TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

June 2023

June 1, 2023 - The Lord set His Heart

"Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day." (Deuteronomy 10:14–15)

God's electing love — the love by which he chooses a people for himself — is absolutely free. It is the gracious overflow of his boundless happiness guided by his infinite wisdom. These verses describes the delight God had in choosing Israel from all the peoples of the earth. Notice two things.

First, notice the contrast between verses 14 and 15. Why does Moses describe the election of Israel against the backdrop of God's ownership of the whole universe? The reason seems to be, to get rid of any notion that God was somehow boxed in to choose this people — that there were some limits to his choosing.

The truth is that Yahweh is the only true God. He owns everything in the universe and has the right and authority to take any people he wants for his own special possession.

The second thing to notice (in verse 15) is the way God exercises his sovereign freedom to *"set his heart in love on your fathers." "*He delighted in your fathers to love them." He freely chose to take pleasure in loving the fathers. God's love for the fathers of Israel was free and merciful and wasn't constrained by anything that the fathers were in their Jewishness or in their virtue. This is a lesson for us. For us who are believers in Christ, God has chosen us just as freely, not because of anything in us, but because God simply delighted to set his heart on us.

June 2, 2023 - I am Wonderfully Made

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. Psalm 139:14

Social media can be a moral wasteland, turning adults into the worst versions of themselves and drawing kids into corruption and self-harm. Still, there is beauty everywhere, even amidst the filth and rancor online.

Among the best are the videos of people, usually kids, receiving some medical marvel: a child hearing his father's voice for the first time because of a hearing aid or cochlear implant, a colorblind groom seeing his bride in all her glory for the first time on their wedding day, or huge smiles breaking out on infants' faces when seeing their parents without any blur.

Watching others captivated by the wonder of simply seeing or hearing is a powerful statement on the goodness of God's world such as in this Tik Tok. These folks didn't receive superpowers. They were just restored to normal human ability. Their stories point to the importance of our bodies as fundamental to our identity as image bearers of God. They are part of the wonderful design of our loving Designer who is our loving God.

June 3, 2023 - Know the Truth

You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. John 8:32

In 1978, at the Harvard University commencement, America heard from a prophetic voice when renowned Soviet dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn boldly and without apology challenged broadly accepted ideas that were then considered politically correct. His comments have not only proven true, but they are more relevant today than ever and, therefore, are worth revisiting.

Though few college commencement speakers these days dare to defy conventional wisdom or the secularism that undergirds it, on June 8, 1978, Solzhenitsyn's stunning address not only made those assembled there uncomfortable, it provoked many of them to boo him.

Why would an audience boo a moral giant like Solzhenitsyn who had stared down a brutal Communist dictatorship's Gulags and won the Nobel Prize in literature? Those who booed had expected him to celebrate the West and to direct his condemnations only at Communism. Instead, he condemned Communism and the West. In the process, Solzhenitsyn had the courage to speak of something that was reviled at the time by elites on both sides of the Atlantic, which was truth.

Truth eludes us if we do not concentrate our attention totally on its pursuit. But even while it eludes us, the illusion of knowing it still lingers and leads to many misunderstandings. Also, truth seldom is pleasant; it is almost invariably bitter. Especially the truth about ourselves.

June 4, 2023 - What we are Ultimately For

God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being. Acts 17:27-28

Ideas powerfully shape our lives. Economic trends matter, but so do the stories we tell about them. Those stories are shaped by what we believe about life and the world, right and wrong, reality, and human identity. Beneath this generation's historically poor mental health, uptick in alcoholism, and subsequent swing toward sobriety is a crisis of meaning now so acutely felt in a world untethered from absolutes or givens. This was the generation told that they could define reality while rejecting the wisdom and structures of the past. The weight of the world was placed on their shoulders, and it was heavy indeed.

To those struggling, Scripture gives both voice and comfort. For all of us, it gives the only solid foundation for meaning and purpose. To be clear, Scripture never equates financial success with happiness or meaning, something that social science research continues to affirm. Instead, money is a means among many by which we might pursue the true end of life, to know and love God.

The true crisis for millennials and any generation, is not a financial one. It's a crisis of meaning, purpose, and of knowing what we are ultimately for.

June 5, 2023 - The Idea of Childhood

If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Matthew 18:6

Years ago, theologian O.M. Bakke published a book titled When Children Became People: The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity. In it, Bakke notes that the idea of children as fully human, with infinite value and inalienable rights, was a distinctly Christian invention. In the ancient world, children were beaten, ignored, left to die, and sexualized with alarming regularity. However, this changed because of Christians, who adopted unwanted children, condemned their sexualization, and embraced their God-given role as parents.

Bakke quoted the charge given by 5th-century Church father John Chrysostom: Let everything take second place to our care for our children, our bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. … ponder deeply how you can teach [your child] to think lightly of this life's passing glories; thus, he will become truly renowned and glorious.

And, of course, Jesus commanded that His disciples "Let the little children come to me" and issued a dire warning to anyone who would cause a child to stumble. Because of Christians, the idea of childhood came into existence.

Joe 6, 2023 -

No devotion Uploaded

June 7, 2023 - God has Acted

And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. Luke 3:22

Doves play a serious role in Scripture. A dove confirmed to Noah the waters were receding. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at His baptism "in the form of a dove." And now doves are confirming the Bible's historical reliability.

According to a recent study, "Analysis of bird remains excavated in Jerusalem confirmed that specific species of birds — pigeons and doves — were indeed sacrificed in the Temple as the biblical text suggests."

Many of the Bible's historical claims are questioned by skeptical scholars. Some, for example, doubted that Israelites sacrificed doves in accordance with Mosaic Law because doves are not domesticated like other sacrificial offerings. Maybe chickens, but not doves.

Well, the vast numbers of dove bones discovered near the Temple Mount suggest, yet again, the Bible is a reliable source of history. And we should expect no less, since the Bible claims that God has acted, and is still acting, not just in human hearts but within human history.

June 8, 2023 - Digital Dangers and Resolutions

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (Romans 13:14)

Christians do not just coast through life like jellyfish floating in the current of contemporary culture. We live by the power of the Spirit and find our course by the word of God. We swim like dolphins, not jellyfish. Part of that course setting and power is expressed in thoughtful engagement with the digital realities of our day. Here are five dangers.

1) The hook of constant curiosity

Resolution: I will strictly limit my experimental time on the device and devote myself more to truth than to technique.

2) The empty world of virtual (un)reality

Resolution: I will spend my constructive, creative energy not in the unreality of "virtual reality" but in the reality of the real world.

3) “Personal” relations with a machine

Resolution: I will not replace the risk of personal relationships with impersonal electronic safety.

4) The risk of unhealthy relationships

Resolution: I will not cultivate a one-on-one relationship with a person of the opposite sex other than my spouse. If I am single, I will not cultivate such a relationship with another person’s spouse.

5) Unhealthy Images

Resolution: I will never open any app or website to view unhealthy images, nor purchase or download anything unhealthy.

June 9, 2023 - Provide for His Own

If anyone does not provide for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 1 Timothy 5:8

How human rights are defined depends, first and foremost, on who we believe humans are and what we believe humans are for. In our culture, it is widely assumed that humans must determine their purpose, which is not based on any shared plot about what humans are. As a result, “human rights” are abstractly defined as something akin to autonomy, the ability to self-determine who we are and how we should live.

Defining human rights this way doesn’t work in reality. Not only will our respective autonomies inevitably conflict, limiting someone’s ability to live what they choose, but we’ll continue to bump into reality itself, in which there are givens about humanity that we cannot ultimately deny.

Understood correctly, human rights are fundamentally the right to be fully human. This requires knowing, to some degree, how we were made and what we are for, especially if these things were, to any degree, built into reality. In this framework, the most important right that children have is the right to be cared for and looked after by those who should care the most for them, whose choices brought them into the world in the first place. In other words, children have a right to their parents, and parents have an obligation to look after the health and wellbeing of their children and to provide for their own.

June 10, 2023 -Seek the Things Above

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:1–2)

Jesus Christ is refreshing. So, seek the things that are above. Don’t replace Christ with trifles. Flight from Christ into Christless leisure makes the soul parched. At first it may feel like freedom and fun to skimp on prayer and neglect the word. But then we pay: shallowness, powerlessness, vulnerability to sin, preoccupation with trifles, superficial relationships, and a frightening loss of interest in worship and the things of the Spirit.

Jesus Christ is the refreshing centre of vacations, He is preeminent in all things (Colossians 1:18), including vacations and picnics and softball and long walks and BBQs. He invites us to, *“Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).*

Do we want it? That is the question. Christ gives himself to us in proportion to how much we want his refreshment. *"You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).* Let us seek the things above where Christ our Lord is.

June 11, 2023 - Jesus Rejoiced

In that same hour he [Jesus] rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will." (Luke 10:21)

This verse is one of only two places in the Gospels where Jesus is said to rejoice. The seventy disciples have just returned from their preaching tours and reported their success to Jesus.

Notice that all three members of the Trinity are rejoicing here: Jesus is rejoicing, but it says he is rejoicing in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is filling him and moving him to rejoice. Then at the end of the verse it describes the pleasure of God the Father. "Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do" — what you rejoiced to do!

What is it that has the whole Trinity rejoicing together in this place? It is the free, electing love of God to hide things from the intellectual elite and to reveal them to babes.

When the seventy disciples return from their evangelistic mission and give their report to Jesus, he and the Holy Spirit rejoice that God the Father has chosen, according to his own good pleasure — his own rejoicing — to reveal the Son to babes and to hide him from the wise.

God contradicts what human merit might dictate. He hides from the self-sufficient wise and reveals to the most helpless and unaccomplished. So, when we see this — in fact, when we know that we are among the chosen children — we too join the rejoicing.

June 12, 2023 - Bears Much Fruit

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." (John 12:24–25)

"Whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." What does that mean?

It means, at least, that you don't take much thought for your life in this world. In other words, it just doesn't matter much what happens to your life in this world.

If men speak well of you, it doesn't matter much.
If they hate you, it doesn't matter much.
If you have a lot of things, it doesn't matter much.
If you have little, it doesn't matter much.
If you are persecuted or lied about, it doesn't matter much.
If you are famous or unheard of, it doesn't matter much.
If you have died with Christ, these things just don't matter much.

This is what Jesus meant when he said, *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24)*. He calls us to choose the cross. People only did one thing on a cross. They died on it. "*Take up your cross," means, "Like a grain of wheat, fall into the ground and die."*

Choose it. But why? For the sake of radical commitment to ministry to bear much fruit.

June 13, 2023 - My Help Comes from The Lord

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. (Psalm 121:1–3)

Do you need help? I do. Where do you look for help? The Psalmist reminded himself of two great truths: One is that God is a mighty Creator over all the problems of life; the other is that God never sleeps.

God is a tireless worker. He never wearies. Think of God as a worker in your life. Yes, it is amazing. We are prone to think of ourselves as workers in God's life. But the Bible wants us first to be amazed that God is a worker in our lives: *"From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who works for those who wait for him" (Isaiah 64:4).*

God is working for us around the clock. He does not take days off and he does not sleep. In fact he is so eager to work for us that he goes around looking for more work to do for people who will trust him: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him" (2 Chronicles 16:9).

God loves to show his tireless power and wisdom and goodness by working for people who trust him. What a truth! What a reality! God is up all night and all day to work for those who wait for him.

June 14, 2023 - I Know Them

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them." (John 10:27)

Jesus knows those who are his. What is this knowledge? John 10:3 is a close parallel to John 10:27. It says, *"The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."* When Jesus says, *"I know them,"* this means at least that he knows them by name; that is, he knows them individually and intimately. They are not anonymous, lost in the flock.

John 10:14–15 provides another insight: *"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father."* There is a real similarity between the way Jesus knows his Father in heaven and the way he knows his sheep. Jesus sees himself in the Father, and he sees himself in his disciples.

To some degree Jesus recognizes his own character in his disciples. He sees his own brand mark on the sheep. This endears them to him. The apostle Paul puts it like this: *"God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his'" (2 Timothy 2:19).*

It is hard to overemphasize what a tremendous privilege it is to be known personally, intimately, lovingly by the Son of God. It is a precious gift to all his sheep, and it contains within it profound, personal fellowship and affection and the promise of eternal life as he knows those who are his.

June 15, 2023 - Be My Disciple

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26–27)

Jesus is unashamed and unafraid of telling us up front the "worst" — the painful cost of being a Christian: hating family (verse 26), carrying a cross (verse 27), renouncing possessions (verse 33). There is no small print in the covenant of grace. It is all big, and bold. No cheap grace and very costly! Come, and be my disciple.

But Satan hides his worst and shows only his best. All that really matters in the deal with Satan is in small print on the back page. On the front page in big, bold letters are the words, *"You will not surely die" (Genesis 3:4), and "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9).* But on the back page in small print — so small you can only read it with the magnifying glass of the Bible — it says, *"And after the fleeting pleasures, you will suffer with me forever in hell."*

Why is Jesus willing to show us his "worst" as well as his best, while Satan will only show us his best? Matthew Henry answers, *"Satan shows the best, but hides the worst, because his best will not [counterbalance] his worst; but Christ's will abundantly."* When we sit down to calculate the cost of following Jesus — when we weigh the "worst" and the "best" — it is worth it to be his disciple.

June 16, 2023 - God Chose You

God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit. (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

The Bible speaks of our election — God's choosing us — in Christ before the foundation of the earth (Ephesians 1:4) before we had done anything good or evil (Romans 9:11). Therefore, our election is unconditional in the strictest sense. Neither our faith nor our obedience is the basis of it. It is free and utterly undeserved.

On the other hand, dozens of passages in the Bible speak of our final salvation (as opposed to our election in eternity past) as conditional upon a changed heart and life. So, the question arises, How can I have the assurance that I will persevere in the faith and holiness necessary for inheriting eternal life?

The answer is that assurance is rooted in our election. Second Peter 1:10 says, "Be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall." Divine election is the foundation of God's commitment to save me, and therefore that he will undertake to work in me by sanctifying grace what his electing grace has begun.

This is the meaning of the new covenant. Everyone who believes in Jesus is a secure beneficiary of the new covenant. Election is the final ground of assurance because, since it is God's commitment to save, it is also God's commitment to enable all that is necessary for salvation as he chose you.

June 17, 2023 - May You Be Strengthened

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

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

For the Christian, this strength comes from God. That is why Paul is praying for the Colossians. He is asking God to empower them for the patient endurance that the Christian life requires. But when he says that the strength of patience is "according to [God's] glorious might" he doesn't just mean that it takes divine power

to make a person patient. He means that faith in this "glorious might" is the channel through which the power for patience comes.

Patience is indeed a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22), but the Holy Spirit empowers (with all his fruit) through "hearing with faith" (Galatians 3:5). Therefore Paul is praying that God would connect us with the "glorious might" that empowers patience, and that connection is faith that makes us strong.

June 18, 2023 - God Meant It For You

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

The story of Joseph is a great lesson in why we should have faith in the sovereign grace of God. Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers, which must have tested his patience tremendously. But he is given a good job in Potiphar's house in Egypt. Then, when he is acting uprightly in the unplanned place of obedience, Potiphar's wife lies about his integrity and has him thrown into prison — another great trial to his patience.

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

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

What would have been the key to patience for Joseph during all those long years of exile and abuse? The answer is: faith in God's sovereign grace — the sovereign grace of God to turn the unplanned place and the unplanned pace into the happiest ending imaginable. That's the key to our patience as well. Do we believe that God is working for us in the strangest and most painful turns of our lives for good?

June 19, 2023 - The Homeschooling Boom

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Matthew 28:20

The 2020 pandemic disrupted the education of millions of children. In response, many parents opted for alternative forms of education. "In that single year," wrote Dixie Lane with the Institute for Family Studies, "the number of registered homeschoolers more than doubled, rising from about 5.4% to about 11.1%."

Still, Lane argues, the pandemic was not the only reason for the boom. In general, parents are committed to two principles in education: localism and parental authority. The state overreach in K-12 education has brought parents back to those fundamental values.

Some are fighting to make public schools better; others are investing in homeschooling or private Christian education. Either way, children are rightly being seen as the primary responsibility of parents, not the state.

More options mean a beautiful opportunity for Christians to love the Lord with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength and to teach our children to do likewise.

June 20, 2023 - Has The Metaverse Failed?

Is the Metaverse headed for the graveyard? A year and a half after its release, the Metaverse remains vastly unpopular, despite millions of dollars of corporate investments and costly marketing campaigns. The most well-funded Metaverse app only has 38 active daily users, and Microsoft and Disney have laid off their specially designated Metaverse teams.

In the initial hype, Meta overestimated the desire and demand for virtual reality. Meta could be our generation's MySpace, soon to be replaced by something superior, or it could be the failure to account for our embodied natures as image bearers.

Though we're prone to dissatisfaction with our bodies and our relationships, we still crave "in-person" interaction and experiences, because our bodies are real and so is the physical world. Even the most beautiful picture cannot replace seeing the Grand Canyon up close.

Digital knockoffs do not change or alter who we really are, body and spirit, a "living soul" made in the image and likeness of God.

June 21, 2023 - The End and the Beginning

Genesis 1:1 says, *"In the beginning, God . . ."* Before anything else existed — sunsets, seaweed, giraffes, algebra, lightning, tomatoes, laughter, supernovas, bubblegum, coffee — there was only the triune God, eternally happy within his triune self. Everything and everyone else came later.

At the other end of the Bible, the close of Revelation describes an eternal future in which "the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God" (Revelation 21:3). Notice three truths about these bookends. First, God bestrides the Bible, vibrantly present at both the beginning and end. He's the Alpha and Omega of the Scriptures, the first and the last. He never began to exist, nor will he ever cease to do so. He is absolute, unchanging reality. Of no one and nothing else is this true. Only God is present at both the beginning and end of the Bible. Second the Bible starts with God alone and end with God and His people. Third, the story doesn't end where the Bible ends but goes on for all eternity. We thank God that we are His people and that we will enjoy Him forever.

June 22, 2023 - Serving God

"They shall be servants to him, that they may know my service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries." (2 Chronicles 12:8)

Serving God is utterly different from serving anyone else. God is extremely jealous that we understand this — and enjoy it. For example, he commands us, "Serve the Lord with gladness!" (Psalm 100:2). There is a reason for this gladness. It is given in Acts 17:25. God is not "served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything."

We serve him with gladness because we do not bear the burden of meeting his needs. He has no needs. So, serving him can't mean meeting his needs. Instead we rejoice in a service where he meets our needs. Serving God always means receiving grace from God to do what we have to do.

To show how jealous God is for us to understand this, and glory in it, there is a story in 2 Chronicles 12. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, who ruled the southern kingdom after the revolt of the ten tribes, chose against serving the Lord and gave his service to other gods and other kingdoms.

The point is plain: serving the enemy and serving God are very different. How so? Serving God is a receiving and a blessing and a joy and a benefit. Serving the enemy is exhausting and depleting and sorrowful. God is a giver. The enemy is a taker.

June 23, 2023 - The Grace of God

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

When things are bad it should not enter our minds that we should try to show that things aren't so bad; or that we can add our strength to our heavenly Father's arm as he rescues us. We should think, Yes! I need you! I thank you! I love your strength! I love your initiative! I love your grip! You are great!

In that spirit of yielded affection, one cannot boast. I call that yielded affection "faith." This is the essence of the grace of God that we desperately need and should crave for in our time of need. This is the faith that magnifies grace.

As we ponder how to live the Christian life, the uppermost thought should be: How can I magnify rather than nullify the grace of God? Paul answers this question in Galatians 2:20–21, *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God."*

Why does his life not nullify the grace of God? Because he lives by faith in the Son of God. Faith calls all attention to grace and magnifies it, rather than nullifying the grace of God.

June 24, 2023 - Pray for our Leaders

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1–4)

So, there are two levels at which we pray for people in high positions. One is that they be saved. We also pray that God would have mercy on us and on the world — which he aims for us to evangelize, and that he would cause the hearts of presidents and governors and mayors and legislators to make decisions that bring about justice and peace and freedom so that we can go about our lives of worship and godliness and love and evangelism and world missions. So let us all pray for our leaders.

June 25, 2023 - Deeds of Darkness

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. Ephesians 5:11

Modern pagans reject ancient paganism. They find solidarity with the idea of human equality and dignity, they see the natural world as a place of order rather than of chaos, and call for sexual restraint, the protection of children and disadvantaged groups, and the end of slavery, mindless conquest, and human sacrifice. To this extent, they are embracing the innovations of Christianity.

After all, it was Christianity and not paganism, as historian Tom Holland has explained, that taught that men, women, and children, slave or free, share the image of God. It was St. Patrick, not the Druids, who believed and taught Ireland that "the Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" and not subject to hostile spirits

who are appeased by human sacrifices. It was Christianity that turned Nordic peoples away from a belief system that committed them to conquest, plunder, and death in battle.

In short, all the things that make modern paganism appealing to modern people aren't pagan. Though many Westerners are bored by the hollowness of materialism and desperate to fill the spiritual vacuum it has left, they will not find answers in dead religions. Only Jesus offers the truth: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." And thus ecape the deeds of darkness.

June 26, 2023 - God was Able

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

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

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

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

Abraham was too old to have children, and Sarah was barren. Not only that: How do you turn a son or two into "many nations," which God said Abraham would be the father of? It all seemed totally impossible. Abraham's faith glorified God by being fully assured that he could and would do the humanly impossible. This is the faith we are called to have, trusting that God is able.

June 27, 2023 - A Better Country

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

I want very much for God to say to me what he said about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: *"I am not ashamed to be called your God." Two reasons are given: "God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city."*

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

Now, consider the other reason given. It goes like this: *"They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God."*

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

When we desire this heavenly city — this dwelling place of God — more than we desire all that this world can give, God is not ashamed to be called our God. We should make much of all that he promises to be for us. This is great news. So, open your eyes to the better country.

June 28, 2023 - He Has Now Reconciled

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

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

But Paul's message of salvation is not good news to those who reject the diagnosis. He says, you *"were alienated and hostile in mind."* I think he means that the hostility is really there toward the true God, but people do not allow themselves to think about the true God. They imagine God to be the way they would like him to be, which seldom includes any possibility that they might be in really serious trouble with him.

But concerning the God who really exists — a God who is sovereign over all things, including sickness and calamity — we were all hostile to him, Paul says. Deep down, we hated his absolute power and authority. That any of us is saved is owing to the wonderful truth that the death of Christ obtained the grace by which God conquered our hearts and caused us to be reconciled to him.

June 29, 2023 - Live by Faith

The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

Faith is a perfect fit with God's grace and its freedom and all-sufficiency, as it calls attention to the glorious trustworthiness of God. One of the important implications of this conclusion is that the faith that justifies and the faith that sanctifies are not two different kinds of faith. "Sanctify" simply means to make holy or to transform into Christlikeness. It is all by grace.

Faith is the act of the soul that connects with grace, and receives it, and channels it as the power of obedience, and guards grace from being nullified through human boasting.

The simple reason why the faith that justifies is also the faith that sanctifies is that both justification and sanctification are the work of sovereign grace. It is faith that corresponds to grace. Justification and sanctification are not the same kind of work but they are both works of grace. Sanctification and justification are "grace upon grace" (John 1:16). As both justification and sanctification are works of grace, it is natural that they would both be by faith, which is how we live.

June 30, 2023 - God Created All Things

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. Colossians 1:16

How Can Anything Exist Without God? Recently, Christian writer Samuel Sey tweeted, “The question isn’t: ‘does God exist?’ The question is: ‘how could anything exist without God?’” Or, as Fraulein Maria sang in The Sound of Music, “Nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could.” Not only is there something, and lots of them in this world, but there is also consciousness, creativity, beauty, love, and order. These things say an awful lot about what kind of First Cause is required to bring all these somethings into existence.

One Twitter user pushed back against Sey, arguing that a more important question is, “What kind of people should we be?” Sey responded, “It’s impossible to know what kind of people we should be without affirming who our Creator is.” God, the Christian Triune God of Scripture, is the best explanation for the world we experience. As C.S. Lewis put it, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else.”