TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

January 2023

January 1, 2023 - How To Succeed

Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. Jeremiah 29:5-6

The faithfulness that individual Christians demonstrate in their everyday lives makes a compelling case that the Christian worldview is both true and good. Every square inch of reality was created by God and exists under the rule and reign of Jesus Christ, every Christian is "on the front lines". Christian faithfulness, especially at a time of cultural chaos, isn't really about trying to do great things for God.

Afraid for the nation? Buy a house. Plant a garden. Get married. Have lots of babies. Help your children marry well, be great grandparents. You needn't run for office, start a podcast or lead a thinktank. The most powerful & countercultural work happens in your home.

God told the exiles of Judah to "build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce." It can be easy to equate "greatness" with fame or followers or something loud and big. But God asks for faithfulness in whatever our hand finds to do. That was true for the exiles in Babylon, and it's still true today.

January 2, 2023 - What Is Your Purpose?

Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. . . . 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. (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17)

When you get up in the morning and you face the day, what do you say to yourself about your hopes for the day? When you look from the beginning of the day to the end of the day, what do you want to happen because you have lived?

If you say, "I don't even think like that. I just get up and do what I've got to do," then you are cutting yourself off from a basic means of grace and a source of guidance and strength and fruitfulness and joy. It is crystal clear in the Bible, including these texts, that God means for us to aim consciously at something significant in our days.

God's revealed will for you is that when you get up in the morning, you don't drift aimlessly through the day letting mere circumstances alone dictate what you do, but that you aim at something — that you focus on a certain kind of purpose.

Aimlessness is akin to lifelessness. Dead leaves in the back yard may move around. They are full of motion and empty of life. God did not create humans in his image to be aimless, like lifeless leaves blown around in the backyard of life. He created us to be purposeful — to have a focus and an aim for all our days. What is yours today? What is yours for the new year?

January 3, 2023 - Hope Of The Glory

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:2)

Seeing the glory of God is our ultimate hope. God will "present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy" (Jude 24). He will *"make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory" (Romans 9:23).*

Jesus, in all his person and work, is the incarnation and ultimate revelation of the glory of God. *"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Hebrews 1:3). "The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).*

Seeing and sharing in God's glory is our ultimate hope through the gospel of Christ. Such a hope, that is really known and treasured, has a huge and decisive effect on our present values and choices and actions.

Get to know the glory of God. Study the glory of God and the glory of Christ. Study the glory of the world that reveals the glory of God, and the glory of the gospel that reveals the glory of Christ.

Treasure the glory of God in all things and above all things. Study your own soul to know how to make the glories of the world collapse. Let all glories that distract you from the glory of God shatter. Treasure the glory of God above all this world.

January 4, 2023 - Jesus Who Delivers

. . . Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

Do you remember the time you were lost as a child, or slipping over a precipice, or about to drown? Then suddenly you were rescued. You held on for "dear life." You trembled for what you almost lost. You were happy and thankful. And you trembled with joy. That's the way I feel at the end of the year about my rescue from God's wrath.

But oh, the horror of not repenting and not holding fast to the testimony of Jesus! The description of the wrath of God by the "apostle of love" (John) is terrifying. Those who spurn God's love will *"drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night" (Revelation 14:10–11).*

"And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). Jesus will "tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty" (Revelation 19:15). Whatever that vision signifies, it is meant to communicate something unspeakably terrible.

Flee this with all your might. And let us save as many as we can! No wonder there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous (Luke 15:7)!

January 5, 2023 - Working In You

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20–21)

Christ shed the blood of the eternal covenant. This Jesus is now our living Lord and Shepherd.

And because of all that, God does two things:

1. *he equips us with everything good that we may do his will, and*

2. *he works in us that which is pleasing in his sight.*

The "eternal covenant," secured by the blood of Christ, is the new covenant. And the new covenant promise is this: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33). Therefore, the blood of this covenant not only secures God's equipping us to do his will, but also secures God working in us to make that equipping successful.

The will of God is not just written on stone or paper as a means of grace. It is worked in us. And the effect is: We feel and think and act in ways that please God. We are still commanded to use the equipment he gives: *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." But more importantly we are told why: "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12–13).*

If we are able to please God — if we do his good pleasure — it is because the blood-bought grace of God has moved from mere equipping to omnipotent transforming.

January 6, 2023 - You Sweep Them Away

You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers. . . . So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90:5–6, 12)

The end of a year is like the end of life. And 11:59 pm on December 31 is like the moment of death. The 365 days of the year are like a miniature lifetime. And these final hours are like the last days in the hospital after the doctor has said that the end is very near. And in these last hours, the lifetime of this year passes before our eyes and we face the inevitable question: Did we live it well? Will Jesus Christ, the righteous Judge, say *"Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21)?*

It is a great advantage to have a trial run at your own dying. It is a great benefit to rehearse once a year in preparation for the last scene of your life. It is a great benefit because the morning of January 1 will find most of us still alive, at the brink of a whole new lifetime, able to start fresh all over again.

The great thing about rehearsals is that they show you where your weaknesses are, where your preparation was faulty; and they leave you time to change before the real play in front of a real audience.

How do you get a heart of wisdom so as to know how best to live? Numbering your days simply means remembering that your life is short and your dying will be soon. Great wisdom comes from periodically pondering these things.

January 7, 2023 - 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 only God's disposition to do good for us when we don't deserve it. It is an actual power from God that acts and makes good things happen in us and for us.

God's grace was God's acting in Paul to make Paul work hard. So when Paul says, *"Work out your own salvation," he adds, "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12–13). Grace is power from God to do good things in us and for us.*

The proper response to the grace you experienced in the past is thankfulness, and the proper response to grace promised to you in the future is faith. We are thankful for the past grace of the last year, and we are confident in the grace for the new year. We know it will accomplish great things in us and through us and will not be in vain.

January 8, 2023 - Stay Faithful

"And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house as the sanctuary. Be strong and do the work." 1 Chronicles 28:9-10

These verses preserves David's final words of counsel to his son Solomon. There are four life-shaping reminders he wanted his child to carry with him:

1. *"Serve God with a whole heart and with a willing mind." Give your heart to the Lord; it will shape everything you do.*
2. *"The Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought." Remember that you can never deceive or fool the Lord. He knows your heart better than you ever will.*
3. *"If you seek Him, He will be found by you." The Lord is gracious, tender-hearted, loving, and kind. He never hides from those who seek Him.*
4. *"Be careful now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong and do it." Don't let anything keep you from doing what God has called you to. Fight against internal and external temptations and stay faithful.*

January 9, 2023 - To Save Those

Just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so 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 9:27–28)

The death of Jesus bears sins. This is the very heart of Christianity, and the heart of the gospel, and the heart of God's great work of redemption in the world. When Christ died he bore sins. He took sins not his own. He suffered for sins that others had done, so that they could be free from sins.

This is the answer to the greatest problem in your life, whether you feel it as the main problem or not. There is an answer to how we can get right with God in spite of being sinners. The answer is that Christ's

death is an offering "to bear the sins of many." He lifted our sins and carried them to the cross and died there the death that we deserved to die.

Now what does this mean for my dying? "It is appointed [to me] to die once." It means that my death is no longer punitive. My death is no longer a punishment for sin. My sin has been borne away. My sin is "put away" by the death of Christ. Christ took the punishment.

Why then do I die at all? Because God wills that death remain in the world for now, even among his own children, as an abiding testimony to the extreme horror of sin. In our dying we still manifest the external effects of sin in the world from which Jesus came to save those who eagerly wait for him.

January 10, 2023 - It Depends On God

It depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. (Romans 9:16)

Let us make crystal clear at the beginning of the year that all we will get from God this year, as believers in Jesus, is mercy. Whatever pleasures or pains come our way will all be mercy.

This is why Christ came into the world: *"in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy" (Romans 15:9).* We were born again *"according to his great mercy" (1 Peter 1:3).* We pray daily *"that we may receive mercy" (Hebrews 4:16);* and we are now *"waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life" (Jude 1:21).* If any Christian proves trustworthy, it is *"by the Lord's mercy [he] is trustworthy" (1 Corinthians 7:25).*

In Luke 17:5–6, the apostles plead with the Lord, *"Increase our faith!"* And Jesus says, *"If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."* In other words, the issue in our Christian life and ministry is not the strength or quantity of our faith, because that is not what uproots trees. God does. Therefore, the smallest faith that truly connects us with Christ will engage enough of his power for all you need.

The fullest obedience and the smallest faith obtain the same thing from God: mercy. A mere mustard seed of faith taps into the mercy of God's tree-moving power. And flawless obedience leaves us utterly dependent on mercy.

The point is this: Whatever the timing or form of God's mercy, we never rise above the status of beneficiaries of mercy. We are always utterly dependent on what we do not deserve. It all depends on God.

January 11, 2023 - Being Sanctified

By a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. (Hebrews 10:14)

This verse is full of encouragement for imperfect sinners like us, and full of motivation for holiness.

It means that you can have assurance that you stand perfected and completed in the eyes of your heavenly Father not because you are perfect now, but precisely because you are not perfect now but are "being sanctified," "being made holy" — that, by faith in God's promises, you are moving away from your lingering imperfection toward more and more holiness. That's the point of Hebrews 10:14.

Does your faith make you eager to forsake sin and make progress in holiness? That's the kind of faith that in the midst of imperfection can look to Christ and say, "You have already perfected me in your sight."

This faith says, “Christ, today I have sinned. But I hate my sin. For you have written the law on my heart, and I long to do it. And you are working in me what is pleasing in your sight (Hebrews 13:21). And so, I hate the sin that I still do; and I hate the sinful thoughts that I contemplate.”

This is the true and realistic faith that saves. This is not the boast of the strong. It is the cry of the weak in need of a Saviour. I invite you, I urge you, to be weak enough to trust Christ in this way while you are being sanctified.

January 12, 2023 - Cancelling The Record

You, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (Colossians 2:13–15)

The reason that union with Christ makes a great difference for the believer is that Christ achieved a decisive triumph over the devil at Calvary. He did not remove Satan from the world, but he disarmed him to the extent that the weapon of damnation was stripped from his hand.

He cannot accuse believers of unforgiven sin. Which is the only accusation that can destroy us. And therefore, he cannot bring us to utter ruin. He can hurt us physically and emotionally. He can tempt us and incite others against us. But he cannot destroy us.

The decisive triumph is owing to the fact that “the record of debt that stood against us” was nailed to the cross and cancelled. The devil made that record his chief accusation against us. Now he has no accusation that can hold in the court of heaven. He is helpless to do the one thing he wants to do most: damn us. He can’t. Christ bore our damnation.

Death is still our enemy. But it is defanged. The viper’s poison has been drained away. The deadly sting is gone. The sting of death was sin. And the damning power of sin was in the demand of the law. But thanks be to Christ who satisfied the law’s demand. “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:55). The record has been cancelled.

January 13, 2023 - Let Us Draw Near

Let us draw near with a true heart. (Hebrews 10:22)

The command we are given in this passage is to draw near to God. The great aim of the writer of the book of Hebrews is that we get near God, that we have fellowship with him, that we do not settle for a Christian life at a distance from God.

This drawing near is not a physical act. It’s not building a tower of Babel by your achievements to get to heaven. It’s not necessarily going to a church building. Or walking to an altar at the front. It is an invisible act of the heart. You can do it while standing absolutely still, or while lying in a hospital bed, or on the train as you commute to work.

This is the centre of the gospel — this is what the garden of Gethsemane and Good Friday are all about — that God has done astonishing and costly things to draw us near to himself. He has sent his Son to suffer and to die so that through him we might draw near. Everything that he has done in the great plan of redemption is so that we might draw near. And that nearness is for our joy and for his glory.

He does not need us. If we stay away, he is not impoverished. He does not need us in order to be happy in the fellowship of the Trinity. But he magnifies his mercy by giving us free access through his Son, in spite of our sin, to the one Reality that can satisfy our souls completely and forever, namely, himself. This is God's will for you, even as you read this. This is why Christ died: that you would draw near to God.

January 14, 2023 - Through Many Tribulations

Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)

The need for inner strength arises not just from the depletions of everyday stress, but from the suffering and afflictions that come from time to time. And they do come.

Suffering is inevitably added to heart-weariness on the way to heaven. When it comes, the heart may waver and the narrow way that leads to life may look impossibly hard. It's hard enough to have a narrow road and steep hills that test the old jalopy's strength to the limit. But what shall we do when the car breaks down?

Paul cried out three times with this question because of some affliction in his life. He asked for relief from his thorn in the flesh. But God's grace did not come in the form he asked. It came in another form. Christ answered, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).*

God often blesses us with a "grace given" in the circle of "grace denied." We should not be surprised that God gives us wonderful graces in the midst of suffering that we had asked him to spare us from. He knows best how to apportion his grace for our good and for his glory which is sometimes through many tribulations.

January 15, 2023 - But Not With God

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." (Mark 10:27)

Here are two great incentives from Jesus to become a World Christian and to dedicate yourself to the cause of Frontier Missions. As a goer or a sender.

1. *Every impossibility with men is possible with God (Mark 10:27). The conversion of hardened sinners will be the work of God and will accord with his sovereign plan. We need not fear or fret over our weakness. The battle is the Lord's, and he will give the victory.*
2. *Christ promises to work for us, and to be for us so much that, when our missionary life is over, we will not be able to say we've sacrificed anything (Mark 10:29–30).*

When we follow his missionary prescription, we discover that even the painful side effects work to improve our condition. Our spiritual health, our joy, improves a hundredfold. And when we die, we do not die. We gain eternal life.

I do not appeal to you to screw up your courage and sacrifice for Christ. I appeal to you to renounce all you have, to obtain life that satisfies your deepest longings. I appeal to you to count all things as rubbish for the surpassing value of standing in the service of the King of kings. You may face persecutions and privations — but remember the joy! With man many things are impossible but not with God.

January 16, 2023 - A Little While

After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (1 Peter 5:10)

Sometimes in the midst of the afflictions and ordinary stresses of daily life, we may cry out, "How long, O Lord? I can't see beyond today's pain. What will tomorrow bring? Will you be there for that affliction too?"

This question is utterly urgent, because Jesus said, *"The one who endures to the end will be saved" (Mark 13:13).* We tremble at the thought of being among *"those who shrink back and are destroyed" (Hebrews 10:39).* We are not playing games. Suffering is a horrible threat to faith in God's grace.

Therefore, it is a wonderful thing to hear Peter promise the afflicted and weary Christians.

The assurance that he will not delay beyond what we can endure, and that he will abolish the flaws we bemoan, and that he will establish forever what has taken so long — that assurance comes from the God of "all grace."

God is not the God of some grace — like bygone grace. He is "the God of all grace" — including the infinite, inexhaustible stores of grace that we need to endure to the end.

Faith in that grace, strengthened by the memory of past grace, is the key to enduring on the narrow and hard road that leads to life as we wait a little while.

January 17, 2023 - The Book of Life

I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. (Revelation 20:12)

What about the last judgment? Will our sins be remembered? Will they be revealed? Anthony Hoekema puts it wisely like this: "The failures and shortcomings of . . . believers . . . will enter into the picture on the Day of Judgment. But — and this is the important point — the sins and shortcomings of believers will be revealed in the judgment as forgiven sins, whose guilt has been totally covered by the blood of Jesus Christ."

He will open from your "book of life" file a sealed envelope marked "free and gracious bonus: life!" (see Mark 4:24 and Luke 6:38). Then he will declare, "By this your life bears witness to the grace of my Father, the worth of my blood, and the fruit of my Spirit. These bear witness that your life is eternal. And according to these you will have your rewards. Enter into the everlasting joy of your Master."

January 18, 2023 - Let God Be True

What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged." (Romans 3:3–4)

Our concern with truth is an inevitable expression of our concern with God. If God exists, then he is the measure of all things, and what he thinks about all things is the measure of what we should think.

Not to care about truth is not to care about God. To love God passionately is to love truth passionately. Being God-centred in life means being truth-driven in ministry. What is not true is not of God. Ponder these four sets of texts on God and truth:

1. *God Is the Truth John 14:6: Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*
2. *Not Loving the Truth Is Eternally Ruinous Second Thessalonians 2:10: The wicked will perish "because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."*
3. *Christian Living Is Based on Knowledge of the Truth First Corinthians 6:15–16: "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her?"*
4. *The Body of Christ Is Built with Truth in Love Colossians 1:28: "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."*

May God make us passionate for him and for truth.

January 19, 2023 - God Is Able

God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8)

We know that faith in God's grace is the experiential key to generosity, because in 2 Corinthians, Paul holds out this wonderful promise.

If you want to be free from the need to stash away your money, if you want to overflow with an abundance (of grace!) for every good work, then put your faith in God's grace. Trust the promise that "God is able to make all grace abound to you" in every moment for this very purpose.

I call faith in grace the "experiential key" to generosity, so as not to deny that there is a historical key as well. There is a key of experience, and a key of history. When talking about the grace they received, Paul reminds the Corinthians of the historical key of grace, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Without this historical work of grace, the door of Christ-exalting generosity would remain closed.
That past grace is an indispensable key to love. Thus, the experiential key to love and generosity is this: Put your faith firmly in grace — namely, that "God is able to make all grace abound to you" — so that your needs are met, and so that you will be able to overflow with the love of generosity. Freedom from greed comes from the deeply satisfying faith in God's grace and knowing that God is able.

January 20, 2023 - Arise From The Dead

Anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." (Ephesians 5:14)

When Jesus commanded Lazarus to rise from the dead, how did he obey that command? John 11:43 says, "He [Jesus] cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out.'" That was a command to a dead man. The next verse says, *"The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips" (John 11:44).*

How did Lazarus do that? How does a dead man obey a command to live again? The answer seems to be: The command carries the power to create new life. Obedience to the command means doing what living people do.

This is extremely important. The command of God, “Rise from the dead!” carries in it the power we need to obey it. We do not obey it by creating that life. We obey it by doing what living people do — Lazarus came forth. He rose. He walked out to Jesus. The call of God creates life. We respond in the power of what the call creates.

The way to obey the command to be born is to first experience the divine gift of life and breath, and then to do what living, breathing people do: cry out to God in faith and gratitude and love. When the command of God comes with the creating, converting power of the Holy Spirit, it gives life. And we believe and rejoice and obey and arise from the dead.

January 21, 2023 - Consider Him

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. (Hebrews 12:3)

One of the most remarkable capacities of the human mind is the capacity to direct its own attention to something it chooses. We can pause and say to our minds, “Think about this, and not that.” We can focus our attention on an idea or a picture or a problem or a hope.

It is an amazing power. This is a great weapon in the arsenal of our war against sin. The Bible calls us again and again to use this remarkable gift. Let’s take this gift off the shelf, and dust it off, and put it to use.

For example, Paul says in Romans 8:5–6, “Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace”.

This is stunning. What you set your mind on determines whether the issue is life or death. Many of us have become far too passive in our pursuit of change and wholeness and peace.

Our emotions are governed in large measure by what we consider — what we dwell on with our minds. Above all, this great capacity of our minds to focus and consider is meant for considering Jesus (Hebrews 12:3). So, let’s do this: “Consider him”.

January 22, 2023 - Made Us Alive

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4–6)

The decisive act of God in conversion is that he “made us alive together with Christ” even when “we were dead in our trespasses.” In other words, we were dead to God. We were unresponsive; we had no true spiritual taste or interest; we had no spiritual eyes for the beauties of Christ; we were simply dead to all that ultimately matters.

Then God acted — unconditionally — before we could do anything to be fit vessels of his presence. He made us alive. He sovereignly awakened us from the sleep of spiritual death, to see the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4). The spiritual senses that were dead, miraculously came to life.

God saw us in our deadness and pitied us. God saw the terrible wages of sin leading to eternal death and misery. “God, being rich in mercy . . . made us alive.” And the riches of his mercy overflowed to us in our need. Let us thank and praise our great God and saviour that he made us alive.

January 23, 2023 - Reprove Words

"Do you think that you can reprove words, when the speech of a despairing man is wind?" (Job 6:26)

In grief and pain and despair, people often say things they otherwise would not say. They paint reality with darker strokes than they will paint it tomorrow when the sun comes up. They sing in minor keys and talk as though that is the only music. They see clouds only and speak as if there were no sky.

They say, "Where is God?" Or: "There is no use to go on." Or: "Nothing makes any sense." Or: "There's no hope for me." Or: "If God were good, this couldn't have happened." What shall we do with these words?

Job says that we do not need to reprove them. These words are wind, or literally "for the wind." They will be quickly blown away. There will come a turn in circumstances, and the despairing person will waken from the dark night and regret hasty words.

Therefore, the point is, let us not spend our time and energy reproving such words. They will be blown away of themselves on the wind.

How quick we can be to defending God, or sometimes the truth, from words that are only for the wind. If we had discernment, we could tell the difference between the words with roots and the words blowing in the wind.

There are words with roots in deep error and deep evil. But not all grey words get their colour from a black heart. Some are coloured mainly by the pain and despair. What you hear is not the deepest thing within. There is something real and dark within where they come from. But it is temporary — like a passing infection — real, painful, but not the true person. So, let us learn to discern if we need to reprove words.

January 24, 2023 - Christ Will Appear

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)

What must you do so that you may know that your sins are taken away by the blood of Christ, and that, when he comes, he will shield you from the wrath of God and bring you into eternal life? The answer is this: Trust Christ in a way that makes you eager for him to come.

The text says he is coming to save those who are "eagerly waiting for him." So how do you get ready? How do you experience the forgiveness of God in Christ and prepare to meet him? By trusting him in a way that makes you eager for him to come.

This eager expectation for Christ is simply a sign that we love him and believe in him — really believe in him, authentically.

There is a phony faith that wants only escape from hell but has no desire for Christ. That kind of faith does not save. It does not produce an eager expectation for Christ to come. In fact, it would rather that Christ not come for as long as possible, so that it can have as much of this world as possible.

But the faith that really holds on to Christ as Saviour and Lord and Treasure and hope and joy is the faith that makes us long for Christ to come. And that is the faith that saves when Christ will appear.

January 25, 2023 - You Do Not Know

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. (James 4:13–16)

James is talking about pride and arrogance and how they show up in subtle ways. When you take three categories of temptation to self-reliance — wisdom, power, and riches — they form a powerful inducement toward the ultimate form of pride: namely, atheism. The safest way for us to stay supreme in our own estimation is to deny anything above us.

This is why the proud preoccupy themselves with looking down on others. C.S. Lewis said, "A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you" (Mere Christianity).

But to preserve pride, it may be simpler to just proclaim that there is nothing above to look at. Ultimately, the proud must persuade themselves that there is no God.

One reason for this is that God's reality is overwhelmingly intrusive in all the details of life. Pride cannot tolerate the intimate involvement of God in running the universe, let alone the detailed, ordinary affairs of life. The remedy for pride is unwavering faith in God's sovereign grace and admitting that you do not know.

January 26, 2023 - Not To Man

Rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. (Ephesians 6:7–8)

Consider these five things in connection to your job.

1) A call to radically Lord-centred living.

This is astonishing compared to the way we usually live. Paul says that all our work should be done as work for Christ, not for any human supervisor. With good will render service "as to the Lord and not to man."

2) A call to be a good person.

Lord-centred living means being a good person and doing good things.

3) Power to do a good job for inconsiderate earthly employers.

Paul's aim is to empower Christians, with Lord-centred motives, to go on doing good for supervisors who are not considerate.

4) Encouragement that nothing good is done in vain.

God graciously chooses to reward us for all the good things done in faith.

5) Encouragement that insignificant status on earth is no hindrance to great reward in heaven.

The Lord will reward every good thing you do. Your supervisor may think you are a nobody or he may not even know you exist. That doesn't matter. The Lord knows you exist. And in the end no faithful service will be in vain as we render service to God and not to man.

January 27, 2023 - Call To Mind

"This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end." (Lamentations 3:21–22)

One of the great enemies of hope is forgetting God's promises. Reminding is a great ministry. Peter and Paul both said that they wrote letters for this reason (2 Peter 1:13; Romans 15:15).

The main Helper in reminding us what we need to know is the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). But that doesn't mean you should be passive. The mind has this great power: It can talk to itself by way of reminder. The mind can "call to mind," as our text says.

If we don't "call to mind" what God has said about himself and about us, we languish. Don't wallow in the mire of godless messages in your own head. Messages like: "I can't . . ." "She won't . . ." "They never . . ." "It has never worked . . ."

The point is not that these are true or false. Your mind will always find a way to make them true, unless you "call to mind" something greater. God is the God of the impossible. Reasoning your way out of an impossible situation is not as effective as reminding yourself that God does impossible things.

Without reminding ourselves of the greatness and grace and power and wisdom of God, we sink into brutish pessimism.

The great turn from despair to hope in Psalm 77 comes with these words: "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds" (Psalm 77:11–12).

This is the great battle of life: to remember our great God and call to mind!

January 28, 2023 - Great Is your Reward

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account." (Matthew 5:11)

"Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20)

Jesus revealed a secret that protects our happiness from the threat of suffering and the threat of success. That secret is this: Great is your reward in heaven. And the sum of that reward is enjoying the fullness of the glory of Jesus Christ (John 17:24).

Jesus protects our happiness from suffering when he says, "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)

Our great reward in heaven rescues our joy from the threat of persecution and reviling. The disciples were tempted to put their joy in ministry success. "Even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (Luke 10:17). But that would have severed their joy from its only sure anchor.

So Jesus protects their joy from the threat of success by promising the far greater reward of heaven. Rejoice in this: that your names are written in heaven. Your inheritance is infinite, eternal, sure. Our joy is safe. Neither suffering nor success can destroy its anchor. Great is your reward in heaven.

January 29, 2023 - The Earth is the Lord's

Psalm 24:1

January 30, 2023 - On His throne

"The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne." (Revelation 3:21)

What does Jesus mean when he says this to the church in Laodicea? Sit with Jesus on his throne? This is a promise to everyone who conquers, that is, who presses on in faith to the end (1 John 5:4), in spite of every threatening pain and luring, sinful pleasure. So if you are a true believer in Jesus, you will sit on the throne of the Son of God who sits on the throne of God the Father.

The throne of God signifies the right and authority to rule the universe. That's where Jesus sits. "He must reign," Paul said, "until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25). So when Jesus says, "I will grant him to sit with me on my throne," he promises us a share in the rule of all things.

We, the church, are "the fullness of him who fills all." What does that mean? The universe will be filled with the glory of the Lord (Numbers 14:21). And one dimension of that glory will be the complete and unopposed extension of his rule everywhere.

Jesus fills the universe with his own glorious rule through us. Sharing in his rule, we are the fullness of his rule. We rule on his behalf, by his power, under his authority. In that sense, we sit with him on his throne.

January 31, 2023 - You Will Ask

"In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God." (John 16:26–27)

Don't make God's Son more of a Mediator than he is. Jesus is not going to insert himself between you and the Father, as though you can't go to him directly. Why? "The Father himself loves you."

This is astonishing. Jesus is warning us not to think of God Almighty as unwilling to receive us directly into his presence. By "directly" Jesus meant, "I am not going to take your requests to God for you. You may take them directly. He loves you. He wants you to come. He is not angry at you."

It is absolutely true that no sinful human being has any access to the Father except through Jesus's blood (Hebrews 10:19–20). He intercedes for us now (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). He is our advocate with the Father now (1 John 2:1). He is our High Priest before the throne of God now (Hebrews 4:15–16). He said, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Jesus is protecting us from taking his intercession too far. Jesus is there. He is providing an ever-present, ever-living witness to the removal of the Father's wrath from us.

But he is not there to talk for us, or to keep us at a distance from the Father, or to suggest that the Father's heart is guarded toward us or disinclined to us — hence the words, "For the Father himself loves you."

So, come. Come boldly (Hebrews 4:16). Come expectantly. Come expecting a smile. Come trembling with joy, not dread, now you will ask in the name of Jesus.