TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

October 2024

October 1, 2024 - Sow 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 tithe when we've never tried it? To speak to our colleagues about Christ when we are timid? To invite new neighbours 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. Therefore, faith pushes us into the current where the power of God's grace flows most freely — the current of love.

We should sow to the Spirit. By faith, we should put the seeds of our energy in the furrows where we know the Spirit is at work to bear fruit — the furrows of love.

October 2, 2024 - Immortal Until Work is Done

"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. According to Ephesians 4:11–12, 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. It certainly was for Jesus — only in his thirties.

We need not fret about keeping ourselves alive in order to finish our ministry. God alone knows the appointed time of our service. He will decide when our death is not an interruption of our ministry, but the last act of our ministry.

Henry Martyn was right when he said, "If [God] has work for me to do, I cannot die." In other words, I am immortal until my work is done.

October 3, 2024 - His Timing is Perfect

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may find grace for a well-timed help. (Hebrews 4:16)

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. Timing really matters.

What if grace comes too early or comes too late? The traditional translation of Hebrews 4:16 does not make clear a very precious promise in this regard. We need a more literal rendering to see it. The promise is not merely that we find grace "to help in time of need," but that the grace is well-timed by God.

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. God's grace is always well-timed.

October 4, 2024 - Grace for Every Need

Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant. (Psalm 86:16)

Grace is the constant plea of the praying psalmists. They pray for it again and again to meet every need. They give us a beautiful model of daily dependence on grace for every need.

- They cry out for grace when they need help: "Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me! O Lord, be my helper!" (Psalm 30:10).
- When they need healing: "Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; heal me, O Lord" (Psalm 6:2).
- When they are afflicted by enemies: "Be gracious to me, O Lord! See my affliction from those who hate me" (Psalm 9:13).
- When they are lonely: "Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted" (Psalm 25:16).
- When they are grieving: "Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief" (Psalm 31:9).
- When they have sinned: "O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!" (Psalm 41:4).

- When they long for God's name to be exalted among the nations: "God be gracious to us and bless us . . . that your way may be known on earth" (Psalm 67:1–2).

Prayer is the great link of faith between the soul of the saint and the promise of grace. If ministry was meant by God to be sustained by prayer, then ministry was meant to be sustained by faith in grace.

October 5, 20224- Combating Discouragement

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Psalm 73:26)

This God-besotted psalmist, Asaph, says, I am despondent! I am discouraged! But then immediately he fires a broadside against his despondency: "But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." The psalmist does not yield to discouragement. He battles unbelief with counterattack.

He says, "In myself I feel very weak and helpless and unable to cope. My body is shot, and my heart is almost dead. But whatever the reason for this despondency, I will not yield. I will trust God and not myself. He is my strength and my portion."

The Bible is replete with instances of saints struggling with sunken spirits. Psalm 19:7 says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul." This is a clear admission that the soul of the saint sometimes needs to be revived.

David says the same thing in Psalm 23:2–3, "He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul." The soul of the "man after [God's] own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14) needs to be restored. It was dying of thirst and ready to fall exhausted, but God led the soul to water and gave it life again.

God has put these testimonies in the Bible so that we might use them to fight the unbelief of despondency, and we fight with the blast of faith in God's promises: "God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." We preach that to ourselves, and we thrust it into Satan's face, and we believe it.

October 6, 2024 - Preach to Yourself

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. (Psalm 42:11)

We must learn to fight despondency — the downcast spirit. The fight is a fight of faith in grace. It is fought by preaching truth to ourselves about God and his promised future.

This is what the psalmist does in Psalm 42. The psalmist preaches to his troubled soul. He scolds himself and argues with himself. And his main argument is grace: "Hope in God! Trust in what God will be for you in the future. A day of praise is coming. The presence of the Lord will be all the help you need. And he has promised to be with us forever."

Martyn Lloyd-Jones believes this issue of preaching truth to ourselves about God's grace is all-important in overcoming spiritual depression. In his helpful book, Spiritual Depression, he writes,

Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them, but they start talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. . . . Your self is talking to you.

The battle against despondency is a battle to believe the promises of God. And that belief in God's grace comes by hearing the word. And so preaching to ourselves the word of God is at the heart of the battle.

October 7, 2024 - The Poison of Lust

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. (Hebrews 11:24–26)

Or, boil it down to the essentials: "By faith Moses . . . [left] the fleeting pleasures of sin . . . for he was looking to the reward" (Hebrews 11:24–26).

Faith is not content with "fleeting pleasures." It is ravenous for joy. Joy that lasts. Forever. And the word of God says, "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). So, faith will not be sidetracked into the deceitful pleasures of sin. It will not give up so easily in its quest for maximum joy.

The role of God's word is to feed faith's appetite for God. And, in doing this, it weans my heart off the deceptive taste of lust.

At first, lust begins to trick me into feeling that I would really miss out on some great satisfaction if I followed the path of purity. But then I take up the sword of the Spirit and begin to fight.

As I pray for my faith to be satisfied with God's life and peace, the sword of the Spirit carves the sugarcoating off the poison of lust. I see it for what it is. And by the grace of God, its alluring power is broken.

October 8, 2024 - Jesus Keeps His Sheep

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31–32)

Though Peter, in fact, failed miserably, by denying Jesus three times, the prayer of Jesus preserved him from utter ruin. He was brought to bitter weeping and restored to the joy and boldness that showed itself in Peter's message at Pentecost. Jesus is interceding for us today in the same way that our faith might not fail. Paul says this in Romans 8:34.

Jesus promised that his sheep would be preserved and never perish. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27–28).

The reason for this is that God works to preserve the faith of the sheep. "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

We are not left to ourselves to fight the fight of faith. "It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

Our endurance in faith and joy is finally and decisively in the hands of God. Yes, we must fight. But this very fight is what God works in us. And he most certainly will do it, for, as it says in Romans 8:30, "Those whom he justified he also glorified." The glorification of God's justified children is as good as done. He will lose none of those he has brought to faith and justified.

October 9, 2024 - Firm in Your Faith

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith. (1 Peter 5:8–9)

The two great enemies of our souls are sin and Satan. And sin is the worst enemy, because the only way that Satan can destroy us is by getting us to sin and keeping us from repenting. The only thing that damns us is unforgiven sin. Not Satan.

God may give him leash enough to rough us up, the way he did Job, or even to kill us, the way he did the saints in Smyrna (Revelation 2:10); but Satan cannot condemn us or rob us of eternal life. The only way he can do us ultimate harm is by influencing us to sin and keep us from repentance. Which is exactly what he aims to do.

So, Satan's main business is to advocate, promote, assist, titillate, and confirm our bent to sinning. And to keep us from faith and repentance.

Satan wants to catch us at a time when our faith is not firm, when it is vulnerable. It makes sense that the very thing Satan wants to destroy would also be the means of our resisting his efforts. That's why Peter says, "Resist him, firm in your faith" (1 Peter 5:9). It is also why Paul says that the "shield of faith" can "extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one" (Ephesians 6:16). The way to thwart the devil is to strengthen the very thing he is trying most to destroy — your faith.

October 10, 2024 - Abstain from the Passions of the Flesh

Abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. (1 Peter 2:11)

I have learned again and again from firsthand experience that there are many professing Christians who have a view of salvation that disconnects it from real life, and that nullifies the threats of the Bible, and that puts the sinning person who claims to be a Christian beyond the reach of biblical warnings. I believe this view of the Christian life is comforting thousands who are on the broad way that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13).

Jesus said, if you don't fight lust, you won't go to heaven. "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell" (Matthew 5:29). The point is not that true Christians always succeed in every battle. The issue is that we resolve to fight, not that we succeed flawlessly. We don't make peace with sin. We make war.

The stakes in this war are infinitely higher than in any threat of world war or terrorism. The apostle Paul listed "immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness," then said it is "on account of these the wrath of God is coming" (Colossians 3:5–6). And the wrath of God is immeasurably more fearful than the wrath of all the nations of the world put together. May God give us grace to take our souls and others' souls seriously and keep up the fight.

October 11, 2024 - We Do not Lose Heart

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16–18)

Paul can't see the way he used to (and there were no glasses). He can't hear the way he used to (and there were no hearing aids). He doesn't recover from beatings the way he used to (and there were no antibiotics). His strength, walking from town to town, doesn't hold up the way it used to. He sees the wrinkles in his face and neck. His memory is not as good. And he admits that this is a threat to his faith and joy and courage.

But he does not lose heart. Why? He doesn't lose heart because his inner man is being renewed. How? The renewing of his heart comes from something very strange: it comes from looking at what he can't see.

What, then, did he see when he looked? A few verses later in 2 Corinthians 5:7, he says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." This doesn't mean that he leaps into the dark without evidence of what's there. It means that for now the most precious and important realities in the world are beyond our physical senses. And with Paul we need to go on seeing with the eyes of the heart, so that we not lose heart.

October 12, 2024 - Count it all Joy

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (James 1:2–3)

Strange as it may seem, one of the primary purposes of being shaken by suffering is to make our faith more unshakable. Faith is like muscle tissue: if you stress it to the limit, it gets stronger, not weaker. That's what James means here. When your faith is threatened and tested and stretched, the result is greater capacity to endure. He calls it steadfastness.

God loves faith so much that he will test it so as to keep it pure and strong. For example, he did this to Paul according to 2 Corinthians 1:8–9,

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

God so values our wholehearted faith that he will, graciously, if necessary, take away everything else in the world that we might be tempted to rely on — even life itself. His aim is that we grow deeper and stronger in our confidence that he himself will be all we need.

October 13, 2024 - Grace Through Suffering

"They have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away." (Mark 4:17)

The faith of some is broken instead of built by suffering. Jesus knew this and described it here in the parable of the four soils. Some people who hear the word receive it at first with gladness, but then suffering makes them fall away.

So, affliction does not always make faith stronger. Sometimes it crushes faith. And then comes true the paradoxical words of Jesus, "The one who has not, even what he has will be taken" (Mark 4:25).

This is a call for us to endure suffering with firm faith in grace, so that our faith might grow stronger and not be proved vain (1 Corinthians 15:2). "To the one who has, more will be given" (Mark 4:25). Knowing God's design in suffering is one of the main means of growing through suffering.

If you think your suffering is pointless, or that God is not in control, or that he is whimsical or cruel, then your suffering will drive you from God, instead of driving you from everything but God — as it should. So, it is crucial that faith in God's grace includes the faith that he gives grace through suffering.

October 14, 2024 - My Grace is Sufficient for You

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

God's design for suffering is that it should magnify Christ's worth and power. This is grace, because the greatest joy of Christians is to experience Christ magnified in our lives.

When Paul was told by the Lord Jesus that his "thorn in the flesh" would not be taken away, he supported Paul's faith by explaining why. God ordains that Paul be weak so that Christ might be seen as strong on Paul's behalf.

If we feel and look self-sufficient, we will get the glory, not Christ. So, Christ chooses the weak things of the world "so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (1 Corinthians 1:29). And sometimes he makes seemingly strong people weaker so that the divine power will be the more evident.

We know that Paul experienced this as grace because he rejoiced in it: "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9–10).

Living by faith in God's grace means being satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus. Therefore, faith will not shrink back from what reveals and magnifies all that God is for us in Jesus. That is what our own weakness and suffering are meant to do.

October 15, 2024 - Afraid of Death No More

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)

How does Christ deliver us from the fear of death and set us free to live with the kind of loving abandon that can "let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also"?

The term "children" is taken from the previous verse and refers to the spiritual offspring of Christ, the Messiah. These are also the "children of God." In sending Christ, God has the salvation of his "children" especially in view.

The Son of God, who existed before the incarnation as the eternal Word (John 1:1), took on flesh and blood, and clothed his deity with humanity. He became fully man and remained fully God.

The reason Christ became human was to die. As preincarnate God, he could not die for sinners. But united to flesh and blood, he could. His aim was to die. Therefore, he had to be born human, mortal.

In dying, Christ defanged the devil. How? By covering all our sin (Hebrews 10:12). This means that Satan has no legitimate grounds to accuse us before God. "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies" (Romans 8:33). On what grounds does he justify? Through the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 9:14; Romans 5:9) we are afraid of death no more.

October 16, 2024 - In God's Universe

Can wicked rulers be allied with you, those who frame injustice by statute? Psalm 94:20

The news about the public schools gets worse daily. Lesbians and male homosexuals are allowed to visit high schools to explain and defend homosexuality to the students. No such right is given to Christians. Indeed, we read frequently of a teacher fired somewhere for doing no more than giving favourable treatment to the Bible.

What can we expect of a country that does this? What kind of future do we have? This has been happening for some time now, organizing oppression under the pretence of law. In one area after another, law has ceased to be a protection to the righteous and has become an oppression. Our laws and our taxes now discriminate against the hardworking and the godly citizens. It has become dangerous to have a new law: it winds up penalising us rather than the criminals.

In the face of all this, students are taught, "there's nothing perverted about being a gay," and they are taught to "act out gay roles." A while back the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Kentucky law requiring the Ten Commandments to be posted in all schools! Perhaps the judges felt it would be traumatic or upsetting for children, those who have learned to read, to see such statements as "Thou shalt not steal."

Under the circumstances, what can we expect from God except judgment? Should we be surprised or upset if the years ahead become grimmer and greyer? Remember, there may not be justice in our schools and courts, but there is in God's universe.

October 17, 2024 - Glorify God in Your Body

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

God did not create the physical-material universe willy-nilly. He had a purpose, namely, to add to the ways his glory is externalized and made manifest. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).

Our bodies fit into that same category of physical things that God created for this reason. He is not going to back out on his plan to glorify himself through human beings and human bodies.

Why does God go to all the trouble to dirty his hands, as it were, with our decaying, sin-stained flesh, in order to reestablish it as a resurrection body and clothe it with glory and immortality? Answer: Because his Son paid the price of death so that the Father's purpose for the material universe would be fulfilled, namely, that he would be glorified in it, including in our bodies, forever and ever.

That's what the text says: "You were bought with a price [namely, the death of his Son]. So glorify God in your body." God will not disregard or dishonour the work of his Son. God will honour the work of his Son by raising our bodies from the dead, and we will use our bodies to glorify him forever and ever. That is why you have a body now. And that is why it will be raised to be like Christ's glorious body, so glorify God in your body.

October 18, 2024 - God is Faithful

Those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

Between eternity past in God's predestination, and eternity future in God's glorification, none is lost.

No one who is predestined for sonship fails to be called. And no one who is called fails to be justified. And no one who is justified fails to be glorified. This is an unbreakable steel chain of divine covenant faithfulness.

And so Paul says, And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)

[He] will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:8–9)

These are the promises of our God who cannot lie. Those who are born again are as secure as God is faithful.

October 19, 2024 - 10 Things 'Yahweh' Means

God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations." (Exodus 3:15)

There are at least 10 things the name Yahweh, "I AM," says about God:

1. He never had a beginning. Every child asks, "Who made God?" And every wise parent says, "Nobody made God. God simply is. And always was. No beginning."

2. God will never end. If he did not come into being, he cannot go out of being, because he is being.

3. God is absolute reality. There is no reality before him. There is no reality outside of him unless he wills it and makes it. He is all that was eternally.

4. God is utterly independent. He depends on nothing to bring him into being or support him or counsel him or make him what he is.

5. Everything that is not God depends totally on God. The entire universe is utterly secondary. It came into being by God and stays in being moment by moment on God's decision to keep it in being.

6. All the universe is by comparison to God as nothing.

7. God is constant. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He cannot be improved. He is not becoming anything. He is who he is.

8. God is the absolute standard of truth and goodness and beauty.

9. God does whatever he pleases, and it is always right and always beautiful and always in accord with truth.

10. God is the most important and most valuable reality and person in the universe. He is more worthy of interest and attention and admiration and enjoyment than all other realities, including the entire universe.

October 20, 2024 -Perseverance and Eternal Security

"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." (Luke 22:20)

The new covenant, promised most explicitly in Jeremiah 31 and 32, was secured and sealed by the blood of Jesus. The new covenant comes true for God's people who trust the Messiah, Jesus, because Jesus died to establish it.

And what does the new covenant secure for all who belong to Christ? Perseverance in faith to the end. Listen to Jeremiah 32:40,

“I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.”

The everlasting covenant — the new covenant — includes this unbreakable promise. They may not. They will not. Christ sealed this covenant with his blood. He purchased your perseverance if you are in Jesus Christ through faith.

If you are persevering in faith today, you owe it to the blood of Jesus. The Holy Spirit, who is working in you to preserve your faith, is honouring the purchase of Jesus. God the Spirit works in us what God the Son obtained for us. The Father planned it. Jesus bought it. The Spirit applies it — all of them infallibly.

God is totally committed to the perseverance and eternal security of his blood-bought children.

October 21, 2024 - Everlasting Enjoyment of God

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For 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 5:9–11)

What do we need to be saved from? Verse 9 states it clearly: the wrath of God. But is that the highest, best, fullest, most satisfying prize of the gospel?

No. Verse 10 says “much more . . . shall we be saved by his life.” Then verse 11 takes it all the way up to the ultimate end and goal of the gospel: “more than that, we also rejoice in God.”

That is the final and highest good of the good news. There is not another “more than that” after that. There is only Paul’s saying how we got there, “through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

The end of the gospel is “we rejoice in God.” The highest, fullest, deepest, sweetest good of the gospel is God himself, enjoyed by his redeemed people.

God in Christ became the price (Romans 5:6–8), and God in Christ became the prize (Romans 5:11).

The gospel is the good news that God bought for us the everlasting enjoyment of God.

October 22, 2024 - All the Mercy We Need

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. (Psalm 51:1)

This is what God had promised in Exodus 34:6–7:

“The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.”

David knew that there were guilty who would not be forgiven. And there were guilty who by some mysterious work of redemption would not be counted as guilty but would be forgiven. Psalm 51 is his way of laying hold on that mystery of mercy.

We know more of the mystery of this redemption than David did. We know Christ and his work on the cross. But we lay hold of the mercy in the same way he did.

The decisive thing he does is turn, helpless, to the mercy and love of God. Today that means turning, helpless, to Christ, whose blood secures all the mercy we need.

October 23, 2024 - The Grace of our God

We always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:11–12)

Grace is not only God's disposition to do good for us when we don't deserve it — we call this "undeserved favour"; God's grace is also a power from God that acts in our lives and makes good things happen in us and for us — which we also don't deserve.

Paul said that we fulfill our resolves for good "by his power" (verse 11). And then he adds at the end of verse 12, "according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." The power that actually works in our lives to make Christ-exalting obedience possible is an exertion of the grace of God.

You can see this also in 1 Corinthians 15:10: 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.

So, grace is an active, present, transformative, obedience-enabling power given by the grace of our God.

October 24, 2024 - My Should Thirsts for God

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? (Psalm 42:1–2)

What makes this so beautiful and so crucial for us is that he is not thirsting mainly for relief from his threatening circumstances. He is not thirsting mainly for escape from his enemies or for their destruction.

It's not wrong to want relief, and to pray for it. It is sometimes right to pray for the defeat of enemies. But more important than any of that is God himself.

When we think and feel with God in the Psalms, this is the main result: We come to love God, and we want to see God and be with God and be satisfied in admiring and exulting in God.

A likely translation of the end of verse 2 is, "When will I come and see the face of God?" The final answer to that question was given in John 14:9 and 2 Corinthians 4:4. Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." And Paul said that when we are converted to Christ we see "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

When we see the face of Christ, we see the face of God. May the Lord increase your hunger and your thirst to see the face of God. And may he grant your desire, even today, through the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God as our souls thirst for God.

October 25, 2024 - The Precious Promises of God

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power. (2 Thessalonians 1:11)

When Paul says that God fulfills our good resolves by his power through faith, he means that we defeat sin and we do righteousness by faith, that is, by being satisfied with all that God promises to be for us in Christ in the next five minutes, five months, five decades, and into eternity.

Here are three examples of how this might look in your life:

1. If you set your heart to give sacrificially and generously, the power of God to fulfill this resolve will come to you as you trust his grace in the promise, "My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).
2. If you set your heart to live a pure life, the power of God to fulfill this resolve will come to you as you trust his grace in the promise, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).
3. And if you set your heart to speak out for Christ when the opportunity comes, the power of God to fulfill this resolve will come to you as you trust his grace in the promise, "Do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour" (Matthew 10:19).

May God increase our daily faith in the precious promises of God.

October 26, 2024 - Bring Us to God

Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. (1 Peter 3:18)

The greatest good of the good news — the gospel — is the enjoyment of fellowship with God himself. This is made explicit here in the phrase "that he might bring us to God." That's why Jesus died.

All the other gifts of the gospel exist to make this one possible.

- We are forgiven so that our guilt does not keep us away from God.
- We are justified so that our condemnation does not keep us away from God.
- God is propitiated so that his wrath doesn't stand between us and God as our Father.
- We are given eternal life now, with new bodies in the resurrection, so that we have the capacities for being with God forever and enjoying God to the fullest.

Test your heart. Why do you want forgiveness? Why do you want to be justified? Why do you want the wrath of God to be propitiated? Why do you want eternal life? Is the decisive answer, "Because I want to enjoy God now and forever"?

The gospel-love that God gives is ultimately the gift of himself. This is what we were made for. This is what we lost because of our sin. This is what Christ came to restore and bring us to God.

October 27, 2024 - Bless the Lord

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! (Psalm 103:1)

The psalm begins and ends with the psalmist preaching to his soul to bless the Lord — "Bless the Lord, O my soul" — and preaching to the angels and the hosts of heaven and the works of God's hands that they should do the same. The psalm is overwhelmingly focused on blessing the Lord. What does it mean to bless the Lord?

It means to speak well of his greatness and goodness — and really mean it from the depths of your soul. What David is doing in the first and last verses of this psalm, when he says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," is saying that authentic speaking about God's goodness and greatness must come from the soul.

Blessing God with the mouth without the soul would be hypocrisy. Jesus said, "This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8). David knows that danger, and he is preaching to himself. He is telling his soul not to let this happen.

"Come, soul, look at the greatness and goodness of God. Join my mouth and let us bless the Lord with our whole being. Soul, we are not going to be a hypocrite as we bless the Lord!"

October 28, 2024 - Better Off to Obey Jesus

"Whoever desires to love life and see good days . . . let him turn away from evil and do good." (1 Peter 3:10–11)

There is only one basic reason why we disobey the commands of Jesus: it's because we don't have heartfelt confidence that obeying will bring more blessing than disobeying. We do not hope fully in God's promise. What did he promise? Peter passes on the teachings of Jesus like this:

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days . . . let him turn away from evil and do good." (1 Peter 3:9–11)

Peter, following Jesus, is not ashamed to motivate obedience to hard commands — like not returning evil for evil — with the promise of greater joy. Do you want to enjoy everlasting life? Turn away from evil! Joy for all eternity awaits you! Is that not reward enough to avoid the pleasures of vengeance now?

You will always be better off to obey than to disobey Jesus.

October 29, 2024 - Satan and The Saints

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

What does it mean to "believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead"? Satan believes that God raised Jesus from the dead. He saw it happen. To answer this question, we need to ponder what the resurrection means for God's people.

The meaning of the resurrection is that God is for us. He aims to overcome all our sense of abandonment and alienation. The resurrection of Jesus is God's declaration to Israel and to the world that we cannot work our way to glory, but that he intends to do the impossible to get us there.

The resurrection is the promise of God that all who trust Jesus will be the beneficiaries of God's power to lead us in paths of righteousness and through the valley of death.

Therefore, believing in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead is much more than accepting a fact. It means being confident that God is for you, that he is transforming your life, and that he will save you for eternal joy.

Believing in the resurrection means trusting in all the promises of life and hope and righteousness for which it stands. It means being so confident of God's power and love that no fear of worldly loss or greed for worldly gain will lure us to disobey his will. That's the difference between Satan and the saints.

October 30, 2024 - All Authority in Heaven

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18–20)

The last chapter of Matthew is a window that opens onto the sunrise glory of the risen Christ. Through it you can see at least three massive peaks in the mountain range of Christ's character: the peak of his power; the peak of his kindness; and the peak of his purposefulness.

All authority is his — the right and the power to do his will. And he uses this power to pursue his unwavering purpose to make disciples from all the nations. And in the process he is personally kind to us, promising to be with us to the end.

We all know in our hearts that if the risen Christ is going to satisfy our desire to admire greatness, that is the way he has to be. Great in power. Great in kindness. Great in purposefulness.

People who are too weak to accomplish their purposes can't satisfy our desire to admire greatness. We admire people even less who have no purpose in life. And still less those whose purposes are merely selfish and unkind.

What we long to see and know is a Person whose power is unlimited, whose kindness is tender, and whose purpose is single and unflinching.

October 31, 2024 - The Grace of God in Christ

"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." (John 15:11)

God is absolutely sovereign. "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (Psalm 115:3).

Therefore, he is not frustrated. He rejoices in all his works when he contemplates them as colours of the magnificent mosaic of redemptive history. He is an unshakably happy God.

His happiness is foundationally the delight he has in himself. Before creation, he rejoiced in the image of his glory in the person of his Son — his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased (Matthew 3:17). Then the joy of God "went public" in the works of creation and redemption.

These works delight the heart of God because they reflect his glory. The heavens are telling the glory of God (Psalm 19:1). He does everything he does to preserve and display that glory, for in this his soul rejoices.

All the works of God culminate in the praises of his redeemed people. "Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!" (Psalm 150:2). The climax of his happiness is the delight he takes in the echoes of his excellence in the praises of the saints.

Our praise is not only God's delight, as an echo of his excellence; it is also the apex of our joy. Praise is the consummation of the joy we have in seeing and savouring the greatness of God.

God's pursuit of praise from us and our pursuit of pleasure in him are the same pursuit. This is the great outcome of the gospel of the glory of the grace of God in Christ!