A watercolor illustration featuring various flowers and a butterfly. The flowers are in shades of pink, peach, and light blue, with some showing yellow stamens. The butterfly is small and colorful, with green, orange, and black markings. The background is white, and the flowers are scattered around the central text.

PILGRIM

RUTH CHOU SIMONS



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PILGRIM

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TO MY FELLOW PILGRIMS:
HIS GRACE HAS BROUGHT US
SAFE THUS FAR,
AND HIS GRACE WILL
LEAD US HOME.







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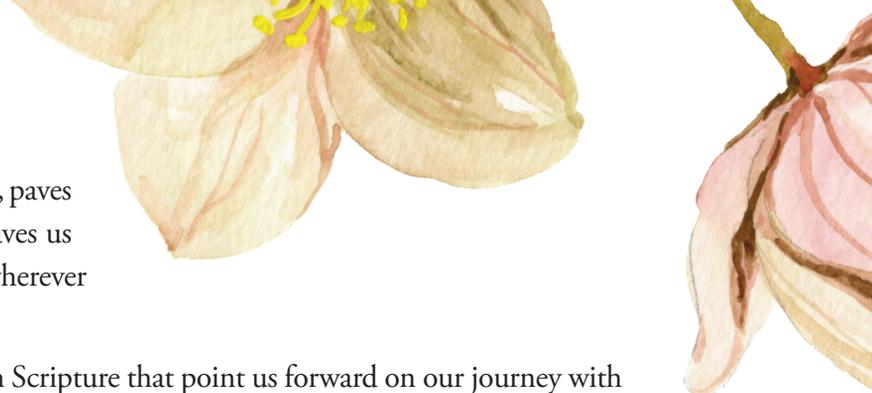
OUR PILGRIM JOURNEY

I don't know about you, but sometimes I find myself in such a hurry or so focused on where I'm going that I miss the street signs meant to point the way and help me discern where I am. I get lost, miss the turn, or think I'm somewhere I'm not—all because I'm not paying attention to the very guideposts meant to inform my journey.

A guidepost, by definition, points the way on a path that may be difficult or hard to navigate. Sometimes the way of the Christian life seems unclear or complex. Sometimes our walk with Christ feels like an unsure road to understand. But the Bible, God's Word, is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path, as we read in Psalm 119:105. We've not been left to wander aimlessly on this journey heavenward. No, our Savior shows us the way, by being the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6).

I wrote this *Pilgrim* journey so that we might walk this road, courageously and confidently, together as Christ-followers. Through the guideposts of grace that appear in this book—guideposts that affirm key truths in the Bible—we will find that we are not alone, not abandoned, and no longer need to strive to secure our own footing or define our own paths. Instead, we





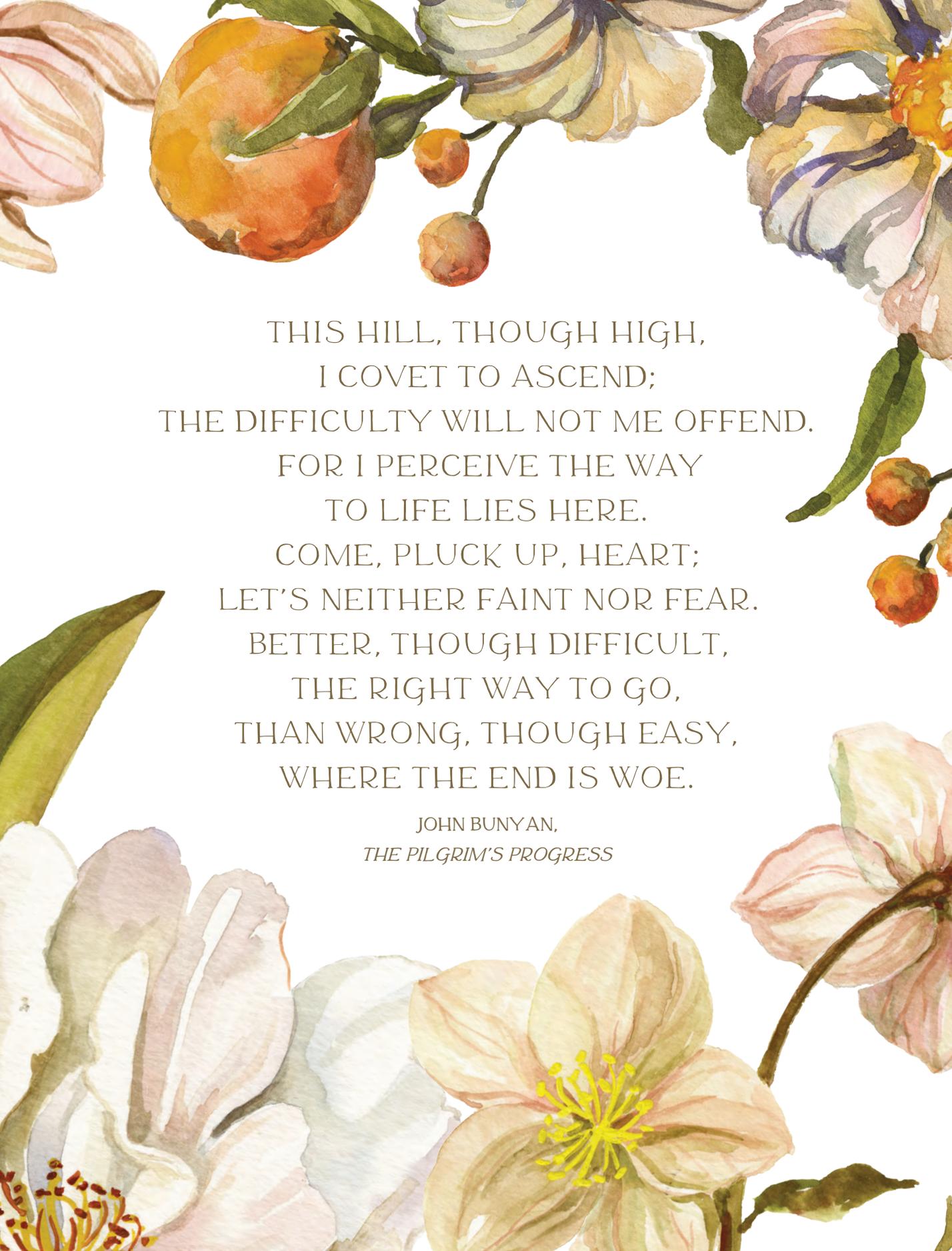
discover that God writes our stories, paves our paths, leads the way, never leaves us nor forsakes us, and goes with us wherever this earthly journey takes us.

Here, we'll explore reminders from Scripture that point us forward on our journey with Christ—guideposts that direct our hearts and minds to the truths of the gospel, the attributes of God, and the core foundations of our faith. We'll encounter reminders of God's character and how He leads us onward as pilgrims—the same reminders that have shaped believers who've gone before us in ages past. Some of these faithful pilgrims penned hymns that elucidate these truths in ways that stick with us long after the melodies fade; these accompany us on this journey as well.

My prayer is that through this exploration, you'll discover the themes of grace that punctuate not only the moment of salvation in a believer's life, but all the twists and turns, hills and valleys that shape our journeys—before, behind, ahead, and along the way. These truths are reminders of *God's* way, not yours or mine. They are indicators of God's story, not our own. Lord willing, these guideposts of grace will serve to remind us, again and again, season after season, that God is at work right where we are.

If you're weary, fellow traveler, I'm here to tell you you're not alone, and there is great hope for the road ahead. I'm here to remind you that you can lay down the heavy burden you've been carrying for miles and miles, and—if you're willing—let your Savior carry it for you instead. He is at work more than you know. There are guideposts of grace everywhere we look, friend, and they accompany our *Pilgrim* journey, even now. We just have to cultivate eyes that see and hearts that believe these guideposts are ours—for me and for you. Will you join me—as God leads us onward in this *Pilgrim* journey, together?

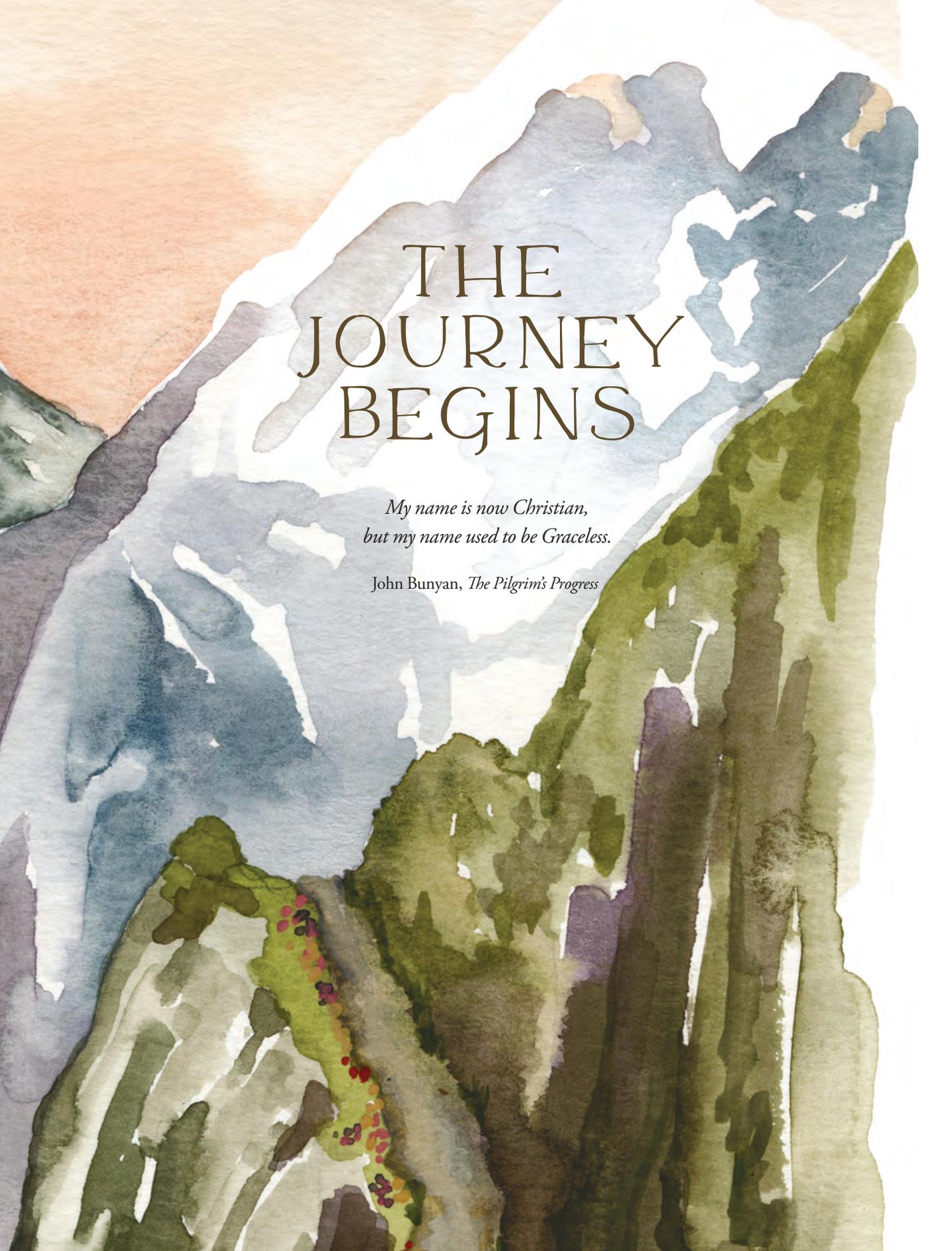


A watercolor illustration featuring various flowers and fruit. At the top, there are pink and purple flowers, a large orange fruit, and several small round fruits on a stem. At the bottom, there are large, light-colored flowers with yellow centers and green leaves. The background is white.

THIS HILL, THOUGH HIGH,
I COVET TO ASCEND;
THE DIFFICULTY WILL NOT ME OFFEND.
FOR I PERCEIVE THE WAY
TO LIFE LIES HERE.
COME, PLUCK UP, HEART;
LET'S NEITHER FAINT NOR FEAR.
BETTER, THOUGH DIFFICULT,
THE RIGHT WAY TO GO,
THAN WRONG, THOUGH EASY,
WHERE THE END IS WOE.

JOHN BUNYAN,
THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS



A watercolor illustration of a landscape. The top left corner shows a warm, orange and yellow sky. Below it, a range of mountains is depicted in shades of blue, purple, and green. A path or stream winds through the lower part of the scene, decorated with small, colorful dots in red, purple, and yellow. The overall style is soft and artistic, with visible brushstrokes and blended colors.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

*My name is now Christian,
but my name used to be Graceless.*

John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*



O love
of God,
how rich
and pure!
How measureless
and strong!

1

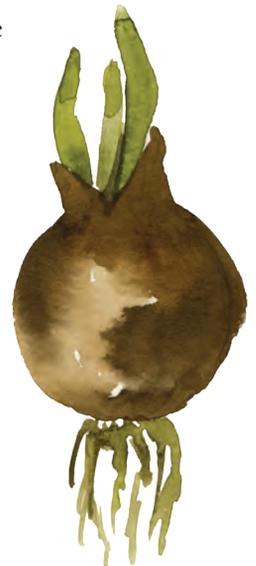
A LOVE THAT WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU

My firstborn spent a semester abroad in his junior year of college. Like any mom who's separated from her child, I knew the exact distance between him and me those months he was away. It felt like a million miles, but it was actually only 4,533, including one very large body of water. While he was away, we weren't even on the same continent, and truthfully, I hadn't expected the ache to be so overwhelming. Thankfully, our weekly chats on video eased the sadness and served to remind me that, in spite of miles and time zones, there was no distance between our hearts.

Every journey is marked by distance and terrain. Distance tells you how far you have yet to go, and terrain indicates how much effort it'll take to get to your destination. When traveling, we know we will be separated from comforts and the people we know and love, and we plan accordingly. In preparation for a journey, we pack survival kits, emergency contact cards, and try to minimize the unsettledness we inevitably experience when we're far from home.

It's not so different with our spiritual journeys. Whether we feel distant from or in close proximity to the things that give us assurance can be the difference between journeying in fear and anxious striving, or journeying from a position of courage and confidence.

We were made for the latter in our walks with God—a journey that traverses seasons of life and the difficult terrain of our hearts. It's a journey that



finds its purpose when we receive the gift of salvation through Christ and live as a new creation the rest of our days until we see our Savior face to face. The promises recorded for us in the Bible testify that while the journey is not easy, we do not walk alone.

So why do so many of us feel distant and alone? Why do we so often allow ourselves to believe that the distance between the God who rescues us and our sinful hearts is vast, when Christ erased the miles, the distance, and the eternal separation sin causes...and brought us near?

Maybe that's why the apostle Paul so clearly addresses the true state of a Christ-follower's nearness to God, and wrote in Romans 8:38-39, "I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Paul wouldn't have spelled out all the ways we cannot be separated from God's love if it wasn't so easy to forget. As if death, angels, and rulers were not enough, Paul says "nor anything else in all creation" (read: nothing in all the world) is capable of removing us from the active love of God in our lives as believers.

Let that sink in for just a moment...

You are loved.

You are welcomed.

Nothing can get in the way of God's love for you.

Not even you.

Not the government.

Not evil.

Not even your own mistakes.

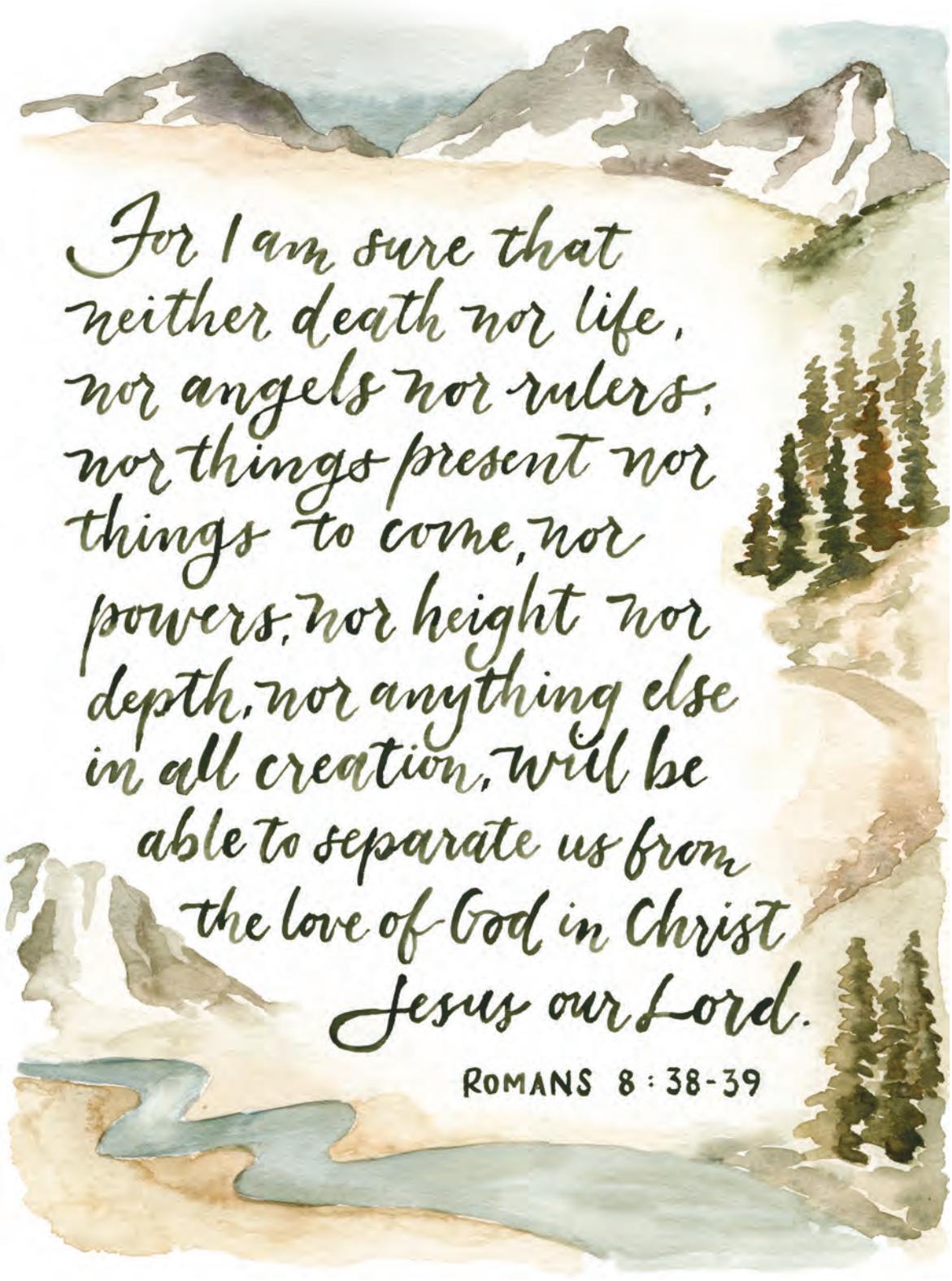
God's love is so limitless that no one can stop it.

My guess is that, like me, it's much easier for you to remember the ways you've caused distance with God than to remember the ways God has bridged the impossible chasm with His love. That's why Paul makes such a dramatic point about the inability for anything to remove you from God's love.





THE LOVE OF GOD IS GREATER FAR
THAN TONGUE OR PEN CAN EVER TELL;
IT GOES BEYOND THE HIGHEST STAR,
AND REACHES TO THE LOWEST HELL.
THE WAND'RING CHILD IS RECONCILED
BY GOD'S BELOVED SON.
THE ACHING SOUL AGAIN MADE WHOLE,
AND PRICELESS PARDON WON.

A watercolor illustration of a mountain landscape. In the background, there are several mountain peaks, some with patches of white snow. The middle ground shows a valley with a winding path and clusters of evergreen trees. In the foreground, a blue river flows across the scene. The overall style is soft and artistic, with visible brushstrokes and a gentle color palette.

For I am sure that
neither death nor life,
nor angels nor rulers,
nor things present nor
things to come, nor
powers, nor height nor
depth, nor anything else
in all creation, will be
able to separate us from
the love of God in Christ
Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 8 : 38-39

THE LOVE OF GOD

God's love is a core aspect of His character—so much so that the Bible says God is love. His love is perfect, steadfast, and not based on feelings or emotions. God exhibits His love in ways that are in harmony with His holiness, justice, omnipotence, and other attributes. One special quality of God's love is that it's self-sacrificing. He was willing to send His Son to die on the cross for us so that we could be brought back into relationship with Him.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul teaches that God secured our salvation by grace, and not because of our righteousness or religious acts. He shows that it was God's love that fulfilled the law we are unable to keep. It was God's love that rescued us, and it is God's love that sustains us. As Christ-followers, we can't walk, follow, or go anywhere with Jesus if we don't first surrender to the love of God that makes our journey with Him possible in the first place.

How might you think differently about your relationship with God this day if you took to heart the words of this hymn writer?

*The love of God is greater far
than tongue or pen can ever tell;
it goes beyond the highest star,
and reaches to the lowest hell.
The wand'ring child is reconciled
by God's beloved Son.
The aching soul again made whole,
and priceless pardon won.*

Does God still seem distant when you consider the distance He traversed to rescue you?

Without wonder and amazement for God's love for us, we will continue to live as if we're separated from our Father by millions of miles. Without



recognizing the nature of God's love, we'll believe we've stayed away from church too long to darken the doors and take part in Sunday worship. We'll assume we're too far off His radar to even know His care. We'll act as though we walk alone, far from home. Don't believe these lies, friend. Instead, be amazed by the limitless love of God. As Samuel Rutherford so wisely said, "Believe God's love and power more than you believe your own feelings and experiences. Your rock is Christ, and it is not the rock that ebbs and flows but the sea."

Nothing can separate us from God's love because His love doesn't depend on us or our feelings. It's limitless and unending, and is in perfect harmony with His goodness, mercy, and justice. It's not fickle. He's not holding out on us. We don't have to worry for the other shoe to drop. Because God's love for us is infinite, our security in Him is infinite. Let that truth usher total assurance and peace into your worry-torn heart. You and I get to choose right now to realign our hearts with the truth of His love for us. It's deeper, wider, more extravagant than we know. God's love has eradicated the distance between our hearts and His; we have a forever companion who will stay at our side through every step of life's journey.

When we could not be home with God, Christ became *God with us* on this journey. God with us...*home* with us. The very gift of salvation is that we might walk with God, forever.

GUIDEPOST:

NOTHING CAN
SEPARATE US FROM
GOD'S LOVE.

