TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

April 2022

April 1, 2022 - Hold Fast

When God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. (Hebrews 6:17–18)

God is not inconsistent. He does not exert himself with promises, and oaths, and the blood of his Son, simply to anchor down one end of our security while leaving the other to dangle in the air.

The salvation Jesus obtained by his blood was everything it takes to save his people, not just part of it.

Why does God tell us to hold fast?

The answer is this:
- What Christ bought for us when he died was not the freedom from having to hold fast, but the enabling power to hold fast.

- What he bought was not the nullification of our wills as though we didn't have to hold fast, but the empowering of our wills so that we want to hold fast.

- What he bought was not the cancelling of the commandment to hold fast, but the fulfillment of the commandment to hold fast.

- What he bought was not the end of exhortation, but the triumph of exhortation.

Trust in God to give you the power to hold fast through his enabling spirit.

April 2, 2022 - The Gospel

Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. (1 Peter 3:18)

Here's a summary of the gospel in 6 points to help you understand it and enjoy it and share it!

1) God created us for his glory. "Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory" (Isaiah 43:6–7). God made all of us in his own image so that we would reflect, his character and moral beauty.
2) Therefore, every human should live for God's glory. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).
3) Nevertheless, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

4) Therefore, we all deserve eternal punishment. “The wages of sin is (eternal) death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

5) Yet, in his great mercy, God sent his only Son Jesus Christ into the world to provide for sinners the way of eternal life. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

6) Therefore eternal life is a free gift to all who will trust in Christ as Lord and Saviour and supreme Treasure of their lives. “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

April 3, 2022 - Give Us All Things

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

The most far-reaching promise of God’s grace is found in this verse. Part of the reason is that the promise in it is so all-encompassing that it stands ready to help at every time in life and ministry. There never will be a circumstance in life where this promise is irrelevant.

There are other such sweeping promises in the Bible, such as Psalm 84:11: “No good thing does [God] withhold from those who walk uprightly.”

What puts Romans 8:32 in a class by itself is the logic that gives rise to the promise and makes it as solid and unshakable as God’s love for his infinitely admirable Son.

It contains a foundation and guarantee that is so strong and so solid and so secure that there is absolutely no possibility that the promise could ever be broken. That is what makes it an ever-present strength in times of great turmoil. Whatever else gives way, whatever else fails, this all-encompassing promise of grace can never fail.

“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all . . . ” That’s the foundation. If this is true, says the logic of heaven, then God will, with absolute certainty, give us all things.

April 4, 2022 - Jesus Loves Me

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

Our only hope is a Mediator. Standing alone, with nothing to commend us but our own sinful life, we are utterly lost. If there is any hope for eternity in the presence of God, we will need a Redeemer, a Substitute, a Saviour.

At this point of terrible crisis, nothing shines like the gospel of Jesus Christ — “who loved me and gave himself for me”. You may be granted to see the all-engulfing darkness and horror of the judgment — not a theological inference, not a merely rational conclusion, not a mere thought, but a glimpse with the inward eye full of knowing and feeling and certainty.

Our God is a consuming fire. He will not look upon evil. We are utterly lost. Our guilt was so huge, so real, so unquestioned, that there is not even the remotest possibility of making excuses. The sight is a sudden and all-enveloping and infinite hopelessness.

In this instant Jesus is all that matters. Can our heart contain the wave of gratitude? The free gift of God, our desperate and only need! How wonderful that Jesus loves me.

April 5, 2022 - Arm Yourselves

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. (1 Peter 4:1)

When we arm ourselves with the thought that Christ suffered for us, we realize that we died with him. *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Peter 2:24).* When we die with him, we cease to sin.

The weapon for our warfare against sin is this thought — this consideration. When the temptations of Satan come — to lust, to steal, to lie, to covet, to envy, to retaliate, to put down, to fear — arm yourself with this thought: *When my Lord suffered and died to free me from sin, I died to sin!*

When Satan says to you, Why deny yourself the pleasure of lust? Why deal with this mess, which you could avoid by lying? Why not go ahead and get that harmless luxury you covet? Why not seek justice by returning the same hurt you just received?

Answer: The Son of God suffered to deliver me from sinning. What he died to purchase is more wonderful than the pleasures of sin. Arm yourselves with these thoughts.

April 6, 2022 - Through Knowledge

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. (2 Peter 1:3)

I am amazed at the power that the Bible attributes to knowledge.

Literally, all the power available from God to live and be godly comes through knowledge! Amazing! What a premium we should put on doctrine and instruction in the Scriptures! Life and godliness are at stake.

Not that knowing guarantees godliness. It doesn't. But it seems that ignorance guarantees ungodliness. Because, Peter says, the divine power that leads to godliness is given through the knowledge of God.

Here are three implications, a warning, and an exhortation.

1. *Read!* But beware of wasting your time on theological froth and bubbles. Read rich doctrinal books about "the one who called you to his glory and excellence."
2. *Ponder!* Slow down. Take time to think about what the Bible means when you read it. Ask questions. Let yourself be humbly troubled by puzzling things.
3. *Discuss.* Be a part of a small group that cares passionately about the truth. Not a group that just likes to talk and raise problems. But a group that believes there are biblical answers to biblical problems, and they can be found.

Warning: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6)."They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2). So beware of the deadly effects of ignorance.

Exhortation: "Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord" (Hosea 6:3).

April 7, 2022 - Fear of Man

"Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord." (Jeremiah 1:8)

A great obstacle to serving the Lord, especially among the young, is the fear of rejection and opposition. All kinds of thoughts enter the mind about how some people might not like the way we act or speak. People might disagree or be offended. I might make a mistake and get criticized.

The fear of man is a great hindrance to ministry. God says, Don't fear, because I will be with you and I will deliver you. God's presence and approval is more valuable than all the praise of men. God says that, in and through all your troubles, I will deliver you. You will triumph in the end. You will be more than a conqueror.

The same thing is promised to all of us in Christ Jesus today:

- *"[God] has said, '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)*
- *"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)*

So God said to young Jeremiah, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'" — or I'm too old, or I'm too anything (Jeremiah 1:7). Why? Because your life is rooted in the unshakable, sovereign purposes of God. You have been chosen and consecrated and formed and appointed for a great purpose. God's authority, not your own, is behind your serving and your speaking. God himself will be with you to deliver you in all your trials. Do not have the Fear of Man.

April 8, 2022 - Shall Never Thirst

"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

This text points to the fact that believing in Jesus is a feeding and drinking from all that Jesus is. It goes so far as to say that our soul-thirst is satisfied with Jesus, so that we don't thirst anymore.

He is the end of our quest for satisfaction. There is nothing beyond, and nothing better.

When we trust Jesus the way John intends for us to, the presence and promise of Jesus is so satisfying that we are not dominated by the alluring pleasures of sin. This accounts for why such faith in Jesus nullifies the power of sin and enables obedience.

John 4:14 points in the same direction: *"Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." S*aving faith is spoken of here as a drinking of water that satisfies the deepest longings of the soul.

Through faith, Christ becomes in us an inexhaustible fountain of satisfying life that lasts forever and leads us to heaven, and on the way sets us free from the sinful illusions of other things. This he does by sending us his Spirit so that we shall never thirst.

April 9, 2022 - Delight in God's Word

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103)

Never reduce Christianity to a matter of demands and resolutions and willpower. It is a matter of what we love, what we delight in, what tastes good to us.

When Jesus came into the world, humanity was split according to what they loved. *"The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light" (John 3:19).* The righteous and the wicked are separated by what they delight in — the revelation of God in Jesus, or the way of the world.

How do you come to delight in the word of God?

Firstly, pray for new tastebuds on the tongue of your heart; Secondly, meditate on the staggering promises of God to his people.

April 10, 2022 - Because of The Resurrection

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. (1 Corinthians 15:17)

Here are ten amazing things we have because of the resurrection of Jesus:

1) *A Saviour who can never die again.*
2) *Repentance which is a gift from God.*
3) *New birth so that we are Born Again to a living hope.*
4) *Forgiveness of sin now and forever.*
5) *The Holy Spirit which gives us the power to live a holy life and understand the Bible.*
6) *No condemnation for the elect.*
7) *Jesus's personal fellowship and protection.*
8) *Proof of coming judgment.*
9) *Salvation from the future wrath of God.*
10) *Our own resurrection from the dead to live forever with Jesus in Heaven.*

All Because of the Resurrection.

April 11, 2022 - Stand by me

At my first defence no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So, I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (2 Timothy 4:16–18)

Consider and be astounded! Paul is deserted and he says: "no one came to stand by me." He is an old man. A loyal servant. In a foreign city, far from home. Surrounded by enemies. In danger of death. Why? Answer: So, he could write this precious sentence for our discouraged, or fearful, or lonely souls: "But the Lord stood by me!"

Oh, how I love those words! When you are deserted by close friends, do you cry out against God? Are the people in your life, then, really your god? Or do you take courage in this magnificent truth: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20) — no matter who deserts you? Do you strengthen your heart with this oath of God: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5)?

May we know, like the apostle Paul, that Jesus will “Stand by me”.

April 12, 2022 - All Things

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

God strips every pain of its destructive power. You must believe this or you will not thrive, or perhaps even survive, as a Christian, in the pressures and temptations of modern life.

There is so much pain, so many setbacks and discouragements, so many controversies and pressures. I do not know where I would turn, if I did not believe that almighty God is taking every setback and every discouragement and every controversy and every pressure and every pain, and stripping it of its destructive power, and making it work for the enlargement of my joy in God.

If God is for us, and if God is God, then it is true that nothing can succeed against us. He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all will infallibly and freely with him give us all things — the world, life, death, and God himself – all things.

April 13, 2022 - The Lord Will Sustain You

[The Lord] will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:8–9)

What are you depending on to ensure that your faith will last until Jesus comes?

The question is not, Do you believe in eternal security? The question is, How are we kept secure?

Does the perseverance of your faith rest decisively on the reliability of your own resolve? Or does it rest decisively on the work of God to “keep you trusting”?

It is a great and wonderful truth of Scripture that God is faithful and will keep forever those whom he has called. Our confidence that we are eternally secure is a confidence that God will do whatever is necessary to “keep us trusting!”

The certainty of eternity is no greater than the certainty God will keep us trusting now.

Two passages that put the call of God and the keeping of God together in this way are:

1. “May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24).

2. “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you” (Jude 1–2).

The “faithfulness” of God guarantees that he will keep safe forever all whom he has called. The Lord will sustain you.

April 14, 2022 - A Father and a Lord

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:1)

We as a church are "in" a Father and "in" a Lord. What does that mean?

The word "Father" implies primarily care and sustaining and protection and provision and discipline. So, to be "in" the Father would mean mainly to be in the care and under the protection of God as our heavenly Father.

The other designation is Lord: We are in the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "Lord" implies primarily authority and leadership and ownership. So, to be "in" the Lord means mainly to be in the charge, under the authority, and in the possession of Jesus as our supreme Lord.

So, Paul greets the Thessalonian church in such a way as to remind them that they are a family (in the care of a Father) and that they are servants (in the charge of a Lord). These two descriptions of God as Father and Lord, and thus of the church as family and servants, correspond to two of our deepest needs.

We want a merciful Father to be our Protector, and we want an omnipotent Lord to be our Champion and our Commander and our Leader in the great cause. It is wonderful to have a Father and a Lord.

April 15, 2022 - What did Jesus accomplish?

And likewise the cup after they had eaten, Jesus said: "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood". (Luke 22:20)

By his death and resurrection, Christ accomplished the full salvation for his elect, the people he chose before the foundation of the world. Jesus said that his blood was the blood of the new covenant. Which means that his blood secured, guaranteed, purchased, obtained the new covenant. What the new covenant promised is that God would take out the heart of stone, put in the heart of flesh, and cause his people to walk in his ways (Ezekiel 36:26–27).

The new covenant was not just that God would make faith and forgiveness possible, but that he would make it certain for his people. In fact, that's what makes the new covenant the new covenant. That's what makes it new and different from the old covenant: it cannot fail because God accomplishes it, makes it certain, from start to finish.

Jesus made certain that all God's wrath would be turned away from all God's elect, that they would all be redeemed, that they would all come to faith, that they would all be justified, forgiven, receive the Holy Spirit, be sanctified, be raised from the dead, be glorified in God's presence with eternal joy forever. That is the accomplishment of the cross, and it is certain. This answers then "What did Jesus accomplish".

April 16, 2022 - Together for Good

We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

If you live inside this massive promise, your life is more solid and stable than Mount Everest.

Nothing can blow you over when you are inside the walls of this certainty. Outside, all is confusion and anxiety and fear and uncertainty. Outside this promise of God's all-encompassing grace, there are straw houses of drugs and pleasures and dozens of futile diversions. There are flimsy hopes of fragile investment strategies and fleeting insurance coverage and trivial retirement plans. There are cardboard fortifications of

deadbolt locks and alarm systems and antiballistic missiles. Outside are a thousand substitutes for this solid safety.

Once you walk through the door of love into the massive, unshakable structure of Romans 8:28, everything changes. There comes into your life stability and depth and freedom. You simply can't be blown over anymore. The confidence that a sovereign God governs for your good all the pain and all the pleasure that you will ever experience is an incomparable refuge and security and hope and power in your life.

When God's people really live by this amazing grace, they are the freest and strongest and most generous people in the world. Their light shines and people give glory to their Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16) as all things work together for good.

April 17, 2022 - Remember Jesus Risen

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel. (2 Timothy 2:8)

Paul mentions two specific ways to remember Jesus risen: Remember him as risen from the dead and remember him as the offspring of David. Why these two things?

Because if he is risen from the dead, he is alive and triumphant over death — including our death! "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11).

No matter how serious the suffering becomes, the worst that it can do on this earth is kill you. And Jesus has taken the sting out of that enemy. He is alive. And you will be alive. "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Matthew 10:28).

But more than that, the resurrection of Jesus was not a random resurrection. It was the resurrection of the son of David. Every Jewish person knew what that meant. Jesus is the Messiah. This resurrection was the resurrection of an everlasting King. Hear the angel to Mary, Jesus's mother:

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:31–33)

So, remember Jesus Risen, the one you serve, and the one for whom you suffer. He is not just alive from the dead, but he is alive as a King who will reign forever. No matter what they do to you, you do not need to be afraid. You will live again and reign with him.

April 18, 2022 - Don't Live in Defeat

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. (Romans 7:19)

Christians do not live only in defeat. But neither do we live only in perfect victory over sin. And in those times when we fail to triumph over sin, Romans 7:13–25 shows us the normal way a healthy Christian should respond.

We should say:

1. *I love the law of God. (verse 22)*
2. *I hate what I just did. (verse 15)*

3. *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? (verse 24)*

4. *Thanks be to God! The victory will come through Jesus Christ my Lord. (verse 25)*

No Christian wants to live in defeat. No Christian settles for living in defeat. But if we are defeated for a time, we shouldn't lie about it. No hypocrisy. No posing. No boasted perfectionism. No churchy, pasted smiles or superficiality. God save us from blindness to our own failures and the consequent quickness to judge others. God, help us to feel worse about our own shortfalls than the failure of others.

God, give us the honesty and humility of the apostle Paul in this text! "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24–25).

This will ensure we don't live in defeat.

April 19, 2022 - Strengthen Your Brothers

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31–32)

What about the other ten apostles (not counting Judas)? Satan was going to sift them too. Did Jesus pray for them? Yes, he did. But he did not ask the Father to guard their faith in the very same way he guarded Peter's.

God broke the back of Peter's pride and self-reliance that night in the agony of Satan's sieve. But he did not let him go. He turned him around and forgave him and restored him and strengthened his faith. And now it was Peter's mission to strengthen the other ten. "And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

Jesus provided for the ten by providing for Peter. The strengthened becomes the strengthener. There is a great lesson here for us. Sometimes God will deal with you directly, strengthening your faith alone in the wee hours of the morning when everyone else is asleep. But most of the time God strengthens our faith through another person.

God sends us some Simon Peter who brings just the word of grace we need to keep on in the faith: some testimony about how "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

Eternal security is a community project. Whenever God encourages your heart with the promise that in Satan's sifting your faith will not fail, then take that encouragement and double your joy by using it to strengthen your brothers and sisters.

April 20, 2022 - The Book of Life

All who dwell on earth will worship [the beast], everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. (Revelation 13:8)

Salvation is secured for all who are written in the book of life. The reason that being written in the book of life secures our salvation is that the book is called "the book of life of the Lamb who was slain." The names in this book are not saved on the basis of their deeds. They are saved on the basis of Christ being slain.

John says in Revelation 20:12, *"I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was*

written in the books, according to what they had done." So, how then does the record of our lives contained in "the books" have a part in our judgment, if we are saved on the basis of Christ being slain?

The answer is that the books, which record our deeds, contain enough evidence of our belonging to Christ that they function as a public confirmation of our faith and our union with Christ.

*Consider the thief on the cross. Jesus said that he would enter paradise (Luke 23:43). B*ut what will judgment be like for him when the books are opened? More than 99.9% of his life will be sin. His salvation will be secured by the blood of Christ. His name will be in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain. Christ will be the basis of his salvation, not his works. Praise God that your name as well as his is written in The Book of Life.

April 21, 2022 - Love Your Enemies

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:44)

Prayer for your enemies is one of the deepest forms of love, because it means that you have to really want that something good happen to them.

You might do nice things for your enemies without any genuine desire that things go well with them. But prayer for them is in the presence of God who knows your heart, and prayer is interceding with God on their behalf.

It may be for their conversion. It may be for their repentance. It may be that they would be awakened to the evil in their hearts. It may be that they will be stopped in their downward spiral of sin, even if it takes disease or calamity to do it. But the prayer Jesus has in mind here is always for their good.

This is what Jesus did as he hung on the cross: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. (Luke 23:34)

And it's what Stephen did as he was being stoned: Falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" (Acts 7:60)

Jesus is calling us not just to do good things for our enemy, like greeting them and helping supply their needs; he is also calling us to desire their best, and to express those desires in prayers, even when the enemy is nowhere around.

Our hearts should desire their salvation and desire their presence in heaven with us and desire their eternal happiness. This is what it means to Love Your Enemies.

April 22, 2022 - Resist the Devil

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

The more real Satan appears in our day, the more precious the victory of Christ will become to those who trust him.

The New Testament teaches that when Christ died and rose again, Satan was decisively defeated. A time of limited freedom is granted to him, but his power against God's people is broken and his destruction is sure.

"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8)

"[God] disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him." (Colossians 2:15) The decisive blow was struck at Calvary. And one day, when Satan's time of limited

freedom is over, Revelation 20:10 says, *"The devil . . . [will be] thrown into the lake of fire . . . and will be tormented day and night forever and ever."*

These verses show what have been gained for those of us who follow Jesus Christ? *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1) "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies!" (Romans 8:33) "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4) "They [the saints] have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." (Revelation 12:11)*

Our task now is to live in that victory and make Satan know his defeat. He has been defeated and we have been given the victory. Therefore, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you"

April 23, 2022 - Talking to God

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. (Psalm 23:4)

The form of the 23rd psalm is instructive. In Psalm 23:1–3 David refers to God as "he":

The Lord is my shepherd . . he makes me lie down . . he leads me . . he restores my soul.

Then in verses 4 and 5 David refers to God as "you": I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me. You anoint my head with oil. Then in verse 6 he switches back: I shall dwell in the house of the Lord.

The lesson we can learn from this form is that it is good not to talk very long about God without talking to God.

Every Christian is at least an amateur theologian — that is, a person who tries to understand the character and ways of God and then put that into words. If we aren't little theologians, then we won't ever say anything to each other, or to God, about God, and will be of very little real help to each other's faith.

We should interweave theology with prayer. We should frequently interrupt our talking about God by talking to God.

Not far behind the theological sentence, "God is generous," should come the prayerful sentence, "Thank you, God, for your generosity." On the heels of, "God is glorious," should come, "I adore your glory."

This is the way it must be, if we are feeling God's reality in our hearts as well as thinking it in our heads and describing it with our lips which includes Talking to God.

April 24, 2022 - Can Shame be Good

When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. (Romans 6:20–21)

When a Christian's eyes are opened to the God-dishonouring evil of his former behaviour, the Christian rightly feels ashamed. There is a proper place for looking back and feeling the twinge of pain that we once lived in a way that was so belittling to God. To be sure, we are not to be paralysed by dwelling on this.

Well-placed shame can be very healthy and redemptive. The biblical criterion for misplaced shame and for well-placed shame is radically God-centred.

The biblical criterion for misplaced shame says, Don't feel shame for something that honours God, no matter how weak or foolish or wrong it makes you look in the eyes of other people.

The biblical criterion for well-placed shame says, Do feel shame for having a hand in anything that dishonours God, no matter how strong or wise or right it makes you look in the eyes of others.

The reason we should feel shame is disapproval for behaviour that dishonours God. The reason we should not feel shame is behaviour that honours God, even if people try to shame you for it. So Shame can be Good.

April 25, 2022 - Through Suffering

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

I have never heard anyone say, *"The really deep lessons of my life have come through times of ease and comfort."* But I have heard strong saints say, *"Every significant advance I have ever made in grasping the depths of God's love and growing deep with him, has come through suffering."*

This is a sobering biblical truth. For example: *"For [Christ's] sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8).* Paraphrase: No pain, no gain. Or: Now let it all be sacrificed, if it will get me more of Christ.

Here's another example: *"Although he was a son, [Jesus] learned obedience through what he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). The same book said he never sinned (Hebrews 4:15).*

So learning obedience does not mean switching from disobedience to obedience. It means growing deeper and deeper with God in the experience of obedience.

Do you not love your beloved more when you feel some strange pain that makes you think you have cancer? We are strange creatures indeed. If we have health and peace and time to love, it can become a thin and hasty thing. But if we are dying, love becomes a deep, slow river of inexpressible joy, and we can scarcely endure to give it up.

So, we gain much through suffering.

April 26, 2022 - They can't keep Him Buried

"You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can." (Matthew 27:65)

When Jesus was dead and buried, with a big stone rolled against the tomb, the Pharisees came to Pilate and asked for permission to seal the stone and guard the tomb.

They gave it their best shot — in vain. It was hopeless then, it is hopeless today, and it will always be hopeless. Try as they may, people can't keep Jesus down. They can't keep him buried.

It's not hard to figure out: He can break out because he wasn't forced in. He let himself be defamed and harassed and scorned and shoved around and killed.

I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. (John 10:17–18)

No one can keep him down because no one ever knocked him down. He lay down when he was ready. When it looks like he is buried for good, Jesus is doing something awesome in the dark.

The world thinks Jesus is done for — out of the way — but Jesus is at work. For twenty centuries, the world has given it their best shot — in vain. They can't bury him. They can't hold him in. They can't silence him or limit him. Jesus is alive and utterly free to go and come wherever he pleases. Trust him and go with him, no matter what. You cannot lose in the end.

April 27, 2022 - Tears turned to Joy

Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him. (Psalm 126:5–6)

Sowing is the work that has to be done, even when there are things in life that make us cry. The crops won't wait while we finish our grief or solve all our problems. If we are going to eat next winter, we must get out in the field and sow the seed, whether we are crying or not.

If you do that, the promise of the psalm is that you will "reap with shouts of joy." Not because the tears of sowing produce the joy of reaping, but because the sheer sowing produces the reaping, and you need to remember this even when your tears tempt you to give up sowing.

When there are simple, straightforward jobs to be done, and you are full of sadness, and tears are flowing easily, go ahead and do the jobs with tears. Be realistic. Say to your tears, *"I feel you. But there is a field to be sown, dishes to be washed, car to be fixed, sermon to be written."*

Then say, on the basis of God's word, *"Tears, I know that you will not stay forever. The very fact that I just do my work, tears and all, will in the end bring a harvest of blessing. So, go ahead and flow if you must. But I believe that the simple work of my sowing will bring sheaves of harvest. And my tears will be turned to joy."*

April 28, 2022 - Pray Like This

"Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.'" (Matthew 6:9)

Dozens of times Scripture says that God does things *"for his name's sake."*

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (Psalm 23:3)

For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt. (Psalm 25:11)

He saved them for his name's sake. (Psalm 106:8)

For my name's sake I defer my anger. (Isaiah 48:9)

Your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. (1 John 2:12)

If you ask what is really moving the heart of God in all those statements and many like them, the answer is that God delights in having his name known and honoured.

The first and most important prayer that can be prayed is, *"Hallowed be your name."* I used to think this is an acclamation. Like, *"Hallelujah! The Lord's name is hallowed!"* But it's not an acclamation. It's a petition. A kind of imperative or command. Lord, let it be! Cause it to be. May your name be hallowed. This is my request, my prayer. I am urging you to this: Cause people to hallow your name. Cause me to hallow your name!

God loves to have more and more people "hallow" his name. That's why his Son teaches Christians to pray for it. In fact, Jesus makes it the very first and paramount prayer. Because this is the first and great passion of the Father. This is basically a missionary prayer and Jesus says we should pray like this.

April 29, 2022 - His Mercies

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22–23)

God's mercies are new every morning because each day only has enough mercy in it for that day. God appoints every day's troubles. And God appoints every day's mercies. In the life of his children, they are perfectly appointed. Jesus said, *"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34).* Every day has its own trouble. Every day has its own mercies. Each is new every morning.

We often tend to despair when we think that we may have to bear tomorrow's load on today's resources. God wants us to know: We won't. Today's mercies are for today's troubles. Tomorrow's mercies are for tomorrow's troubles.

Sometimes we wonder if we will have the mercy to stand in terrible testing. Yes, we will. Peter says, *"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).* When the reviling comes, the Spirit of glory comes. It happened for Stephen as he was being stoned. It will happen for you. When the Spirit and the glory are needed, they will come.

The manna in the wilderness was given one day at a time. There was no storing up. That is the way we must depend on God's mercy. You do not receive today the strength to bear tomorrow's burdens. For today's troubles you are given his mercies.

April 30, 2022 - Hearts God had Touched

Saul also went to his home at Gibeah, and with him went men of valour whose hearts God had touched. (1 Samuel 10:26)

Just think of what is being said in this verse. God touched them. Not a wife. Not a child. Not a parent. Not a counsellor. But God. God touched them.

The One with infinite power in the universe. The One with infinite authority and infinite wisdom and infinite love and infinite goodness and infinite purity and infinite justice. That One touched their heart.

How does the circumference of Jupiter touch the edge of a molecule? Let alone penetrate to its nucleus?

The touch of God is awesome not just because it is God who touches, but also because it is a touch. It is a real connection. That it involves the heart is awesome. That it involves God is awesome. And that it involves an actual touch is awesome.

The valiant men were not just spoken to. They were not just swayed by a divine influence. They were not just seen and known. God, with infinite condescension, touched their heart. God was that close. And they were not consumed.

Oh, for the touch of God! O Lord, come. Come that close. Burn and soak and blow and bless. Come all the way. Let us pray that we too have hearts God has touched.