TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

June 2022

June 1, 2022 - Do Everything in the Name of Jesus

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)

Have you ever wondered what God is doing while you are looking in the wrong place for something you lost and needed very badly? He knows exactly where it is, and yet he is letting you look in the wrong place.

Nothing is wasted that we do in the name of Jesus — nothing, not even looking for a quote in the wrong place. This happened to me and this is what I read:

In a home for retarded children, Catherine was nurtured twenty years. The child had been mentally handicapped from the beginning, and had never spoken a word, but only vegetated. She either gazed quietly at the walls or made distorted movements. To eat, to drink, to sleep, were her whole life. She seemed not to participate at all in what happened around her. A leg had to be amputated and she went downhill.

One day the doctor called the director to come quickly. Catherine was dying. When they entered the room, they could not believe their senses. Catherine was singing Christian hymns she had heard and had picked up, just those suitable for death beds. She repeated over and over again the German song, “Where does the soul find its fatherland, its rest?” She sang for half an hour with transfigured face, then she passed away quietly.

Is anything that is done in the name of Christ really wasted? Singing to this disabled child was not wasted. And your agonizing, unplanned detour is not a waste, not if you look to the Lord for his unexpected work and do everything in the Name of Jesus.

June 2, 2022 - Strength Comes from God

May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy. (Colossians 1:11)

“Strengthened” is the right word. The apostle Paul prayed for the church at Colossae, that they would be “strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience”. Patience is the evidence of an inner strength.

Impatient people are weak, and therefore dependent on external supports, like schedules that go just right and circumstances that support their fragile hearts. Their outbursts of oaths and threats and harsh criticisms of the culprits who crossed their plans do not sound weak. That noise is all a camouflage of weakness. Patience demands tremendous inner strength.

For the Christian, this strength comes from God. That is why Paul is praying for the Colossians. He is asking God to empower them for the patient endurance that the Christian life requires. When he says that the strength of patience is “according to [God’s] glorious might” he doesn’t just mean that it takes divine power to make a person patient. He means that faith in this “glorious might” is the channel through which the power for patience comes.

Patience is indeed a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22), but the Holy Spirit empowers with all his fruit through “hearing with faith” (Galatians 3:5). Therefore, Paul is praying that God would connect us with the “glorious might” that empowers patience. That connection is faith and is how Strength Comes from God.

June 3, 2022 - Look unto Jesus

Here are 12 BIBLICAL truths for an effective LIFE and MINISTRY that by the grace of God, in His strength (Phil 4:13) and to His glory (Eph. 1: 12) we can all choose to do:

1. Seek The Lord (Isaiah 55:6-8) – Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.

2. Go in Peace (Luke 7:50) – And Jesus said to the woman, “Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace.”

3. Grow in Grace (2 Peter 3:18) – But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

4. Search the Scriptures (John 5:39) – Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and it is they which testify of Me.

5. Run your Race (Hebrews 12:1) -Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

6. Look unto Jesus (Hebrews 12:2) – Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

7. Walk in Love (Ephesians 5:2) – and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

8. Preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2) – Preach the Word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

9. Test the Spirits (1 John 4:1) – Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

10. Pray without Ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

11. Worship in Spirit and Truth (John 4:24) – God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

12. Finish your Course (2 Timothy 4:7) – I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Look to Jesus.

June 4, 2022 - Eagerly waiting for Jesus

Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (Hebrews 9:28)

The question before us all is: Are we included in the "many" whose sins Jesus bore and will we be saved at his second coming?

The answer of Hebrews 9:28 is, "Yes," if we are "eagerly waiting for Jesus." We can know that our sins are taken away and that we will be safe in the judgment, if we trust Jesus in such a way that it makes us eager for his coming.

There is a phony faith that claims to believe in Jesus but is only a fire insurance policy. Phony faith "believes" only to escape hell. It has no real desire for Jesus. In fact, it would prefer if he did not come, so that we can have as much of this world's pleasures as possible. This shows that a heart is not with Jesus but with the world.

So, the issue for us is: Do we eagerly long for the coming of Jesus? Or do we want him to stay away, while our love affair with the world runs its course? That is the question that tests the authenticity of faith.

Let us be like the Corinthians as we *"wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:7),* and like the Philippians whose *"citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).*

That's the issue for us. Do we love the appearing of Jesus, or do we love the world and hope that his appearing will not interrupt our plans? Eternity hangs on this question. Let us be found eagerly waiting for Jesus.

June 5, 2022 - God Meant it for Good

"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive." (Genesis 50:20)

The story of Joseph in Genesis 37–50 is a great lesson in why we should have faith in the sovereign, grace of God.

Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers, which must have tested his patience tremendously. He is given a good job in Potiphar's house in Egypt. Then, when he is acting uprightly in the unplanned place of obedience, Potiphar's wife lies about his integrity and has him thrown into prison. Another great trial to his patience.

Again, things turn for the better, and the prison keeper gives him responsibility and respect. But just when he thinks he is about to get a reprieve from Pharaoh's cupbearer, whose dream he interpreted, the cupbearer forgets him for two more years. Another painful trial to his patience.

Finally, the meaning of all these detours and delays becomes clear. Joseph is raised up to be the leader of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. He ends up saving from starvation the very brothers who sold him into slavery.

What would have been the key to patience for Joseph during all those long years of exile and abuse? The answer is: faith in God's sovereign, grace — the sovereign grace of God to turn the unplanned place and the unplanned pace into the happiest ending imaginable.

That's the key to our patience as well. Do we believe that God is working for us in the strangest and most painful turns of our lives and that he means it for Good?

June 6, 2022 - Thus says The Lord

When I was in the seventh grade, our science teacher read predictions by a number of scientists about the future germ-free world when everyone would be living in glass-enclosed cities and farms. Now we know that most germs are beneficial and that life is impossible without them, but our scientists have not learned humility.

Again, in high school, and at the university, I was faithfully taught that our coal and oil reserves were small and the world would be without coal and oil in about twenty-five years. Well, twenty-five years have come and gone, and the estimate of the world's reserves is higher but we still hear the same talk!

In the early and mid-1960s, scientist made all kinds of frightening predictions about world overpopulation by 1975, and predicted worldwide famine by 1975, they are still being quoted solemnly by the faithful followers of the cult of science. The strong faith, in the face of all evidence, which most people have in science is really amazing. When they hear that "Science says" something, they abandon all common sense and listen obediently to the current garbage. Many scientists tell us that a healthy skepticism is basic to science; what we too often see is the blindest of faith.

On the other hand, these same people listen sleepily, if at all, to the proclamations of Scripture. "Thus says the Lord" does not arouse in them the instant attention or curiosity which "Science says" does, because their faith is not in the Lord, but in Science. A man listens to what he believes in and a man's thinking is determined by his faith.

The problem lies in us. Will we have itching ears, or hearing ears? Will we say with the Psalmist, *"I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word" (Ps. 119:16),* or will we be open to the word of every learned fool who claims to be an authority?

June 7, 2022 - The Will of the Lord

But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the Lord to put them to death. (1 Samuel 2:25)

The sons of Eli the priest would not obey their father when he rebuked them for their sin. There are three implications of this text for our lives.

1) It is possible to sin so long and so grievously that the Lord will not grant repentance. As it says of Esau in Hebrews 12:17, "He found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears." He was forsaken; he could not repent.

This does not mean that those who truly repent even after a whole lifetime of sinning cannot be saved. They certainly can be and will be! God is staggeringly merciful. Remember the thief on the cross.

2) Sometimes God does not permit a sinning person to do what is right.

Listening to the voice of their father was the right thing to do. But they would not. Why? "For it was the will of the Lord to put them to death." The reason given for why they did not obey their father was that God had other purposes for them and had given them up to sinning and death.

3) Sometimes our prayers for God's revealed will to be done will not be done because God has decreed something different for holy and wise purposes.

When something like this happens while we are crying out to God for change, the answer of God is not: "I don't love you." Rather the answer is: "I have wise and holy purposes in not overcoming this sin and not

granting repentance. You do not see these purposes now. Trust me. I know what I am doing. I love you." This is the Will of the Lord.

June 8, 2022 - The Gift of God

By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9)

The New Testament correlates faith and grace to make sure that we do not boast in what grace alone achieves.

One of the most familiar examples is Ephesians 2:8. By grace, through faith. There's the correlation that guards the freedom of grace.

Faith is the act of our soul that turns away from our own insufficiency to the free and all-sufficient resources of God. Faith focuses on the freedom of God to dispense grace to the unworthy. It banks on the bounty of God.

Therefore faith, by its very nature, nullifies boasting and fits with grace. Wherever faith looks, it sees grace behind every praiseworthy act. So it cannot boast, except in the Lord. The author of grace.

Faith cannot boast in human goodness or competence or wisdom, because faith focuses on the free, all-supplying grace of God. Whatever goodness faith sees, it sees as the fruit of grace.

When it looks at our *"wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption," it says, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:30–31).* This is the Gift of God.

June 9, 2022 - The Grace of God

I do not nullify the grace of God. (Galatians 2:21)

When I lost my footing as a little boy in the undertow at the beach, I felt as if I were going to be dragged to the middle of the ocean in an instant.

It was a terrifying thing. I tried to get my bearings and figure out which way was up but I couldn't get my feet on the ground, and the current was too strong to swim. I wasn't a good swimmer anyway.

In my panic I thought of only one thing: Could someone help me? But I couldn't even call out from under the water.

When I felt my father's hand take hold of my upper arm like a mighty vice grip, it was the sweetest feeling in the world. I yielded entirely to being overpowered by his strength. I revelled in being picked up at his will. I did not resist.

The thought did not enter my mind that I should try to show that things aren't so bad; or that I should add my strength to my dad's arm. All I thought was, Yes! I need you! I thank you! I love your strength! I love your initiative! I love your grip! You are great!

In that spirit of yielded affection, one cannot boast. I call that yielded affection "faith." My father was the embodiment of the grace of God that I desperately needed and craved under the water. This is the faith that magnifies grace.

As we ponder how to live the Christian life, the uppermost thought should be: How can I magnify rather than nullify the grace of God? Faith calls all attention to grace and magnifies it, rather than nullifying the Grace of God.

June 10, 2022 - Who will God Bless?

"In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:3)

You who hope in Christ and follow him in the obedience of faith are Abraham's descendants and heirs of his covenant promises.

God said to Abraham in Genesis 17:4, *"Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations."* Genesis makes plain that Abraham did not father a multitude of nations in a physical or political sense. The meaning of God's promise was that a multitude of nations would enjoy the blessings of sonship even though physically unrelated to Abraham.

From the very beginning, God had in view that Jesus Christ would be the descendant of Abraham and that everyone who trusts in Christ would become an heir of Abraham's promise. Paul says in Galatians 3:29, *"If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."*

All we have to do is share the faith of Abraham, trust in the God's promises, so much so that, if obedience requires it, we could give up our dearest possession like Abraham gave up Isaac.

Faith in God's promises is the way to become a child of Abraham; obedience is the evidence that faith is genuine. Therefore, Jesus says in John 8:39, *"If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did."*

Children of Abraham are people from all nations who put their hope in Christ. You who hope in Jesus Christ and follow him in the obedience of faith are the descendants of Abraham and heirs of his covenant promises. You are who God will Bless.

June 11, 2022 - Faith Glorifies God

He grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. (Romans 4:20–21)

Paul has in mind a special reason why faith glorifies God's grace. The reason is that this God-glorifying faith is a future-oriented confidence in God's integrity and power and wisdom to follow through on all his promises.

Paul illustrates this faith with Abraham's response to the promise of God: that he would be the father of many nations even though he was old and his wife was barren *(Romans 4:18). "In hope he believed against hope,"* he had faith in the grace of God's promise, in spite of all human evidence to the contrary.

He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God. He grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. (Romans 4:19–21)

The faith of Abraham was a faith in the promise of God to make him the father of many nations. This faith glorified God because it called attention to all the omnipotent, supernatural resources of God that would be required to fulfill it.

Abraham was too old to have children, and Sarah was barren. Not only that: How do you turn a son or two into "many nations," which God said Abraham would be the father of? It all seemed totally impossible.

Therefore, Abraham's faith glorified God by being fully assured that he could and would do the humanly impossible. This is the faith we are called to have. That God will do for us what we could never do for ourselves. This Faith Glorifies God.

June 12, 2022 - God is not ashamed to be called their God

But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:16)

I want very much for God to say to me what he said about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: *"I am not ashamed to be called your God." Does this mean that God might actually be "proud" to be called my God? This wonderful possibility is surrounded (in Hebrews 11:16) by reasons: one before and one after.*

Take the one after, first: *"God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city."* He has done something for them. He made them a city — the heavenly city *"whose designer and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10).* He has worked for them. Not the other way around.

Now, consider the reason he gives in the front. It goes like this: "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one."

"Therefore" signals that a reason has just been given for why God is not ashamed to be called our God. The reason is their desire. They desire a better country than the earthly one they live in; namely, a heavenly one where God is.

When we desire this heavenly city, this dwelling place of God, more than we desire all that this world can give, God is not ashamed to be called our God. When we make much of all that he promises to be for us, he is proud to be our God. This is good news.

So, open your eyes to the better country, the city of God that he has prepared for us, and let yourself desire it with all your heart. God will not be ashamed to be called your God.

June 13, 2022 - Seek First the Kingdom of God

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33)

One of the most powerful testimonies to the all-sufficiency of God's grace is the "faith principle" that has governed the lives of so many missionaries, notably those of Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF).

Without condemning those who follow a different pattern, it has been the practice of those who follow in the steps of Hudson Taylor and George Mueller to move the hearts of supporters to give by directing their requests to God and not to people.

James H. Taylor, the great-grandson of the founder of OMF, explains how this faith in grace, rooted in demonstrations of bygone grace, honours God.

We . . . begin from a position of faith. We believe God does exist. We have become convinced of this in a variety of ways, but all of us have experienced the grace of God in bringing us to know Himself through Jesus Christ and through rebirth by His Spirit. We believe we have good grounds for believing in Him

through the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead: we believe that someone who said He would die and rise again, and did it, is credible in every other way. Therefore, we are prepared to trust Him, not only for the eternal salvation of our souls, but also for the practical provision of our daily bread and financial support.

What OMF is devoted to, is glorifying the dependability of God — in their message and in their method. Hudson Taylor put it this way: "There is a living God. He has spoken in the Bible. He means what He says and will do all that He has promised." Lives of faith show the dependability of God as they Seek First the Kingdom of God.

June 14, 2022 - Jesus Has Reconciled us toGod

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death. (Colossians 1:21–22)

The best news in all the world is that our alienation from God is ended and we are reconciled to the Judge of the universe. God is no longer against us but for us. Having omnipotent love on our side is amazing. Life becomes utterly free and daring when the strongest being in the universe is for you.

But Paul's message of salvation is not good news to those who reject the diagnosis in Colossians 1:21. He says, you "were alienated and hostile in mind."

How many people do you know who say, "Apart from God's grace, I am hostile to God in my mind"? People seldom say, "I hate God." So, what does Paul mean that people are "hostile in mind" to God before they were reconciled by the blood of Christ?

He means that the hostility is really there toward the true God. People do not allow themselves to think about the true God. They imagine God to be the way they would like him to be, which seldom includes any possibility that they might be in really serious trouble with him.

Concerning the God who really exists, a God who is sovereign over all things, including sickness and calamity — we were all hostile to him, Paul says. Deep down, we hated his absolute power and authority.

That any of us is saved is owing to the wonderful truth that the death of Christ obtained the grace by which God conquered our hearts and caused us to love the One we once hated. Many are still learning not to be hostile to God as Jesus has reconciled us to God.

June 15, 2022 - Asking for Wisdom

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, without reproach; and it shall be given him." James 1:5

When was the last time you asked for wisdom? I have been to a great many prayer meetings over the years, but I don't recall hearing many prayers for wisdom. Either church folk are content to be without wisdom, or else they assume that they are wise.

The interesting thing is that no strings are attached to praying for wisdom. We are simply to pray in faith. At the same time, we are told how important wisdom is: *"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom" (Prov. 4:7). We are also told that wisdom is a blessing (Prov. 3:13); it is better than rubies and everything else (Prov. 8:11); it is the foundation of the good life (Prov. 24:3),* and so on and on. Very obviously, God regards wisdom as necessary to the good life, and promises to give it to all who ask for it.

We must love not being wise, because we do not seek wisdom, as individuals or a nation. Church members, church boards, senates, legislators and judges all need wisdom and should pray for it.

As a people, we stress learning and spend billions of dollars promoting it, but learning means the accumulation of data, of facts, not of wisdom. Our world is full of learned fools who lack wisdom.

One of our worst forms of folly is to assume that it is other people who need wisdom, not us! Our Lord does not ask us to pray that our friends become wise, but that we do. Are you asking for Wisdom?

June 16, 2022 - Faith in the Son of God

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)

Faith is a perfect fit with God's grace. It corresponds to the freedom and all-sufficiency of grace. And it calls attention to the glorious trustworthiness of God.

One of the important implications of this conclusion is that the faith that justifies and the faith that sanctifies are not two different kinds of faith. "Sanctify" simply means to make holy or to transform into Christlikeness. It is all by grace.

Therefore, it must also be through faith. For faith is the act of the soul that connects with grace, and receives it, and channels it as the power of obedience, and guards grace from being nullified through human boasting.

The simple reason why the faith that justifies is also the faith that sanctifies is that both justification and sanctification are the work of sovereign grace. It is faith that corresponds to grace. Justification and sanctification are not the same kind of work, justification is the imputation of righteousness; sanctification is the impartation of righteousness, but they are both works of grace. Sanctification and justification are *"grace upon grace" (John 1:16).*

The human side of God's free grace is faith. If both justification and sanctification are works of grace, it is natural that they would both be by faith, in the Son of God.

June 17, 2022 - Wrestling in Prayer

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always wrestling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. Colossians 4:12

Prayer can be like a wrestling match. It's like wrestling in hard work with obstacles to be removed. It's like wrestling with athletic efforts, with the need for self-control and discipline. It's like wrestling in a fight with swords when the devil has to be driven off. Anyone who has ever tried to pray in any focused or sustained way for some spiritual breakthrough knows something of this kind of struggle.

So, don't think of prayer always as an easy conversation. You hear so many people talk about prayer as just wonderful — "have a little conversation with Jesus." Well, it is sweet, and it is easy, sometimes, but often, it is a walkie-talkie during war: the bombs are dropping; the enemy fire is heavy all around. Prayer is embattled, and we are called to get on the frequency of the heavenly headquarters and send in for air cover. "I've got to have the air force quick, Father, because I'm in trouble." But never forget that even our call for help is an act of help from the Lord who is for us as we are wrestling in prayer.

June 18, 2022 - Glorify God

You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:20)

"Worship" is the term we use to cover all the acts of the heart and mind and body that intentionally express the infinite worth of God. This is what we were created for. It might be singing in church. It might be sweeping the kitchen floor.

Don't just think about worship services when you think about worship. That is a huge limitation. All of life is supposed to be worship.

Take breakfast, for example, or midmorning snacks. First Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Now eating and drinking are about as basic as you can get. Paul says, in effect, let all your eating and drinking be worship.

Or take death. We will experience death in our bodies. In fact, it will be the last act of the body on this earth. The body bids farewell. How shall we worship in that last act of the body? We see the answer in Philippians 1:20–21. Paul says that his hope is that Christ would be magnified, worshiped, shown to be worthy, in his body by death. Then he adds, "For to me . . . to die is gain." We express the infinite worth of Christ in dying by counting death as gain. You are always in a temple. Always worship. Always Glorify God.

June 19, 2022 - "Lord, teach us to pray."(Luke 11:1)

God answers the prayers of sinners, not perfect people. You can become paralysed in your praying if you do not focus on the cross and realize this.

Let's see it from Luke 11 — in two ways: In this version of the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2–4), Jesus says, "When you pray, say . . . " and then in verse 4 he includes this petition, "and forgive us our sins." So, if you connect the beginning of the prayer with the middle, what he says is, "Whenever you pray, say . . . forgive us our sins."

This means that this should be as much a part of all our praying as, "Hallowed be your name." Which means that Jesus assumes that we need to seek forgiveness virtually every time we pray.

We are always sinners. Nothing we do is perfect. As Martin Luther said, on his deathbed, "We are beggars. This is true." Even if we have achieved some measure of obedience before we pray, we always come to the Lord as sinners — all of us. God does not turn away the prayers of sinners when they pray like this.

The second place we can see this is in Luke 11:13*: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"* Jesus calls his disciples "evil." Pretty strong language. He did not mean that they were out of fellowship with him. He did not mean that their prayers could not be answered.

He meant that as long as this fallen age lasts, even his own disciples will have an evil bent that pollutes everything they do but that doesn't keep them from doing much good as they rely on his grace and power. We are sinners and need to pray as Jesus taught us for forgiveness.

June 20, 2022 - Our Heart Exploits our Mind

The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!" (Proverbs 22:13)

This is not what I expected the proverb to say. I would have expected it to say, "The coward says, 'There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!'" But it says, "sluggard," not "coward." So, the controlling emotion here is laziness, not fear.

But what does laziness have to do with the danger of a lion in the street? We don't usually say, "This man is too lazy to go do his work because there is a lion outside."

The point is that the sluggard creates imaginary circumstances to justify not doing his work, and thus shifts the focus from the vice of his laziness to the danger of lions. No one will approve his staying in the house all day just because he is lazy. But they might excuse him if there is a lion in the street.

One profound biblical insight we need to learn from this is that our heart exploits our mind to justify what we want. That is, our deepest desires precede the rational functioning of our minds and incline the mind to perceive and think in a way that will make the desires look right, even if they're wrong.

This is what the sluggard is doing. He deeply desires to stay at home and not work. There is no good reason to stay at home. So, what does he do? Does he overcome his bad desire? No, he uses his mind to create unreal circumstances to justify his desire.

Jesus said, "The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil" (John 3:19). We love the darkness so that we can keep on doing what we want without exposure. In this condition, the mind becomes a factory of darkness, a fountain of half-truths, evasions, and lies. Anything to protect the evil desires of the heart from exposure. Consider and be wise.

June 21, 2022 - The Promises of God

For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. (2 Corinthians 1:20)

If "all the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus]," then to trust him now in the present is to believe that his promises will come true.

Those are not two separate faiths — trusting him and believing in his promises. Trusting Jesus — believing in Jesus for salvation — means believing that he keeps his word. Being satisfied in the crucified and risen Jesus includes the belief that at every future moment, to all eternity, nothing will separate us from his love, or keep him from working all things together for our good. That "good" is ultimately seeing and savouring the beauty and worth of God in Christ as our supreme Treasure.

The confidence that this all-satisfying good will be there for us forever is based on all the glorious grace of the past, especially the grace that God did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all (Romans 8:32).

We need to taste now the spiritual beauty of God in all his past achievements — especially the death and resurrection of Christ for our sins — trusting in all the promises of God.

June 22, 2022 - Faith that God has Assigned

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. (Romans 12:3)

In the context of this verse, Paul is concerned that people were thinking of themselves "more highly than [they] ought to think." His final remedy for this pride is to say that not only are spiritual gifts a work of God's

free grace in our lives, but so also is the very faith with which we use those gifts. ". . . each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned."

This means that every possible ground of boasting is taken away from us. How can we boast if even the qualification for receiving gifts is also a gift?

This truth has a profound impact on how we pray. Jesus gives us the example in Luke 22:31–32. Before Peter denies him three times Jesus says to him, *"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."*

Jesus prays for Peter's faith to be sustained even through the sin of denial, because he knows that God is the one who gives and assigns faith. So, we should pray the way Jesus did, for ourselves and for others that God would sustain our assigned faith.

June 23, 2022 - God did not spare His Own Son

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)

If you asked "who killed Jesus", what would people say?

Some may say the soldiers, others the Jews, or Pilate. What if we then said, "His Father killed him."

That's what the first half of Romans 8:32 says: God did not spare his own Son but handed him over — to death. *"This Jesus [was] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23).* Isaiah 53 puts it even more bluntly, *"We esteemed him stricken, smitten by God. . . . It was the will of the Lord to crush him; he (his Father!) has put him to grief" (Isaiah 53:4, 10).*

Or as Romans 3:25 says, *"God put [him] forward as a propitiation by his blood."* Just as Abraham lifted the knife over the chest of his son Isaac, but then spared his son because there was a ram in the thicket, so God the Father lifted his knife over the chest of his own Son, Jesus — but did not spare him, because he was the ram; he was the substitute.

God did not spare his own Son, because it was the only way he could spare us and still be a just and holy God.

June 24, 2022 - The Lord Delights in Prospering You

"The Lord will again take delight in prospering you." (Deuteronomy 30:9)

God does not bless us begrudgingly. There is a kind of eagerness about the blessing of God. He seeks us out, because it is his pleasure to do us good. God is not waiting for us; he is pursuing us. That, in fact, is the literal translation of Psalm 23:6, *"Surely goodness and mercy shall pursue me all the days of my life."*

God loves to show mercy. He is not hesitant or indecisive or tentative in his desires to do good to his people. That's what he meant when he came down on Mount Sinai and said to Moses, *"The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" (Exodus 34:6).* It's what he meant when he said in Jeremiah 9:24*, "I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."*

God is never irritable or edgy. Instead, he is infinitely energetic with absolutely unbounded and unending enthusiasm for the fulfillment of his delights.

This is hard for us to comprehend, because we have to sleep every day just to cope, not to mention thrive. Our emotions go up and down. We get discouraged one day and feel hopeful and excited another.

We are like little geysers that gurgle and sputter and pop erratically. But God is like a great Niagara Falls — you look at 186,000 tons of water crashing over the precipice every minute and think: Surely this can't keep going at this force year after year after year. Yet it does. That's the way God is about doing us good. He never grows weary of it.

June 25, 2022 - God will Rejoice Over You

As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isaiah 62:5)

When God does good to his people, it is not so much like a reluctant judge showing kindness to a criminal whom he finds despicable. It is like a bridegroom showing affection to his bride.

Sometimes we joke and say about a marriage, "The honeymoon is over." But that's because we are finite. We can't sustain a honeymoon level of intensity and affection. But God says that his joy over his people is like a bridegroom over a bride. And he doesn't mean it starts out that way and then fades.

He is talking about honeymoon intensity and honeymoon pleasures and honeymoon energy and excitement and enthusiasm and enjoyment. He is trying to get into our hearts what he means when he says he rejoices over us with all his heart. Jeremiah 32:41, *"I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul."* Zephaniah 3:17, *"The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing."*

With God the honeymoon never ends. He is infinite in power and wisdom and creativity so that there will be no boredom for the next trillion ages of millenniums as he rejoices over you.

June 26, 2022 - What Pleases God

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (2 Corinthians 5:9)

What if you discovered, like the Pharisees did, that you had devoted your whole life to trying to please God but all the while had been doing things that in God's sight were abominations (Luke 16:14–15)?

Someone may question this and say, "I don't think that's possible; God wouldn't reject a person who has been trying to please him." Do you see what this questioner has done? He has based his conviction about what would please God on his idea of what God is like. That is precisely why we must begin with the character of God revealed in the Bible.

God is a mountain spring, not a watering trough. A mountain spring is self-replenishing. It constantly overflows and supplies others. But a watering trough needs to be filled with a pump or bucket. So, the great question is: How do you serve a spring? And: How do you serve a watering trough? How do you glorify God the way he really is?

If you want to glorify the worth of a watering trough, you work hard to keep it full and useful. But if you want to glorify the worth of a spring, you do it by getting down on your hands and knees and drinking to

your heart's satisfaction, until you have the refreshment and strength to go back down in the valley and tell the people what you've found.

My hope as a desperate sinner hangs on this biblical truth: that God is the kind of God who will be pleased with the one thing I have to offer: my thirst. That is what pleases God.

June 27, 2022 - Trembles at God's Word

"This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word." (Isaiah 66:2)

The first mark of the upright heart is that it trembles at the word of the Lord. Isaiah 66 deals with the problem of some who worship in a way that pleases God and some who worship in a way that doesn't. Verse 3 describes the wicked who bring their sacrifices, "He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man." Their sacrifices are an abomination to God, on a par with murder. Why?

In verse 4 God explains, "When I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen." Their sacrifices were abominations to God because the people were deaf to his voice. But what about those whose prayers God heard? Verse 2, "This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word."

The first mark of the upright, whose prayers are a delight to God, is that they tremble at God's word. These are the people to whom the Lord will look. The first thing that makes a prayer acceptable to God is the brokenness and humility of the one who prays. They tremble at God's word.

June 28, 2022 - Heart's Desire and Prayer

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. (Romans 10:1)

Paul prays that God would convert Israel. He prays for her salvation! He does not pray for ineffectual influences, but for effectual influences. That is how we should pray too.

We should take the new covenant promises of God and plead with God to bring them to pass in our children and our neighbours and on all the mission fields of the world.

God, take out of their flesh the heart of stone and give them a new heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 11:19)
Circumcise their heart so that they love you! (Deuteronomy 30:6)
Father, put your Spirit within them and cause them to walk in your statutes. (Ezekiel 36:27)
Grant them repentance and a knowledge of the truth that they may escape from the snare of the devil. (2 Timothy 2:25–26)
Open their hearts so that they believe the gospel! (Acts 16:14)

When we believe in the sovereignty of God, in the right and power of God to elect and then bring hardened sinners to faith and salvation, then we will be able to pray with no inconsistency, and with the confidence of great biblical promises for the conversion of the lost. May this be our heart's desire and prayer to God.

June 29, 2022 - The Commandment of the Lord

Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice." (1 Samuel 15:24)

Why did Saul obey the people instead of God? He feared the people instead of God. He feared the human consequences of obedience more than he feared the divine consequences of disobedience. He feared the displeasure of the people more than the displeasure of God. That is a great insult to God.

Isaiah says it is a kind of pride to be afraid of what man can do while we disregard the promises of God. He quotes God with this piercing question: *"I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, and have forgotten the Lord, your Maker?" (Isaiah 51:12–13).*

The point is this: If you fear man, you have begun to deny the holiness, the worth of God and his Son, Jesus. God is infinitely stronger than man. He is infinitely wiser and infinitely fuller of reward and joy. To turn from him out of fear of what man can do is to discount all that God promises to be for those who fear him. It is a great insult.

On the other hand, when we hear God's promises and trust him with courage, fearing the reproach brought upon God by our unbelief, then he is greatly honoured.

June 30, 2022 - God's Grace toward me was not in Vain

By the grace of God I am what I am and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10)

Grace is not simply leniency when we have sinned. Grace is the enabling gift and power of God not to sin. Grace is power, not just pardon. Paul describes grace as the enabling power of his work. It is not simply the pardon of his sins; it is the power to press on in obedience.

Therefore, the effort we make to obey God is not an effort done in our own strength, but *"by the strength that God supplies — in order that in everything God may be glorified" (1 Peter 4:11). It is the obedience of faith. Faith in God's ever-arriving gracious power to enable us to do what we should.*

The obedience that gives God pleasure is produced by the power of God's grace through faith. The same dynamic is at work at every stage of the Christian life. The power of God's grace that saves through faith, is the same power of God's grace that sanctifies through faith. God's Grace towards us is not in vain.