



PART 3 - D
WALKING WITH GOD ON HIS TERMS

**“God is the only being who is good,
and the standards are set by Him...
when you get your own universe, you
can make your own standards.”¹**

Francis Chan

God's Call to Obedience

WALKING WITH GOD ON HIS TERMS

D

Introduction

Many Christians are living spiritually impoverished lives because they have not developed a biblical system of beliefs to govern their lives, *based on what God says* about His character and the expression of His loving, divine purpose in all His ways. Perhaps you are one of those people. You may be unaware that you have constructed a view of God that is formed by past and present experiences, your emotions, your logic and your belief in lies. Your erroneous beliefs become a barrier to your ability to delight in God and His ways of relating to you. These beliefs can develop into demands you place on God to meet your perceived needs and desires. Failure to correct your view of God and your view of what you really deserve can lead you down the path of demandingness. (See following diagram.)

You begin with **desires** that may be biblical or unbiblical. When you believe that you **deserve** these desires be met, they quickly become **demands**, perceived needs or rights. You believe God exists to fulfill them. As you look to your circumstances and people to meet these demands, you will inevitably be left with disappointment. Then, as you place yourself as the judge over your circumstances, people and even God, you become angry, critical, judgmental, negative, fearful and discontent.

This **disappointment** will soon turn into **discouragement**. You become self-focused, viewing yourself as a victim or martyr, living in self-pity or numbing resignation. You begin blaming God and others for your unmet expectations. Discouragement can eventually lead to sinful **depression**. You have lost hope of having your perceived needs, rights or demands met so your anger is turned inward as well. You believe God has let you down because He has not met your terms for the relationship.

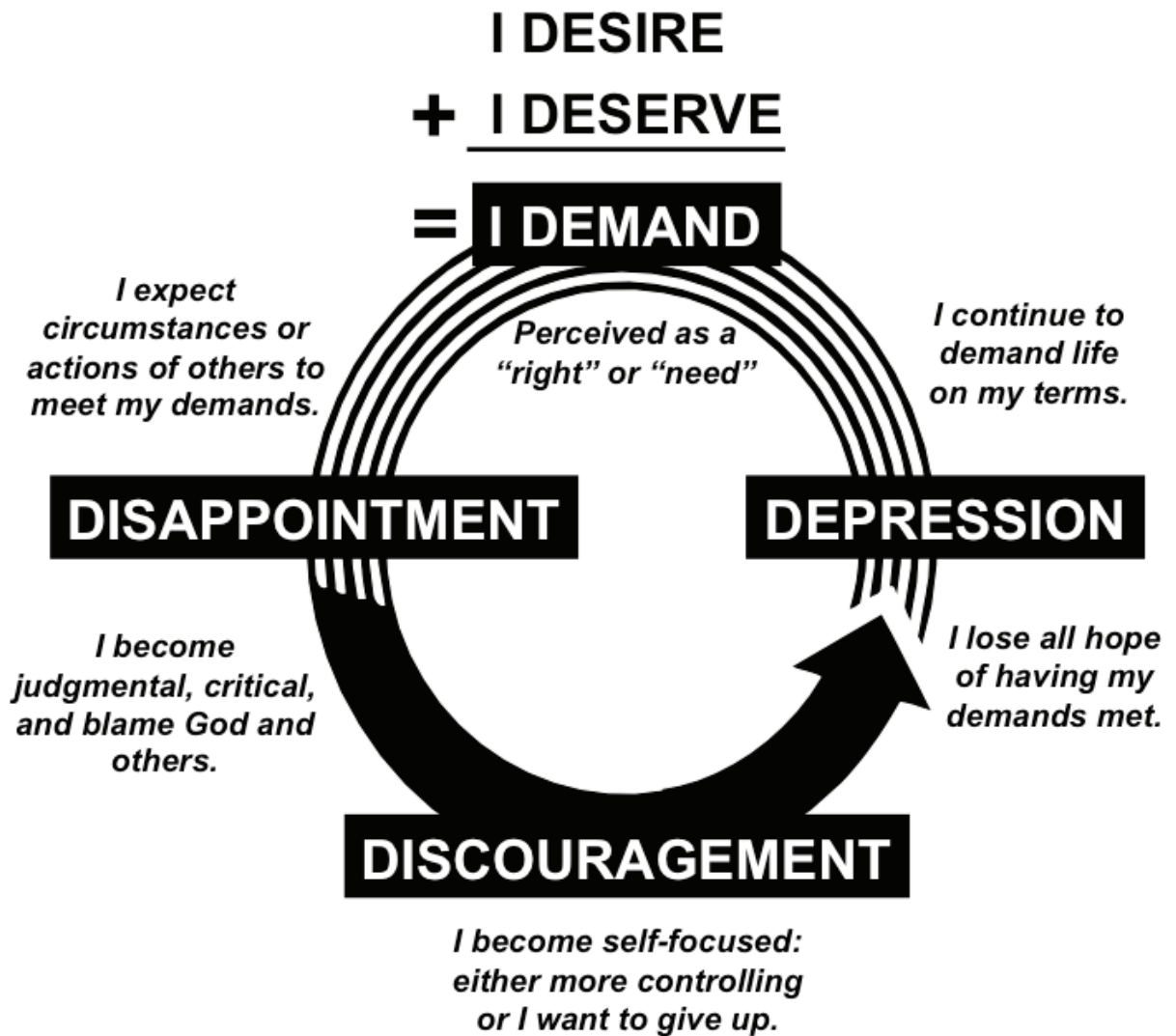
God's solution is to correct your sinful beliefs about His character, what you really deserve and to walk with Him on His terms, not yours. God's resources are to confess how you have sinfully responded to the impact of your unmet demands, renew your mind with truth about what you deserve, relinquish your perceived rights and forgive those who have disappointed you. Then put your hope in God and trust His sovereign plan and provision for your life.

Your erroneous beliefs about God also become a barrier to learning how to appropriate the wonderful variety and sustaining power of His spiritual blessings and glorious riches. If this is not your situation, you may benefit from this study by learning ways to help others with this problem.

“**And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.**”

PHIL. 4:19

The Path of Demandingness



“ The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.”
Ps. 145:17,18

Paul, in his epistles, frequently reminds you of what Christ has accomplished on your behalf. Not only Paul's letters, but the entire Word of God, is designed to be the source from which you formulate your beliefs and anchor your faith. Thus, this study begins with reminders to you of what God has done to accomplish your salvation through His will, love, mercy and grace.

- I. The triune God accomplished your entire salvation through His own will, design, initiative, decision, power and grace.
 - A. God the Father chose you to be His child before the world was created, by the kind intention of His will. (Eph. 1:3-9)
 1. He gave you physical life by creating you in your mother's womb and by ordaining the days of your life before you were born. (Ps. 139:13,16; 119:73; Is. 44:24)
 2. He determined *when* you would live and *where* you would live. (Acts 17:26)
 3. He drew you into a relationship with Him. (John 6:44)
 4. He brought you from your natural state of spiritual death to spiritual life, through the power of the Holy Spirit, because you were unable to comprehend the gospel or to make a spiritual decision. (Eph. 2:1-9)
- “ ...no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”**
JOHN 6:65
5. His Spirit determined when He would move into your life to produce your spiritual birth. (John 3:5-8)
- B. The Father gave you to His Son so that He would die for you and raise you to eternal life. (John 6:37,39; 17:1,2,24)
 1. Christ died for you while you were a sinner, helpless, powerless and ungodly. (Rom. 5:6-9)
 2. Christ died for you and reconciled you to Himself while you were His *enemy*. (Rom. 5:10,11)

- C. Your belief in the gospel is merely a *response* to the complete work of God in you and for you. He gave you the faith to understand and the power to respond to His call. (Eph. 2:8)

God saw you at your worst: born as a rebel against Him, His enemy, demanding your own way, deceived, deluded, seeking only to please yourself, striving to be righteous in your own eyes and perhaps in His. Even in that condition, He loved you so much that He willingly gave His very life for you. Your sin was so heinous that it required the Father putting His beloved Son to death on a cross. It required total separation from His Son while His wrath was being poured out upon Christ who received the judgment you deserved.

If Christ gave you nothing more than your salvation, you have sufficient cause to maintain a thankful, grateful spirit toward Him and for the life He has given you. Is your life characterized by worshiping God with immense gratitude for who He is and all He has done for you through His death and resurrection?

Having accomplished the greatest act of love in the history of the world *on your behalf*, He now desires to intimately commune with you. He gave His life as an expression of His perfect, eternal, unconditional love for you. Now He wants to walk in a close relationship with you for eternity. Will you permit Him to do so? Will you receive the riches of His grace or will you reject them because they don't meet your standards of how you want Him to relate to you?

- II. God has *already* supplied you with a rich inheritance, which is all you *need* for your emotional and spiritual security, stability and fulfillment, no matter what your circumstances may be. (2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:4)
- A. Salvation (Titus 3:5,6)
 - B. Fruit of His Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, which are also God's attributes and the way He relates to you (Gal. 5:22,23)
 - C. Christ's righteousness given to you (2 Cor. 5:21)
 - D. Forgiveness, cleansing from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)
 - E. Love and acceptance, which are not based on your performance (Rom. 8:38,39; Titus 3:5,6)
 - F. Faith to believe truth, even when you have lost control of your world (Heb. 11:1)
 - G. Power to overcome sin and defeat (Rom. 6:18; 1 Cor. 15:57; Phil 4:13)
 - H. Abundant life in relation to Him, no matter what your circumstances are (John 10:10b)

- I. Hope, which is not dependent upon your circumstances (Rom. 4:18-21)
- J. Eternal security (John 10:28,29; 1 Pet. 1:3-5)
- K. Fellowship with Him (1 Cor. 1:9)
- L. Guidance (Is. 42:16; Ps. 25:12)
- M. Comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-5)
- N. Purpose (John 15:16a)

“ WE MAY HAVE AS MUCH OF GOD AS WE WILL. CHRIST PUTS THE KEY OF THE TREASURE-CHAMBER INTO OUR HAND, AND BIDS US TAKE ALL THAT WE WANT. IF A MAN IS ADMITTED INTO THE BULLION VAULT OF A BANK, AND TOLD TO HELP HIMSELF, AND COMES OUT WITH ONE CENT, WHOSE FAULT IS IT THAT HE IS POOR? WHOSE FAULT IS IT THAT CHRISTIAN PEOPLE GENERALLY HAVE SUCH SCANTY PORTIONS OF THE FREE RICHES OF GOD?”

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- III. You will not *experience* knowing Him intimately and His blessings if you are rejecting truth.
 - A. You may believe the following lies, which you try to validate by your experience, feelings and logic, convincing yourself that you are right and God is wrong. Therefore, you do not *experience* His intimacy, love, forgiveness, power, grace and fellowship.
 1. believing God is distant and doesn't want to be involved in your daily life
 2. believing God doesn't love you just as much when you are sinning as when you are obedient
 3. believing God doesn't love you at all
 4. believing God has rejected, failed, abandoned, forsaken you
 5. believing you deserve a better life
 6. believing you must sanctify yourself
 7. believing God is *not* working all things for your good, rejecting the concept of God's goodness (Rom. 8:28; Ps. 52:1)

- a. You may equate God's goodness with making life easy for you and eliminating your suffering.
 - b. You have lost sight of God's expressions of goodness in the midst of your suffering and His desire to encourage you toward His goals.
8. believing you are a "victim" of God-ordained suffering in your life
 9. believing He is not sufficient or effective in His ability to minister to your neediness (2 Cor. 12:7-10)
- B. Your belief system may translate into some of the following sinful attitudes and actions:
1. being performance-oriented
 - a. striving to please Him through your own efforts and your own resources
 - b. presenting your own righteousness to Christ; taking credit for your obedience (Is. 64:6)
 - c. believing you should not suffer because you have tried to please God
 - d. establishing the goal of and striving for perfection
 - e. seeking "formulas" for successful living
 - f. being "driven" to succeed
 2. living a rebellious, sinful life without repentance
 - a. being angry at God, His plan for your life and/or others who are difficult people
 - b. claiming the "rights" to suppress, escape, manipulate or control to receive what you believe you must have
 - c. having a prevailing ungrateful attitude toward God, life, others and circumstances
 - d. hardening your heart and numbing your spirit toward God and others
 - e. believing your whining, self-pity, anger or unwillingness to accept your form(s) of suffering will change God's terms of relating to you

3. comparing your life to others, which will
 - a. produce feelings of superiority toward others and self-affirmation
 - b. produce feelings of inferiority, jealousy, anger, self-pity, discontentment
 4. establishing and pursuing self-life goals, demanding that your personal rights and perceived needs be met by God and others
 5. seeking security, power, purpose, sufficiency, affirmation and satisfaction through your idols and false identities
 6. refusing to believe that because God is your creator and you are His creation, He knows what is best for you and how best to relate to you
- IV. You may *appear* to be spiritual while “doing your own thing.” You may be trying to experience God through your own controlling strategies.
- A. You may pray, but then turn to your own resources, escapes, idols and false identities to bring comfort, the feeling of being loved, satisfaction and significance.
 - B. You may have regular devotions while seeking your self-life goals and your own means to reach them.
 - C. You may have a spiritual “veneer” while developing a lifestyle that is not an expression of “walking in the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:1,4)
 - D. You may believe you are in control of your own spiritual growth and pride yourself on changes in your life. (Phil. 1:6; 2:13; 1 Cor. 3:6b,7b)
 - E. You may be serving Christ in your own strength, taking pride in what you have to offer Him. (1 Cor. 3:12,13)
- V. You view your miserable or unhappy state to be *God’s* fault for not providing for your perceived needs and not loving you the way you want to be loved.
- A. You do not see that your misery, self-pity, anger and discontentment are the *result* of your rebellious attitudes and actions and your rejection of God’s truths. (Gal. 6:7,8)
 1. You do not see your miserable state as a form of discipline from a loving Father
 - a. who is reaching toward you so that you will see your need to repent. (Ps. 32:1-5)

- b. who is trying to show you that *your way* is not working, which is the reason why you are so unhappy and dissatisfied. (Heb. 12:5-11)
 - 2. You do not realize that God is pursuing you by not allowing your sinful beliefs and methods to succeed. (Jas. 4:6)
 - B. You do not understand that a loving God, who is pursuing you, desires you to see your need for a fuller relationship with Him.
- VI. You become the *determiner* of what you regard as truth.
 - A. You allow your view of God to be shaped by your circumstances, past and present experiences, emotions and worldly logic. You may
 - 1. allow the untrustworthiness of your parents' character to determine your view of God.
 - 2. allow the people who violated you in the past to determine your view of God.
 - B. You *judge* God as unloving, unfaithful or unconcerned because of
 - 1. His allowance of your past or present circumstances which were/are troublesome, difficult, painful.
 - 2. His not giving you what you want.
 - 3. your refusal to see that He always gives you what you need
 - a. to create a Christ-shaped void, which prepared your heart for His salvation.
 - b. to sanctify you, to grow you spiritually into the likeness of Christ. (Rom. 5:3-5; Jas. 1:2-4)
 - c. to reach His goals. (2 Cor. 9:8)
 - C. You *judge* your Creator as
 - 1. unworthy to control your life.
 - 2. incapable of ministering effectively to you.
 - 3. unable to relate to you in a loving way.

4. not knowing how to care for you or what is best for you.

D. You *reject* God's expressions of love and His blessings because

1. they don't come "packaged" according to *your* demands and expectations or on *your* terms.
2. you believe you deserve far better, rather than believing you deserve nothing but eternal damnation.
3. He didn't give you "enough." You may acknowledge that He has given you some good gifts, but you want/demand more.

E. You *reject* what God says in Scripture about His character and His provisions for your emotional and spiritual well-being.

1. You, in fact, call Him a liar, and in so doing, you are a blasphemer.
2. You choose to believe the lies of Satan, the one *God* declares a liar and deceiver. (John 8:44,45)

You are primarily seeking a meaningful relationship with God *through* people and circumstances meeting your self-life goals. When they fail to meet your expectations, then you conclude that God has failed you, doesn't love you, and doesn't know what you need to be fulfilled. You are ultimately saying, "I will give You permission to closely relate to me when You meet *my* terms; otherwise, I will not trust You."

“ UNBELIEF SEES GOD THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES, AS WE SOMETIMES SEE THE SUN SHORN OF HIS RAYS THROUGH SMOKY AIR; BUT FAITH PUTS GOD BETWEEN ITSELF AND CIRCUMSTANCES, AND LOOKS AT THEM THROUGH HIM.”²
F. B. MEYER

VII. **You have erected a barrier** between you and God through your unbelief and your resulting demands. This barrier produces some of the following:

- A. A lack of experiencing God's intimacy, fellowship, power, blessings, fruit
 1. knowing "about" God, but not *knowing* God
 2. not knowing how to "connect" with Him
- B. An anger toward God ~ If you are angry at the plan for your life then you must confess that you are angry at God, The Planner.

- C. A self-trust, relying upon your own feelings, experience, logic, common sense to determine your relationship with God
- D. A self-sufficiency, relying upon your goals, idols, false identities, controlling strategies to replace your provision in and through Christ
- E. An excuse, which you believe is valid, to rebel against submission to God and His Word
- F. An inability to “rest” in Christ and His sovereign will for your life
- G. A determination that you know better than God what is best for your life

VIII. God says,

“ You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘He did not make me’? Can the pot say of the potter, ‘He knows nothing’? ”
Is. 29:16

- A. You are double-minded, professing to know the Lord while not permitting Him to intimately relate to you through your submission to truth.
 - 1. God says in this condition you should not *expect* to receive anything from Him, although He continues to bless you in many ways that you probably take for granted. (Jas. 1:6-8)
 - 2. His riches and spiritual blessings await you; they haven’t been removed, for they are your inheritance if you are a child of God.

“ Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.”
Is. 30:18 NASB

- 3. God’s attributes remain consistent and unchanging, no matter what your opinions are. (Heb. 13:8)
- B. God’s love continues to pursue you; His love is always reaching toward you to draw you to Himself. (Lam. 3:22-24)
 - 1. Acknowledge that your misery, self-pity, anger or discontent is the *result* of your rebellious attitudes, sinful responses to your trials and rejection of God’s truths. (Gal. 6:7,8)

2. Recognize your miserable state as a form of discipline from a loving Father. (Heb. 12:5-11)
 - a. God is trying to show you that *your way* is not working, and that is why your methods are not bringing the desired results. (Jas. 4:6)
 - b. He is reaching toward you, through this form of discipline, so that you will see your need to be broken of self-will and to repent. (Ps. 32:1-5)
 - c. He desires you to see your need for a fuller relationship with Him.

IX. God has given you His Word as *the primary source* upon which to formulate your beliefs about His character, His goals and ways to relate to Him.

“ FAITH HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH FEELINGS, OR WITH IMPRESSIONS, WITH IMPROBABILITIES, OR WITH OUTWARD APPEARANCES. IF WE DESIRE TO COUPLE THEM WITH FAITH, THEN WE ARE NO LONGER RESTING ON THE WORD OF GOD BECAUSE FAITH NEEDS NOTHING OF THE KIND. FAITH RESTS ON THE NAKED WORD OF GOD. WHEN WE TAKE HIM AT HIS WORD, THE HEART IS AT PEACE.”³

GEORGE MUELLER

- A. Confess your self-manufactured views of God and also
 1. your prideful, arrogant spirit, which has rejected His truth and intimacy with Him.
 2. your selfish motives, goals, demands, expectations.
 3. your anger at God/others, self-pity, self-absorption, jealousy, hardened heart, depression, etc.
 4. your own ways of trying to reach intimacy with God apart from abiding in Christ. (John 15:5)
 5. your ways of rewarding yourself, satisfying yourself or escaping painful situations through your idols, false identities, “pet” sins, secret sins.
 6. your specific sins revealed in this study.
- B. Come humbly to the Scriptures with a broken spirit and a willingness to *accept* and to *believe* what God says about Himself. Meditate on and immerse yourself in His Word. (Ps. 1:1-3; John 8:45,46; Jas. 4:6-10)
 1. Prepare for Bible reading and prayer.

- a. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth about Jesus to you as you read His Word. It is His role to do so. (John 14:26)
 - b. Ask God to rebuke the principalities and powers of Satan, which have a grip on your mind. (Jude 9)
2. Choose to accept the **fact** that God's route of blessing is usually linked with brokenness, repentance, suffering and trial. (Ps. 32:1,2; Matt. 5:3-12; Jas. 1:12) In the Old Testament, Joseph went through many forms of severe suffering. But he understood his Lord's dominion over and purpose in his adversity; summed up in his words, "...**God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.**" (Gen. 41:52 NASB)
 3. Choose to renew your mind repeatedly with belief in His truth, to appreciate His attributes and sovereign ways of working. (Rom.12:2; Is. 26:3)
 4. Choose to submit yourself in obedience to the truths you are learning.
- C. Realize you are called to suffer for the sake of Christ; that is *not* negotiable. (Phil. 1:29)
- D. Realize you are given choices:
1. You can accept suffering as coming from the hand of a *loving* Father to accomplish His will in and through you. Then you can humbly receive the treasures He has provided for you in darkness. (Jas. 1:2-4; Is. 45:3)
 2. You can rail against adversity, reject God's grace and other provisions for your suffering, and maintain a distant relationship with God. (Prov. 19:3)
 3. Your *attitudes* toward and *beliefs* about God and suffering determine whether life
 - a. will be one of prevailing misery, complaint and/or superficiality, rejecting intimacy with Him and the riches of His grace.
 - b. will be an exciting, fulfilling journey with Jesus as He manifests Himself in the midst of adversity.
 4. You must repeatedly tell yourself the truth about God's love, goodness and faithfulness, regardless of what your circumstances are or what you are feeling and perceiving.
 - a. Do not allow your circumstances to become excuses to deny the truth of God's Word!

- b. Believe that your suffering is often the setting God has designed to give you the opportunity to be broken of self-will so that you can
- 1) *know* Christ intimately. (Phil. 3:10)
 - 2) learn and apply divine truths that may have never been understood if you had led a painless path to glory.

“ HERE IS THE SECRET OF DIVINE ALL-SUFFICIENCY, TO COME TO THE END OF EVERYTHING IN OURSELVES AND IN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES. WHEN WE REACH THIS PLACE, WE STOP ASKING FOR SYMPATHY BECAUSE OF OUR HARD SITUATION OR BAD TREATMENT, FOR WE WILL RECOGNIZE THESE THINGS AS THE VERY CONDITIONS OF OUR BLESSING, AND WE WILL TURN FROM THEM TO GOD AND FIND IN THEM A CLAIM UPON HIM.”
UNKNOWN

- E. Thank God repeatedly for His wonderful attributes and gifts, which you appreciate.
- F. Thank God for your forms of suffering, knowing He is using them to build your character. (Eph. 5:20; Rom. 5:3-5) See *Practicing Thanksgiving*.

Teach me the glory of my cross; teach me the value of my thorn. Show me that I have climbed to Thee by the path of pain. Show me that my tears have made my rainbows. ⁴ --George Matheson

- G. Realize that you need to come to Him and to worship Him in the *truth* of who He declares Himself to be. (Ps. 145:18; John 4:24)
- H. Accept His terms of relationship: His ways of loving, sustaining and comforting you, and His ability to satisfy you. (Luke 6:21)
- I. Open your mind and heart to *receive* His forms of blessing, rejoicing in the fact that He gave His life to bring you into an intimate, eternal relationship with Him!

“ O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.”
Ps. 63:1-4

“ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

EPH. 3:16-19