Howland came up on deck and was thrown into the sea by the pitching of the ship. As he went over, he caught hold of a topsail halyard that was trailing in the water and held on, though he was pulled many fathoms under.

The Faith That Crossed an Ocean

The sailors hauled him up with a boat hook. He lived to become a leader in the colony, and today his descendants number in the millions.

Life and death both traveled aboard. A baby boy was born on the open sea and named Oceanus. A young servant, William Butten, died just days before land was sighted.

The Mayflower reached Cape Cod in November 1620, after 66 days at sea. The travelers tried to sail south toward their intended destination near the Hudson River, but dangerous shoals and roaring breakers nearly wrecked them, and they turned back. Bradford wrote that when they finally reached harbor, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean. Then he described what lay before them: no friends to welcome them, no inns to refresh them, no houses to shelter them, only what he called a hideous and desolate wilderness, with winter coming on.

Imagine that moment. The ocean behind you, the wilderness before you, and your children beside you.

There are seasons in our own lives that feel much like that. Something familiar has ended, and the next safe harbor remains hidden. We have responsibilities aboard with us: children, loved ones, work, and promises we have made. We cannot simply abandon the journey because the weather becomes frightening. In those moments, faith must rest upon more than our ability to predict the outcome.

Hebrews 11:8 describes Abraham obeying God and going out without knowing where he was going. The point is not that Christians should move carelessly or mistake every personal desire for divine direction. The point is that obedience sometimes requires us to move beyond what we can fully see. We should plan carefully, seek counsel, and count the cost. Then, when the path of duty is clear, we must have the courage to walk it.

Psalm 91 gives us language for that dependence. God is our refuge when our surroundings offer little reassurance. His faithfulness does not rise and fall with the waves. The sea may be beyond our control.

The Faith That Crossed an Ocean

Our next act of obedience is still before us.
"Advancement of the Christian Faith"
Because they had landed outside the territory their charter covered, some passengers began to say that once ashore, no one would have authority over them. The leaders knew a divided company would not survive the winter. So before anyone settled, the men aboard signed the Mayflower Compact.
The document explicitly named "the Glory of God, and advancement of the Christian Faith" among the purposes of their voyage. It also pledged cooperation in forming a civil government and establishing just and equal laws for the colony's general good.
Those words deserve our attention. The advancement of the Christian faith was important enough to be named in the agreement by which they ordered their community. Their religious purpose reached into their understanding of public responsibility. Marshall and Manuel treat the Compact as one of the clearest expressions of the covenant idea that ran through the Pilgrims' church life: people binding themselves before God to one another for a shared purpose.
The Compact was a brief governing agreement for a particular colony. Yet its language offers a powerful historical witness: these people could speak openly of God, Christian faith, mutual obligation, and civil order in the same document.
For Christians today, that raises a searching question. Does our faith shape the way we build? Does it influence how we conduct business, raise children, resolve disagreements, care for neighbors, and use whatever authority has been entrusted to us?
It takes faith to begin something whose future you cannot guarantee. It also takes humility to accept obligations to other people. A community cannot endure if every person insists upon his own way while refusing responsibility for the whole. The Compact reminds us that building requires agreement, restraint, and a willingness to serve a purpose larger than personal convenience.
We can admire that resolve without pretending that every passenger possessed identical convictions or that the colony's later history

was free from failure. Honest remembrance makes room for both courage and human weakness. Our forefathers were people. Their example is valuable because ordinary people, with real limitations, undertook difficult responsibilities and persevered.

Refuge Through the Winter

The hardest part of the story was still ahead.

While William Bradford was away with a small party exploring the coast in freezing December weather, his young wife Dorothy fell from the Mayflower into the icy harbor and drowned. He returned to that news. Their little son had been left behind in Holland. Bradford rarely wrote about his own grief, but he carried it into the work that followed.

Most of the passengers lived aboard the cramped ship through the winter while the men went ashore to build. Sickness spread quickly through the weakened company. In January and February, two or three people sometimes died in a single day. At the worst of it, only six or seven people were well enough to care for everyone else. Bradford records that these few fetched wood, made fires, prepared food, made beds, and washed the soiled clothing of the sick, doing it all willingly and without complaint. Among them were the elder William Brewster and the military captain Myles Standish, whose own wife, Rose, died that winter.

By spring, roughly half of the Mayflower passengers had died. Whole families were wiped out. Only a handful of the married women survived. Their first governor, John Carver, collapsed while working in the fields in April and died soon after. Bradford, still in mourning, was chosen to lead them.

Then came a quiet test of faith that is easy to overlook. That same April, the Mayflower sailed back to England. The way home was open. Not one of the surviving settlers chose to go.

We must pause over all of that. These were families. Every death left someone grieving. The story contains mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, and children whose hopes were interrupted by sorrow.

Their suffering also helps us approach Psalm 91 with reverence and care. We should pray confidently for protection. We should ask God to preserve our households, heal the sick, supply our needs, and deliver us from danger. But we must never use the suffering of another believer as proof that he lacked faith.

Hebrews 11 remembers faithful people who experienced remarkable deliverance. It also remembers faithful people who endured persecution, deprivation, and death. Both belong to its testimony of faith. God's people have known rescue from danger and sustaining grace within it.

Psalm 91:15 includes God's assurance that He will be with the one who calls upon Him in trouble. That promise speaks tenderly to the believer whose trial has not yet ended. The presence of trouble does not mean the absence of God.

Some readers need to hear that today. You have prayed, yet the burden remains. You have worked, yet the bills are still heavy. You have asked for healing, yet you continue to wait.

Keep bringing your need before the Lord. Receive help when it comes. Take the next responsible step. And remember the six or seven who stayed on their feet that winter: sometimes the way God carries the suffering is through the tired hands of those still standing. Your present difficulty does not place you beyond His care.

Providence and Helping Hands

The settlers' survival also involved help from the people already living in the region. In March 1621, a man named Samoset walked into the settlement and greeted them in English. Soon afterward he returned with Tisquantum, known to the settlers as Squanto.

Squanto's own life was a story of suffering. Years earlier, in 1614, an English captain named Thomas Hunt had kidnapped him and other men and carried them to Spain to be sold as slaves. Squanto escaped that fate, made his way to England, and eventually crossed the ocean home in 1619. He arrived to find his village of Patuxet

empty. An epidemic had swept through, and his people were gone. The Pilgrims had built Plymouth on the very ground where his village had stood.

This man, who had every reason to hate the English, chose to stay with them. He taught them to plant corn using fish to enrich the soil, showed them where to catch eels and fish, guided them through the land, and served as an interpreter. Bradford called him a special instrument sent of God for their good, beyond their expectation.

Marshall and Manuel give this part of the story special attention in The Light and the Glory. They see in Squanto one of the clearest pictures of God's providence in the whole account: a man prepared through years of hardship, in places he never chose to go, for a role no one could have planned. It calls to mind Joseph's words to his brothers in Genesis 50:20, that what men intended for evil, God intended for good, to preserve many people alive. God did not excuse the wrong done to Squanto. He redeemed it.

In that same spring, the settlers entered a mutual protection agreement with the Wampanoag leader Ousamequin, often called Massasoit in English accounts. That peace held for many years. When the colony gave thanks for its first harvest in the autumn of 1621, Massasoit and around ninety of his men came and joined them for several days of feasting. Remembering that help gives us a fuller and more honest account of how the settlement endured.

For the Christian, this offers another lesson in humility. We may pray for provision and then need to receive it through another person's knowledge, kindness, or labor. A strong man must be willing to learn. A faithful household must be willing to give thanks.

Trusting God should make us attentive to the help He places before us. It should also make us ready to become an answer to someone else's prayer. Galatians 6:2 calls believers to bear one another's burdens. That command has practical weight. Sometimes bearing a burden means bringing a meal, sharing a skill, helping with a repair,

visiting someone who is alone, or offering work to a man who needs it. A community grows stronger when its people understand that faith includes responsibility for one another.

Hunger, Prayer, and Rain

The first harvest did not end their trials. In November 1621 a ship called the Fortune arrived with thirty-five new settlers, but almost no food or supplies for them. The colony had to stretch its stores across many more mouths, and everyone went on half rations through the winter. The next two years brought real hunger. There were seasons when the settlers did not know where the next week's food would come from.

In the spring of 1623, Bradford and the other leaders made a practical change. Until then, the colony had worked its fields in common, with everything going into a shared store. Bradford observed that this arrangement bred resentment and discouraged effort. Now each family was given its own parcel of land to plant for itself. The result, he wrote, was that far more corn was planted than before, and even women and children went willingly into the fields. Marshall and Manuel point to this as an example of how faithful people can learn from failure and govern more wisely, rather than simply repeating what is not working.

Then came a new danger. From late spring into July, a drought settled over the colony. Week after week no rain fell, and the newly planted corn began to wither. Without that harvest, they faced another winter of starvation.

The colony set apart a solemn day of humiliation and prayer. Edward Winslow, one of their leaders, recorded that the morning was clear and hot, and they spent about eight or nine hours in prayer. By evening clouds had gathered, and the next morning a soft, gentle rain began. It fell steadily for days, soaking the ground without beating down the crops. The corn revived. Winslow noted that the Native people who witnessed it were struck by the difference between this rain and the violent storms they usually saw after a drought. That autumn the colony held a

day of thanksgiving for God's mercy.

The Light and the Glory treats this account as one of its central illustrations: a people who, at the point of greatest need, first humbled themselves before God and then saw Him answer.

We should be careful how we apply such a story. God is not a vending machine, and Scripture does not promise that every prayer for rain will be answered with rain on the following day. Many faithful prayers receive answers that come slowly or in forms we did not expect. But this account reminds us of something we too easily forget: our first response to crisis should be to turn to God, not as a last resort after every other option has failed, but as the beginning of everything we do.

Has your family set apart time to seek the Lord together about the need you are facing? The Pilgrims did not stop working because they prayed. They prayed because they knew their work was not enough.

From Sea to Shining Sea

The faith that crossed an ocean did not stop at the coast. Marshall and Manuel continued their account in a second book, From Sea to Shining Sea, which follows the story from the writing of the Constitution in 1787 through the 1830s, as the young nation pushed westward. The title comes from "America the Beautiful," and the book asks whether the faith of the founding generations would survive the move into new and untamed territory.

It was tested hard. As families moved over the mountains into Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio, many left churches behind. Frontier settlements were often rough, violent, and spiritually neglected.

Then came the revivals of the Second Great Awakening. In the summer of 1801, a camp meeting at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, drew a crowd of many thousands. Families traveled for days by wagon and on foot, camped in the woods, and listened to preaching that went on day and night. Similar gatherings spread across the frontier.

Much of that frontier faith was carried by the circuit riders,

preachers who traveled on horseback from one scattered settlement to the next. Francis Asbury, the leading Methodist bishop, rode well over a quarter of a million miles during his ministry, through mud, snow, swollen rivers, and sickness. Many younger circuit riders were worn out by exposure and died young. They preached in cabins, barns, and open fields, often to a handful of people, and then rode on to the next.

There is a line running from the Pilgrims to these frontier preachers. Both were willing to leave comfort behind. Both endured hardship for the sake of people they had not yet met. Both were, in Bradford's phrase, stepping-stones for others. Marshall and Manuel trace that line deliberately, arguing that each generation must receive the faith anew and carry it into its own wilderness.

That is our calling too. The frontier in front of us may not be a mountain range or an ocean. It may be a family that has drifted from the Lord, a neighbor who has never heard the Gospel clearly, or a community that has forgotten what its grandparents knew. The question is the same one every generation has faced: will we carry the faith forward, or will we simply live off the memory of those who did?

What Will We Leave Behind?

The Pilgrims could not see the generations that would follow them. They knew the demands of their own day: shelter, food, worship, work, government, and family. Bradford hoped they would be stepping-stones. He could not have imagined how many would walk across them.

We also live one day at a time. We cannot control everything our children will encounter. We can, however, give them an example of faith worth remembering.

Let them see us pray before making difficult decisions. Let them hear us acknowledge God's provision. Let them watch us correct our mistakes, keep our promises, and persevere when work becomes hard. Let them learn that courage can coexist with sorrow and that a tired Christian can still be a faithful Christian.

A patriotic love for our country should move us toward that kind of service. We honor what is worthy in our inheritance by accepting the duties of our own generation. We build honestly, care for our

neighbors, teach our children, and seek the good of the place where God has put us.

The advancement of the Christian faith continues through people who live under the authority of Jesus Christ. It continues when the Gospel is spoken truthfully, when the Scriptures are taught faithfully, and when Christian conviction produces Christian conduct.

We need that faith in our homes today. We need men and women who will work without surrendering hope, pray without growing ashamed, and endure without allowing hardship to make them cruel. The God to whom we turn remains worthy of our trust.

So when the future seems as broad and uncertain as an ocean, remember those who faced difficult days before us. Remember the father on the ship watching his family left on the shore. Remember the six or seven who nursed the sick through the winter. Remember the man who caught a rope in a storm, the people who prayed through a drought, and the riders who carried the Gospel into the wilderness.

Then take up the responsibilities God has placed before you. Pray for wisdom. Work with integrity. Strengthen your household. Help carry another person's burden. Continue in the faith.

And let the confession of Psalm 91 become the settled conviction of your heart: the Lord is your refuge, your fortress, and your God.

May we leave those who follow us an example of faith that endured, and a testimony that God was faithful through it all.

For further reading: William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation; Edward Winslow, Good News from New England; Peter Marshall and David Manuel, The Light and the Glory and From Sea to Shining Sea; Pilgrim Hall Museum, Plymouth, Massachusetts.

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