TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

August 2024

August 1, 2024 - It Doesn't Matter Much

"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)

What does that mean to hate your life? It means, at least, that you don't take much thought for your life in this world, 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.

Jesus's words are even more radical. Jesus is calling us not just to endure experiences we don't choose, but to make a choice to follow him. He is moving into Gethsemane and toward the cross.

Jesus is not just saying: If things go bad, don't fret, since you have died with me anyway. He is saying: Choose to die with me. Choose to hate your life in this world the way I have chosen the cross. Then you will keep your life for eternity and have a great reward.

August 2, 2024 - Where Do You Get Help?

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)

Where do you look for help? The psalmist's help comes from the Lord. He 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. The sending of his Son, Jesus, was the main way the Father showed this. What a truth! What a reality! What a help!

August 3, 2024 - Truth Is Contested

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:6-7

Externally, the church faced the hostility of a pagan culture, along with the temptations to sexual perversity, idol worship, and worldliness in various forms. “See to it,” Paul wrote to the church at Colossae, “that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”

The Church has faced the same kinds of challenges, from within and without, ever since. Knowing how to recognize and respond to them in this cultural moment is our calling. Christians are called to know and defend truth at a time truth is contested.

August 4, 2024 - Sense of Emptiness

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

A recent article in Vox detailed the rise and consequences of the “self-care” movement. What started as calls for rest, or maybe a binge of mind-numbing television or a bath, became an anthem for isolation and self-obsession. Self-care companies have sold all kinds of cures for our stress and mental health problems: candles, lotions, journals, and routines. Each one encourages us to focus on ourselves.

And yet, what are the fruits of this movement? We’ve never been more lonely and depressed. According to one 2013 study, our materialism and our loneliness are locked in a vicious cycle.

Of course, rest and reflection are essentials spoken of in Scripture, but the Bible always orients our attention upward, to our Maker, and outward, to our relationships with others. The focus is not inward. When our focus is only inward, self-care quickly devolves into self-obsession and ultimately, a greater sense of emptiness.

August 5, 20224- The Bible is True

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. John 17:17

Throughout the last century, and especially in the last few decades, the scholarly world has been “surprised” to find that the biblical authors were telling the truth. Sceptics assume that the content of the Bible is more “pious fraud” than history, a well-intentioned story to inspire the faithful. And yet the reliability of the Word of God has been repeatedly affirmed, as more biblical archaeological sites are discovered and more extra-biblical sources corroborate biblical events.

The Bible doesn’t offer the option of just believing the comfortable stuff. It demands to be taken as fact or not at all, while making claims about real times and real places, about real people and real things. Most notably, it claims that the God revealed in its pages intruded Himself into the grit and grime of our fallen world in a way that can now be found by archaeological discoveries. If the God of the Bible is indeed God, He is the God of the real world.

It should comfort us to know that what God has given to us in the Bible is true. Thus, it can be trusted in all that it promises, whether about the past, the present, or the future.

August 6, 2024 - Jesus Knows 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."

So, 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.

August 7, 2024 - To Be Human

He made him who knew no sin to be a sin-offering for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21

To be human is to experience pain and suffering. The betrayal of a friend, the loss of a loved one to cancer, the hurtful words of a hot-tempered coworker, the apathy of a spouse—the consequences of sin and brokenness can take various forms. Our sin hurts ourselves and others and, even when we are not personally guilty, the world is broken.

It's tempting to respond by either detaching from the world around us or by indulging it. Advocates of detachment encourage folks not to get too close to people or things in this life. Some suggest that by developing rigorous disciplines—mental, physical, or spiritual—we can remain unaffected by pain and pleasure.

Though they seem opposites, detachment and indulgence are two sides of the same bad coin. Both are, in the end, attempts to escape the pain of what Christianity recognizes as a fallen world.

Though the suffering of this fallen world, along with all the pain and grief, is a real part of the world, it is not the end of the Story. Nor is sin a final obstacle to God. Rather, it is through suffering that He draws humanity to Himself. It is in the death and resurrection of Jesus that we are transformed. Christ thwarts sin by turning it on its head.

August 8, 2024 - The Ten Commandments

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. Exodus 20:2-3

Recently, the governor of Louisiana signed a bill that requires every public classroom in the state to display the Ten Commandments. Headlines quickly reported panic and filed lawsuits, but is the idea that far-fetched?

No. Historically, the Mosaic Law was one of the first recorded legal codes, dating only a few hundred years after Hammurabi's Code of Babylon. As State Representative Dodie Horton explained, this is reason enough for the bill. "It doesn't preach a certain religion," she said, "but it definitely shows what a moral code we all should live by is." Western Civilisation cannot be understood separate from the idea of a moral law, this one in particular. In fact, both the Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence appeal to it.

It would be ironic if a legal challenge goes to the U.S. Supreme Court. After all, on the east side of the building is Moses holding the Ten Commandments.

August 9, 2024 - Christ is Worth It

"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! 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." The love of Christ is worth it.

August 10, 2024 - Love Your Neighbour

You shall love your neighbour as yourself. Matthew 22:39

C.S. Lewis argued that the relational aspect of our humanity had eternal implications:

It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbour. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbour's glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals

whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours. So let us take care to love our neighbour.

August 11, 2024 - Our Secure Assurance

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. 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, because Jesus said in Luke 22:20, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." Jesus secures the new covenant for all who are his which is the basis for our secure assurance.

August 12, 2024 - Salt and Light

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:13-16

For the church to reclaim its role as a transformative force in society, it must embody the principles of salt and light as described in Matthew 5:13-16. This requires believers to embrace and live out the following biblical principles: 1. Cultivating a biblical worldview across all areas of life. 2. Christian thinking in leadership: Beyond numbers to influence. 3. Christ followers should speak the language of our culture. 4. Preparing Christian children for leadership, not just followership. 5. Nurturing world-changers in every realm of society. 6. Embracing our communities for holistic impact. 7. Cultivating problem solvers for global challenges. 8. Demonstrating transformation by improving community quality of life. 9. Loving one another. 10. Speaking the truth with love. Then the church will be salt and light.

August 13, 2024 - Endurance and Patience

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. The apostle Paul prayed for the church at Colossae, that they would be "strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience" (Colossians 1:11). 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.

August 14, 2024 - Male and Female

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

There is a lot of confusion behind the contemporary call for equity instead of equality. Equality is about dignity. Men and women are equal in standing, dignity, and value, despite the significant differences between them. This understanding of men and women is, in fact, grounded in Scripture. As described in the first chapter of Genesis, God made His image bearers male and female. Both are made after His likeness. Each are, before God, equal.

Equity, on the other hand, grounds dignity in sameness. It demands that men and women are seen as identical. Difference, in this view, implies inequality.

The picture of humanity described in the Bible is one in which men and women share sameness as well as difference. They are, in this sense, complementary to one another. In order to fulfill their God-given purpose to fill and subdue the earth, men and women partner. Both are required. In fact, in sameness and difference, we are like the God whose image we bear. As revealed in Scripture, God is Trinity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit share the sameness of the Godhead, with difference in persons. When we presume women to be the same as men, we undermine what our natures reveal about God.

August 15, 2024 - Eagerly Waiting for Him

Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (Hebrews 9:28)

The question before us all is: Are we included in the "many" whose sins Christ bore? And will we be saved at his second coming? The answer is "Yes," if we are "eagerly waiting for him." We can know that our sins are taken away and that we will be safe in the judgment, if we trust Christ in such a way that it makes us eager for his coming.

There is a phony faith that claims to believe in Christ but is only a fire insurance policy. Phony faith "believes" only to escape hell. It has no real desire for Christ. In fact, it would prefer if he did not come, so that we can have as much of this world's pleasures as possible. This shows that a heart is not with Christ, but with the world.

So, the issue for us is: Do we eagerly long for the coming of Christ? Or do we want him to stay away, while our love affair with the world runs its course? That is the question that tests the authenticity of faith.

Let us be like the Corinthians as we "wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:7), and like the Philippians whose "citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). Eternity hangs on this question. Are we eagerly waiting for him?

August 16, 2024 - God's Sovereign Grace

"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 in Genesis 37–50 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. 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?

August 17, 2024 - Boast in the Lord

By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9)

The New Testament correlates faith and grace to make sure that we do not boast in what grace alone achieves. One of the most familiar examples is Ephesians 2:8. By grace, through faith. There's the correlation that guards the freedom of grace. By grace, through faith.

Faith is the act of our soul that turns away from our own insufficiency to the free and all-sufficient resources of God. Faith focuses on the freedom of God to dispense grace to the unworthy. It banks on the bounty of God.

Therefore faith, by its very nature, nullifies boasting and fits with grace. Wherever faith looks, it sees grace behind every praiseworthy act. So it cannot boast, except in the Lord. The author of grace.

Faith cannot boast in human goodness or competence or wisdom, because faith focuses on the free, all-supplying grace of God. Whatever goodness faith sees, it sees as the fruit of grace. When it looks at our "wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption," it says, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:30–31).

August 18, 2024 - Trust Goad as the Giver

“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.

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.

The worship of Sunday morning and the worship of daily obedience is not at bottom a burdensome giving to God, but a joyful getting from God. That is the true service that God demands. In all you do, trust God as the giver.

August 19, 2024 - See the Light

For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

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 (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 the Bible, 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.”

August 20, 2024 -

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July 21, 2024 -

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August 22, 2024 - Children of Abraham

"In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:3)

You who hope in Christ and follow him in the obedience of faith are Abraham's descendants and heirs of his covenant promises. God said to Abraham in Genesis 17:4, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations." But Genesis makes plain that Abraham did not father a multitude of nations in a physical or political sense. Therefore, the meaning of God's promise is that a multitude of nations would somehow enjoy the blessings of sonship even though physically unrelated to Abraham.

From the very beginning, God had in view that Jesus Christ would be the descendant of Abraham and that everyone who trusts in Christ would become an heir of Abraham's promise. Paul says in Galatians 3:29, "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

God said to Abraham 4,000 years ago, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations," he opened the way for any one of us, no matter what nation we belong to, to become a child of Abraham and an heir of God's promises. All we must do is share the faith of Abraham — that is, bank our hope on God's promises, so much so that, if obedience requires it, we could give up our dearest possession like Abraham gave up Isaac.

August 23, 2024 - Power, Love & Self-Control

God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. 1 Timothy 1:7

Despite cultural propaganda that sells marijuana as "harmless," research increasingly finds that regular cannabis use is just the opposite. Not only have recent studies found that marijuana use is a leading indicator of workplace accidents and leads to schizophrenia among young men, but a new, peer-reviewed study tracking almost 30 years of medical records for over 6.5 million Danish citizens has found that marijuana use is closely associated with increased risks for depression and bipolar disorder.

Those previously diagnosed with cannabis addiction were almost twice as likely to develop clinical depression and up to four times as likely to be diagnosed with bipolar disorder. The increased risk for psychosis is more likely for men than for women, and the chances go up with use.

As U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse Deputy Director Dr. Wilson Compton noted, studies like these are rapidly exposing that "cannabis may not be the innocent and risk-free substance that so many people believe." Let us have the spirit of power and love and self-control always being in control of our mind.

August 24, 2024 - Faith Glorifies God

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.

Therefore, 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. That God will do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

August 25, 2024 - God is Not Ashamed

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." This wonderful possibility is surrounded (in Hebrews 11:16) by reasons: one before and one after.

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). He has worked for them. Not the other way around.

Now, consider the reason he gives in the front. "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. When we make much of all that he promises to be for us, he is proud to be our God. This is good news.

So, open your eyes to the better country, the city of God that he has prepared for us, and let yourself desire it with all your heart. God will not be ashamed to be called your God.

August 26, 2024 - Hostile to God

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 steels the soul. Life becomes utterly free and daring when the strongest being in the universe is for you.

Paul's message of salvation is not good news to those who reject the diagnosis in Colossians 1:21. He says, you "were alienated and hostile in mind."

Paul 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 love the One we once hated. Many are still learning not to be hostile to God. It is a good thing that he is gloriously patient.

August 27, 2024 - God's Free Grace

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. It corresponds to the freedom and all-sufficiency of grace. And 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.

Therefore, it must also be through faith. For 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.

Paul makes this connection between faith and sanctification explicit. Sanctification is by the Spirit and by faith. Which is another way of saying that it is by grace and by faith. The Spirit is "the Spirit of grace" (Hebrews 10:29). God's way of making us holy is by the Spirit; but the Spirit works through faith in the gospel.

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. And it's faith that corresponds to grace. Sanctification and justification are "grace upon grace" (John 1:16). We praise God for his free grace.

August 28, 2024 - Glorify God in Your Body

You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:20)

"Worship" is the term we use to cover all the acts of the heart and mind and body that intentionally express the infinite worth of God. This is what we were created for. It might be singing in church. It might be sweeping the kitchen floor. Don't just think about worship services when you think about worship. That is a huge limitation which is not in the Bible. All of life is supposed to be worship.

Take breakfast, for example, or midmorning snacks. First Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Now eating and drinking are about as basic as you can get. What could be more real or more ordinarily human than eating and drinking? And Paul says, in effect, let all your eating and drinking be worship.

Or take death, we will experience death in our bodies. In fact, it will be the last act of the body on this earth. The body bids farewell. How shall we worship in that last act of the body? We see the answer in Philippians 1:20–21. Paul says that his hope is that Christ would be magnified — worshiped, shown to be worthy — in his body by death. Then he adds, "For to me . . . to die is gain." We express the infinite worth of Christ in dying by counting death as gain.

You have a body. But it is not yours. "You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

August 29, 2024 - Prayer Is For Sinners

"Lord, teach us to pray." (Luke 11:1)

God answers the prayers of sinners, not perfect people. And you can become paralysed in your praying if you do not focus on the cross and realise this.

In the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2–4), Jesus says, "When you pray, say . . . " and then in verse 4 he includes this petition, "and forgive us our sins." So, if you connect the beginning of the prayer with the middle, what he says is, "Whenever you pray, say . . . forgive us our sins."

This means that this should be as much a part of all our praying as, "Hallowed be your name." Jesus assumes that we need to seek forgiveness virtually every time we pray.

We are always sinners. Nothing we do is perfect. Even if we have achieved some measure of obedience before we pray, we always come to the Lord as sinners — all of us. And God does not turn away the prayers of sinners when they pray like this.

We are simultaneously evil and redeemed. We are gradually overcoming our evil by the power of the Holy Spirit. But our native corruption is not obliterated by conversion.

If we recognise our sin, renounce it, fight it, and cling to the cross of Christ as our hope, then God will hear us and answer our prayers.

August 30, 2024 - A Lion In The Street

The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!" (Proverbs 22:13)

The controlling emotion here is laziness, not fear. What does laziness have to do with the danger of a lion in the street? The point is that the sluggard creates imaginary circumstances to justify not doing his work, and thus shifts the focus from the vice of his laziness to the danger of lions. No one will approve his staying in the house all day just because he is lazy. But they might excuse him if there is a lion in the street.

One profound biblical insight we need to learn from this is that our heart exploits our mind to justify what we want. Our deepest desires precede the rational functioning of our minds and incline the mind to perceive and think in a way that will make the desires look right, even if they're wrong.

This is what the sluggard is doing. He deeply desires to stay at home and not work. There is no good reason to stay at home. So, what does he do? Does he overcome his bad desire — his laziness? No, he uses his mind to create unreal circumstances to justify his desire.

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). We love the darkness so that we can keep on doing what we want without exposure. In this condition, the mind becomes a factory of darkness — a fountain of half-truths, evasions, and lies — anything to protect the evil desires of the heart from exposure.

August 31, 2024 - The God of the Bible

I AM THAT I AM. Exodus 3:14

New Atheist icon and Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins recently asked a surprising question on X. Referring to his most famous book published 18 years ago, Dawkins wrote: "What do religious people think I got wrong in The God Delusion?"

The replies were insightful. One person pointed out that Dawkins depended on methodological naturalism, the belief that only material explanations are valid, but which is, itself, a belief that can't be proven by material explanations. Another pointed out: "[You] spent the majority of the book making a moral case against religion; [but] you state in other works that there isn't objective morality."

In fact, Dawkins' "moral case against religion" is central to The God Delusion. He wrote: The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a … capriciously malevolent bully.

These are strange words from a man who wrote elsewhere that: The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference. So, which is it? Is the God of the Bible not worth believing in because He's evil, or is evil an illusion? Dawkins seems to have wanted to have his moral indignation and eat it too. The truth is that the God of the Bible is loving, kind, forgiving, merciful and benevolent who sent his Son to save us from our sin so that we can be reconciled to him.