TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

November 2022

November 1, 2022 - All Things Are Possible

"All things are possible with God." (Mark 10:27)

Sovereign grace is the spring of life for the Christian. For what the Christian loves best is the experience of the sovereign grace of God filling them and overflowing for the good of others.

Christian missionaries love the experience of *"not I, but the grace of God that is with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).* They bask in the truth that the fruit of their missionary labour is entirely of God (Romans 11:36).

They feel only gladness when the Master says, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). They leap like lambs over the truth that God has taken the impossible weight of new creation off their shoulders and put it on his own. Without begrudging, they say, *"Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Corinthians 3:5).*

When they come home on furlough, nothing gives them more joy than to say to churches, *"I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience" (Romans 15:18).*

"All things are possible with God!" — in front the words give hope, and behind they give humility. They are the antidote to despair and the antidote to pride.

November 2, 2022 - I have Other Sheep

"I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice." (John 10:16)

God has a people in every people group in the world. He will call them through the gospel with Creator power and they will believe! What a power is in these words for overcoming discouragement!

The story of Peter Cameron Scott is a good illustration. Born in Glasgow in 1867, Scott became the founder of the Africa Inland Mission but his beginnings in Africa were hard.

His first trip to Africa ended in a severe attack of malaria that sent him home. He resolved to return after he recuperated. This return was especially gratifying to him because this time his brother John joined him but before long, John was struck down by fever.

All alone, Peter buried his brother in African soil, and in the agony of those days recommitted himself to preach the gospel in Africa. Yet his health gave way again, and he had to return to England.

How would he ever pull out of the desolation and depression of those days? He had pledged himself to God but where could he find the strength to go back to Africa? With man it was impossible!

He found strength in Westminster Abbey. David Livingstone's tomb is still there. Scott entered quietly, found the tomb, and knelt in front of it to pray. The inscription reads:

OTHER SHEEP I HAVE WHICH ARE NOT OF THIS FOLD; THEM ALSO I MUST BRING.

He rose from his knees with a new hope. He returned to Africa and today, over a hundred years later, the mission he founded is a vibrant, growing force for the gospel in Africa.

November 3, 2022 - Hundredfold Now

"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, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life." (Mark 10:29–30)

What Jesus means here is that he himself makes up for every sacrifice.

- *If you give up a mother's nearby affection and concern, you get back one hundred times the affection and concern from the ever-present Christ.*
- *If you give up the warm comradeship of a brother, you get back one hundred times the warmth and comradeship of Christ.*
- *If you give up the sense of at-homeness you had in your house, you get back one hundred times the comfort and security of knowing that your Lord owns every house.*

To prospective missionaries, Jesus says, "I promise to work for you, and be for you, so much that you will not be able to speak of having sacrificed anything."

What was Jesus's attitude to Peter's "sacrificial" spirit? Peter said, *"We have left everything and followed you" (Mark 10:28).* Jesus said to Peter, "No one ever sacrifices anything for me that I do not pay back a hundredfold now.

November 4, 2022 - Grace Is Sufficient

Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Corinthians 12:8–9)

Is the suffering that comes to the Christian because of persecution the same as the suffering that comes from cancer? Do the promises given to one apply to the other? My answer is yes. All of life, if it is lived earnestly by faith in the pursuit of God's glory and the salvation of others, will meet with some kind of obstacle and suffering. The suffering that comes to the obedient Christian is part of the price of living where you are in obedience to the call of God.

In choosing to follow Christ in the way he directs, we choose all that this path includes under his sovereign providence. Thus, all suffering that comes in the path of obedience is suffering with Christ and for Christ — whether it is cancer at home or persecution far away.

We willingly take the path of obedience where the suffering befalls us, and we do not murmur against God. We may pray — as Paul did — that the suffering be removed but if God wills, we embrace it as part of the cost of discipleship in the path of obedience on the way to heaven knowing that His Grace is Sufficient for me.

November 5, 2022 - Lest We Drift Away

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. (Hebrews 2:1)

We all know people that this has happened to. There is no urgency. No vigilance. No focused listening or considering or fixing of their eyes on Jesus and the result has not been a standing still but a drifting away.

That is the point here: there is no standing still. The life of this world is not a lake. It is a river and it is flowing downward to destruction. If you do not listen earnestly to Jesus and consider him daily and fix your eyes on him hourly, then you will not stand still; you will go backward. You will drift away from Christ.

Drifting is a deadly thing in the Christian life and the remedy for it, according to Hebrews 2:1, is: Pay close attention to what you have heard. That is, consider what God is saying in his Son Jesus. Fix your eyes on what God is saying and doing in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

This is not a hard swimming stroke to learn. The only thing that keeps us from swimming against sinful culture is not the difficulty of the stroke but our sinful desire to go with the flow which causes us to drift away.

November 6, 2022 - Perfect In Weakness

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

This is God's universal purpose for all Christian suffering: more contentment in God and less reliance on self and the world. I have never heard anyone say, "The really deep lessons of 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."

Paul stresses that in our sufferings the glory of Christ's all-sufficient grace is magnified. If we rely on him in our calamity, and he sustains our "rejoicing in hope," then he is shown to be the all-satisfying God of grace and strength that he is.

If we hold fast to him, "when all around our soul gives way," then we show that he is more to be desired than all we have lost. Suffering clearly is designed by God not only as a way to wean Christians off self and onto grace but also as a way to spotlight that grace and make it shine. That is precisely what faith does: it magnifies Christ's grace and we are made perfect in our weakness.

November 7, 2022 - Christ's Afflictions

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. (Colossians 1:24)

Christ has prepared a love offering for the world by suffering and dying for sinners. It is a perfect sacrifice. It pays in full for all the sins of all his people. Nothing can be added to make a better gift. It is lacking in nothing — except one thing, a personal presentation by Christ himself to the nations of the world.

God's answer to this lack is to call the people of Christ (people like Paul) to make a personal presentation of the afflictions of Christ to the world.

But the most amazing thing is how Paul fills up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

He says that it is his own sufferings that fill up Christ's afflictions. This means, then, that Paul exhibits the sufferings of Christ by suffering himself for those he is trying to win to Christ. In his sufferings they are to see Christ's sufferings.

God really means for the body of Christ, the church, to experience some of the suffering he experienced so that when we proclaim the cross as the way to life, people will see the marks of the cross in us and feel the love of the cross from us.

November 8, 2022 - Rejoice And Be Glad

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." (Matthew 5:11–12)

Christianity has different ways to rejoice in suffering. All of them are to be pursued as an expression of the all-sufficient, all-satisfying grace of God.

One way of rejoicing in suffering comes from fixing our minds firmly on the greatness of the reward that will come to us. The effect of this kind of focus is to make our present pain seem small in comparison to what is coming: *"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18)*

Another way of rejoicing in suffering comes from the effects of suffering on our assurance of hope. Joy in affliction is rooted not only in the hope of resurrection and reward, but also in the way suffering itself works to deepens that hope.

Paul says, *"We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Romans 5:3–4).*

So whether we focus on the riches of the reward or the refining effects of suffering, God's purpose is that our joy in suffering be sustained.

November 9, 2022 - Reproach Of Christ

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. (Hebrews 11:26)

We do not choose suffering simply because we are told to, but because the One who tells us to describes it as the path to everlasting joy.

He beckons us into the obedience of suffering not to demonstrate the strength of our devotion to duty, or to reveal the vigour of our moral resolve, or to prove the heights of our tolerance for pain but rather to manifest, in childlike faith, the infinite preciousness of his all-satisfying promises — the all-satisfying greatness and beauty of his own glory as the fulfillment of all of them.

Moses *"[chose] to be mistreated with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. . . . For he was looking to the reward" (Hebrews 11:25–26).* Therefore, his obedience glorified the reward — all that God is for him in Christ — not the resolve to suffer.

In the pursuit of joy through suffering, we magnify the all-satisfying worth of the Source of our joy. God himself shines as the brightness at the end of our tunnel of pain. If we do not communicate that he is the goal and the ground of our joy in suffering, then the very meaning of our suffering will be lost.

The meaning is this: God is gain. The chief end of man is to glorify God and it is truer in suffering than anywhere else that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

November 10, 2022 - O You Of Little Faith

"But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30)

Jesus says that the root of anxiety is inadequate faith — "little faith" — in our Father's grace. One reaction to this might be: "This is not good news! In fact, it is very discouraging to learn that what I thought was a mere struggle with an anxious disposition is rather a far deeper struggle with whether I trust God." My response to this discouragement is to agree, but then to disagree.

Suppose you had been having pain in your stomach and had been struggling with medicines and diets of all kinds, to no avail. And then suppose that your doctor tells you, after a routine visit, that you have cancer in your small intestine. Would that be good news? You say, emphatically not! And I agree.

But let me ask the question another way: Are you glad the doctor discovered the cancer while it is still treatable, and that indeed it can be very successfully treated? You say, yes, I am very glad that the doctor found the real problem. Again I agree.

That's what it's like to learn that the real problem behind anxiety is "little faith" in the promises of God's grace and he is able to work in wonderfully healing ways when we cry out, *"I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).*

November 11, 2022 - A Great Salvation

How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? (Hebrews 2:3)

Is there a sense of greatness in your mind about your salvation? Or do you neglect it? Do you respond to the greatness of your salvation or do you treat it the way you treat your last will and testament, or the title to your car, or the deed on your house? You signed it once and it is in the bottom drawer somewhere but it is not a really great thing in your mind.

But when you neglect your great salvation, what are you really neglecting? Here's what he is saying when he says, "Don't neglect your great salvation!"

- *Don't neglect being loved by God.*
- *Don't neglect being forgiven and accepted and protected and strengthened and guided by almighty God.*
- *Don't neglect the sacrifice of Christ's life on the cross.*
- *Don't neglect the free gift of righteousness imputed by faith.*

- *Don't neglect the removal of God's wrath and the reconciled smile of God.*
- *Don't neglect the indwelling Holy Spirit and the fellowship and friendship of the living Christ.*
- *Don't neglect the radiance of God's glory in the face of Jesus.*
- *Don't neglect the free access to the throne of grace.*
- *Don't neglect the inexhaustible treasure of God's promises.*

This is indeed a great salvation.

November 12, 2022 - Love Kindness

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

No one has ever felt unloved because he was told that the attainment of his joy would make another person happy. I have never been accused of selfishness when justifying a kindness on the basis that it delights me. On the contrary, loving acts are genuine to the degree that they are not done begrudgingly.

The good alternative to begrudgingly is not neutrally or dutifully, but gladly. The authentic heart of love loves kindness (Micah 6:8); it doesn't just do kindness.

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. (1 John 5:2–4)

Notice the logic. First, being born of God gives a power that conquers the world. This is given as the ground or basis for the statement that the commandments of God are not burdensome.

So, being born of God gives a power that conquers our worldly aversion to the will of God. Now his commandments are not "burdensome," but are the desire and delight of our heart. This is the love of God: not just that we do his commandments, but also that they are not burdensome and we love doing kindness.

November 13, 2022 - Draw Near To God

[God] gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. (James 4:6–8)

James teaches us that there is a precious experience of "more grace" and God "drawing near" to us. Surely this is a wonderful experience — more grace and a special nearness of God. But I ask: is this experience of the love of God unconditional? No. It is not. It is conditional on our humbling ourselves and our drawing near to God. God "gives [more] grace to the humble. . . . Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."

There are precious experiences of the love of God that require that we fight pride, seek humility, and cherish the nearness of God. Those are the conditions. Of course, the conditions themselves are the work of God in us. But they are no less conditions we fulfill.

If this is true, I fear that the unqualified, biblically careless reassurances today that God's love is all unconditional may stop people from doing the very things the Bible says they need to do in order to enjoy all the peace that they so desperately crave. In trying to give peace through "unconditionality" we may be cutting people off from the very remedy the Bible prescribes.

Let us declare the biblical truth that the fullest and sweetest experiences of the grace of God and the nearness of God will be enjoyed by those who daily humble themselves and draw near to God.

November 14, 2022 - Take Delight

"If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honourable; if you honour it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth." (Isaiah 58:13–14)

It is possible to pursue God without glorifying God. If we want our quest to honour God, we must pursue him for the joy of fellowship with him.

Consider the Sabbath as an illustration of this. The Lord rebukes his people for seeking their own pleasure on his holy day. "Turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day." But what does he mean? Does he mean that we should not seek our joy on the Lord's Day? No, because the next thing he says is, "Call the Sabbath a delight." And in verse 14, "You shall take delight in the Lord." So what he is criticizing is that they are delighting in their own business on the Sabbath rather than delighting in the beauty of their God and the rest and holiness that this day stands for.

He's not rebuking their pleasure seeking. He's rebuking the weakness of it. As C. S. Lewis said, "We are far too easily pleased." They have settled for secular interests and thus honour them above the Lord.

The enjoyment of God and the glorification of God are one. His eternal purpose and our eternal pleasure unite in one experience of worship. This is what the Lord's Day is for.

November 15, 2022 - Obey The Gospel

[God will] grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at among all who have believed. (2 Thessalonians 1:7–10)

When Jesus returns to this earth, which he has promised to do, those who have not believed the gospel, Paul says, "will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might." This is a terrible prospect that should terrify all unbelievers who hear this truth.

It should sober us who do believe and fill us with seriousness about what is at stake in this world. It should cause compassion to rise in our hearts for those who do not believe, or do not even know, the gospel.

To sustain us in all our afflictions here, Paul gives us two amazing words of encouragement and hope. "[God will] grant relief to you who are afflicted." If we experience a terrible intensification of affliction near the end of history, God's word is: Hold fast: relief is on the way. Your afflictions will not have the last word and your seemingly powerful adversaries will regret the day they touched the Lord's people.

Then comes the best word of encouragement and hope. Not only will we get relief when the Lord comes, but we will get the greatest experience that we were created for in the first place: We will see his glory, and marvel at it in such a way that he will be glorified in us, those who did obey the gospel, for all the world to see.

November 16, 2022 - When I Am Afraid

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. (Psalm 56:3)

One possible response to the truth that our anxiety is rooted in unbelief goes like this: *"I have to deal with feelings of anxiety almost every day; and so I feel like my faith in God's grace must be totally inadequate. So I wonder if I can have any assurance of being saved at all."*

My response to this concern is: Suppose you are in a car race and your enemy, who doesn't want you to finish the race, throws mud on your windshield. The fact that you temporarily lose sight of your goal and start to swerve does not mean that you are going to quit the race.

And it certainly doesn't mean that you are on the wrong racetrack. Otherwise, your adversary, wouldn't bother you at all. What it means is that you should turn on your windshield wipers of faith.

When anxiety strikes and blurs our vision of God's glory and the greatness of the future that he plans for us, this does not mean that we are faithless, or that we will not make it to heaven. It means our faith is being attacked.

At first blow, our belief in God's promises may sputter and swerve. But whether we stay on track and make it to the finish line depends on whether, by grace, we set in motion a process of resistance — whether we fight back against the unbelief of anxiety by faith when we are afraid.

November 17, 2022 - Jesus More Glory

Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses — as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honour than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. (Hebrews 3:3–6)

The people who boast and hope in Jesus Christ are the house of God. Which means that Jesus this very day — not just back in Moses's day or in his own days on earth — but this very day is our Maker, our Owner, our Ruler, and our Provider.

Jesus is called the "builder" of this house. Moses was not the builder. He was part of the house. So it says, "Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses — as much more glory." So Moses, as great as he was in leading the house, and giving God's word to the house, was still just a part of the house. But Jesus built the house.

So if we boast in Jesus and hope in Jesus, we are the house, and Jesus is our Builder, and Owner and Ruler and Provider. He will not let his house be destroyed or fall into ruin and he gets much more glory.

November 18, 2022 - Consider Those Blessed

Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. (James 5:11)

Behind all disease and disability is the ultimate will of God. Not that Satan is not involved — he is probably always involved in one way or another with destructive purposes (Acts 10:38). But his power is not decisive. He cannot act without God's permission.

That is one of the points of Job's sickness. The text makes it plain that when disease came upon Job, *"Satan . . . struck Job with loathsome sores" (Job 2:7). His wife urged him to curse God. But Job said, "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). And again the inspired author of the book (just as he did in 1:22) commends Job by saying, "In all this Job did not sin with his lips."*

In other words: This is a right view of God's sovereignty over Satan. Satan is real and may have a hand in our calamities, but not the final hand, and not the decisive hand.

James makes clear that God had a good purpose in all Job's afflictions. So even though Satan was involved, the ultimate purpose was God's, and it was "compassionate and merciful."

For God's elect children, Satan cannot destroy us, and God turns all his attacks finally against him and for us, this is why we consider them blessed.

November 19, 2022 - Unable To Enter

To whom did [God] swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. (Hebrews 3:18–19)

Even though the people of Israel saw the waters of the Red Sea divide and walked through the Sea on dry ground, the moment they got thirsty, their hearts were hard against God and they did not trust him to take care of them. They cried out against him and said that life in Egypt was better.

That is what the book of Hebrews was written to prevent. Oh, how many professing Christians make a start with God. They hear that their sins can be forgiven and that they can escape hell and go to heaven. And they say: "What have I got to lose? I'll believe."

But then in a week or a month or a year or ten years, the test comes — a season of no water in the wilderness. A weariness with manna. And subtly a growing craving for the fleeting pleasures of Egypt.

This is a terrifying condition to be in — to find yourself no longer interested in Christ and his word and prayer and worship and missions and living for the glory of God. And to find all the fleeting pleasures of this world more attractive than the things of the Spirit.

If that is your situation, I plead with you to listen to the Holy Spirit speaking in this text. "They were unable to enter because of unbelief!" Give heed to the word of God. Do not harden your heart. Wake up to the deceitfulness of sin and enter His rest.

November 20, 2022 - Come To Life

Someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each of the seeds its own body. (1 Corinthians 15:35–38)

God is intimately involvement in creation. Paul here is comparing how a seed is planted in one form and comes forth in another form with a "body" different from all other bodies. This is a remarkable statement of God's intimate involvement in the way God designs each seed to bring forth its own unique plant.

Psalm 94:9, says, "He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?" The psalmist assumes that God was the designer of the eye and that he designed the way the ear is planted in the head to do its hearing work.

When we marvel at the wonders of the human eye and the remarkable structure of the ear, we marvel at the mind and the creativity and the power of God.

Creation is his handiwork and bears the marks of his Creator claim on it, like a piece of artwork belongs to the one who painted it until he sells it or gives it away.

I call you to be utterly God-conscious and God-exalting and God-saturated in all your observation and admiration of the wonders of the world as they come to life.

November 21, 2022 - Fear Not

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

When we are anxious about some risky new venture or meeting, we should battle unbelief with the promises of God like this one. When our mind is in neutral, the hum of the gears could be the sound of this verse. It is good to have more than one promise in the arsenal of our faith.

When we are anxious about our ministry being useless and empty, we can fight unbelief with the promise of Isaiah 55:11, *"So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*

When we are anxious about being too weak to do our work, we can battle unbelief with the promise of Christ, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).*

When we are anxious about decisions we have to make about the future, we can battle unbelief with the promise, *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you" (Psalm 32:8).*

When we are anxious about facing opponents, we can battle unbelief with the promise, *"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).*

It is good to fight unbelief with every promise in the Bible but it helps to have one central, default weapon and this is a good one, Fear Not.

November 22, 2022 - He Cares For You

. . . casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

There is a promise suited to every sin you are tempted to commit and every form of unbelief that takes you off guard and makes you anxious. For example:

When I am anxious about being sick, I battle unbelief with the promise, *"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19). And I take the promise with trembling, "knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Romans 5:3–5).*

When I am anxious about getting old, I battle unbelief with the promise: *"Even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save" (Isaiah 46:4).*

So, let us make war, not with other people, but with our own unbelief. It is the root of anxiety, which, in turn, is the root of so many other sins. Let us fix our eyes on the precious and very great promises of God.

Take up the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit for help, lay the promises up in your heart, and fight the good fight — to live by faith in grace because he cares for you.

November 23, 2022 - Put On The New Self

Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:24)

Christianity means change is possible. Deep, fundamental change. It is possible to become tender-hearted when once you were callous and insensitive. It is possible to stop being dominated by bitterness and anger. It is possible to become a loving person, no matter what your background has been.

The Bible assumes that God is the decisive factor in making us what we should be. With wonderful bluntness, the Bible says, "Put away . . . all malice" and be "tender-hearted" (Ephesians 4:31–32). It does not say, "If you can . . . " Or, "If your parents were tender-hearted . . . " Or, "If you have not been terribly abused . . . " It says, "Be . . . tender-hearted."

This is wonderfully freeing. It frees us from the terrible fatalism that says change is impossible for me. It frees me from mechanistic views that make my background my destiny.

And God's commands always come with freeing, life-changing truth to believe. For example,

- *God adopted us as his children. (Matthew 23:9).*
- *God loves us as his children. We are "loved children" (Ephesians 5:1).*
- *God has forgiven us in Christ. Be tender-hearted and forgiving just as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32).*
- *Christ loved you and gave himself up for you. "Walk in love, as Christ loved [you]" (Ephesians 5:2).*

Don't be a fatalist. Be a Christian. Change is possible. God is alive. Christ is risen. The promises are true. Put on the New Self.

November 24, 2022 - Two-Edged Sword

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

The word of God is our only hope. The good news of God's promises and the warnings of his judgment are sharp enough and living enough and active enough to penetrate to the bottom of my heart and show me that the lies of sin are indeed lies.

Abortion will not create a wonderful future for me. Neither will cheating, or dressing provocatively, or throwing away my sexual purity, or keeping quiet about dishonesty at work, or divorce, or vengeance. And what rescues me from this deception is the word of God.

The word of God's promise is like throwing open a great window of bright morning sunlight on the roaches of sin masquerading as satisfying pleasures in our hearts. God has given you his good news, his promises, his word to protect you from the deep deceptions of sin that try to harden your heart and lure it away from God and lead it to destruction.

Be of good cheer in your battle to believe. Because the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword.

November 25, 2022 - Grace To Help

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

Every one of us needs help. We are not God. We have needs. We have weaknesses. We have confusion. We have limitations of all kinds. We need help.

But every one of us has something else: We have sins. And therefore at the bottom of our hearts we know that we do not deserve the help we need. And so we feel trapped.

I need help to live my life, and to handle death, and to cope with eternity — help with my family, my spouse, my children, my loneliness, my job, my health, my finances. I need help. But I don't deserve the help I need.

So what can I do? I can try to deny it all and be a superman or a superwoman, who doesn't need any help. Or I can try to drown it all and throw my life into a pool of sensual pleasures. Or I can simply give way to the paralysis of despair.

But God declares over this hopeless situation: Jesus Christ became a High Priest to shatter that despair with hope, and to humble that superman or superwoman, and to rescue that drowning wretch.

Yes, we all need help. Yes, none of us deserves the help we need. But no to despair and pride and sin. Look at what God says. Because we have a Great High Priest, the throne of God is a throne of grace and the help we get at that throne of grace is mercy and grace to help in time of need.

November 26, 2022 - Die Is Gain

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21)

How is it "gain" to die?

1) Our spirits will be made perfect (Hebrews 12:22–23).

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.

There will be no more sin in us. We will be done with the inner war and the heartrending disappointments of offending the Lord who loved us and gave himself for us.

2) We will be given profound rest in our souls (Revelation 6:9–11).

There will be a serenity beneath the eye and care of God that surpasses anything we have known here on the softest summer evening by the most peaceful lake at our most happy moments.

3) We will experience a deep at-homeness (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

The whole human race is homesick for God, without knowing it. When we go home to Christ, there will be a contentment beyond any sense of security and peace we have ever known in this life.

November 27, 2022 - Ungreateful

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful . . . (2 Timothy 3:1–2)

Notice how ingratitude goes with pride, abuse, and insubordination.

In another place Paul says, *"Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking . . . but instead let there be thanksgiving" (Ephesians 5:4).* So, it seems that gratitude, thankfulness, is the opposite of ugliness and violence.

The reason this is so is that the feeling of gratitude is a humble feeling, not a proud one. It is other-exalting, not self-exalting. And it is glad-hearted, not angry or bitter. Bitter thankfulness is a contradiction in terms.

The key to unlocking a heart of thankfulness and overcoming bitterness and ugliness and disrespect and violence is a strong belief in God, the Creator and Sustainer and Provider and Hope-giver. If we do not believe we are deeply indebted to God for all we have and hope to have, then the very spring of gratitude has gone dry. Pray for a great awakening of humble gratitude.

November 28, 2022 - Good From Evil

Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:14)

Now, this is amazing. Don't miss it. It could save you years of wasted living.

What this verse is saying is that if you want to become mature and understand and appreciate the more solid teachings of the word, then the rich, nutritional, precious milk of God's gospel promises must transform your moral senses — your spiritual mind — so that you can discern between good and evil.

Or, let me put it another way. Getting ready to feast on all God's word is not first an intellectual challenge; it is first a moral challenge. If you want to eat the solid food of the word, you must exercise your spiritual senses so as to develop a mind that discerns between good and evil. This is a moral challenge, not just intellectual.

The pathway to maturity and to solid biblical food is not first becoming an intelligent person but becoming an obedient person.

This is so important because in our highly technological society we are prone to think that education — especially intellectual education — is the key to maturity. There are many Ph.D.'s who choke in their spiritual immaturity on the things of God. And there are many less-educated saints who are deeply mature and can feed with pleasure and profit on the deepest things of God's word.

November 29, 2022 - I Will Bless You

Since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." (Hebrews 6:13–14)

There is one Person whose worth and honour and dignity and preciousness and greatness and beauty and reputation is more than all other values combined — ten thousand times more — namely, God himself. So, when God takes an oath, he swears by himself.

If he could have gone higher, he would have gone higher. Why? To give you strong encouragement in your hope. What God is saying in swearing by himself is that it is as impossible that he will break his word of promise to bless us as it is that he will ever despise himself.

God is the greatest value in the universe. There is nothing more valuable or wonderful than God. So, God swears by God.

Now this is our God, the God who is reaching as high as he can reach to inspire your unshakable hope in him. So, flee to God for refuge. Turn from all the superficial, self-defeating hopes of the world, and put your hope in God. There is nothing and no one like God as a refuge and a rock of hope and he will bless you.

November 30, 2022 - Hold Fast

So 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)

Why does the writer of Hebrews encourage us to hold fast to our hope? If the final enjoyment of our hope was obtained and irrevocably secured by the blood of Jesus, then 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 transformation 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.*

So, I exhort you with all my heart: Reach out and take hold of that for which you have been taken hold of by Christ. Hold it fast with all your might.