

Up To Palace Beautiful

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[0 : 00] If we could this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling if we could just read for a moment in that Psalm that we read in Psalm 84 and if we read again in verse 10.

Psalm 84 and verse 10 where David the Psalmist says, for a day in your court is better than a thousand elsewhere, I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a Son and shield, the Lord bestows favour and honour, no good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you. You know as a family we recently watched a Disney film, a film that I'd watched in my childhood and it was called Homeward Bound. Homeward Bound, I don't know if you've seen it before but what shocked me is that it came out in 1993 which only reminded me that I'm getting old. But Homeward Bound it's a brilliant family film because it's about three pets, it's about an

American bulldog named Chance, a golden retriever named Shadow and a Himalayan cat named Sassy. And these three pets they're left behind at a farm and they decide to make the long journey back home and by passing through forests and over mountains and even through rivers the pets make their way home, that they're Homeward Bound. But you know as when we watched the film with the kids and you must think that all I do at the moment is watch films but I have to say that in the current circumstances there's not much else you can do. But when watching Homeward Bound I thought that that's the perspective we should always have in the pilgrims progress. Because the pilgrims progress it's not just about getting from A to B, it's not just about getting from the city of destruction to the celestial city, it's more than that because it's a journey home. You know my friend the pilgrims on the pilgrims progress they were Homeward Bound and we as pilgrims in the pilgrims progress we are Homeward Bound because our citizenship is in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven and we have an inheritance that is incorruptible undefiled that fadeeth not away but is reserved in heaven for us and as Christians we are Homeward Bound because Jesus promised us he said to us in my father's house are many mansions if it were not so I would have told you I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also. My friend we're Homeward Bound because you know this world is not our home we're just passing through and you know that's what we're reminded us we continue in part two of the pilgrims progress because we've seen that Christiana,

Mershi and the four boys they have been invited to the celestial city they've been invited by the King to come and dwell in the King's presence with joy forever and as we saw last Lord's day when they began their long journey Homeward Homeward Bound they experienced Mershi at the gate and messages in the house and even though Mershi we saw that Mershi was unsure and thought that she was unworthy and even unwelcome to enter through the wicked gate and yet she met the Lord of the Way who was happy to receive her and all the pilgrims and grant pardon by word and deed. You remember that the Lord of the Way said I grant pardon by word and deed by word in the promise of forgiveness and by deed in the way I obtained it and so they experienced Mershi at the gate but then they also experienced messages in the house because like Christian before them when the pilgrims all arrived at the interpreter's house they were given seven messages in the house in order to help them prepare for the next stage of their journey Homeward and so this evening I just like us to consider this next section of the Homeward Bound journey and I want us to think about it under three headings Great Heart Grim and Gladness Great Heart Grim and Gladness so there are three headings this evening Great Heart Grim and Gladness so first of all Great Heart Great Heart you remember last Lord's Day that just as the pilgrims were about to leave the interpreter's house to continue in the pilgrims' progress the interpreter he called for one of his servants he called for a man who went by the name of Great Heart and the interpreter he instructed Great Heart to take his sword his helmet and his shield and accompany the pilgrims all the way to the palace beautiful but what we didn't mention last time was that in the morning when Christiana and Mershi and the four boys when they woke up and prepared to continue on their pilgrimage the interpreter he encouraged them to wait until after they had had a bath in the garden now it sounds unusual but Bunyan he writes in the morning they arose with the sun and prepared themselves for their departure but the interpreter would have them tarry a while he said to the maid take them to the bath and wash them and make them clean from the soil which they have gathered by traveling and we're told that they went and washed and they came out of the bath not only sweet and clean but also enlivened and strengthened we then read that because the pilgrims had washed in the interpreter's bath the interpreter he set a seal upon their forehead just between their eyes and the seal was so that everyone would know that the pilgrims these pilgrims had washed in the interpreter's bath and they had been cleansed from the filth of their journey of course what we have to see is that Bunyan is teaching us that as pilgrims who have fled from the city of destruction and passed through the wicked gate and now entered the interpreter's house Bunyan is saying that as pilgrims they've been baptized with the Holy Spirit and sealed by the Holy Spirit they've been baptized by the Holy Spirit and sealed by the Holy Spirit you remember that we mentioned before that the interpreter is a description and a depiction of the Holy Spirit teaching the Christian

and the interpreter's house is an image and an illustration of what happens when the Holy Spirit is working in the heart and life of a Christian therefore what's happening here is that the bath at the interpreter's house is the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the seal of the interpreter is the seal of the Holy Spirit but I want to be clear every Christian pilgrim receives the baptism and seal of the Holy Spirit every Christian pilgrim receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the seal of the Holy Spirit because the baptism and seal of the Holy Spirit it's not a second blessing it's not a second blessing which somehow gives you the gift of speaking in tongues or some other gift that's not true there's no such thing as the second blessing of the Holy Spirit in fact as I've mentioned to you before that when Steve Lawson was asked the question have you received the second blessing Steve Lawson said yes and the third and the fourth and the fifth in fact he said I've received every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ and you know that's true of you as well my Christian friend your salvation it isn't inferior or inadequate in comparison to someone else's because you have received tonight every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ you have been baptized and sealed by the Holy Spirit every

[9 : 14] Christian has been baptized and sealed by the Holy Spirit that's what Paul says to us in Ephesians chapter 1 he tells us who we are and he says you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of your salvation you've been sealed you've been baptized and sealed by the Holy Spirit but then just before they left the interpreter's house the interpreter he he fetched out white clothing and he commanded the pilgrims to put it on and so as that those now washed and sealed and clothed in white robes the interpreter he instructs great heart saying he says take these my daughters and conduct them to the house called beautiful at which place they will rest next so great heart he took his weapons and he went out before them on the way and Bunyan writes he says now I saw in my dream that they went on with great heart going before them and they came to the place where Christians burden fell off his back and tumbled into the sepulchre they came to the cross you remember it was at the cross that burdens Christians burdened loosed from off his back and rolled into the tomb never to be seen again they came to the cross and we read that it was at the cross that Christianity asked great heart what the Lord of the Way meant when he received the pilgrims at the wicked gate you're we said earlier that the Lord of the Way had said to them when he welcomed them in through the wicked gate he said I grant pardon by word and deed by word in the promise of forgiveness and by deed in the way I obtained it and what great heart says to Christiana it's brilliant because he says the pardon that you mercy and these boys have obtained it was by him that let you in at the gate he has obtained it in this double way he has shown righteousness to cover you and spilt his blood to wash you he has obtained it in this double way he has shown righteousness to cover you and spilt his blood to wash you bunion is teaching us the doctrine of double imputation it's the doctrine of double imputation or as we like to call it Calvary's great transaction it's Calvary's great transaction that on the cross

Jesus bore our griefs and carried our sorrows he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our inequities the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we were healed on the cross Jesus was our sinless substitute Jesus was our sinless scapegoat Jesus was our sinless sacrifice and on the cross Jesus took the penalty and punishment for our sin and by his obedience we have obtained forgiveness and pardon we have obtained his righteousness through his blood it was Calvary's great transaction that's what Paul said at the end of 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 he said God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him my friend because of Jesus you can say tonight on the cross the worst about me was laid upon him and the best about him was laid upon me my disobedience was reckoned to him his right his obedience was reckoned to me my sin and my shame was transferred to Christ and his salvation and his security was transferred to me my ruin was credited to him his riches were credited to me my righteousness was imputed to him my filthy righteousness my unrighteousness was imputed to him and his righteousness was imputed to me my friend it's double imputation it's Calvary's great transaction he became sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him it's Calvary's great transaction but then as they continued forward along the journey they moved off from the cross and like Christian before them the pilgrims they came across three men simple sloth and presumption but you remember that when Christian encountered these three men they were fast asleep with fetters fastened around them and you remember how Christian he tried to to rouse them from their sleep and wake them from their slumber to make them see the danger that they were in but simple just said I see no danger sloth said just a little more sleep and presumption he just presumed that he would make it to the celestial city without having to persevere at all but what's interesting is that when the pilgrims find simple sloth and presumption this time they're not sleeping anymore they're dead they're hanging they're hanging by the king's highway and great heart he explains to them he says these three men were of very bad quality they had no mind to be pilgrims themselves and whosoever they could they hindered they turned several out of the way there was slow pace short wind no heart linger after lust sleepy head and a young woman named dull and you know banyani has all these illustrative names in order to emphasize to us that each of them were persuaded not to persevere in the pilgrims progress to which christiana responds and she says they have but what they deserve and I think it is well that they hang so near the highway that

others may see and take warning and my friend simple sloth and presumption they hung near the king's highway so that we too will take heed to the warning the warning that as pilgrims we must persevere to the end we must persevere to the end and so as they continue along the king's highway they'll meet a grim man but Christiana will also have a grim moment which brings us to look at our second heading grim so there's great heart and then grim great heart and grim banyan writes thus they went on till they came to the foot of the hill difficulty where again their good friend great heart showed them the two byways that were at the foot of the hill where formality and hypocrisy lost themselves and great heart said although you see that these ways are blocked with chains posts and a ditch yet there are those that will choose to adventure there rather than take pains to go up this hill of course the hill difficulty is a description and a depiction of the christian life because the christian life my friend it isn't one that goes with the flow as Jesus said the broad way well that's easy but it leads to destruction but the narrow way it's difficult but it leads to life therefore if we want to walk in the pilgrims progress Jesus says we must deny self we must take about cross daily and we must follow Jesus because Jesus said whosoever will save his life shall lose it but whosoever will lose his life for my sake in the gospel the same shall save it my friend the christian life it's like an uphill struggle it's like the hill difficulty because in the christian life you're taught to go against the grain you're taught to swim against the tide of the world you're taught to fight against the lusts of the flesh and you're taught to defend against the attacks of the devil the christian life it's not meant to be easy in fact Jesus promised that it wouldn't be easy that's why Paul preached so often in order to strengthen the souls of disciples he exhorted them to continue in the faith and that through much tribulation we will enter the kingdom of God it's not meant to be easy but as great heart confirms to the pilgrims there are some who venture onto the dangerous paths of formalist and hypocrisy and he says that even if the king's servants see that they're in danger and call them to come back they refuse to listen they refuse to listen to the loving warning and that's because the formalist thinks that he'll get away with it and the hypocrite thinks that he'll never get found out but as great heart explains they're both going head long towards disaster and destruction and you know my friend you know there was no one who condemned religious formalism and hypocrisy more than Jesus because you know when we read through the gospels Jesus is repeatedly condemning the formalist for his pomp and his practices Jesus he pronounces warnings of woe to the play acting hypocrite and you know Bunions message to us in this section is he's saying

don't go the way of the formalist and don't go the way of the hypocrite go the way of difficulty go up the hill called difficulty don't go the way of the formalist. don't go the way of the hypocrite go the way of difficulty go the way of difficulty then we read that they set forward and began to go up the hill difficulty and up the hill they went but as you guessed it it was a struggle. It was a struggle to get up the hill difficulty. And before they got to the top, they had to rest for a while at the Prince's Arbor on the hill. In fact, we read the Christiana's youngest son, James. He was so tired of climbing the hill difficulty that he started crying.

And, you know, it immediately made me think of one of our boys when we go for a long walk. There's always one of them. There's always one of them that gets very tired and wants to give up and they start crying. They want to be carried. And, you know, that's what James confessed to great heart. Young James said, I was almost beat out of heart, but thank you for lending me a hand at my need. I remember now what my mother told me, that the way to heaven is up a ladder, but the way to hell is down a hill. I'd rather go up the ladder to life, said James, than go down the hill to death. I would rather go up the ladder to life than down the hill to death.

[21 : 43] And, you know, there are actually two lessons for us there in that sentence alone. Because what we see is that we are to disciple young Christians and direct young children. We see great heart. He disciplined a young Christian. And, and, uh, Christiana directed her young children. We're to disciple young Christians and direct young children. We're to disciple young Christians and direct young children.

But you know as they rested for a while, Christiana, she shared with others some pomegranate, honeycomb and a little bottle of spirits which she had received from the interpreter.

And you know I believe that the pomegranate, honeycomb and bottle of spirits, it's an illustration of fellowship, the word and prayer. Fellowship, the word and prayer because that's the refreshing diet of the Christian. Fellowship, the word and prayer. And if you join us on Wednesday evening we can discuss this in more detail then. We can discuss the pomegranate and the honeycomb and the little bottle of spirits. But then Mershey said, she said, how sweet is rest to them that labor and how good is the Prince of Pilgrims to provide such resting places for them. Of this arbor I have heard much but I never saw it before. But let us beware of sleeping for as I have heard it cost poor Christian dearly. You'll remember that when Christian rested at the arbor on the hill, he fell asleep. And when he fell asleep his scroll of assurance fell out of his hand and he left it behind and after a while he realized that he had left it behind and he had to go back to find it. You know something happens to Christian's wife, Christiana. She had her grim moment because we're told that when they had eaten and drunk and chatted a little longer, great heart sent to them the day we're on, if you're ready let us prepare to be going. So they got up to go and the boys went before them but Christiana forgot to take her bottle of spirits with her. She forgot to take her bottle of spirits with her. In other words she forgot to move forward in prayer.

And it's another valuable lesson. Don't worry about anything but pray about everything. Don't worry about anything but pray about everything. As what Paul said in his letter to the Philippians, do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication and thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And we're told that when Christiana forgot her bottle of spirits she sent her youngest son James, she sent him back to fetch it for her. And with that, Mercy says, I think this is a losing place. Here Christian lost his scroll and here Christiana left her bottle behind. And you know, great heart, he responds to Mercy by saying, the cause is sleep and forgetfulness. Some sleep when they should keep awake and some forget when they should remember.

And this is the very cause why often at the resting places some pilgrims in some things come off loser. Pilgrims should watch, he says, and pilgrims should remember what they have already received under their greatest enjoyments. But for lack of doing so, they're rejoicing often ends in tears and their sunshine in a cloud. You know, it's a reminder to us as pilgrims that the Lord is not only given to us every spiritual blessing in Christ, he's also given to us many privileges as pilgrims. He's given to us assurance. He's given to us peace in our heart. He's given to us prayer and the word and fellowship. He's given to us all these treasures to help us along the way.

[26 : 04] But you know, my friend, if we forget them, if we forget these treasures, then there is, as these pilgrims discovered, there is a forgetting place where all our rejoicing will end in tears and our sunshine will be a cloud. Do you know, as I know why David prayed in Psalm 103, he said in that wonderful Psalm, O thou my soul, bless God the Lord and all that in me is bestowed up his holy name to magnify and bless, bless, O my soul, the Lord thy God and not forgetful be of all his gracious benefits he hath bestowed on thee. My friend, let's not forget all of the Lord's gracious benefits towards us. And so great heart, he continued to direct the pilgrims up the hill called difficulty and they passed by the place where Timurus and mistrust had met with

Christian and tried to persuade Christian to go back for fear of the lions at the palace beautiful. But they went on until they came to the lions at the palace beautiful. Now writes Bunyan, great heart was a strong man and he wasn't afraid of a lion but the boys, the boys who had been walking out in front, they were glad to hide behind great heart because they were afraid of the lions.

And when great heart saw the boys cowering behind him, he smiled and he said, now my boys, do you love to go ahead when there's no danger approaching but love to come behind as soon as the lions appear. Great heart was teaching the boys and teaching us to stand firm no matter what the circumstances. Stand firm because you know my friend there are times when our adversary the devil, he goes around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. There are times when his ferocious roar will make us want to cower away and just cover and hide ourselves. But you know what Peter says in his letter, he says the devil goes around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour but Peter says we're to be watchful, we're to be vigilant, we're to stand firm in our faith, we're to resist the devil so that he will flee from us. And Bunyan tells us that as they went up towards the gate of the palace beautiful, great heart he threw out his sword to make away for the pilgrims to pass by the lions. But then there appeared a man called Grim, or he was also known as Bloody Man because he had slayed so many pilgrims and were told that Grim was off the race of the giants. He was like Goliath. And as Grim stood over them he said to the pilgrims and to great heart he said what is the cause of your coming here? And great heart he stood up to the giant and he said these women and children are going on pilgrimage and this is the way they must go and go it they shall. And Grim responded saying this is not their way neither shall they go therein I have come forth to withstand them. But with that great heart he made the first move by swinging his sword at Grim and forcing Grim to retreat. And Grim said well you slay me upon my own ground. But great heart he proclaimed this is the king's highway this is the king's highway and these women and children though weak they shall go on their way. And great heart he struck Grim with a downright blow on his head breaking his helmet and bringing him to his knees. And with the lions chained they were unable to help Grim and so great heart were told that he cut off Grim's arm leaving him powerless and then he killed him. He killed him and we're told that when it was all over great heart he held out his hand to the pilgrims and said come now follow me and no hurt shall happen to you. But you know this section it not only shows us a Grim moment with

Christiana and a Grim man with this man called Grim it also highlights a Grim message. A Grim message because Bunyan he makes a little note about the king's highway that was on the way to the palace beautiful. Bunyan writes he says now to say the truth because of the fierceness of the lions and because of Grim this way had of late been unoccupied and was almost overgrown with grass.

And you know what Bunyan is actually drawing our attention to in that little note was what was happening at the time in the 17th century because as you know part one of the pilgrims programme it was published in 1678 and it was it was a Puritan classic it was a great success but it seems that by the time part two was written in 1684 it seems that Puritanism was waning. There had been a revival of Puritanism in the early part of the 17th century but by the 1680s it was beginning to decline. And with this little note here Bunyan is telling us that in recent years few have begun the pilgrims progress and fewer still have made it as far as the palace beautiful. Bunyan is telling us that the church isn't as well attended as it was in previous years and I'm sure that many of us can relate to that too because you know we can remember the days when the churches in our island were full they were full with people listening to the gospel. But like it was in Bunyan's day the church has seasons of revival and seasons of regression.

[32 : 35] But my friend in this season of regression we need to pray for revival. We need to pray that the Lord would revive his work and rouse his people and restore his church. We need to pray with Habakkuk revive thy work in the midst of the year. In the midst of the years make known in wrath remember mercy. In this season of regression we need to pray for revival. And so this evening we encounter great heart. We encounter grim but we also encounter gladness. That's our last heading this evening. Great heart grim and gladness. Gladness. So when they arrived at the gate of the palace beautiful we're told that great heart he knocked and watchful the porter he asked he answered by shouting he said who is it? But as soon as great heart said it is I watchful knew his voice and immediately he came down to open the gate and watchful the porter he asked great heart he said what is your business here so late at night? Great heart said I have brought some pilgrims and by my Lord's commandment they must lodge here and watchful asked would you not go in and stay until morning? But great heart said no I will return to my Lord tonight. And you know despite the attempts of Christiana and mercy and James they tried to persuade great heart to stay with him all the way throughout their journey he went back to the interpreter's house despite their attempts he went he went back home to the interpreter's house. But not without giving the pilgrims one more lesson. Great heart said to them I am at my Lord's commandment if he shall allow me to be your guide all the way I will willingly wait upon you but here you failed at the first.

For when my Lord commanded me to come this far with you you should have begged him to let me go all the way with you because if you had he would have granted your request. The pilgrims you know they hadn't asked for great heart to remain with them throughout the pilgrims' progress. They had only asked for great heart to take them to the palace beautiful and Bunyan's little lesson for us is the lesson of Jesus. You do not have because you do not ask. You do not have because you do not ask as Jesus said whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give it to you.

Ask and it will be given to you seek and you shall find knock and it shall be opened unto you for everyone who asks receives the one who seeks finds and the one who knocks it will be opened.

You do not have because you do not ask and with that we're told that great heart he returned to the interpreter's house. But then we read that watchful reporter he asked Christiana he asked her who she was and where she was from and so she said I have come from the city of destruction I am a widow and my husband is dead his name was Christian the pilgrim and you know in complete astonishment watchful said was he your husband yes sir Christiana and these are his his children and this is mercy one of my town's women and with that watchful were told he quickly rang the bell at the door of the palace beautiful and said to the maid he said go tell them all within that Christiana the wife of Christian and her children have come here on pilgrimage and they all come to the door and they all say to Christiana they say to her come in Christiana come in wife of that good man come in blessed woman come in all that are with you and they warmly invite them into the palace beautiful so much so that those in the palace beautiful they hug and kiss all the pilgrims and there was this great cheer from everyone within there was this great noise of gladness there was a noise of gladness they were all glad to see pilgrims arriving and entering the palace beautiful and you know as we said before the palace beautiful is a description and a depiction of the church it was a stately palace it was the church was was a beautiful building and you know that's certainly true because the church of Jesus

Christ it's a glorious body of people yes we're sinners sinners by nature and sinners by practice yes we're full of flaws and faults and failings but the beauty of the church is not in us it's in Christ it's Christ's church whom he he bought and redeemed by his precious blood he has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light of salvation the church is the palace beautiful my friend only because it has been washed and made white in the blood of the lamb and you know when these pilgrims arrive at the palace beautiful when pilgrims come out on the side of Christ when pilgrims enter into the palace beautiful those those who are already within they rejoice there's this joy and gladness among all the saints they're rejoicing it's just like

[38 : 34] Jesus said there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents so my friend if you haven't entered the palace beautiful yet if you're not part of the church of Jesus Christ if you're not a member then you are warmly invited to come you are encouraged to come and those who are within they will rejoice to see you coming because there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents and so when the pilgrims arrived at the palace beautiful were told that they were fed they had worshiped together and then they went to bed to rest and were told that christiana slept in the same bed that her husband christian had slept it and you remember it was a chamber called peace it was a chamber called peace and christiana she confessed she said little did i think that when my husband went on pilgrimage that i would follow him much less did i ever think that i would see his face again and worship the lord with him and yet now i believe i shall and god willing we'll find out what happens next week as we continue in the pilgrims pro guys i'm in the lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray oh lord our gracious god may give thanks to thee that as thy people we are homeward bound that we have been brought out of darkness out of the city of destruction and that we are being brought into that celestial city and lord we give thanks to thee that that were the one who has drawn us to thyself the one who has welcomed us into palace beautiful that none of us are worthy none of us are worthy of salvation and yet through calvary's great transaction that we are made righteous that we experience and enjoy all the blessings of salvation and lord help us even this evening to know who we are in christ and what we are in christ and to know that for those who are still in the outside for those who are looking in for those who look at christiana and christian and all the other pilgrims and may belong to be on the pilgrims progress with them we pray lord that tonight that there would be rejoicing in the presence of the angels over one sin of repenting that there would be those in the hearing who are on their knees saying like the publican god be merciful to me a sinner all lord hear us then we pray bless thy truth to us we ask that thou wouldst keep us in the way keep us as we go into another week that we would know thy help and thy strength thy grace to be sufficient for us that whatever is before us help us to know that the lord is also there do us good we pray for jesus sake amen then we'll bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of sam 84 sam 84 in the sing sam's version and we're singing from march 8 down to the end of the sam a sam that we read earlier on a sam that is a pilgrim sam of going towards the lord's house this this pilgrim in sam 84 he was in many ways homeward bound and that's what every pilgrim is we are all homeward bound so sam 84 from verse 8 hear my prayer lord god almighty and receive the plea i make listen to me god of jacob hear me for your mercy's sake look upon our shield and bring favor to your chosen

king one day in your courts is better than a thousand days elsewhere let me stay in my god's temple let me be a doorman there rather than find happiness in the tense of wickedness and we'll sing on to the end of the sam of sam 84 to god's praise here my prayer lord god almighty and receive the plea i make listen to me god of jacob hear me for your mercy's sake look upon our shield and bring favor to your chosen king one day in your courts is better than a thousand days elsewhere let me stay in my god's temple let me be a doorman there rather than find happiness in the tense of wickedness for the lord with grace and honor god will be a shield and sun he will not be bold in fencing from the just and lameless one lord almighty great and true bless the one who just in you