TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

August 2022

August 1, 2022 - Hope in God

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. (Psalm 42:11)

We must learn to fight despondency — the downcast spirit. The fight is a fight of faith in grace. It is fought by preaching truth to ourselves about God and his promised future.

This is what the psalmist does in Psalm 42. The psalmist preaches to his troubled soul. He scolds himself and argues with himself. His main argument is grace: *"Hope in God! Trust in what God will be for you in the future. A day of praise is coming. The presence of the Lord will be all the help you need and he has promised to be with us forever."*

Martyn Lloyd-Jones believes this issue of preaching truth to ourselves about God's grace is all-important in overcoming spiritual depression. In his helpful book, Spiritual Depression, he writes,

Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them, but they start talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. . . . Your self is talking to you. Now this man's treatment [in Psalm 42] was this: instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. *"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"* he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says, *"Self, listen for a moment. I will speak to you." (20–21)*

The battle against despondency is a battle to believe the promises of God and that belief in God's grace comes by hearing the word. So preaching to ourselves the word of God, to Hope in God, is at the heart of the battle.

August 2, 2022 - Looking to the Reward

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. (Hebrews 11:24–26)

Faith is not content with "fleeting pleasures." *It is ravenous for joy. Joy that lasts Forever. The word of God says, "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).* So, faith will not be side-tracked into the deceitful pleasures of sin. It will not give up so easily in its quest for maximum joy.

The role of God's word is to feed faith's appetite for God. And, in doing this, it weans my heart off the deceptive taste of lust.

At first, lust begins to trick me into feeling that I would really miss out on some great satisfaction if I followed the path of purity. But then I take up the sword of the Spirit and begin to fight.

I read that if I think about things that are pure and lovely and excellent, the peace of God will be with me (Philippians 4:8–9).

I read that setting the mind on the flesh brings death, but setting the mind on the Spirit brings life and peace (Romans 8:6).

But best of all, I read that God withholds no good thing from those who walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11), and that the pure in heart will see God (Matthew 5:8).

As I pray for my faith to be satisfied with God's life and peace, the sword of the Spirit carves the sugarcoating off the poison of lust. I see it for what it is and by the grace of God, its alluring power is broken as I look to the reward.

August 3, 2022 - I have prayed for you

"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)

Though Peter, in fact, failed miserably, by denying Jesus three times, the prayer of Jesus preserved him from utter ruin. He was brought to bitter weeping and restored to the joy and boldness that showed itself in Peter's message at Pentecost. Jesus is interceding for us today in the same way that our faith might not fail.

Jesus promised that his sheep would be preserved and never perish. *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27–28).*

The reason for this is that God works to preserve the faith of the sheep. *"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).*

We are not left to ourselves to fight the fight of faith. *"It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).*

He will lose none of those he has brought to faith and justified and intercedes for.

August 4, 2022 - Firm in your Faith

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith. (1 Peter 5:8–9)

The two great enemies of our souls are sin and Satan. And sin is the worst enemy, because the only way that Satan can destroy us is by getting us to sin and keeping us from repenting. The only thing that damns us is unforgiven sin. Not Satan.

God may give him leash enough to rough us up, the way he did Job, or even to kill us, the way he did the saints in Smyrna (Revelation 2:10); but Satan cannot condemn us or rob us of eternal life. The only way he can do us ultimate harm is by influencing us to sin and keep us from repentance. Which is exactly what he aims to do.

So, Satan's main business is to advocate, promote, assist, titillate, and confirm our bent to sinning and to keep us from faith and repentance.

We see this in Ephesians 2:1–2: *"You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked . . . according to the prince of the power of the air".* Sinning "accords" with Satan's power in the

world. When he brings about moral evil, it is through sin. When we sin, we move in his sphere. We come into accord with him. When we sin, we give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27).

Satan wants to catch us at a time when our faith is not firm, when it is vulnerable. It makes sense that the very thing Satan wants to destroy would also be the means of our resisting his efforts. The way to thwart the devil is to be firm in your faith.

August 5, 2022 - The Love ofMoney

The love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. (1 Timothy 6:10)

What did Paul mean when he wrote this? He couldn't have meant that money is always on your mind when you sin. A lot of sin happens when we are not thinking about money.

My suggestion is this: He meant that all the evils in the world come from a certain kind of heart, namely, the kind of heart that loves money.

So what does it mean to love money? It doesn't mean to admire the paper or the copper coins or the silver shekels. To know what it means to love money, you have to ask, What is money? I would answer that question like this: Money is simply a symbol that stands for human resources. Money stands for what you can get from man — other human beings — instead of God.

God deals in the currency of grace, not money: *"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!" (Isaiah 55:1).* Money is the currency of human resources. So, the heart that loves money is a heart that pins its hopes, and pursues its pleasures, and puts its trust in what human resources can offer.

So, the love of money is virtually the same as faith in money — belief (trust, confidence, assurance) that money will meet your needs and make you happy. Love of money is the alternative to faith in God's grace.

You can't trust in God and in money at the same time. Belief in one is unbelief in the other. A heart that loves money, is not trusting all that God is for us in Jesus as the satisfaction of our souls.

August 6, 2022 - We Do not Lose Heart

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16–18)

Paul can't see the way he used to (and there were no glasses). He can't hear the way he used to (and there were no hearing aids). He doesn't recover from beatings the way he used to (and there were no antibiotics). His strength, walking from town to town, doesn't hold up the way it used to. He sees the wrinkles in his face and neck. His memory is not as good and he admits that this is a threat to his faith and joy and courage.

But he does not lose heart. Why? He doesn't lose heart because his inner man is being renewed. How? The renewing of his heart comes from something very strange: it comes from looking at what he can't see.

This is Paul's way of not losing heart: looking at what he cannot see. What, then, did he see when he looked?

A few verses later in 2 Corinthians 5:7, he says, *"We walk by faith, not by sight."* This doesn't mean that he leaps into the dark without evidence of what's there. It means that for now the most precious and important realities in the world are beyond our physical senses.

We "look" at these unseen things through the gospel. We strengthen our hearts — we renew our courage — by fixing our gaze on the invisible, objective truth that we see in the testimony of those who saw Christ face to face. With Paul we need to go on seeing with the eyes of the heart, so that we do not lose heart.

August 7, 2022 - Rest a little longer

They were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. (Revelation 6:11)

For almost three hundred years, Christianity grew in soil that was wet with the blood of the martyrs.

Until the Emperor Trajan (about AD 98), persecution was permitted but not legal. From Trajan to Decius (about AD 250), persecution was legal. From Decius, who hated the Christians and feared their impact on his reforms, until the first edict of toleration in 311, the persecution was not only legal but widespread and general.

One writer described the situation in this third period:

Horror spread everywhere through the congregations; and the number of lapsi [the ones who renounced their faith when threatened] . . . was enormous. There was no lack, however, of such as remained firm, and suffered martyrdom rather than yielding; and, as the persecution grew wider and more intense, the enthusiasm of the Christians and their power of resistance grew stronger and stronger.

So, for three hundred years, to be a Christian was an act of immense risk to your life and possessions and family. It was a test of what you loved more and at the extremity of that test was martyrdom. Martyrdom is not something accidental. It is not taking God off guard. It is not unexpected.

It may look like defeat. But it is part of a plan in heaven that no human strategist would ever conceive or could ever design. This plan will triumph for all those who endure to the end by faith in God's all-sufficient grace.

August 8, 2022 - Testing of Your Faith

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (James 1:2–3)

Strange as it may seem, one of the primary purposes of being shaken by suffering is to make our faith more unshakable. Faith is like muscle tissue: if you stress it to the limit, it gets stronger, not weaker. That's what James means here. When your faith is threatened and tested and stretched to the breaking point, the result is greater capacity to endure. He calls it steadfastness.

God loves faith so much that he will test it to the breaking point so as to keep it pure and strong.

God so values our wholehearted faith that he will, graciously, if necessary, take away everything else in the world that we might be tempted to rely on — even life itself. His aim is that we grow deeper and stronger in our confidence that he himself will be all we need.

He wants us to be able to say with the psalmist, *"Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:25–26).*

August 9, 2022 - Suffering and Faith

"They have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away." (Mark 4:17)

The faith of some is broken instead of built by suffering. Jesus knew this and described it here in the parable of the four soils. Some people who hear the word receive it at first with gladness, but then suffering makes them fall away.

So, affliction does not always make faith stronger. Sometimes it crushes faith and then comes true the paradoxical words of Jesus, *"The one who has not, even what he has will be taken" (Mark 4:25).*

This is a call for us to endure suffering with firm faith in grace, so that our faith might grow stronger and not be proved vain (1 Corinthians 15:2). *"To the one who has, more will be given" (Mark 4:25).* Knowing God's design in suffering is one of the main means of growing through suffering.

If you think your suffering is pointless, or that God is not in control, or that he is whimsical or cruel, then your suffering will drive you from God, instead of driving you from everything but God — as it should. So, it is crucial that faith in God's grace includes the faith that he gives grace through suffering.

August 10, 2022 - My Grace is Sufficient

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

God's design for suffering is that it should magnify Christ's worth and power. This is grace, because the greatest joy of Christians is to experience Christ magnified in our lives.

When Paul was told by the Lord Jesus that his "thorn in the flesh" would not be taken away, he supported Paul's faith by explaining why. God ordains that Paul be weak so that Christ might be seen as strong on Paul's behalf.

If we feel and look self-sufficient, we will get the glory, not Christ. So, Christ chooses the weak things of the world *"so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (1 Corinthians 1:29).* At times he makes seemingly strong people weaker so that the divine power will be the more evident.

We know that Paul experienced this as grace because he rejoiced in it: *"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9–10).*

Living by faith in God's grace means being satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus. Therefore, faith will not shrink back from what reveals and magnifies all that God is for us in Jesus and shows that God's grace is sufficient for us.

August 11, 2022 - Destroy the Devil

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Hebrews 2:14–15)

How does Christ deliver us from the fear of death and set us free to live with the kind of loving abandon that can "let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also"?

The term "children" is taken from the previous verse and refers to the spiritual offspring of Christ, the Messiah. These are also the "children of God." In other words, in sending Christ, God has the salvation of his "children" especially in view.

The Son of God, who existed before the incarnation as the eternal Word (John 1:1), took on flesh and blood, and clothed his deity with humanity. He became fully man and remained fully God.

The reason Christ became human was to die. As preincarnate God, he could not die for sinners but united to flesh and blood, he could. His aim was to die. Therefore, he had to be born human, mortal.

In dying, Christ defanged the devil. How? By covering all our sin (Hebrews 10:12). This means that Satan has no legitimate grounds to accuse us before God. *"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies" (Romans 8:33).*

August 12, 2022 - Our Bodies will Glorify God Forever

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

God did not create the physical-material universe willy-nilly. He had a purpose, namely, to add to the ways his glory is externalized and made manifest. *"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).*

Our bodies fit into that same category of physical things that God created for this reason. He is not going to back out on his plan to glorify himself through human beings and human bodies.

Why does God go to all the trouble to dirty his hands, as it were, with our decaying, sin-stained flesh, in order to re-establish it as a resurrection body and clothe it with glory and immortality? Answer: Because his Son paid the price of death so that the Father's purpose for the material universe would be fulfilled, namely, that he would be glorified in it, including in our bodies, forever and ever.

God will not disregard or dishonour the work of his Son. God will honour the work of his Son by raising our bodies from the dead. They will be raised to be like Christ's glorious body and we will use our bodies to glorify God forever and ever.

August 13, 2022 - God IsFaithful

Those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

Between eternity past in God's predestination, and eternity future in God's glorification, none is lost.

No one who is predestined for sonship fails to be called and no one who is called fails to be justified and no one who is justified fails to be glorified. This is an unbreakable precious chain of divine covenant faithfulness.

And so Paul says, And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)

[He] 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)

These are the promises of our God who cannot lie. Those who are born again are as secure as God is faithful.

August 14, 2022 - What does it mean to be God

God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations." (Exodus 3:15)

These are what it means to be God.

1. He never had a beginning. Every child asks, "Who made God?" And every wise parent says, "Nobody made God. God simply is. And always was. No beginning."

2. God will never end. If he did not come into being he cannot go out of being, because he is being.

3. God is absolute reality. There is no reality before him. There is no reality outside of him unless he wills it and makes it. He is all that was eternally. No space, no universe, no emptiness. Only God.

4. God is utterly independent. He depends on nothing to bring him into being or support him or counsel him or make him what he is.

5. Everything that is not God depends totally on God. The entire universe is utterly secondary. It came into being by God and stays in being moment by moment on God's decision to keep it.

6. All the universe is by comparison to God as nothing. Contingent, dependent reality is to absolute, independent reality as a shadow to substance. As an echo to a thunderclap.

7. God is constant. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He cannot be improved. He is not becoming anything. He is who he is.

8. God is the absolute standard of truth and goodness and beauty. There is no law-book to which he looks to know what is right. No almanac to establish facts. No guild to determine what is excellent or beautiful. He himself is the standard of what is right, what is true, what is beautiful.

9. God does whatever he pleases and it is always right and always beautiful and always in accord with truth. All reality that is outside of him he created and designed and governs as the absolute reality. So he is utterly free from any constraints that don't originate from the counsel of his own will.

10. God is the most important and most valuable reality and person in the universe. He is more worthy of interest and attention and admiration and enjoyment than all other realities, including the entire universe.

August 15, 2022 - He Cares for You

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you (1 Peter 5:7)

There is no easier road to trouble and defeat than worry. As someone has aptly stated it, “Why pray, when you can worry?” After all, prayer might solve your problems, but if you nurse your worries carefully, they’re bound to increase and multiply.

The man who worries is bound to fail sooner or later because he has a bigger problem locked up in his head than anything life can bring him. Worry comes wherever there is a lack of trust in God, and it means frustration and inner failure. The biggest enemy of the man who worries is himself. No enemy can rob him of more sleep, poison more of his food, spoil more of his days, and cheat him of more happiness and success than worry—and it comes from his own mind.

If there is a God, it doesn’t make sense to worry, does it? If God is God, then He is capable of assuming your burdens, is He not? And if God indeed revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, then we have a God who welcomes and takes our burdens, makes all things, including evil, work together for good for us, and in everything supplies our needs. Is there any sense in worrying when you have a God like Jesus Christ?

If you want the blessed peace and assurance of God, stop trusting in your own little self and trust in God instead. Any man who trusts in himself has grounds for worrying, but the man who trusts in the Lord has grounds for serene confidence. Our God is able, and with Him nothing is impossible. When we by faith become members of Jesus Christ, then we are made partakers of God’s unshakeable success. We know that He will lead us safely through the deep waters of trouble and affliction into the safety of His arms. In this confidence we invite you to a life free from worry to a life in Christ.

August 16, 2022 - The New Covenant

“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” (Luke 22:20)

What that means is that the new covenant, promised most explicitly in Jeremiah 31 and 32, was secured and sealed by the blood of Jesus. The new covenant comes true for God’s people who trust the Messiah, Jesus, because Jesus died to establish it.

And what does the new covenant secure for all who belong to Christ? Perseverance in faith to the end. Listen to Jeremiah 32:40,

“I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.”

The everlasting covenant — the new covenant — includes the unbreakable promise, “I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.” They may not. They will not. Christ sealed this covenant with his blood. He purchased your perseverance if you are in Jesus Christ through faith.

If you are persevering in faith today, you owe it to the blood of Jesus. The Holy Spirit, who is working in you to preserve your faith, is honouring the purchase of Jesus. God the Spirit works in us what God the Son obtained for us. The Father planned it. Jesus bought it. The Spirit applies it — all of them infallibly.

God is totally committed to the perseverance and eternal security of his blood-bought children in the new covenant.

August 17, 2022 - The Image of God

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

God made humans in his image so that the world would be filled with reflectors of God. Images of God. Seven billion statues of God. So that nobody would miss the point of creation.

Nobody (unless they are stone blind) could miss the point of humanity, namely, God — knowing, loving, showing God. The angels cry in Isaiah 6:3, *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"* It is full of billions of human image-bearers.

But not only humans. Also nature! Why such a breathtaking world for us to live in? Why such a vast universe?

I once read that there are more stars in the universe than there are words and sounds that all humans of all time have ever spoken. Why are there so many? So large? So bright? At such unimaginable distances? The Bible is crystal clear about this: *"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1).*

It's not about us. It's about God. He is more glorious, Greater in power, Greater in scope, Greater in brightness, than all the galaxies combined. One wise man said, the universe is like a peanut that God carries around in his pocket.

God created us to know him and love him and show him and then he gave us a hint of what he is like: the universe and us created in His image.

August 18, 2022 - From The Lord

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord. (Proverbs 16:33)

In modern language we would say, "The dice are rolled on the table, and every play is decided by God." There are no events so small that he does not rule them for his purposes. *"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?" Jesus said. "And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:29–30).*

Every roll of the dice in Las Vegas, every tiny bird that falls dead in a thousand forests — all of this is God's command. In the book of Jonah, God commands a fish to swallow a man (1:17), he commands a plant to grow for shade (4:6), and he commands a worm to kill it (4:7). Far above the life of fish and worms, the stars take their place and hold their place at God's command.

Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power, not one is missing. (Isaiah 40:26)

How much more, then, the natural events of this world — from weather to disasters to disease to disability to death.

His law he enforces; the stars in their courses
and sun in its orbit obediently shine;
the hills and the mountains, the rivers and fountains,
the deeps of the ocean, proclaim him divine.
("Let All Things Now Living," Katherine Davis)

Let us therefore stand in awe and be at peace, knowing that no natural event is outside of God's wise and good purposes, and perfect control. It is all from the Lord.

August 19, 2022 - Rejoice in God

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:9–11)

What do we need to be saved from? Verse 9 states it clearly: the wrath of God. But is that the highest, best, fullest, most satisfying prize of the gospel?

No. Verse 10 says "much more . . . shall we be saved by his life." Then verse 11 takes it all the way up to the ultimate end and goal of the gospel: "more than that, we also rejoice in God."

That is the final and highest good of the good news. There is not another "more than that" after that. There is only Paul's saying how we got there, "through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

The end of the gospel is "we rejoice in God." The highest, fullest, deepest, sweetest, good of the gospel is God himself, enjoyed by his redeemed people.

God in Christ became the price (Romans 5:6–8), and God in Christ became the prize (Romans 5:11). The gospel is the good news that God bought for us the everlasting enjoyment of God so we can rejoice in God.

August 20, 2022 - Have Mercy on Me

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. (Psalm 51:1)

Three times: "Have mercy," "according to your steadfast love," and "according to your abundant mercy." This is what God had promised in Exodus 34:6–7:

"The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty."

David knew that there were guilty who would not be forgiven and there were guilty who by some mysterious work of redemption would not be counted as guilty but would be forgiven. Psalm 51 is his way of laying hold on that mystery of mercy.

We know more of the mystery of this redemption than David did. We know Christ. But we lay hold of the mercy in the same way he did. The decisive thing he does is turn, helpless, to the mercy and love of God. Today that means turning, helpless, to Christ, whose blood secures all the mercy we need.

August 21, 2022 - The Grace of our God

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, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:11–12)

Grace is not only God's disposition to do good for us when we don't deserve it — we call this "undeserved favour"; God's grace is also a power from God that acts in our lives and makes good things happen in us and for us — which we also don't deserve.

The power that actually works in our lives to make Christ-exalting obedience possible is an exertion of the grace of God.

You can see this also in 1 Corinthians 15:10: 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. Grace is an active, present, transformative, obedience-enabling power.

God's grace is ever cascading over the waterfall of the inexhaustible river of grace coming to us from God. In the next five minutes, you will receive sustaining grace flowing to you from God. The Grace of our God will continue to come to us throughout all eternity.

August 22, 2022 - My Soul Thirsts for God

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? (Psalm 42:1–2)

What makes this so beautiful and so crucial for us is that he is not thirsting mainly for relief from his threatening circumstances. He is not thirsting mainly for escape from his enemies or for their destruction.

It's not wrong to want relief, and to pray for it. It is sometimes right to pray for the defeat of enemies but more important than any of that is God himself.

When we think and feel with God in the Psalms, this is the main result: We come to love God, and we want to see God and be with God and be satisfied in admiring and exulting in God.

A likely translation of the end of verse 2 is, *"When will I come and see the face of God?"* The final answer to that question was given in John 14:9 Jesus said, *"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."* When we see the face of Christ, we see the face of God.

May the Lord increase your hunger and your thirst to see the face of God and may he grant your desire, even today, through the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

August 23, 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)

When Paul says that God fulfills our good resolves by his power through faith (he calls our acts "works of faith"), he means that we defeat sin and we do righteousness by faith, that is, by being satisfied with all that God promises to be for us in Christ in the next five minutes, five months, five decades, and into eternity.

Here are some examples of how this might look in your life:

1. *If you set your heart to give sacrificially and generously, the power of God to fulfill this resolve will come to you as you trust his grace in the promise, "My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). And the promise, "Whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6).*
2. *If you set your heart to speak out for Christ when the opportunity comes, the power of God to fulfill this resolve will come to you as you trust his grace in the promise, "Do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour" (Matthew 10:19).*

May God increase our daily faith in the precious promises of God — promises of his inexhaustible, blood-bought, Christ-exalting grace.

August 24, 2022 - Bring us to God

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

The greatest good of the good news — the gospel — is the enjoyment of fellowship with God himself. This is made explicit here in 1 Peter 3:18 in the phrase "that he might bring us to God." That's why Jesus died.

All the other gifts of the gospel exist to make this one possible.

- *We are forgiven so that our guilt does not keep us away from God.*
- *We are justified so that our condemnation does not keep us away from God.*
- *God is propitiated so that his wrath doesn't stand between us and God as our Father.*
- *We are given eternal life now, with new bodies in the resurrection, so that we have the capacities for being with God forever and enjoying God to the fullest.*

Test your heart. Why do you want forgiveness? Why do you want to be justified? Why do you want the wrath of God to be propitiated? Why do you want eternal life? Is the decisive answer, "Because I want to enjoy God now and forever"?

The gospel-love that God gives is ultimately the gift of himself. This is what we were made for. This is what we lost because of our sin. This is what Christ came to restore, to bring us to God.

August 25, 2022 - Why You Give In

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. . . . Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:8, 12)

Why isn't David crying out for sexual restraint? Why isn't he praying for men to hold him accountable? Why isn't he praying for protected eyes and sex-free thoughts? In this psalm of confession and repentance after his ordeal with Bathsheba, you would expect David to ask for something like that. The reason is that he knows that sexual sin is a symptom, not the disease.

People give way to sexual sin because they don't have fullness of joy and gladness in Christ. Their spirits are not steadfast and firm and established. They waver. They are enticed, and they give way because God does not have the supreme place in their feelings and thoughts that he should.

David knew this about himself. It's true about us too. David is showing us, by the way he prays, what the real need is for those who sin sexually: God! Joy in God. This is profound wisdom for us and shows why we give in.

August 26, 2022 - Bless the Lord

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! (Psalm 103:1)

The psalm begins and ends with the psalmist preaching to his soul to bless the Lord — "Bless the Lord, O my soul" — and preaching to the angels and the hosts of heaven and the works of God's hands that they should do the same.

Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word,
obeying the voice of his word! Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will!
Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul!
(Psalm 103:20–22)

The psalm is overwhelmingly focused on blessing the Lord. What does it mean to bless the Lord? It means to speak well of his greatness and goodness — and really mean it from the depths of your soul.

What David is doing in the first and last verses of this psalm, when he says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," is saying that authentic speaking about God's goodness and greatness must come from the soul.

Blessing God with the mouth without the soul would be hypocrisy. Jesus said, *"This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8).* David knows that danger, and he is preaching to himself. He is telling his soul not to let this happen.

August 27, 2022 - Turn Away from Evil

"Whoever desires to love life and see good days . . . let him turn away from evil and do good." (1 Peter 3:10–11)

There is only one basic reason why we disobey the commands of Jesus: it's because we don't have heartfelt confidence that obeying will bring more blessing than disobeying. We do not hope fully in God's promise.

Peter, following Jesus, is not ashamed to motivate obedience to hard commands — like not returning evil for evil — with the promise of greater joy. "Bless those who revile you . . . that you may obtain a blessing!" Do you want to enjoy everlasting life? Turn away from evil! Joy for all eternity awaits you! Is that not reward enough to avoid the pleasures of vengeance now?

You will always be better off to obey than to disobey Jesus, even if that obedience costs you your life. Jesus said, Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time . . . with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. (Mark 10:29–30)

The only way to have the power to follow Christ in the costly way of love is to be filled with hope, with strong confidence that, if we lose our life doing his will, we will find it again and be richly rewarded forever as we turn away from evil.

August 28, 2022 - You Will Be Saved

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

What does it mean to "believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead"? Satan believes that God raised Jesus from the dead. He saw it happen. To answer this question, we need to ponder what the resurrection means for God's people.

The meaning of the resurrection is that God is for us. He aims to overcome all our sense of abandonment and alienation. The resurrection of Jesus is God's declaration to Israel and to the world that we cannot work our way to glory, but that he intends to do the impossible to get us there.

The resurrection is the promise of God that all who trust Jesus will be the beneficiaries of God's power to lead us in paths of righteousness and through the valley of death.

Therefore, believing in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead is much more than accepting a fact. It means being confident that God is for you, that he is transforming your life, and that he will save you for eternal joy.

Believing in the resurrection means trusting in all the promises of life and hope and righteousness for which it stands. It means being so confident of God's power and love that no fear of worldly loss or greed for worldly gain will lure us to disobey his will. That's the difference between Satan and the saints who will be saved.

August 29, 2022 - I Am with You Always

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18–20)

The last chapter of Matthew is a window that opens onto the sunrise glory of the risen Christ. Through it you can see at least three massive peaks in the mountain range of Christ's character: the peak of his power; the peak of his kindness; and the peak of his purposefulness.

All authority is his, the right and the power to do his will and he uses this power to pursue his unwavering purpose to make disciples from all the nations and in the process, he is personally kind to us, promising to be with us to the end.

We all know in our hearts that if the risen Christ is going to satisfy our desire to admire greatness, that is the way he has to be. Great in power. Great in kindness. Great in purposefulness.

People who are too weak to accomplish their purposes can't satisfy our desire to admire greatness. We admire people even less who have no purpose in life and still less those whose purposes are merely selfish and unkind.

What we long to see and know is a Person whose power is unlimited, whose kindness is tender, and whose purpose is single and unflinching. We must have the real thing. We must see the Original of all power and kindness and purposefulness. We must see and worship the risen Christ who will be with you always.

August 30, 2022 - Your Joy may be Full

"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." (John 15:11)

God is absolutely sovereign. *"Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (Psalm 115:3).* Therefore, he is not frustrated. He rejoices in all his works when he contemplates them as colours of the magnificent mosaic of redemptive history. He is an unshakably happy God.

His happiness is foundationally the delight he has in himself. Before creation, he rejoiced in the image of his glory in the person of his Son — his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased (Matthew 3:17). Then the joy of God "went public" in the works of creation and redemption.

These works delight the heart of God because they reflect his glory. The heavens are telling the glory of God (Psalm 19:1). He does everything to preserve and display that glory, for in this his soul rejoices.

All the works of God culminate in the praises of his redeemed people. “Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!” (Psalm 150:2). The climax of his happiness is the delight he takes in the echoes of his excellence in the praises of the saints.

Our praise is not only God’s delight, as an echo of his excellence; it is also the apex of our joy. Praise is the consummation of the joy we have in seeing and savouring the greatness of God. God’s pursuit of praise from us and our pursuit of pleasure in him are the same pursuit. This is the great outcome of the gospel that your joy may be full.

August 31, 2022 - The Peoples Praise You

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! (Psalm 67:3, 5)

Why does God demand we must praise God? C.S. Lewis says:

“Just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: “Isn’t she lovely? Wasn’t it glorious? Don’t you think that magnificent?”

The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about. My whole, more general, difficulty about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what indeed we can’t help doing, about everything else we value.

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation”.

There is the answer. We praise what we enjoy because the delight is incomplete until it is expressed in praise. If we were not allowed to speak of what we value and celebrate what we love and praise what we admire, our joy would not be full.

God is the most valuable thing and this is why the peoples praise you.