TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

March 2022

March 1, 2022 -Will You Trust Him

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. (Hebrews 11:17)

For many of you right now — and for others of you the time is coming — obedience feels like the end of a dream. You feel that if you do what the word of God or the Spirit of God is calling you to do, it will make you miserable and that there is no way that God could turn it all for good.

Perhaps the command or call of God you hear just now is to stay married or stay single, to stay in that job or leave that job, to get baptized, to speak up at work about Christ, to refuse to compromise your standards of honesty, to confront a person in sin, to venture a new vocation, to be a missionary. As you see it in your limited mind, the prospect of doing this is terrible — it's like the loss of Isaac, the only son who can be an heir.

You have considered every human angle and it is impossible that it could turn out well.

Now you know what it was like for Abraham. This story is in the Bible for you.

Do you desire God and his way and his promises more than anything? Do you believe that he can and will honour your faith and obedience? He will be pleased to call himself your God, and to use all his wisdom and power and love to turn the path of obedience into the path of life and joy?

That is the crisis you face now: Do you desire him? The word of God to you is: God is worthy and God is able. Will you trust him?

March 2, 2022 - He Set Me Apart

He set me apart before I was born and called me by his grace. (Galatians 1:15)

Ponder the conversion of Paul and the sovereignty of Christ.

Paul said that God "set me apart before I was born," *and then, years later, on the Damascus road God, "called me by his grace" (Galatians 1:15).* This means that between Paul's birth and his call on the Damascus Road, he was an already-chosen, but not-yet-called, instrument of God.

This means that Paul was beating and imprisoning and murdering Christians as a God-chosen, soon-to-be-made-Christian missionary.

There was no denying or escaping it. God had chosen him and set him apart, before he was born. And now he would take him. The word of Christ is sovereign. There is no negotiating.

Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do. (Acts 22:10)

Damascus was not Paul's final, free will yielding to Christ after decades of futile divine effort to save him. No. God had a time for choosing him, before he was born and a time for calling him, on the Damascus Road. God called, and the call produced the yielding.

Oh, how sweet are the designs of God in the sovereign salvation of hardened, hopeless sinners who God has set apart for himself.

March 3, 2022 - By Obedience to God

It is sad that Christians have forgotten the meaning of the word church in the New Testament. It translates "ecclesia," an unusual word which meant then the town or ruling council or government for an area.

This means that the church was called into being to become in time the true ruling body for its given area. It was not to attain this position by means of revolution, nor by political activity, but by obedience to the law of God.

As a result, very early the apostle Paul called upon the church to create its own courts of law to adjudicate all problems by means of God's law-word (1 Cor. 6). In terms of this law, Paul summons Christians to give generously to assist those in need. A variety of activities marked the early church: law, charity, education, health, and more. The church was an empire within the empire, providing government for a growing number of people. Worship was the energising point: it sent out a people with marching orders for discipling all nations (Matt. 28:18–20).

The church is a Kingdom whose monarch is the King, Jesus Christ. It has a plan for the peaceful conquest of all things, and for the regeneration of fallen men. Instead of hostility towards men and nations, we in Christ's name offer peace. All through obedience to God.

March 4, 2022 - You Are Immortal

When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. (Acts 23:12)

What about those hungry fellows who promised not to eat till they had ambushed Paul?

It didn't work. Why? Because a string of unlikely events happened.

- A boy overheard the plot. § The boy was the son of Paul's sister.
- The boy had the courage to go to the Roman centurion guarding Paul.
- The centurion took him seriously and brought him to the tribune.
- The tribune believed him and prepared "two hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen" to take Paul to safety.

Every one of those events was highly unlikely. Strange. But that's what happened.

What had those hungry men lying in ambush overlooked? They failed to reckon with what happened to Paul just before they made their plot. The Lord appeared to Paul in prison and said, *"Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome" (Acts 23:11)*.

Christ said Paul was going to Rome. And that was that. No ambush can stand against the promise of Christ. Until he got to Rome, Paul was immortal. There was a final testimony to be given. And Christ would see to it that Paul would give it.

You too have a final testimony to give. And you are immortal until you give it.

March 5, 2022 - Jesus is Risen

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder. (2 Peter 3:1)

As Easter approaches, let's stir up our thankfulness and joy and admiration and amazement at what the resurrection of Jesus means for us. The curse of our fallen nature is that what once thrilled us becomes ordinary. The reality hasn't changed. We have changed.

This is why the Bible exists. Peter says of his two letters that they are written to "stir up" or "arouse" by means of "reminder."

So, let's stir up our sincere minds by way of reminder.

What has God done in raising Jesus from the dead? Here are a few biblical answers.

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, we are born again to a living hope.

1 Peter 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Because of Jesus's resurrection, he now has the glory that God has given him. Our ultimate destiny is to see this glory.

1 Peter 1:21: "God . . . raised him from the dead and gave him glory."

John 17:5, 24: "And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. . . . Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world."

May the risen Lord Jesus himself awaken and arouse your sincere mind to new depths of worship and allegiance and joy as you ponder that Jesus is Risen.

March 6, 2022 - A Prayer for Ukraine

O Lord our Governor, whose glory is in all the world: We commend to your merciful care the people and government of Ukraine, that being guided by your providence, they may dwell secure in your peace. Grant to their leaders and all in authority, wisdom and strength to know and to do your will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness and make them ever mindful of their calling to serve their people; Bring peace to Ukraine quickly we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart in the nations of the world, that working and witnessing together, we may live in justice and peace. Change the hearts of those who would make for conflict and war; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

March 7, 2022 - The Church is Pro-Life

As early as the beginning of the second century, Christian documents condemned abortion. The Didache or "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" admonished readers, "you shall not kill a child by abortion nor kill it after it is born." The first- or second-century Epistle of Barnabas says, "Thou shalt not slay the child by procuring abortion; nor, again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born." The fifth-century Church Father John Chrysostom called abortion "worse than murder," asking, "Why then do you abuse the gift of God…and make the

chamber of procreation a chamber for murder, and arm the woman that was given childbearing unto slaughter?" And Tertullian, who lived in the second century, even described an abortion using a copper instrument strikingly similar to what one might find at a modern day abortion clinic—and he condemned such killing in the strongest terms. Throughout Christian history, far before modern theological revisions, Church teaching was anything but nuanced on abortion. Further, Scripture's own testimony about the unborn is clear: that they are "knit together" and "known" by God in the womb—that they sometimes "leap for joy," and that Jesus Christ, God Himself, came to dwell with us as an unborn Baby.

March 8, 2022 - Our Servant King, Jesus

"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

Not only was he the servant of his people while he lived on earth, but he will also be our servant when he comes again. *"Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them" (Luke 12:37)*. Jesus gave that as a picture of what he will do at his return.

Not only that, but he is also our servant now. *"'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So, we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5–6).*

Does this belittle the risen Christ — to say that he was and is and will ever be the servant of his people? It would, if "servant" meant "one who takes orders," or if we thought we were his masters. Yes, that would dishonour him. But it does not dishonour him to say that we are weak and need his help.

It does not dishonour him to say that he is the only one who can give us what we need most.

It does not dishonour him to say that he is an inexhaustible spring of love, and that the more he helps us and the more we depend on his service, the more amazing his resources appear. Therefore, we can confidently say, "Jesus Christ is alive to serve!"

He is alive to save. He is alive to give. And he is thrilled to be this way. His eyes *"run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him" (2 Chronicles 16:9).*

Jesus Christ is exuberant with omnipotent service for the sake of all who trust him.

March 9, 2022 - The Spirit of Glory

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1 Peter 4:14)

Many Christians in the world today do not know the life-threatening danger that comes with believing in Christ. We have gotten used to being free from such persecution. It seems like the way things must be.

So, our first reaction to the threat that things might be otherwise is often anger. But that anger may be a sign that we have lost our sense of being sojourners and exiles.

Perhaps we have settled too much into this world. We don't feel as homesick for Christ as Paul did: *"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).*

Many of us need the reminder, *"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you" (1 Peter 4:12).* It isn't strange.

Have you ever wondered how you will do in the hour of final trial? The gunman has you in his sights and asks, “Are you a Christian?” Here is a strong word to give you hope that you may do better than you think.

This encouragement from Peter says that in the hour of unusual threat, whether insult or death, there will be “a Spirit of glory and of God resting on us.” God gives special help in the hour of crisis to those who suffer because they are Christians.

I don’t mean he is absent from our other sufferings. I just mean that Peter went out of his way to say that those who suffer “for the name of Christ” will experience a special “resting” on them of “the Spirit of glory and of God.”

Pray that this would be your experience when the trial comes. There will be resources of endurance in that moment that we do not have any other time. Take heart.

March 10, 2022 - God Opens the Heart

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. (Acts 16:14)

Everywhere Paul preached some believed and some did not. How are we to understand why some of those who are dead in trespasses and sins believed and some did not?

The answer why some did not believe is that they *“thrust it aside” (Acts 13:46)* because the message of the gospel was *“folly to them, and they were not able to understand” (1 Corinthians 2:14).* The mind of the flesh *“is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot” (Romans 8:7).*

Everyone who hears and rejects the gospel *“hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed” (John 3:20).* They remain *“darkened in their understanding . . . because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart” (Ephesians 4:18).* It is a guilty ignorance. The truth is available. But *“by their unrighteousness they suppress the truth” (Romans 1:18).*

But why then do some believe, since all are in this condition of rebellious hardness of heart, dead in their trespasses? The book of Acts gives the answer in at least three different ways. One is that they are appointed to believe.

Another way of answering why some believe is that God granted repentance.

But the clearest answer in Acts to the question why a person believes the gospel is that God opens the heart. Lydia is the best example. Why did she believe? Acts 16:14 says, *“The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.”*

If you are a believer in Jesus, all of these happened to you: You were appointed to believe; you were granted to repent; and the Lord opened your heart. The rest of your life you should be overflowing with amazed thankfulness at the miracle that you are a believer.

March 11, 2022 - Greatly Loved

We all once lived among the sons of disobedience in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved. (Ephesians 2:3–5)

Would you not love to hear the angel Gabriel say to you, "You are greatly loved"?

Three times this happened to Daniel.

- *"At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved." (Daniel 9:23)*
- *"O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you." (Daniel 10:11)*
- *And he said, "O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage." (Daniel 10:19)*

When I read through the Bible and come to these verses, I want to take them and apply them to myself. I want to hear God saying to me, "You are greatly loved."

In fact, I do hear this. And you can hear it too. If you have faith in Jesus, God himself says to you in his word — which is more sure than an angel of God speaking — "You are greatly loved." There it stands in Ephesians.

This is the only place where Paul uses this wonderful phrase "great love." And it is better than an angel's voice. If you have seen Jesus as true and received him as your supreme treasure, you are greatly loved. Greatly loved by the Creator of the universe. Just think of it! Greatly loved!

March 12, 2022 - God is for You

. . . among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Ephesians 2:3)

All of God's wrath, all of the condemnation we deserve, was poured out on Jesus. All of God's demands for perfect righteousness were fulfilled by Christ. The moment we see this Treasure, and receive him in this way, his death counts as our death and his condemnation as our condemnation and his righteousness as our righteousness, and God becomes 100% irrevocably for us forever in that instant.

Paul is saying that, before our new birth — before we were made alive together with Christ — God's wrath was on us. The elect were under wrath. This changed when God made us alive in Christ Jesus and awakened us to see the truth and beauty of Christ so that we received him as the one who died for us and as the one whose righteousness is counted as ours because of our union with Jesus. Before this happened to us, we were under God's wrath. Then, because of faith in Christ and union with him, all God's wrath was removed and he then became, in that sense, 100% for us.

Therefore, exult in the truth that God will keep you. He will get you to the end because in Christ he is 100% for you. And therefore, getting to the end does not make God to be 100% for you. It is the effect of the fact that he is already 100% for you.

March 13, 2022 - Hope of the Resurrection

If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all men most miserable. (1 Corinthians 15:19)

Paul concludes from his hourly danger, and his daily dying, and his fighting with wild beasts, that the life he has chosen in following Jesus is foolish and miserable if he will not be raised from the dead.

If death were the end of the matter, he says, *"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Corinthians 15:32). T*his doesn't mean: Let's all become gluttons and drunkards if there is no resurrection. Drunkards are pitiable too — with or without the resurrection. He means: If there is no resurrection, what makes sense is middle-class moderation to maximize earthly pleasures.

But that is not what Paul chooses. He chooses suffering, because he chooses obedience. Paul accepted this suffering as part of his calling.

How could Paul do it? What was the source of this radical and painful obedience? The answer is given in 1 Corinthians 15:20: *"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep." I*n other words, Christ was raised, and I will be raised with him. Therefore, nothing suffered for Jesus is in vain.

The hope of the resurrection radically changed the way Paul lived. It freed him from materialism and consumerism. It gave him the power to go without comforts and pleasures that many people feel they must have in this life.

This is the way Jesus said the hope of the resurrection is supposed to change our behaviour. May God help us to rededicate ourselves for a lifetime of letting the hope of the resurrection have its radical effects.

March 14, 2022 - God who Justifies

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. (Romans 8:33)

Paul could have said here, "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" and then answered, "No one! We are justified." That's true. But that is not what he said. His answer instead is, "God is the one who justifies."

The emphasis is not on the act but on the Actor.

Why? Because in the world of courts and laws where this language comes from, the acquittal of a judge might be overturned by a higher one.

If a local judge acquits you, when you are guilty, a governor may have the right to bring a charge against you. If a governor acquits you, when you are guilty, then the emperor can bring a charge against you.

Here's the point: Above God, there are no higher courts. God's sentence is final and total.

Hear this, all you who believe on Jesus, and are united to Christ, and show yourself among the elect: God is the one who justifies you. Not a human judge. Not a great prophet. Not an archangel from heaven. But God, the Creator of the world and Owner of all things and Ruler of the universe and every molecule and person in it, God is the one who justifies you.

This gives unshakable security in the face of tremendous suffering. If God is for us, no one can successfully be against us. If God gave his Son for us, he will give us everything that is good for us. No charge against us can stand, because God justifies us.

March 15, 2022 - No need to Fear

Pilate entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. So, Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release

you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above." (John 19:9–11)

Pilate's authority to crucify Jesus did not intimidate Jesus. Why not? Not because Pilate was lying. Not because he didn't have authority to crucify Jesus. He did.

Rather, this authority did not intimidate Jesus because it was derivative. Jesus said, "It was given to you from above." Which means it is really authoritative. Not less. But more.

So, how is this not intimidating? Pilate not only has authority to kill Jesus. But he has God-given authority to kill him.

This does not intimidate Jesus because Pilate's authority over Jesus is subordinate to God's authority over Pilate. Jesus gets his comfort at this moment not because Pilate's will is powerless, but because Pilate's will is guided. Not because Jesus isn't in the hands of Pilate, but because Pilate is in the hands of Jesus's Father.

Which means that our comfort comes not from the powerlessness of our enemies, but from our Father's sovereign rule over their power.

This is the point of Romans 8:35–37. Tribulation and distress and persecution and famine and nakedness and danger and sword cannot separate us from Christ because "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

Pilate had authority. Herod had authority. Soldiers have authority. Satan has authority. But none is independent. All their authority is derivative. All of it is subordinate to God's will. Fear not. You are precious to your sovereign Father. There is no need to fear.

March 16, 2022 - Use The Sword

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)

When Paul says to put to death the deeds of the body *"by the Spirit" (Romans 8:13),* I take him to mean that we should use the one weapon in the Spirit's armour that is used to kill; namely, the sword, *"which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).*

So, when the body is about to be led into a sinful action by some fear or craving, we are to use the sword of the Spirit and kill that fear and that craving. That means mainly severing the root of sin's promise by the power of a superior promise.

Having promises at hand that suit the temptation of the hour is one key to successful warfare against sin.

But there are times when we don't have a perfectly suited word from God in our minds and there is no time to look through the Bible for a tailor-made promise. We all need to have a small arsenal of general promises ready to use whenever fear or craving threaten to lead us astray.

Here are three promises to use in fighting against sin:

Isaiah 41:10, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Philippians 4:19, "My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

And, of course, *Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."*

Be constantly adding to your arsenal of promises. But never lose sight of the chosen few that God has blessed in your life. Do both. Be ever ready with the old. And every morning look for a new one to take with you through the day as you use the sword.

March 17, 2022 - Every Resolve for Good

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power. (2 Thessalonians 1:11)

Seeking the power of God to fulfill our good resolves does not mean that we don't really resolve, or that we don't really use willpower.

The engagement of God's power never takes the place of the engagement of our will! The power of God in sanctification never makes us passive! The power of God engages itself beneath or behind and within our will, not in place of our will.

The evidence of God's power in our lives is not the absence of our willing, but the strength and joy of our willing.

Anyone who says, "Well, I believe in the sovereignty of God and so I will just sit back and do nothing" does not really believe in the sovereignty of God. For why would someone who believes in God's sovereignty so blatantly disobey him?

When you sit back to do nothing, you are not doing nothing. You are actively engaging your will in a decision to sit back. And if that is the way you handle sin or temptation in your life, it is blatant disobedience, because we are commanded to wage a good warfare and resist the devil and strive for holiness and put to death the sinful acts of the body.

If you have lingering sin in your life, or if you keep neglecting some good deed just because you have been waiting around to be saved without a fight, you are compounding your disobedience. God will never appear with power in your will in any other way than through your exercise of that will. It will be through your good intentions, plans, purposes and your every resolve for good.

March 18, 2022 - God Rejoices to Do You Good

"I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. . . . I will rejoice in doing them good." (Jeremiah 32:40–41)

This is one of those promises of God that we can come back to again and again when we get discouraged. Can you think of any fact more encouraging than that God rejoices to do you good? Not just does you good. Not just is committed to doing you good, glorious as that is. But that he rejoices to do you good. "I will rejoice in doing them good."

He doesn't begrudgingly fulfill the promise in Romans 8:28 to work everything together for our good. It is his joy to do you good. And not just sometimes. But Always! "I will not turn away from doing good to them." There are no lapses in his commitment or in his joy in doing good to his children. To all those who trust him. That should make us so glad!

But sometimes it is hard to be glad. Our situation is so hard to bear that we just can't muster any joy. When that happens to me, I try to imitate Abraham: *"In hope he believed against hope" (Romans 4:18).* You look

your hopeless situation in the face and say, "You are not as strong as God! He can do the impossible. And I know he loves to do it for those who trust him. So, hopelessness, you will not have the last say. I trust God!"

We should be so glad that what makes the heart of almighty God happy includes doing good for you and me! "I will rejoice in doing them good."

March 19, 2022 - Self Sufficiency

"They do all their deeds to be seen by others. . . . They love the place of honour at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others." (Matthew 23:5–7)

The itch of self-regard craves the scratch of self-approval. If we are getting our pleasure from feeling self-sufficient, we will not be satisfied without others seeing and applauding our self-sufficiency.

Hence Jesus's description of the scribes and Pharisees. "They do all their deeds to be seen by others."

This is ironic. Wouldn't you think that self-sufficiency should free the proud person from the need to be made much of by others? That's what "sufficient" means. But evidently there is an emptiness in this so-called self-sufficiency.

The self was never designed to satisfy itself or rely upon itself. It never can be self-sufficient. We are not God. We are in the image of God. And what makes us "like" God is not our self-sufficiency. We are shadows and echoes. So, there will always be an emptiness in the soul that struggles to be satisfied with the resources of self.

But if you would turn from self as the source of satisfaction and come to Jesus for the enjoyment of all that God is for us in him, then the itch of emptiness would be replaced by fullness. Turn away from Self Sufficiency.

March 20, 2022 - His Everlasting Arms

"The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deuteronomy 33:27)

You may be going through things right now that are painfully preparing you for some precious service to Jesus and to his people. When a person strikes rock bottom with a sense of nothingness or helplessness, he may find that he has struck the Rock of Ages.

You cannot sink so low in despairing of your own resources that God does not see and care. In fact, he is at the bottom waiting to catch you.

Yes, he sees you trembling and slipping. He could and often does grab you before you hit bottom. But this time he has some new lessons to teach.

The psalmist said in Psalm 119:71, *"It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes." He does not say it was easy or fun or pleasant. In retrospect, he simply says, "It was good for me."*

Do not think that your wound has come to you apart from God's gracious design. Remember his word: *"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me . . . I wound and I heal" (Deuteronomy 32:39).*

May God grant a special grace to you who are groaning under some burden. Look eagerly for the new tenderness of love that God is imparting to you even now and know that underneath are his everlasting arms.

March 21, 2022 - Filled with the Spirit

Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4)

How can we be filled with the Holy Spirit? How can we experience an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our church and ourselves that fills us with great joy and frees us, and empowers us, to love those around us in ways so authentic that they are won to Christ?

Answer: Meditate day and night upon the incomparable, hope-giving promises of God. As Romans 15:4 shows us, that's the way Paul kept his heart full of hope and joy and love.

The Holy Spirit is the divine author of Scripture. His word is the means of his work.

Hope is the confidence that the wonderful future promised to us by the word of the Spirit is going to really come true. Therefore, the way to be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with his word. The way to have the power of the Spirit is to believe the promises of his word.

For it is the word of promise that fills us with hope, and hope fills us with joy, and joy overflows in the power and freedom to love our neighbour. And that is the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

March 22, 2022 - Fan Your Spark

A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench. (Isaiah 42:3)

Here are some very encouraging words come from this prophecy in Isaiah 42:1–3 about how Jesus will use his spiritual power.

Do you feel like "a bruised reed" — like one of those big top-heavy Easter lilies whose stem has been squashed so that the flower flops to the ground and gets no sap?

Do you ever feel like your faith is just a little spark instead of a flame — like that little red dot at the end of the wick after you blow out the birthday candle?

Take heart! The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of encouragement: he will not snap off your flower; he will not snuff out your spark.

It may be a grief to us that we are only a spark instead of a flaming fire. But listen! And be encouraged: Yes, there is a big difference between a spark and a fire. But there is an infinite difference between a spark and no spark! A mustard seed of faith is infinitely closer to being a mountain of faith than it is to being no faith.

Open the window of God's promises and let the Spirit blow into every room of your heart. The Holy Wind of God will not break or quench. He will lift up your head and fan your spark into a flame. He is the Spirit of encouragement that will Fan Your Spark.

March 23, 2022 - Anxiety is Pride

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6–7)

Why is anxiety about the future a form of pride? God's answer would sound something like this:

I — the Lord, your Maker — I am he who comforts you, who promises to take care of you; and those who threaten you are mere men who die. So, your fear must mean that you do not trust me — and even though you are not sure that your own resources will take care of you, yet you opt for fragile self-reliance, rather than faith in my grace. So, all your trembling — weak as it is — reveals pride.

The remedy? Turn from self-reliance to God-reliance and put your faith in the all-sufficient power of the promise of his grace.

One way to humble ourselves is to cast all our anxieties on God. Which means that one hindrance to casting your anxieties on God is pride. Which means that undue worry is a form of pride. No matter how weak it looks or feels.

Now, why is casting our anxieties on the Lord the opposite of pride? Because pride does not like to admit that it has any anxieties. Or that we can't take care of them ourselves. And if pride has to admit that its fears are unmanageable, it still does not want to admit that the remedy is trusting someone else who is wiser and stronger.

Pride is a form of unbelief and does not like to trust in God for his grace. Faith, on the other hand, admits the need for help. Pride won't. Faith banks on God to give help. Pride won't. Faith casts anxieties on God. Pride won't.

March 24, 2022 - Adore Christ with our Prayer

I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. (Revelation 5:4)

Have you ever thought of your prayers as the aroma of heaven? This is the picture we get when we read Revelation 5. Here is a glimpse of life in heaven.

In Revelation 5, we see God almighty on the throne with a scroll in his hand. The scroll had seven seals. They all had to be pulled off before the scroll could be opened.

At first, John wept that there was no one worthy to open the scroll and look into it. But then one of the elders in heaven says, *"Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (Revelation 5:5).*

By dying on the cross, Jesus had earned the right to open the remainder of redemptive history and lead his people victoriously through it.

In the next verse, the Lion is pictured as a Lamb, "standing, as though it had been slain". Isn't this a beautiful image of Jesus's victory on the cross? Standing, not lying, though it had been slain!

So, now the Lamb is worthy to take the scroll of redemptive history from God's hand and open it. This is such a kingly act that the twenty-four elders of heaven fall down before the Lamb in adoration.

And do you know what the golden bowls of incense are? Revelation 5:8 says they are "the prayers of the saints." This means that our prayers are the aroma of heaven, sweet smelling before the throne of God and before the Lamb?

Let's all bless and honour and adore Christ here below with our prayers, and then doubly rejoice that the worship council of heaven offers them again to Christ as sweet smelling incense before the Lamb who was slain.

March 25, 2022 - Two Truths

" . . . declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'" (Isaiah 46:10)

The word "sovereignty" (like the word "Trinity") does not occur in the Bible. We use it to refer to this truth: God is in ultimate control of the world from the largest international intrigue to the smallest bird falling in the forest.

Here is how the Bible puts it: *"[God] does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'" (Daniel 4:35).* And: *"Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (Psalm 115:3).*

One reason this doctrine is so precious to believers is that we know that God's great desire is to show mercy and kindness to those who trust him. God's sovereignty means that this design for us cannot be frustrated. It cannot fail.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, befalls those "who love God" and "are called according to his purpose" but what is for our deepest and highest and longest good (Romans 8:28).

This is why I like to say that the mercy and the sovereignty of God are the twin pillars of my life. They are the hope of my future, the energy of my service, the centre of my theology, the bond of my marriage, the best medicine in all my sicknesses, the remedy of all my discouragements. Hold on to these two truths.

March 26, 2022 - God Is for Us

"Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'?" (Isaiah 45:9)

The majesty of God is magnified when we see him through the lens of creation out of nothing. He commands nothingness, and it obeys and becomes something.

Out of nothing he makes the clay, and out of the clay he makes us — the pottery of the Lord — his possession, destined for his glory, in total dependence on him.

"Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Psalm 100:3). It is a humbling thing to be a sheep and a pot that belong to somebody else.

In Isaiah we find another statement about God's majesty. When I put it together with God's absolute power and rights as Creator, there is combustion that goes off.

Isaiah 33:21 says, *"The Lord in majesty will be for us!"*

For us! The Creator is for us and not against us. With all the power in the universe and with absolute right to do as he pleases with what he made — he is for us!

"No eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him" (Isaiah 64:4). "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

Can you think of anything that is more comforting and assuring and delighting than that God is for you?

March 27, 2022 - The Triumph Is Sure

Therefore, strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you. (Isaiah 25:3)

Isaiah sees the day coming when all the nations — representatives from all the people groups — will no longer be at odds with Yahweh, the God of Israel and his Messiah, whom we know to be Jesus.

They will no longer worship Bel or Nebo or Molech or Allah or Buddha or utopian social programs or ancestors or animistic spirits. Instead, they will come in faith to the banquet on God's Mountain.

And they will have the veil of sorrow removed and death shall be swallowed up and the reproach of God's people will be removed and tears shall be gone forever.

That's the setting for understanding this vision. In other words, God is stronger than the "strong peoples" and he is so powerful and so gracious that in the end he will turn ruthless nations to revere him.

So, the picture Isaiah gives us is one of all nations turned to God in worship, a great banquet for all the peoples, the removal of all suffering and grief and reproach from the nations, who have become his people, and the final putting away of death forever.

This triumph is sure because God is doing it. Therefore, we can be certain of it. Not one life spent in the cause of world evangelization is spent in vain.

Not one prayer or one dollar or one sermon or one letter of encouragement or one little light shining in some dark place — nothing in the cause of this advancing kingdom is in vain.

The triumph is sure.

March 28, 2022 - Satan is Doomed

When Jesus met the man filled with demons at Gadara, the demons cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29)

Demons learned a mystery here. They knew they were doomed. They knew the Son of God would be the victor. But they didn't know until it happened that Christ was coming before the time of final defeat.

Christ is not going to wait for the end of the war to lead his troops into combat. He has begun to lead a subversive force into the territory of Satan. He has trained a "life-squad" to perform daring rescue operations. Christ has plotted many tactical victories before the time of the final strategic victory.

The resulting wartime mentality is this: Since Satan's doom is sure, and he knows it, we can always remind him of it when he tempts us to follow him. We can laugh and say, "You're out of your mind. Who wants to join forces with a loser?"

The church is the liberated enemy of Satan. We are the guerrillas. We are the insurgency against the rebel kingdom of "the prince of the power of the air".

It is not safe. But it is thrilling. Many lives are lost. Satan's forces are ever on the lookout for our subversive activity. Christ has guaranteed resurrection for all who fight to the death. But he has not guaranteed comfort, or acceptance from the world, or prosperity in enemy territory.

Many have gladly given their lives behind the lines running errands for the Commander. I can think of no better way to live — or die! Because we know Satan is Doomed.

March 29, 2022 - Sure Triumph

"This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14)

I don't know any more inspiring missionary promise than this word from Jesus.

Not: This gospel *should* be preached. Not: This gospel *might* be preached.
But: This gospel *will* be preached.

March 30, 2022 - Good Choices in Life

We are born at this particular time and place to achieve God's purposes. We need to be like the men of Issachar, who understood the times, and knew what to do (1 Chronicles 12:32).

The way ahead for Christians is to know the Bible well so we can live successful lives that are pleasing to God. This will enable us to make good choices in life. The decisions we make each day affect us for either good or evil, so we need to draw from the wisdom of God to help guide our way.

The heart of every Christian should feed upon God's word so we can discern the good and evil of community trends. We should pray that the Holy Spirit would help us understand the word of God and how to apply it.

The Bible outlines the two teachers that can guide our choices: wisdom and consequences. If you don't learn from one you will be affected by the other one. The Bible-based FamilyVoice materials can provide much of the wisdom people need to make good choices in life. Check them out on our website. FamilyVoice.org.au

March 31, 2022 - Amen to God

All the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. (2 Corinthians 1:20)

Prayer is a response to promises, that is, to the assurances of God's grace.

Prayer is not hoping in the dark that there might be a God of good intentions out there. Prayer banks on the promise of God and goes to the bank every day and draws on stores of grace needed for that day.

Prayer links our faith in God's grace with the foundation of it all, Jesus Christ.

"Amen" is a full and precious word in times of prayer. It doesn't mean primarily, "Yes, I have now said this prayer." It means primarily, "Yes, God has made all these promises."

Amen means, "Yes, Lord, you can do it." It means, "Yes, Lord, you are powerful. Yes, Lord, you are wise. Yes, Lord, you are merciful. Yes, Lord, all grace comes from you and has been confirmed in Christ."

"Amen" is an exclamation point of hope and warranted confidence after a prayer for help.