

PAUL DAVID TRIPP

NEW MORNING MERCIES

A Daily Gospel Devotional

“We have always resonated with Robert Robinson’s hymn ‘Come, Thou Fount,’ especially the line, ‘Prone to wander—Lord, I feel it—prone to leave the God I love.’ We feel the pull daily away from God’s goodness and toward a pursuit of our own, away from God’s gracious acceptance and toward the exhausting, impossible weight of trying to tip the scales in our favor. We are grateful to God that Paul has written this devotional to help, in Robinson’s words, seal our hearts for God’s courts above. If you’re prone to wander, this book is for you.”

Matt and Lauren Chandler, Lead Pastor, The Village Church, Dallas, Texas; President, Acts 29 Church Planting Network; and his wife, Lauren, writer; speaker; singer

“Each morning for years, Paul Tripp has served fresh-brewed wisdom and encouragement through his pithy, thought-provoking tweets, reminding us again and again of the all-sufficiency of Christ and his grace. *New Morning Mercies* offers more of the same (without the limitation of 140 characters)! These devotional readings will strengthen, nourish, and recalibrate your heart, and open your eyes to behold God’s fresh mercies at the dawn of each new day.”

Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth, author; radio host, *Revive Our Hearts*

“Paul Tripp beautifully blends wisdom that has been gained through years of counseling, insight into the biblical story of redemption, and his strong grasp of Christ as our substitute to produce a series of daily devotions that both warm the heart of the hurting and challenge the complacent. You will find this book to be both deeply rooted in scriptural truths and yet eminently readable. I highly recommend it!”

Elyse M. Fitzpatrick, counselor; speaker; author, *Found in Him*

“Over the last year, *New Morning Mercies* has been a great source of life to me. Paul’s writing encourages those who have grown weary of the struggle, living under the weight of the world.”

TobyMac, hip-hop recording artist, music producer, songwriter

NEW MORNING MERCIES

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Ben, you asked to be mentored and you became a substantial contributor. Isn't that just the way our God works?

INTRODUCTION

Each morning, I “tweet” three gospel thoughts. That is, I post three brief thoughts about the Christian faith on the social media site Twitter. My goal is to confront and comfort people with the life-rattling truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I want people to see that the grace of the gospel is not so much about changing the religious aspect of their lives, but about everything in life that defines, identifies, and motivates them. I am calling people to see the gospel as a window through which they are to look at everything in life.

By the Lord’s grace, these tweets have been well received, and numerous people have encouraged me to use them as the basis for a devotional book, with 365 meditations on the gospel truths expressed in the tweets. The book you are holding in your hands is my response to those requests. Each day’s reading opens with one of my gospel tweets, lightly edited, and then a meditation that expands on it.

It is a daunting task to sit down and write 365 devotions. My willingness to attempt such a feat wasn’t rooted in my pride in my ability as an author, but in my confidence in the amazing breadth and depth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As I began writing, I was excited to do some spiritual spelunking, that is, venturing down into the cavernous depths of the faith that I hold so dear. I did so, not so much as an expert, but as a pilgrim or an explorer. I sat down to write, not thinking that I had the gospel mastered, but that there was evidence in my life that I needed to be further mastered by the very message of grace that sits at the epicenter of everything I do in ministry.

Now, I have to be honest here—I didn’t write this devotional just for you. No, I wrote it for myself as well. There is no reality, principle, observation, truth, command, encouragement, exhortation, or rebuke in this devotional that I don’t desperately need myself. I’m like you; familiarity causes me not to treasure the gospel of Jesus Christ as I should. As the themes of grace get more and more familiar and common, they don’t capture my attention and awe as they once did. When amazing realities of the gospel quit commanding your attention, your awe, and your worship, other things in your life will capture your attention instead. When you quit celebrating grace, you begin to forget how much you need grace, and when you forget how much you need grace, you quit seeking the rescue and strength that only grace can give. This means you begin to see yourself as more righteous, strong, and wise than you actually are, and in so doing, you set yourself up for trouble.

So this devotional is a call for you and me to remember. It’s a call to remember the horrible disaster of sin. It’s a call to remember Jesus, who stood in our place. It’s a call to remember the righteousness that is his gift. It’s call to remember the transforming power of the grace you and I couldn’t have earned. It’s a call to remember the destiny that is guaranteed to all of God’s blood-purchased children. It’s a call to remember his sovereignty and his glory. It’s a call to remember that remembering is spiritual war; even for this we need grace.

Introduction

The title of this devotional is not only a reference to the way the Bible talks about God's grace (Lam. 3:22–23), but also an allusion to a famous hymn that I think we should sing every day:

“Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see:
All I have needed thy hand hath provided—
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

One of the stunning realities of the Christian life is that in a world where everything is in some state of decay, God's mercies never grow old. They never run out. They never are ill timed. They never dry up. They never grow weak. They never get weary. They never fail to meet the need. They never disappoint. They never, ever fail, because they really are new every morning. Formfitted for the challenges, disappointments, sufferings, temptations, and struggles with sin within and without are the mercies of our Lord. Sometimes they are:

Awe-inspiring mercies
Rebuking mercies
Strengthening mercies
Hope-giving mercies
Heart-exposing mercies
Rescuing mercies
Transforming mercies
Forgiving mercies
Provision-making mercies
Uncomfortable mercies
Glory-revealing mercies
Truth-illuminating mercies
Courage-giving mercies.

God's mercies don't come in one color; no, they come in every shade of every color of the rainbow of his grace. God's mercies are not the sound of one instrument; no, they sound the note of every instrument of his grace. God's mercy is general; all of his children bask in his mercy. God's mercy is specific; each child receives the mercy that is designed for his or her particular moment of need. God's mercy is predictable; it is the fountain that never stops flowing. God's mercy is unpredictable; it comes to us in surprising forms. God's mercy is a radical theology, but it is more than a theology; it is life to all who believe. God's mercy is ultimate comfort, but it is also a call to a brand-new way of living. God's mercy really does change everything forever, for all upon whom this mercy is bestowed.

So read and remember God's new morning mercies and celebrate your identity as the object of mercy that reaches beyond the ability of the heart to grasp and the words of one author to describe.

JANUARY 1

Here's the bottom line. The Christian life, the church, our faith are not about us, they're about him—his plan, his kingdom, his glory.

It really is the struggle of struggles. It is counterintuitive for us all. It is the thing that makes our lives messy and our relationships conflictual. It is what sidetracks our thoughts and kidnaps our desires. It is the thing below all the other things that you could point to that argues for our need for grace. It is the one battle that one never escapes. It is the one place where ten out of ten of us need rescue. It is the fight that God wages on our behalf to help us to remember that life is simply not about us. It is about God—his plan, his kingdom, and his glory.

This is precisely why the first four words of the Bible may be its most important words: “In the beginning, God . . .” These are four thunderously important words. They really do change everything, from the way that you think about your identity, meaning, and purpose to the way that you approach even the most incidental of human duties. Everything that was created was made by God and for God. All the glories of the created world were designed to point to his glory. The universe is his, designed to function according to his purpose and plan. That includes you and me. We were not made to live independent, self-directed lives. We were not meant to exist according to our own little self-oriented plans, living for our own moments of glory. No, we were created to live for him.

Where is this Godward living meant to find expression? It is meant to be expressed not just in the religious dimension of our lives, but in every aspect of our existence. I love how Paul captures this in 1 Corinthians 10:31: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” When Paul thinks of the call to live for the glory of God, he doesn't first think of the big, life-changing, self-consciously spiritual moments of life. No, he thinks of something as mundane and repetitive as eating and drinking. Even the most regular, seemingly unimportant tasks of my life must be shaped and directed by a heartfelt desire for the glory of God. Now, I don't know about you, but in the busyness of life I lose sight of God's existence, let alone his glory!

Let's start the new year by admitting that there is nothing less natural for us than to live for the glory of another. This admission is the doorway not to despair, but to hope. God knew that in your sin you would never live this way, so he sent his Son to live the life you couldn't, to die on your behalf, and to rise again, conquering sin and death. He did this so that you would not only be forgiven for your allegiance to your own glory, but have every grace you need to live for his. When you admit your need for help, you connect yourself to the rescue he has already provided in his Son, Jesus. Reach out for hope by reaching out for the rescue again today.

For further study and encouragement: Psalm 115

JANUARY 2

Your rest is not to be found in figuring your life out, but in trusting the One who has it all figured out for your good and his glory.

We were on our way to the local mall with our two young boys when the three-year-old asked out of the blue, “Daddy, if God made everything, did he make light poles?” I had the thought that all parents have, again and again, as they deal with the endless “why” questions that little ones ask: “How do we get from where we are to where we need to be in this conversation?” Or, “Why does he have to ask me ‘why’ questions all the time?”

Human beings have a deep desire to know and understand. We spend much of our daily mental time trying to figure things out. We don’t live by instinct. We don’t leave our lives alone. We are all theologians. We are all philosophers. We are all archaeologists who dig into the mounds of our lives to try to make sense of the civilization that is our story. This God-designed mental motivation is accompanied by wonderful and mysterious analytical gifts. This drive and those gifts set us apart from the rest of creation. They are holy, created by God to draw us to him, so that we can know him and understand ourselves in light of his existence and will.

But sin makes this drive and these gifts dangerous. They tempt us to think that we can find our hearts by figuring it all out. It’s the “If only I could understand this or that, then I’d be secure” way of living. But it never works. In your most brilliant moment, you will still be left with mystery in your life; sometimes even painful mystery. We all face things that appear to make little sense and don’t seem to serve any good purpose. So rest is never found in the quest to understand it all. No, rest is found in trusting the One who understands it all and rules it all for his glory and our good.

Few passages capture that rest better than Psalm 62:5–7: “For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.”

In moments when you wish you knew what you can’t know, there is rest to be found. There is One who knows. He loves you and rules what you don’t understand with your good in mind.

For further study and encouragement: 2 Corinthians 5:1–10

JANUARY 3

If eternity is the plan, then it makes no sense to shrink your living down to the needs and wants of this little moment.

There is no doubt about it—the Bible is a big-picture book that calls us to big-picture living. It stretches the elasticity of your mind as it calls you to think about things before the world began and thousands of years into eternity. The Bible simply does not permit you to live for the moment. It doesn't give you room to shrink your thoughts, desires, words, and actions down to whatever spontaneous thought, emotion, or need grips you at any given time. In a moment, your thoughts can seem more important than they actually are. In a moment, your emotions can seem more reliable than they really are. In a moment, your needs can seem more essential than they truly are. We are meant to live lives that are connected to beginnings and to endings. And we are meant to live this way because all that we do is meant to have connection to the God of beginnings and endings, by whom and for whom we were created.

It's hard to live with eternity in view. Life does shrink to the moment again and again. There are moments when it seems that the most important thing in life is getting through this traffic, winning this argument, or satisfying this sexual desire. There are moments when our happiness and contentment shrink to getting those new shoes or to the steak that is just ten minutes away. There are moments when who we are, who God is, and where this whole thing is going shrink into the background of the thoughts, emotions, and needs of the moment. There are moments when we get lost in the middle of God's story. We lose our minds, we lose our sense of direction, and we lose our remembrance of him.

God reminds us that this is not all there is, that we were created and re-created in Christ Jesus for eternity. He reminds us not to live for the treasures of the moment: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19–20).

Think about this: if God has already granted you a place in eternity, then he has also granted you all the grace you need along the way, or you'd never get there. There is grace for our fickle and easily distracted hearts. There is rescue for our self-absorption and lack of focus. The God of eternity grants you his eternal grace so that you can live with eternity in view.

For further study and encouragement: Luke 12:13–21

JANUARY 4

The best theology will not remove mystery from your life, so rest is found in trusting the One who rules, is all, and knows no mystery.

Her voice quivered that morning as she told me to get home as quickly as I could. My wife, Luella, is a very emotionally stable woman. She isn't easily rocked. I knew what we were facing was serious because it *had* rocked her. I was about six hours away; with my assistant, I made the nervous trip home.

Nicole, our daughter, had started her walk home from work late the previous night, as she had done many nights before. A car driven by a drunk and unlicensed driver careered up on the sidewalk and crushed Nicole against a wall. She had devastating injuries, including eleven breaks of her pelvis and massive internal bleeding. When I finally got to the hospital and walked into Nicole's intensive-care room, I did what any father with a drop of parental blood in him would do. I fell apart. I crawled up on Nicole's bed, not sure if she could hear me, and said, "It's Dad, you're not alone, and God is with you, too."

When I walked into that room, it was as if the whole world went dark. My heart cried, "Why, why, why?" If I could choose, I wouldn't have any of my children go through such a thing. And if I had had to choose one of my children, I wouldn't have chosen Nicole at that moment in her life; she seemed so vulnerable. In an instant, we were cast into life-changing mystery, and our theological non-negotiables didn't take that mystery away. Nicole did recover well, but we lived through four years of travail.

I held onto the thought that our lives were not out of control. We were comforted again and again with the thought that when it came to Nicole's accident, God was neither surprised nor afraid. You see, there is no mystery with God. He is never caught off guard. He never wonders how he is going to deal with the unexpected thing. I love the words of Daniel 2:22: "He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with him."

God is with you in your moments of darkness because he will never leave you. But your darkness isn't dark to him. Your mysteries aren't mysterious to him. Your surprises don't surprise him. He understands all the things that confuse you the most. Not only are your mysteries not mysterious to him, but he is in complete charge of all that is mysterious to you and me.

Remember today that there is One who looks at what you see as dark and sees light. And as you remember that, remember, too, that he is the ultimate definition of everything that is wise, good, true, loving, and faithful. He holds both you and your mysteries in his gracious hands, and because he does, you can find rest even when the darkness of mystery has entered your door.

For further study and encouragement: Isaiah 40:12–31

JANUARY 5

If you obey for a thousand years, you're no more accepted than when you first believed; your acceptance is based on Christ's righteousness and not yours.

The fact is that sin is a bigger disaster than we think it is and grace is more amazing than we seem to be able to grasp that it is. No one who really understands what Scripture has to say about the comprehensive, every-aspect-of-your-personhood-altering nature of sin would ever think that anyone could muster enough motivation and strength to rise to God's standard of perfection. The thought that any fallen human being would be able to perform his or her way into acceptance with God has to be the most insane of all delusions. Yet we all tend to think that we are more righteous than we are, and when we think this, we have taken the first step to embracing the delusion that maybe we're not so bad in God's eyes after all.

This is why the reality check of Romans 3:20 is so important. Paul writes, "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight." If you prayed every moment of your life, you could not pray enough prayers to earn acceptance with God. If you gave every penny of every dollar that you ever earned in every job you ever had, you could not give enough to deserve acceptance with God. If every word you ever spoke was uttered with the purest of conscientious motivations, you would never be able to speak your way into reconciliation with God. If you gave yourself to an unbroken, moment-by-moment life of ministry, you could never minister enough to achieve God's favor. Sin is too big. God's bar is too high. It is beyond the reach of every human being who has ever taken his or her first breath.

This is why God, in love, sent his Son: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). You see, there was and is no other way. There is only one portal to acceptance with God—the righteousness of Christ. His righteousness is given over to our account; sinners are welcomed into the presence of a holy God based on the perfect obedience of another. Christ is our hope, Christ is our rest, Christ is our peace. He perfectly fulfilled God's requirement so that in our sin, weakness, and failure we would never again have to fear God's anger. This is what grace does! So as the children of grace, we obey as a service of worship, not in a desperate attempt to do what is impossible—independently earn God's favor.

For further study and encouragement: Galatians 3:1–14

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