TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

January 2024

January 1, 2024 - Male and Female

But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. Mark 10:6

According to a recent study, nearly one-third of Gen Z women now *"identify as lesbian, bisexual, or something else."* To be clear, these numbers only indicate how young people are identifying, not behaving, since Gen Z'ers are not as sexually active as previous generations.

At the same time, these numbers do reflect how many teenage girls who are experiencing normal adolescent changes are being told they're transgender. Is it any wonder that so many young women think being "straight" and "cisgender" is outdated, or even bad? Consider all the media messaging that depicts "traditional guy[s]" as undesirable long-term partners, encourages relationships that are inherently sterile, discusses fertility as a disease, and refuses to call women, women. The erasure of women altogether is a strange, tragic, but consistent end for a culture that once claimed to fight for women.

As young women search for meaning and identity, Christians should safeguard the truth and beauty of what makes a woman special and valuable: being made in the image of God, female.

January 2, 2024 - Triumphant Shame

[Christ did not] offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:25–26)

It is not to be taken for granted that there should be a welcome for sinners in heaven. God is holy and pure and perfectly just and righteous. Yet the whole story of the Bible is how such a great and holy God can and does welcome dirty, unholy people like you and me into his favour. How can this be?

Hebrews 9:25 says that Christ's sacrifice for sin was not like the sacrifices of the Jewish high priests. They came into the holy place yearly with animal sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people.

If Christ followed the pattern of the priests, then he would have to die yearly. And since the sins to be covered include the sins of Adam and Eve, he would have had to begin his yearly dying at the foundation of the world. But the writer treats this as unthinkable.

Why is this unthinkable? Because it would make the death of the Son of God look weak and ineffective. If it has to be repeated year after year for centuries, where would be the triumph? Where would we see the infinite value of the sacrifice of the Son of God? It would vanish in the shamefulness of a yearly suffering and death. There was shame in the cross, but it was triumphant shame.

January 3, 2024 - The Calvary Road

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:6–7)

You would think that if God so rules the world as to use an empire-wide census to bring Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, he surely could have seen to it that a room was available in the inn.

Yes, he could have. He absolutely could have! And Jesus could have been born into a wealthy family. He could have turned stone into bread in the wilderness. He could have called 10,000 angels to his aid in Gethsemane. He could have come down from the cross and saved himself. The question is not what God could do, but what he willed to do.

God's will was that though Christ was rich, yet for your sake he became poor. The "No Vacancy" signs over all the motels in Bethlehem were for your sake. *"For your sake he became poor" (2 Corinthians 8:9).*

God rules all things for the sake of his children. The Calvary road begins with a "No Vacancy" sign in Bethlehem and ends with the spitting and scoffing of the cross in Jerusalem.

January 4, 2024 - Peace For Whom

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:12–14)

Peace for whom? There is a sombre note sounded in the angels' praise. Peace among those on whom his favour rests. Peace among those with whom he is pleased. But without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). So, this message does not bring peace to all.

"This is the judgment," Jesus said, "the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil" (John 3:19). Or as the aged Simeon said when he saw the child Jesus, *"Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed . . . so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34–35).*

*"He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:11–12). T*he people who enjoy the peace of God that surpasses all understanding are those who in everything by prayer and supplication let their requests be made known to God (Philippians 4:6–7).

The key that unlocks the treasure chest of God's peace is faith in the promises of God, when we do trust the promises of God and have joy and peace and love, then God is glorified.

January 5, 20224- Not Just Israel

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:1–2)

Unlike Luke, Matthew does not tell us about the shepherds coming to visit Jesus in the stable. His focus is immediately on foreigners — Gentiles, non-Jews — coming from the east to worship Jesus. So, Matthew portrays Jesus at the beginning and ending of his Gospel as a universal Messiah for all the nations, not just for Israel.

Here the first worshipers are court magicians, or wise men not from Israel but from the East — perhaps from Babylon. They were Gentiles, unclean, according to the Old Testament ceremonial laws. And at the end of Matthew, the last words of Jesus are, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18–19).*

This not only opened the door for us Gentiles to rejoice in the Messiah; it added proof that he was the Messiah. Because one of the repeated prophecies was that the nations and kings would, in fact, come to him as the ruler of the world. For example, Isaiah 60:3, *"Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."*

So, Matthew adds proof to the messiahship of Jesus and shows that he is Messiah — a King, and Promise-Fulfiller — for all the nations, not just Israel.

January 6, 2024 - The Supernatural

"Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." (Matthew 2:2)

Over and over the Bible baffles our curiosity about just how certain things happened. How did this "star" get the magi from the east to Jerusalem? It does not say that it led them or went before them on the way to Jerusalem. It only says they saw a star in the east (Matthew 2:2) and came to Jerusalem. And how did that star go before them in the little five-mile walk from Jerusalem to Bethlehem as Matthew 2:9 says it did? And how did a star "rest over the place where the child was"?

The answer is: We do not know. There are numerous efforts to explain it in terms of conjunctions of planets or comets or supernovas or miraculous lights. We just don't know. I want to exhort you not to become preoccupied on theories that are only tentative in the end and have very little spiritual significance.

People who are exercised and preoccupied with such things, as how the star worked and how the Red Sea split and how the manna fell and how Jonah survived the fish and how the moon turns to blood, are generally people who have what I call a mentality for the marginal.

You do not see in them a deep cherishing of the great central things of the gospel: the holiness of God, the ugliness of sin, the helplessness of man, the death of Christ, justification by faith alone, the sanctifying work of the Spirit, the glory of Christ's return, and the final judgment. These are the Supernatural that should gain our attention.

January 7, 2024 - In Good and Bad Times

To God's elect, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. 1 Peter 1:1-2

The Apostle Peter wrote 1 Peter. Although Peter was only a fisherman before he met Jesus, he was qualified to write God's message to the Christians. The Holy Spirit was with him to enable him to write this message of hope and encouragement. He himself had experienced much hope and encouragement from the Lord, for the Lord forgave and blessed him after he had sinned in denying Jesus three times. You, too, can experience this love of the Lord even if you have sinned in any way.

Have you been a good witness for Jesus, or have you been a stumbling block to others who may need to see the work of Jesus in you? Can you say that you glorify God? Have you been able to control your temper? Have you been kind? Can others, especially those in your family, see a real change in your life?

As we start a new year, may we begin a new life in Christ as Peter did when he realised he needed Jesus. Peter was proud and often acted on his own instead of seeking God's will. Turn to God today and commit to Him every area of your life. Sometimes, we make the mistake of going to Him only when we have problems. That should not be the way. We must always turn to Him, in good times and in bad.

January 8, 2024 - Happy Marriage

And God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him. Genesis 2:18

There has been some interesting research first published by sociologist Brad Wilcox in 2017. It shows Christians have the strongest, happiest and longest lasting of all marriages and believe marriage is not primarily about individual fulfillment but about forming a stable, loving home to raise a family. They hold to an ideal of fidelity and permanence. It is because of this view that conservative husbands tend to care about their family the way they do and among the positive outcomes are wives who tend to be "the happiest of all wives."

Once again, Christianity proves to be good. It makes better humans, both men and women. It matters whether or not husbands and wives take the family seriously. It matters whether they think it's important to fulfill the creation mandate of Genesis 1, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." It matters whether they take seriously the words of Jesus when He quoted Genesis 2, that the husband and wife "are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Apparently, it really matters what men think about themselves, about women, and about families. Though men are often told there is something inherently wrong with being male, the evidence shows that Christianity has the power to overcome toxic behaviour in men and reconcile the sexes—an unexpected finding that has stood up to rigorous empirical testing about a happy marriage.

January 9, 2024 - Worship and Follow Jesus

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (Matthew 2:3)

Jesus is troubling to people who do not want to worship him, and he arouses opposition against those who do. The first kind is the people who simply do nothing about Jesus. He is a nonentity in their lives. This group is represented at the beginning of Jesus's life by the chief priests and scribes. Matthew 2:4 says, "Assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, [Herod] inquired of them where the Christ was to be born." So they told him, and that was that: back to business as usual. The sheer silence and inactivity of the leaders is overwhelming in view of the magnitude of what was happening.

And notice, Matthew 2:3 says, *"When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." I*n other words, the rumour was going around that someone thought the Messiah was born. The inactivity on the part of the chief priests is staggering: why not go with the magi? They are not interested. They are not passionate about finding the Son of God and worshiping him.

The second kind of people who do not want to worship Jesus is the kind who are deeply threatened by him. That's Herod in this story. He is really afraid. So much so that he schemes and lies and then commits mass murder just to get rid of Jesus. These two kinds of opposition will come against Christ and his worshipers: indifference and hostility. If you are a Christian, ponder what it means — what it costs — to worship and follow Jesus.

January 10, 2024 - Worship God with Gifts

God is not served by human hands as though he needed anything (Acts 17:25).

The gifts of the wise men are not given by way of assistance or need-meeting. It would dishonour a monarch if foreign visitors came with royal care-packages. Nor are these gifts meant to be

bribes. Deuteronomy 10:17 says that God takes no bribe. Well, what then do they mean? How are they worship?

Gifts given to wealthy, self-sufficient people are echoes and intensifiers of the giver's desire to show how wonderful the person is. In a sense, giving gifts to Christ are like fasting — going without something to show that Christ is more valuable than what you are going without.

When you give a gift to Christ like this, it's a way of saying, the joy that I pursue is not the hope of getting rich by bartering with you or negotiating some payment. I have not come to you for your things, but for yourself. And this desire I now intensify and demonstrate by giving up things, in the hope of enjoying you more, not things. By giving to you what you do not need, and what I might enjoy, I am saying more earnestly and more authentically, 'You are my treasure, not these things.'"

That's what it means to worship God with gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. Or whatever else we may think of giving to God. May God awaken in us a desire for Christ himself.

January 11, 2024 - He Became Fully Man

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

These verses express so clearly the connection between the beginning and the end of Jesus's earthly life — between the incarnation and crucifixion. These two verses make clear why Jesus came; namely, to die.

It is true that "God so loved the world, that he gave [Jesus]" (John 3:16). But it is also true that God was especially gathering "the children of God who are scattered abroad" (John 11:52). God's design was to offer Christ to the world, and to effect the salvation of his "children" (see 1 Timothy 4:10).

Christ existed before the incarnation. He was spirit. He was the eternal Word. He was with God and was God (John 1:1; Colossians 2:9). But he took on flesh and blood, and clothed his deity with humanity. He became fully man and remained fully God. It is a great mystery in many ways. But it is at the heart of our faith — the Bible teaches he became fully man.

January 12, 2024 - The Real Thing

Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. (Hebrews 8:1–2)

The point of the book of Hebrews is that Jesus Christ, God's Son, has not just come to fit into the earthly system of priestly ministry as the best and final human priest, but he has come to fulfill and put an end to that system, and to orient all our attention on himself, ministering for us first on Calvary as our final Sacrifice and then in heaven as our final Priest.

The Old Testament tabernacle and priests and sacrifices were shadows. Now the reality has come, and the shadows pass away.

Here's an illustration of that point. Suppose as a child you and your mother get separated in the grocery store, and you start to get scared and panic and don't know which way to go, and you run to the end of an aisle, and just before you start to cry, you see a shadow on the floor at the end of the aisle that looks just like your mum. It makes you really hopeful. But which is better? The hopefulness of seeing the shadow, or

having your mother step around the corner and it's really her? That's the way it is when Jesus comes to be our High Priest. This is the replacement of shadows with the real thing.

January 13, 2024 - Much More Excellent

Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. (Hebrews 8:6)

Christ is the Mediator of a new covenant. What does that mean? It means that his blood has finally and decisively purchased and secured the fulfillment of God's promises for us. It means that God, according to the new covenant promises, brings about our inner transformation by the Spirit of Christ. And it means that God works this transformation in us through faith — faith in all that God is for us in Christ.

The new covenant is purchased by the blood of Christ, effected by the Spirit of Christ, and appropriated by faith in Christ.

The words "working in us that which is pleasing in his sight" describe what happens when God writes the law on our hearts in accord with the new covenant. And the words "through Jesus Christ" describe Jesus as the Mediator of this glorious work of sovereign grace.

God replaces shadows with Reality, he also takes the Reality and makes it real to his people. He writes it on our hearts. He does not lay his gift of salvation and transformation under a tree, so to speak, for you to pick up in your own strength. He picks it up and puts it in your heart and in your mind and gives you the seal of assurance that you are a child of God which is much more excellent.

January 14, 2024 - Steward the Nation

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. Revelation 7:9-10

All good loves, including love of spouse, child, family, community, or culture, can be disordered and even idolatrous. Nationalism becomes idolatry whenever love of nation devolves into an excessive or uncritical devotion, is confused with the Kingdom of God, justifies evil, or engages in a partiality that treats citizens of other nations as less worthy of love or justice or charity. However, the idea that nations should be defined, self-governing, morally upright, and the immediate object of Christian stewardship is not idolatry.

Christians are called to steward the nations they are in. After all, our nations are the most obvious aspect of the time and place in which God has placed us. What all nations have in common is that Jesus rules over them all, and no one in heaven or earth will usurp His authority. Let us steward the nations in which we live for the glory of God and the salvation of its citizens.

January 15, 2024 - In Step with Jesus

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly. 1 Thessalonians 5:14

The word translated as "unruly" is in the Greek ataktous, meaning "disorderly," or "out of step." It has reference to soldiers who are out of step or desert the ranks. These members who are to be warned are persons out of step with Christ. This is a very important point. Too often, we judge people by whether or not

they are out of step with us, or with the church. To do so is to make ourselves or the church the standard or norm. The standard can only be Jesus Christ.

Those who are unruly, disorderly, or out of step with Jesus Christ are those who disobey the plain requirements of Scripture. The Word of God is the standard, rule, or canon of faith and life; man's word is not.

All the unruly, the persons out of step with Jesus, are to be warned, or admonished. The word here used in the Greek is "to put into mind." They are to be told very clearly what the Word of God says about their conduct, and to be given the commandments which govern their unruliness.

We are all out of step, not when we go contrary to other men's ways, but when we depart from the law-word of God. Sometimes faithfulness to God, being in step with Jesus, requires us to be out of step with other people. Paul's words are thus a warning to us. Are we walking or marching in step with Jesus, or with men?

January 16, 2024 - Divinely Appointed Setbacks

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9–11)

God has always delighted to show his power through apparent defeat. He makes tactical retreats in order to win strategic victories. In the Old Testament, Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, was promised glory and power in his dream (Genesis 37:5–11). But to achieve that victory he had to become a slave in Egypt. And, as if that were not enough, when his conditions improved because of his integrity, he was made worse than a slave: a prisoner.

But it was all planned. Planned by God for his good and the good of his family, and eventually for the good of the whole world! For there in prison he met Pharaoh's butler, who eventually brought him to Pharaoh, who put him over Egypt. And finally, his dream came true. His brothers bowed before him, and he saved them from starvation. What an unlikely route to glory!

But that is God's way — even for his Son. He emptied himself and took the form of a slave. Worse than a slave — a prisoner — and was executed. But like Joseph, he kept his integrity.

And this is God's way for us too. We are promised glory — if we will suffer with him as it says in Romans 8:17. The way up is down. The way forward is backward. The way to success is through divinely appointed setbacks.

January 17, 2024 - Our Great Salvation

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah . . . " (Jeremiah 31:31)

God is just and holy and separated from sinners like us. This is our main problem. How shall we get right with a just and holy God? God is merciful and has promised in Jeremiah 31 (five hundred years before Christ) that someday he would do something new. He would replace shadows with the Reality of the Messiah. And he would powerfully move into our lives and write his will on our hearts so that we are not constrained from outside, but are willing from inside, to love him and trust him and follow him.

That would be the greatest salvation imaginable — if God should offer us the greatest Reality in the universe to enjoy and then move in us to know that Reality in such a way that we could enjoy it with the greatest freedom and the greatest pleasure possible. That is, in fact, what he promised in the new covenant. But there was a huge obstacle. Our sin. Our separation from God because of our unrighteousness.

How shall a holy and just God treat us sinners with so much kindness as to give us the greatest Reality in the universe (his Son) to enjoy with the greatest possible joy? The answer is that God put our sins on his Son, and judged them there, so that he could put them out of his mind, and deal with us mercifully and remain just and holy at the same time. This is our great salvation.

January 18, 2024 - Free Indeed

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

Jesus became man because what was needed was the death of a man who was more than man. The incarnation was God's locking himself into death row. Christ did not risk death. He chose death. He embraced it. That is precisely why he came: "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). No wonder Satan tried to turn Jesus from the cross — in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1–11) and in the mouth of Peter (Matthew 16:21–23)! The cross was Satan's destruction. How did Jesus destroy him?

Hebrews 2:14 says that Satan has "the power of death." That means Satan has the ability to make death fearful. "The power of death" is the power that holds men in bondage through fear of death. It is the power to keep men in sin so that death comes as a dreadful thing.

But Jesus stripped Satan of this power. He disarmed him. He moulded a breastplate of righteousness for us that makes us immune to the devil's condemnation. If the Son has set you free, you shall be free, indeed!

January 19, 2024 - Christian Solidarity

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8)

The assembly line of Satan turns out millions of sins every day. He packs them into huge cargo planes and flies them to heaven and spreads them out before God and laughs and laughs and laughs. Some people work full-time on the assembly line. Others have quit their jobs there and only now and then return.

Every minute of work on the assembly line makes God the laughingstock of Satan. Sin is Satan's business because he hates the light and beauty and purity and glory of God. Nothing pleases him more than when creatures distrust and disobey their Maker.

The good news is Jesus has come to lead a strike at Satan's assembly plant. He has walked right into the plant, called for the Solidarity of the faithful, and begun a massive walkout. No negotiations with the management. No bargaining. Just single-minded, unswerving opposition to the product. We won't be a part of making it anymore.

We will not use force or violence, but with relentless devotion to Truth we will expose the life-destroying conditions of the devil's industry. Christian Solidarity will not give up until a complete shutdown has been achieved.

When sin has been destroyed, God's name will be wholly honoured. No one will be laughing anymore. Walk off the assembly line of sin and don't go back. Take up your place in the picket line of love. Join Christian Solidarity until the majestic name of God is honoured, and he stands glorious amid the accolades of the righteous.

January 20, 2024 - Parents and Education

Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

The importance of parental engagement in education is a condition that pre-existed COVID. Data from before, during, and after the pandemic shows that parents are the single most important factor in the education of a child and a healthy home the most important ingredient for a successful life.

This is a remarkable opportunity for Christians. The Church has always cared about kids, and the Church has always cared about education. The state-centric way of trying to prepare a new generation of citizens is not fulfilling its promise. Thankfully, there are many Christians dedicated to serving children as best they can. Others are innovating new ways to do school, including starting Christian schools inside church buildings in struggling communities. Others are advocating for school choice so that every family can afford to send their children to schools that will serve them best. And others are working to provide resources and opportunities for all children.

This is why FamilyVoice has doubled down on producing resources and webinars in the realm of education. To this end, we have developed resources to form teachers in a Christian worldview and help them apply it to their work. Find out more and access the free training resources at www.familyvoice.org.au and look in our Online Library under Educational Resources.

January 21, 2024 - The Ancient of Days

Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world — to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." (John 18:37)

Jesus says not only that he was born, but that he "came into the world." The uniqueness of his birth is that he did not originate at his birth. He existed before he was born. The personhood, the character, the personality of Jesus of Nazareth existed before the man Jesus of Nazareth was born.

The theological word to describe this mystery is not creation, but incarnation. The person, not the body, but the essential personhood of Jesus existed before he was born as man. His birth was not a coming into being of a new person, but a coming into the world of an infinitely old person.

The mystery of the birth of Jesus is not merely that he was born of a virgin. That miracle was intended by God to witness to an even greater one; namely, that the child born at Christmas was a person who existed "from of old, from ancient days."

He was the eternal Truth. He spoke only the truth. He acted out the greatest truth of love. And he is gathering into his eternal family all those who are born of the truth. This was the plan from ancient days.

January 22, 2024 - That You May Believe

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30–31)

We should feel the awe, the fear, the astonishment, the wonder of the Son of God, begotten by the Father from all eternity, reflecting all the glory of God, being the very image of his person, through whom all things were created, upholding the universe by the word of his power.

You can read every fairy tale that was ever written, every mystery thriller, every ghost story, and you will never find anything so shocking, so strange, so weird and spellbinding as the story of the incarnation of the Son of God.

We should contemplate the eternal God and the cosmic glory of Christ and a real living contact between them and us in Jesus of Nazareth. When Jesus said, “For this purpose I have come into the world” (John 18:37), he said something as crazy and weird and strange and eerie as any statement in science fiction that you have ever read.

One of these days lightning is going to fill the sky from the rising of the sun to its setting, and there is going to appear in the clouds the Son of Man with his mighty angels in flaming fire, and we will see him clearly, and whether from terror or sheer excitement, we will tremble and we will wonder how we ever lived so long with such a domesticated, harmless Christ. These things have been written so that you will believe.

January 23, 2024 - Him as Your Treasure

If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:10–11)

How do we practically receive reconciliation and exult in God? We do it through Jesus Christ. We make the portrait of Jesus in the Bible — that is, the work and the words of Jesus portrayed in the New Testament — we make that portrait the essential content of our exultation over God. Exulting in God without the content of Christ does not honour Christ. And where Christ is not honoured, God is not honoured.

To exult in God, comes to its fullest experience when the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, as Romans 5:5 says. God purchase our reconciliation through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:10), and not only did God enable us to receive that reconciliation through the Lord Jesus Christ, but even now we exult in God himself, by the Spirit, through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:11).

Jesus purchased our reconciliation. Jesus enabled us to receive reconciliation. Jesus himself shines forth the indescribable gift — God in the flesh — and stirs up all our exultation in God. Receive the reconciliation that he purchased. Exult in him. Experience him as your pleasure. Know him as your treasure.

January 24, 2024 - Two Purposes

Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:7–8)

The issue is sinning, not sickness or broken cars or messed up schedules. Jesus came into the world to enable us to stop sinning. But there is another purpose which John adds in 1 John 2:1–2, “But if anyone

does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."

Jesus appeared in the world for two reasons. He came that we might not go on sinning — that is, he came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8); and he came so that there would be a propitiation for our sins, if we do sin. He came to be a substitutionary sacrifice that takes away the wrath of God for our sins.

Forgiveness is not for the purpose of permitting sin. The aim of the death of Christ for our sins is not that we relax our battle against sin. The upshot of these two purposes is that the payment once made for all our sins, is the freedom and power that enables us to fight sin.

January 25, 2024 - He Empowers Us

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12–13

One of the most important definitions of a Christian is given here. First of all, John compares our regeneration to Christ's virgin birth: Christ owed His birth, not to human blood, nor to any physical urge, nor to a human plan or design, but to God. Our rebirth, like His birth, is a miracle.

Second, such a rebirth is into power, power to become the sons of God. Such a statement had only one meaning in John's day: to be a son of God meant to be filled with power, with a power which is beyond man and this world.

Powerless Christianity is thus a contradiction in terms. To be a Christian is to be a man of power, a world-shaker and a world-mover. Of the early Christians, it was said that they turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

The true believer is defined by power, power in the Word and the Spirit. We are called to power. Why settle for anything less? To turn our backs on this calling to power is to turn our backs on the Lord Himself.

We have a calling to exercise dominion and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:26–28). We dare not be indifferent to that calling. As the sons of Power, we have a world to conquer, and had better recognise our task and calling. It is the Lord who calls us, and it is He who empowers us.

January 26, 2024 - Prince of Peace

A good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. (Matt. 7:17)

Violent marches for peace are a common fact today. Our cities are being attacked, public buildings assaulted, and the police strained by our modern peace lovers. Such peace as these people have to offer is another word for slavery.

The Bible makes clear that peace is not a matter of politics but of Christianity, more specifically, of Jesus Christ. Peace is a product of an inward character; it goes together with righteousness and truth.

To illustrate: a hundred years ago, bank messengers carried heavy canvas bags of gold coins up and down to the bank. When a bag broke, the crowd would form a circle around the area, until the messenger picked up every piece. A man bending over when a bag broke received a boot in the rear.

Today, it would not be safe, of course, to transport bags of gold coins that way. Moreover, if such a bag broke now, there would be a mass scramble to pick up the gold and run. The difference is the loss of

Christian faith and character. There is neither peace nor security in the world today, because there is neither peace nor righteousness in the lives of men. A corrupt humanity is bringing forth corruption. We have no right to expect peace from it.

We have gone astray again. Let us return to the Prince of Peace, who is our only Saviour. No peace marches, politicians, educators, or others can make us into a regenerated people. This Christ can do, and The Prince of Peace shall prevail.

January 27, 2024 - Contemplate Calamity

"The waves of death encompassed me, the torrents of destruction assailed me. . . . This God — his way is perfect." (2 Samuel 22:5, 31)

After the loss of his ten children owing to a natural disaster (Job 1:19), Job said, *"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).* At the end of the book, the inspired writer confirms Job's understanding of what happened. He says Job's brothers and sisters *"comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him" (Job 42:11).*

This has several crucial implications and lessons for us.

Lesson #1. Satan is not ultimate; God is.

Lesson #2. Even if Satan caused that tsunami in the Indian Ocean the day after Christmas, 2004, he is not the decisive cause of over 200,000 deaths; God is.

Lesson #3. Destructive calamities in this world mingle judgment and mercy. God's purposes are not simple.

Lesson #4. The heart that Christ gives to his people feels compassion for those who suffer, no matter what their faith is.

Lesson #5. Christ calls us to show mercy to those who suffer, even if they do not deserve it. These are some of the ways a Christian can contemplate calamity.

January 28, 2024 - Be Purposeful

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.

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 more than anything else. 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 29, 2024 - Our Ultimate Hope

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).

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). "Father, I desire that they . . . may be with me where I am, to see my glory" Jesus prays in John 17:24.*

"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed" (1 Peter 5:1). "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).

"We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7). "This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (2 Corinthians 4:17). "Those whom he justified he also glorified" (Romans 8:30).

Seeing and sharing in God's glory is our ultimate hope through the gospel of Christ.

January 30, 2024 - Omnipotent Transforming

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. By this successful redemption, he obtained the blessing of his own resurrection from the dead. 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 more pleasing to God. 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 31, 2024 - Revive Us Again

Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You? Psalms 85:6

Revivalism, with a focus on a personal faith with public implications, has dramatically shaped life and culture in the Western world and is a major reason it remained religious for so long. At the same time, revivals and revivalism have always faced a good deal of criticism, including charges of excess, hyper-emotionalism, manufactured techniques, and anti-intellectualism.

Jonathan Edwards, a major figure of the First Great Awakening, understood the dangers inherent to revivalist fervour, but he also believed in these unusual times when the Holy Spirit moved among a people. One of the Wests greatest intellectuals, Edwards prayed and worked toward revival, and he offered criteria for evaluating it. According to Edwards, a true work of the Holy Spirit elevates Christ, opposes sin and Satan, prizes the Bible, distinguishes truth from error, and manifests love. He also understood that in the midst of such a movement, there would be things to oppose as well.

What we can all be sure of (and thankful for!) is that God is constantly at work in His world, sometimes in extraordinary but most often in “ordinary” ways. God is constantly speaking through His world, through His Word, and ultimately, in His Son. May we have the ears to hear Him and be ready to be revived again.