TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

July 2023

July 1, 2023 - Revealing of the Sons of God

The creation itself "waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19)

How many of us have reckoned with the glorious potential of a renewed creation — and with the devastating condition of the current one? When God made the world and called it all good, he wasn't looking at the world as we know it. No, when mankind fell from glory, the oceans, mountains, and stars fell with us. Sin dragged continents of beauty and purity into the awful, nauseating swamp of the curse.

We will be changed, in the twinkling of the eye, at the last trumpet, but we won't be born again again. If we are in Christ, the new heavens already live in us. And because his Spirit lives in us, everything that will make the new creation so captivating and satisfying is already ours in him. The Creation will be changed as the Sons of God are revealed.

July 2, 2023 - Stay Pure

Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (Romans 13:14)

The exhortation suggests that not only do we sin by gratifying sinful desires, but we can actually create space for such indulgence. What does that mean, and how does it work?

"Making provision for the flesh" implies that we can choose to put ourselves in the path of temptation. We can make room and create space for sinful desires to be awakened, pursued, and gratified.

Paul's call is simple, even if the obedience is hard won. Wake up. Change your clothes. Put on the Lord Jesus and his armor and then walk in a fitting way before him. Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires and stay pure.

July 3, 2023 - Sober Judgement

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

Paul is concerned that people were thinking of themselves "more highly than [they] ought to think." His final remedy for this pride is to say that not only are spiritual gifts a work of God's free grace in our lives, but so also is the very faith with which we use those gifts.

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

This truth has a profound impact on how we pray. Thus, the man with the epileptic son cried out, *"I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).* This is a good prayer. It acknowledges that without God we cannot believe as we ought to believe and we cry out to God to help and give us sober judgment.

July 4, 2023 - Bear Burdens

Bear ye one anothers burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. Galations 6:2

In the Christian sense, a caring presence is someone who listens carefully and sympathetically to troubled souls in order to accurately understand the nature of their affliction and struggle, and then eventually seeks to help them put it in a biblical perspective and see, or remember, how their suffering fits into God's redemptive, providential purposes. The primary care we're called to offer a suffering saint is hope.

When our souls are in turmoil, we all crave peace. The peace we crave doesn't come from having all our why questions answered, but it's a peace that surpasses understanding, a peace that comes only from the God of peace (Philippians 4:7).

To help others we must hope in God, be discernibly humble, love kindness, and be judicious in the ways we treat suffering saints. That kind of person is very likely to be a caring presence for weary, burdened souls and to help them find the peace and hope that only God can provide as we bear their burdens as we are able.

July 5, 2023 - Social Media and Loneliness

God makes a home for the lonely. Psalm 68:6

According to American psychologist Jean Twenge, smartphones and social media directly correlate with the rise in depression and self-harm among Gen Z. In 36 countries, including the U.S. and U.K., teens are much lonelier than they were 15 years ago. Not only that, but nearly 30% of American girls are clinically depressed, and the rate of suicide for 10-to-24-year-olds has tripled.

Social platforms promise connection but deliver loneliness and depression. That's because, Twenge says, online interactions cannot replace face-to-face interactions. "Even my 16-year-old does not have social media" Twenge said. "She texts with her friends and calls them and that's how they communicate."

Setting aside it's "a waste of time," as Twenge's daughter puts it, and the predatory pornography and terrible ideas that permeate social media, social media cannot carry the weight of real human connection. And, when we try, we are only left more isolated, more disconnected, and lonelier.

July 6, 2023 - The Bridegroom Rejoices

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

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

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

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

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

July 7, 2023 - In The Morning

"O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch" (Psalm 5:3).

Let the first thing out of your mouth in the morning, while you're still on the pillow, be a cry to God: "I love you, Lord. I need you, Lord. Help me, Lord." The first cry out of our mouths in the morning should be, "I need you again today." Then "prepare a sacrifice . . . and watch." I think that sacrifice is my body and my attention devoted to him. I watch for the Lord to show up — and do what? What am I watching for?

Psalm 143:8 puts it like this: *"Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul."* I'm on the lookout for the steadfast love of God, and I'm on the lookout for it in his word.

Psalm 90:14 tells me how to think about praying for it when it comes: *"Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love." Don't just look for it and see it and say, "Here it comes!"* but ask the Lord, *"Oh, satisfy us with this steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad in you all our days."* We watch in God's inspired word for revelations of his steadfast love and his guidance for our lives, and for a profound sense of satisfaction in our souls that he is beautiful and that he cares for us in every morning.

July 8, 2023 - Not I But The Grace of God

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

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

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

Paul confirms this in 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12 by calling each of our acts of goodness a "work of faith," and by saying that the glory this brings to Jesus is "according to the grace of our God" because it happens "by his power."

The obedience that gives God pleasure is produced by the power of God's grace through faith. The same dynamic is at work at every stage of the Christian life. The power of God's grace that saves through faith (Ephesians 2:8) is the same power of God's grace that sanctifies through faith which is not us but the grace of God.

July 9, 2023 - Being Satisfied

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

The essence of faith is being satisfied with all that God is for us in Christ. Defining faith this way emphasizes two things. One is the God-centeredness of faith. It is not merely the promises of God that satisfy us. It is all that God himself is for us in Jesus. Faith embraces God in Christ as our treasure — not just God's promised gifts.

Faith banks its hope not just on the real estate of the age to come, but on the fact that God will be there (Revelation 21:3). What faith embraces most earnestly is not just the reality of sins forgiven, as precious as that is, but the presence of the living Christ in our hearts and the fullness of God himself.

The other thing is the term "satisfaction." Faith is the quenching of the soul's thirst at the fountain of God. Here is the secret of the power of faith to break the enslaving force of sinful attractions. If the heart is satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus, the power of sin to lure us away from the wisdom of Christ is broken and we are satisfied.

July 10, 2023 - See The Lord

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14)

There is a practical holiness without which we will not see the Lord. Learning to fight for holiness by faith in grace is supremely important.

There is another way to pursue holiness that backfires and leads to death. Paul warns us against serving God in any other way than by faith in his enabling grace. God is not *"served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:25).* Any effort to serve God that does not, in that very act, depend on him as the reward of our hearts and the power of our service, will dishonour him as a needy pagan god.

Peter describes the alternative to such self-reliant service of God, *"Whoever serves, [let him do so] as one who serves by the strength that God supplies — in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 4:11).* And Paul says, *"I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me" (Romans 15:18).*

Moment by moment, grace arrives to enable us to do "every good work" that God appoints for us. The fight for good works is a fight to believe the promises of grace knowing that we will see the Lord.

July 11, 2023 - No Unbelief

No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith giving glory to God. (Romans 4:20)

We should long for God to be glorified in our pursuit of holiness and love. God is not glorified unless our pursuit is empowered by faith in his promises. God has revealed himself most fully in Jesus Christ, who was crucified for our sins and raised for our justification (Romans 4:25), he is most glorified when we embrace his promises with joyful firmness because they are bought by the blood of his Son.

God is honored when we are humbled for our feebleness and failure, and when he is trusted for grace. Paul describes Abraham's faith as no unbelief. Faith in God's promises glorifies him as supremely wise and strong and good and trustworthy. So, unless we learn how to live by faith in the promises of God's grace, we may perform remarkable religious rigors, but not for God's glory.

He is glorified when the power to be holy comes through humble faith in grace. Martin Luther said, "[Faith] honors him whom it trusts with the most reverent and highest regard, since it considers him truthful and trustworthy." The trusted Giver gets the glory.

We should desire to learn how to live for God's honour, which means living by faith in grace, which, in turn, means battling unbelief in all the ways it rears its head.

July 12, 2023 - Please God by Faith

Without Faith it is impossible to please God. Hebrew 11:6

The goal of God in everything he does is the glorification of God. It was God himself who told us to pray for his name to be hallowed, so we do.

The goal of the human soul in all we do is to be satisfied in God above all things. It was God himself who demanded that we "serve the Lord with gladness" (Psalm 100:2). God himself told us to pray, *"Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love" (Psalm 90:14), so we do.*

The goal of persevering faith is reached by a proper fear of unbelief. This is God's word: *"They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear" (Romans 11:20).* So, pray for the fear of unbelief.

All the glories, all the promises, all the threatenings are there to help us fight the fight of faith. They are there to prevent the shipwreck of faith. They are there to get us home. It is suicide to ignore the promises and threatenings of Scripture. Let us please God by Faith.

July 13, 2023 - Out of Death into Life

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. (1 John 3:14)

Love is the evidence that we are born again — that we are Christians, that we are saved. Sometimes the Bible makes our holiness and our love for people the condition of our final salvation. In other words, if we are not holy and not loving, we will not be saved at the judgment day (e.g., Hebrews 12:14; Galatians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 6:10). This doesn't mean that acts of love are how we get right with God. No, the Bible is clear again and again as Ephesians 2:8–9 says, *"By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one may boast."* When the Bible says that we are saved by faith but that we must love people in order to finally be saved, it means that faith in God's promises must be so real that the love it produces proves the reality of the faith.

Love for others is a condition of grace in the sense that it confirms that the primary condition, faith, is genuine. We could call love for others a secondary condition, which confirms the authenticity of the primary and essential condition of faith which alone unites us to Christ, and receives his power and takes us out of death into life.

July 14, 2023 - Revealed from Heaven

God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted . . . 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. (2 Thessalonians 1:6–8)

There will come a time when the patience of God is over. When God has seen his people suffer for the allotted time, and the appointed number of martyrs is complete (Revelation 6:11), then a just and holy vengeance will come from heaven.

Notice that God's vengeance on those who have afflicted his people is experienced by us as "relief." The judgment on "those who afflict" us is a form of grace toward us.

When God's patience has run its long-suffering course, and this age is over, and judgment comes on the enemies of God's people, the saints will not disapprove of God's justice. The final destruction of the unrepentant will not be experienced as a misery for God's people.

The unwillingness of others to repent will not hold the affections of the saints hostage. Hell will not be able to blackmail heaven into misery. God's judgment will be approved, and the saints will experience the vindication of truth as a great grace as Jesus is revealed from Heaven.

July 15, 2023 - Give you the Kingdom

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32)

Jesus will not sit by and let us disbelieve without a fight. He takes up the weapon of the word and speaks it with power for all who struggle to believe. His aim is to defeat the fear that God is not the kind of God who really wants to be good to us — that he is not really generous and helpful and kind and tender, but is basically irked with us — ill-disposed and angry.

Sometimes, even if we believe in our heads that God is good to us, we may feel in our hearts that his goodness is somehow forced or constrained. Jesus is at pains to help us not feel that way about God. He is striving in this verse to describe for us the indescribable worth and excellency of God's soul by showing the unbridled pleasure he takes in giving us the kingdom.

This verse is a sentence about the nature of God. It's about the kind of heart God has. It's a verse about what makes God glad — not merely about what God will do or what he has to do, but what he delights to do, what he loves to do and takes pleasure in doing. Every word counts as he delights to give you the kingdom.

July 16, 2023 - A Royal Priesthood

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

In the same way, the heavenly anthem declares that Jesus's redemptive work has made his people "a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10). The division between holy and profane vocations was wholly human and artificial. The true "spiritual estate" belonged to all Christians.

The biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers establishes the equal standing of all believers in the spiritual estate. As a holy priesthood, we are designed and intended to pursue Christ together, united around a common confession "that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another" (1 Corinthians 12:25), as we share being a royal priesthood.

July 17, 2023 - Our Happy God

. . . the gospel of the glory of the blessed God . . . (1 Timothy 1:11)

This is a beautiful phrase in 1 Timothy, buried beneath the too-familiar surface of Bible buzzwords, but after you dig it up, it sounds like this: "the good news of the glory of the happy God." The word "blessed" is not the one that means "praised," but the one that means "happy." A great part of God's glory is his happiness.

It was inconceivable to the apostle Paul that God could be denied infinite joy and still be all-glorious. To be infinitely glorious was to be infinitely happy. He used the phrase, "the glory of the happy God," because it is a glorious thing for God to be happy the way he is.

God's glory consists much in the fact that he is happy beyond our wildest imagination. As the great eighteenth-century preacher, Jonathan Edwards, said, "Part of God's fullness which he communicates is his happiness. This happiness consists in enjoying and rejoicing in himself; so does also the creature's happiness."

This is a key part of the gospel, it is good news that God is gloriously happy. No one would want to spend eternity with a gloomy, unhappy God. If God is unhappy, then the goal of the gospel — to be with God forever — is not a happy goal, and that means it would be no gospel at all. Jesus invites us to spend eternity with a happy God when he says, "Enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:23).

July 18, 2023 - You Have Loved Me

"I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:26)

Imagine being able to enjoy what is most enjoyable with unbounded and increasing energy and passion forever.

This is not now our experience. Three things stand in the way of our complete satisfaction in this world.

1. Nothing in this world has a personal worth great enough to meet the deepest longings of our hearts.
2. We lack the strength to savor the best treasures to their maximum worth.
3. Our enjoyment of things here comes to an end. Nothing lasts.

God does not love the Son the way he loves sinners. He loves the Son because the Son is infinitely worthy of love. That is, he loves the Son because the Son is infinitely lovely. Which means that this love is totally pleasure. Jesus prays that this pleasure that God has in his Son will be the same pleasure we have in the Son. This love will be in us and change us as Jesus prayed for.

July 19, 2023 - Conquer Bitterness

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. (1 Peter 2:23)

No one was more grievously sinned against than Jesus. Every ounce of animosity against him was completely undeserved. No one has ever lived who was more worthy of honor than Jesus; and no one has been dishonored more.

If anyone had a right to get angry and be bitter and vengeful, it was Jesus. How did he control himself when scoundrels, whose very existence he sustained, spat in his face?

What this verse means is that Jesus had faith in the grace of God's righteous judgment. He did not need to avenge himself for all the indignities he suffered, because he entrusted his cause to God. He left vengeance in God's hands and prayed for his enemies: *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).*

Peter gives us this glimpse into Jesus's faith so that we would learn how to live this way ourselves. If Christ conquered bitterness and vengeance by faith in what God, the good Judge, had promised to do, how much more should we, since we have far less right to murmur for being mistreated than he did?

July 20, 2023 - He Himself Bore Our Sins

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

What is the basis of our not holding grudges against Christian brothers and sisters who repent? Our moral indignation because of a terrible offense done against us does not evaporate just because the offender is a Christian. In fact, we may feel even more betrayed and a simple, "I'm sorry" will often seem utterly disproportionate to the painfulness and ugliness of the offense.

Dealing with fellow Christians the promise of God's wrath against our offender does not apply, because there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). *"God has not destined [Christians] for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).* It looks like they are going to get away with it!

Where shall we turn to assure ourselves that justice will be done — that Christianity is not a mockery of the seriousness of sin? The answer is that we look to the cross of Christ. All the wrongs that have been done against us by genuine believers were avenged in the death of Jesus. The suffering of Christ was the real punishment and recompense of God on every hurt you have ever received from a fellow Christian. Therefore, Christianity does not make light of sin. It does not add insult to our injury because he himself bore our sins.

July 21, 2023 - While we Were God's Enemies

While we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son. Romans 5:10

Apparently, Josh Timonen, once a right-hand man of New Atheist author Richard Dawkins, has converted to Christianity. Timonen began working with Dawkins back in 2006, just before the publication of Dawkins' bestseller, The God Delusion, helping with Dawkins' website, some documentaries, as well as his foundation and merchandise. The two parted ways due to a legal dispute.

Later, Timonen relocated his family during the pandemic, and they started attending a church so that his young daughter could make friends. At that church, Timonen and his wife began to reconsider Christianity and, after reading Lee Strobel's The Case for Christ, Timonen was confronted with the historical fact of Jesus' life, ministry, and resurrection, all of which he had dismissed early on in his atheism. Within the year, Josh and his wife placed their faith in Christ. Timonen's story is a reminder that God is at work and that through Christ, can reconcile us to Himself, even "while we were enemies".

July 22, 2023 - Forgiving People

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Saving faith is not merely believing that you are forgiven. Saving faith looks at the horror of sin, and then looks at the holiness of God, and apprehends spiritually that God's forgiveness is unspeakably glorious and beautiful. We don't just receive it; we admire it. We are satisfied with our new friendship with such a great, forgiving God.

Faith in God's forgiveness does not merely mean a persuasion that I am off the hook. It means savouring the truth that a forgiving God is the most precious reality in the universe. Saving faith cherishes being forgiven by God, and from there rises to cherishing the God who forgives — and all that he is for us in Jesus. This experience has a tremendous effect on our becoming forgiving people.

It is possible to go on holding a grudge if your faith simply means you have looked back to the cross and concluded that you are off the hook. We need to go deeper into what true faith is — not just a relief that I'm off the hook, but also a profound satisfaction with all that God is for me in Jesus. This faith looks back not merely to discover that we are off the hook, but also to see and savour the kind of God who offers us a future of endless reconciled tomorrows in fellowship with him. Satisfied fellowship with such a forgiving God is crucial for our being forgiving people.

July 23, 2023 - Right Worshipping

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:23-24

It's not a disease to want to receive in worship. The very essence of worship — and not just the outward acts of worship, but the inward essence of worship — is being satisfied in all that God is for us in Jesus.

The way people should come to worship, is to come hungry to be satisfied in God, to see God more clearly, to taste God more sweetly, to be amazed at the way God is, to feel the admiration and the wonder of his greatness, and to feel hopefulness and thankfulness and confidence of the heart welling up because of the bounty of his grace. All that is a way of getting, not giving. The right posture of that kind of getting is a sense of hunger and neediness and desperation and longing and praying for more of God, more of Christ, more of grace, more power. That's the kind of getting in worship we should pursue as we seek right worshipping.

July 24, 2023 - Aim at Love

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Timothy 1:5)

Paul is aiming at love. And one of the essential sources of this great effect is sincere faith. The reason faith is such a sure source of love is that faith in God's grace expels from the heart the sinful powers that hinder love.

If we feel guilty, we tend to wallow in self-centered depression and self-pity, unable to see, let alone care about, anyone else's need. Or we play the hypocrite to cover our guilt, and so destroy all sincerity in relationships, which makes real love impossible. Or we talk about other people's faults to minimize the guilt of our own, which love does not do. So, if we are going to love, the destructive effects of guilt must be overcome.

It's the same with fear. If we feel fearful, we tend not to approach a stranger at church who might need a word of welcome and encouragement. Or we may reject frontier missions as a vocation, because it sounds too dangerous. Or we may waste money on excessive insurance, or get swallowed up in all manner of little phobias that make us preoccupied with ourselves and blind us to the needs of others. All of which are the opposite of love.

It's the same with greed. If we are greedy, we may spend money on luxuries — money that ought to go to the spread of the gospel. We don't undertake anything risky, lest our precious possessions and our financial future be jeopardized. We focus on things instead of people, or see people as resources for our material advantage. So love is ruined. Let us with God's help aim at love.

July 25, 2023 - Sows to The Spirit

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:8)

Faith has an insatiable appetite for experiencing as much of God's grace as possible. Therefore, faith presses toward the river where God's grace flows most freely, namely, the river of love. What other force will move us out of our contented living rooms to take upon ourselves the inconveniences and suffering that love requires?

What will propel us . . .

- to greet strangers when we feel shy?
- to go to an enemy and plead for reconciliation when we feel indignant?
- to give generously when we've never tried it?
- to speak to our colleagues about Christ when we are timid?
- to invite new neighbors to a Bible study?
- to cross cultures with the gospel?
- to create a new ministry for alcoholics?
- to spend an evening driving a van?
- to invest a morning praying for renewal?

None of these costly acts of love just happens. They are impelled by a new appetite — the appetite of faith for the fullest experience of God's grace. We want more of God. And we want this more than we want our private, disturbance-free security and comfort. Faith loves to rely on God and see him work miracles in us. By faith, let us sow to the Spirit.

July 26, 2023 - Finish My Course

"But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus." (Acts 20:24)

According to the New Testament, "ministry" is what all Christians do. Pastors have the job of equipping the saints for the work of ministry but ordinary Christians are the ones who do the ministry. What ministry

looks like is as varied as Christians are varied. It's not an office like elder or deacon; it's a lifestyle devoted to making much of Christ and meeting the needs of others.

It means that we "do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). Whether we are bankers or bricklayers, it means that we aim at advancing other people's faith and holiness to the glory of God.

Fulfilling your ministry is more important than staying alive. This conviction is what makes the lives of radically devoted people so inspiring to watch. You may think you need to save your life in order to do your ministry. On the contrary, how you lose your life may be the capstone of your ministry as you finish your Course.

July 27, 2023 - God Who Works In You

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12–13)

God is the decisive worker here. Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God who works in you, the willing and the working. God wills and he works for his good pleasure. But believing this does not make Christians passive. It makes them hopeful and energetic and courageous.

Each day there is a work to be done in our special ministry. Paul commands us to work at doing it. But he tells us how to do it in the power that God supplies: believe him! Believe the promise that in this day God will be at work in you to will and work for his good pleasure.

It is God himself, graciously at work each moment, that brings the promise of grace into our present experience. Paul emphasises faith when he talks about motive and power for our working. He focuses on faith in what God is yet to do, not just what he has done. Work out your salvation! Why? How? For there is fresh grace for every moment from God. He is at work in your willing and doing every time you will and do. Believe that it is God who works in you.

July 28, 2023 - Great Grace Upon Them

With great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33)

If our ministry is to witness to Christ tomorrow in some unsympathetic situation, the key will not be our brilliance; the key will be the abundant of great grace upon us.

Of all people, the apostles seemed to need least help to give a compelling witness to the risen Christ. They had been with him for three years. They had seen him die. They had seen him alive after the crucifixion. In their witnessing arsenal they had "many proofs" (Acts 1:3). You might think that, of all people, their ministry of witnessing, in those early days, would sustain itself on the strength of the past glories that were still so fresh.

But that is not what the book of Acts tells us. The power to witness with faithfulness and effectiveness did not come mainly from memories of grace; it came from the new arrivals of "great grace." "Great grace was upon them all." That's the way it was for the apostles, and that's the way it will be for us in our ministry as great grace is upon us.

July 29, 2023 - God's Varied Grace

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Peter 4:10)

When we use our spiritual gifts, we are stewarding grace in every moment of need. It comes in many colors and shapes and sizes. This is one of the reasons spiritual gifts in the body are so diverse. The prism of God's gifts in your life will refract shades of divine glory that would never come through my prism.

There are as many graces as there are needs in the body of Christ — and more. The purpose of spiritual gifts is to receive and dispense the grace of God to those needs. You serve in the power of the ongoing supply of God's grace to do what you need to do.

When you fulfill your spiritual gift to serve someone tomorrow, you will be serving "by the strength that God supplies". God goes on, day-by-day, moment-by-moment, supplying the "strength" in which we minister. He does this because the ongoing, inexhaustible supplier of power gets the glory. "Whoever serves, [let him serve] by the strength that God supplies — in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" as we serve him through God's varied grace.

July 30, 2023 - Grace to Help In Time

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

God shows up just when we need him with the focus on how timely the help is. All ministry is in the future — a moment away, or a month away, or a year, or a decade. We have ample time to fret about our inadequacy. When this happens, we must turn to prayer. Prayer is the form of faith that connects us today with the grace that will make us adequate for tomorrow's ministry.

The point is that prayer is the way to find grace for a well-timed help. This grace of God always arrives from the "throne of grace" on time. The phrase "throne of grace" means that grace comes from the King of the universe who sets the times by his own authority (Acts 1:7).

His timing is perfect, but it is rarely ours: "For a thousand years in [his] sight are but as yesterday when it is past" (Psalm 90:4). At the global level, he sets the times for nations to rise and fall (Acts 17:26). And at the personal level, "My times are in [his] hand" (Psalm 31:15).

When we wonder about the timing of grace, we must think on the "throne of grace." Nothing can hinder God's plan to send grace when it will be best for us and grace is always well-timed.

July 31, 2023 - Life Not Death

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

While activists seek to eliminate any restrictions to so-called "gender-affirming" interventions for minors, a number of European countries are adding safeguards around or backing off altogether from these controversial procedures.

At the heart of the case for so-called "gender-affirming care" is the claim that transition prevents suicide. Research, however, shows the opposite. In a summary of recent research, Ben Johnson described how life satisfaction among those who undergo "transition" surgeries decreases rather than increases. Another

study published last month found that self-identifying transgender individuals—not necessarily those who have had transition surgery—have high levels of loneliness. These studies confirm the findings of one of the best studies on the effect that transitioning has on the mental health of patients, which finds that those who undergo gender transition are over 19 times more likely to commit suicide than their peers. Let us follow God's design for male and female and secure life not death.