TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

November 2024

November 1, 2024 - A Prayer for our Nation

Blessed is the Nation whose God is the LORD. Psalm 33:12

Politically, the issues we are facing are many and complicated, and no major party stands for God's Kingdom in all areas. May we affirm and support what is good: the right to life, liberty of conscience, our fundamental freedoms, equal justice under law, government that carries out its responsibilities but stays out of things beyond its legitimate authority. May we oppose what is evil: infanticide, abuse of all sorts, injustice, and dehumanizing rhetoric from all sides. And above all, may we put our hope in you, not in the election or defeat of candidates or parties.

We pray against the demonic forces driving these and other evils in our society and the increasingly overt embrace of the occult among cultural elites.

Lord, you and you alone determine the rise and fall of nations. Only your Kingdom lasts forever. If this is the time when we will see the decline of our nation, keep us from despair, remembering that our citizenship is in Heaven from which we await our Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord. Your promises remain unchanged, and whatever happens, we know you are true. Our hope is in you, not in politicians, parties, laws, or constitutions. We commit our nation into your hands, and by your grace we will live in faith, hope, and love, whatever happens. We ask all this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

November 2, 2024 - Exchanged the Glory

Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Romans 1:22–23)

It would be a great folly and a great tragedy if a man loved his wedding ring more than he loved his bride. But that is what this passage says has happened.

Human beings have fallen in love with the echo of God's excellence in creation, and lost the ability to hear the incomparable, original shout of love and power and glory.

The message of creation is this:

There is a great God of glory and power and generosity behind all this awesome universe; you belong to him because he made you. He is patient with you in sustaining your rebellious life. Turn and bank your hope on him and delight yourself in him, not merely his handiwork.

According to Psalm 19:1–2, day pours forth the "speech" of that message to all who will listen in the day, speaking with blindingly bright sun and blue sky and clouds and untold shapes and colours and beautiful designs of all things visible. Night pours forth the "knowledge" of the same message to all who will listen at night, speaking with great dark voids and summer moons and countless stars and strange sounds and cool breezes and northern lights.

Day and night are saying one thing: God is glorious! Turn away from the creation as your supreme satisfaction and delight yourself in the Lord of glory.

November 3, 2024 - There is a Better Way

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. Acts 17:16

For Christians, the confidence that Christ is Lord is the ground from which to engage politics. God has called us to be in the world even as we are not of it. He chose to put us in this cultural moment (see Acts 17). Within a Christian worldview, one that sees every sphere of life as important and under the reign of Christ, the political is neither inflated nor trivialized. Christians can be engaged in politics without the other parts of our life being subsumed by it.

Christian political engagement must begin with a proper understanding of citizenship. We are, first and foremost, citizens of the City of God. As such, we strive to live in accordance with God's law, to self-govern according to the love of God and neighbour. When we do this, not only is it unnecessary to have a law, Supreme Court decision, or a bureaucratic agency for every issue, but we are the best citizens of the city of man to which we have been called.

Our most important commitments, to love God and love neighbour, shape our values, which shape our vote. The issues that we prioritize, whether the rule of law or the protection of the preborn, are first and foremost moral concerns with political implications ... not the other way around.

The only way to relieve the political pressures of our day is to build up the pre-political aspects of our life together, especially the family and the Church. When we care well for our children, our neighbours, and our communities, the state doesn't have to.

There are plenty of people who believe that the government should do all the work, but they are wrong. There is a better way, and we must know how to articulate it and be willing to live it.

November 4, 2024 - See and Reflect God's Glory

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. (Ephesians 5:25–26)

If you only hope for unconditional love from God, your hope is great, but too small. Unconditional love from God is not the sweetest experience of his love. The sweetest experience is when his love says, "I have made you so much like my Son that I delight to see you and be with you. You are a pleasure to me, because you are so radiant with my glory."

This sweetest experience is conditional on our transformation into the kind of people whose emotions and choices and actions please God. Unconditional love is the source and foundation of the human transformation that makes the sweetness of conditional love possible. If God did not love us unconditionally, he would not penetrate our unattractive lives, bring us to faith, unite us to Christ, give us his Spirit, and make us progressively like Jesus.

But when he unconditionally chooses us, and sends Christ to die for us, and regenerates us, he puts in motion an unstoppable process of transformation that makes us glorious. He gives us a splendour to match his favourite kind: his own.

It is unspeakably wonderful that God would unconditionally set his favour on us while we are still unbelieving sinners. The ultimate reason this is wonderful is that this unconditional love brings us into the everlasting enjoyment of his glorious presence. The apex of that enjoyment is that we not only see his glory, but also reflect it.

November 5, 20224- It Will Be Defeated

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. (1 Corinthians 15:24)

How far does the reign of Christ extend? The next verse, 1 Corinthians 15:25 says, “He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.” The word all tells us the extent.

So does the word every in verse 24: There is no disease, addiction, demon, bad habit, fault, vice, weakness, temper, moodiness, pride, self-pity, strife, jealousy, perversion, greed, or laziness that Christ will not overcome as the enemy of his honour.

The encouragement in that promise is that when you set yourself to do battle with the enemies of your faith and your holiness, you will not fight alone.

Jesus Christ is now, in this age, putting all his enemies under his feet. Every rule and every authority and every power will be conquered.

So, remember that the extent of Christ’s reign reaches to the smallest and biggest enemy of his glory in your life, and in this universe. It will be defeated.

November 6, 2024 - Majesty and Meekness

“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope.” (Matthew 12:18–21, quoting Isaiah 42)

The Father cries, “Behold, my Servant in whom my soul delights!” The worth and beauty of the Son come not just from his majesty, nor just from his meekness, but from the way these mingle in perfect proportion.

When the angel cries out in Revelation 5:2, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” the answer comes back, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals” (Revelation 5:5).

God loves the strength of the Lion of Judah. This is why he is worthy in God’s eyes to open the scrolls of history and unfold the last days.

But the picture is not complete. How did the Lion conquer? The next verse describes his appearance: “And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain” (Revelation 5:6). Jesus is worthy of the Father’s delight not only as the Lion of Judah, but also as the slain Lamb.

This is the peculiar glory of Jesus Christ, God’s incarnate Son — the stunning mingling of majesty and meekness.

November 7, 2024 - He Does All That He Pleases

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

This verse teaches that whenever God acts, he acts in a way that pleases him. God is never constrained to do a thing that he despises. He is never backed into a corner where his only recourse is to do something he hates to do. He does whatever he pleases. And therefore, in some sense, he has pleasure in all that he does.

This should lead us to bow before God and praise his sovereign freedom — that, in some sense, he always acts in freedom, according to his own "good pleasure," following the dictates of his own delights. God never becomes the victim of circumstance. He is never forced into a situation where he must do something in which he cannot rejoice. He is not mocked. He is not trapped or cornered or coerced.

Even at the one point in history where he did what in one sense was the hardest thing for God to do, "not spare his own Son" (Romans 8:32), God was free and doing what pleased him. Paul says that the self-sacrifice of Jesus in death was "a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:2). The greatest sin, and the greatest death, and the hardest act of God was, in some profound way, pleasing to the Father.

So, let us stand in awe and wonder. And let us tremble that not only our praises of God's sovereignty, but also our salvation through the death of Christ for us, hang on this: "Our God is in heavens; he does whatever he pleases."

November 8, 2024 - God has Chosen You

"The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." (Deuteronomy 7:6)

What would the doctrines of grace — the old Puritan term for the teaching of God's sovereign grace in our salvation (TULIP) — sound like if every limb in that tree were coursing with the sap of Augustinian delight (that is, "Christian Hedonism")?

- Total depravity is not just badness, but blindness to God's beauty, and deadness to the deepest joy.
- Unconditional election means that the completeness of our joy in Jesus was planned for us before we ever existed, as the overflow of God's joy in the fellowship of the Trinity.
- Limited atonement is the assurance that indestructible joy in God is infallibly secured for God's people by the blood of the new covenant.
- Irresistible grace is the commitment and the power of God's love to make sure we don't hold on to suicidal pleasures, and to set us free by the sovereign power of superior delights.
- Perseverance of the saints is the almighty work of God not to let us fall into the final bondage of inferior pleasures, but to keep us, through all affliction and suffering, for an inheritance of fullness of joy in his presence, and pleasures at his right hand forevermore.

Unconditional election delivers the harshest and the sweetest judgments. The unconditional destroys all self-exaltation (that's the harsh part); Election makes me his treasured possession (that's the sweet part). This is one of the beauties of the biblical doctrines of grace: their worst devastations prepare us for their greatest delights.

November 9, 2024 - Given Through Faith

"This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33)

Jesus shatters any absolute dissociation of commandments and love. He says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. . . . Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he

who loves me will be loved by my Father" (John 14:15, 21). "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (John 15:10).

Thinking in terms of commandments and obedience did not stop Jesus from enjoying the love of his Father. And he expects that our thinking of him as one who commands will not jeopardize our love relationship with him either. This is crucial to realize because the new covenant relationship that we have with God through Jesus Christ is not a covenant without commandments. The basic difference between the old covenant offered by God through the Mosaic law and the new covenant offered by God through Christ is not that one had commandments and the other doesn't.

The key differences are that (1) the Messiah, Jesus, has come and shed the blood of the new covenant (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 10:29) so that henceforth he is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that all saving, covenant-keeping faith is conscious faith in him; (2) the old covenant has therefore become "obsolete" (Hebrews 8:13) and does not govern the new-covenant people of God (2 Corinthians 3:7–18; Romans 7:4, 6; Galatians 3:19); and (3) the promised new heart and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit have been given through faith.

November 10, 2024 - His Jaw Dropping Glory

"Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory." (John 17:24)

Believers in Jesus are precious to God and he loves us so much that he will not allow our preciousness to become our god. God does indeed make much of us but he does so in a way that draws us out of ourselves to enjoy his greatness. Test yourself. If Jesus came to spend the day with you, sat down beside you on the couch, and said, "I really love you," what would you focus on the rest of the day that you spend together with him?

It seems to me that too many songs and sermons leave us with the wrong answer. They leave the impression that the heights of our joy would be in the feeling of being loved. To be sure, this is joy indeed. But not the heights, and not the focus. What are we saying with the words "I am loved"? What do we mean? What is this "being loved"?

Would not the greatest, most Christ-exalting joy be found in watching Jesus all day and bursting with, "You're amazing!" He answers the hardest question, and his wisdom is amazing. He touches a filthy, oozing sore, and his compassion is amazing. He raises a dead lady at the medical examiner's office, and his power is amazing. He predicts the afternoon's events, and his foreknowledge is amazing. He sleeps during an earthquake, and his fearlessness is amazing. He says, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), and his words are amazing. We walk around with him all afternoon, utterly amazed at what we are seeing. Redemption, propitiation, forgiveness, justification, reconciliation — all these have to happen. They are the act of love. But the goal of love that makes those acts loving is that we be with him, and see his jaw-dropping glory.

November 11, 2024 - Gospel Promises

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ . . . not frightened in anything by your opponents. . . . For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake. (Philippians 1:27–29)

Paul told the Philippians that living worthy of the gospel of Christ meant fearlessness before enemies. Then he gave the logic of fearlessness. The logic is this: God has given you two gifts, not just one — faith and suffering. That's what verse 29 says, Granted to you to believe, and granted to you to suffer.

In this context that means: Both your faith in the face of suffering, and your suffering are gifts of God. When Paul says, don't be frightened by your opponents, he had two reasons in his mind why they don't need to be frightened:

The opponents are in the hand of God. Their opposition is a gift from God. He governs it.

Your fearlessness, that is, your faith, is also in the hand of God. It too is a gift.

So the logic of fearlessness in the face of adversity is this double truth: Both your adversity and your faith in the face of adversity are gifts of God.

Therefore, fear not. Your adversaries can do no more than God grants. And he will grant all the faith you need. These promises are blood-bought and sealed. They are gospel promises.

November 12, 2024 - Speaking the Truth

Speaking the Truth in Love. Ephesians 4:15

Late last month, Virginia teacher Peter Vlaming won an important legal battle against the high school that fired him. Back in 2018, the well-liked French teacher was placed on administrative leave by West Point High School for failing to comply with the school district's policy concerning preferred pronouns. Though Vlaming was willing to accommodate a request by a female student to use her chosen male name, he refused to refer to the student with the pronouns "he" or "him."

To be clear, Vlaming did not use female pronouns either. Rather, he chose to avoid using any pronouns to refer to the student. The school superintendent, however, told Vlaming that he could not avoid using the male pronouns, even when the student wasn't present. Vlaming refused these demands, and within a few short weeks, was fired.

In other words, Vlaming was fired for what he did not say, or as Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Counsel Tyson Langhofer put it, "what he couldn't say ... in good conscience." Vlaming filed a lawsuit against the school in 2019. A lower court threw out the case, but, in 2023, the Supreme Court of Virginia reinstated the lawsuit, stating:

Absent a truly compelling reason for doing so, no government committed to these principles [of free speech and freedom of religion] can lawfully coerce its citizens into pledging verbal allegiance to ideological views that violate their sincerely held religious beliefs.

On September 30 of this year, the West Point School Board decided to settle the case and agreed to pay Vlaming over half a million dollars in damages and attorney fees. The firing was also cleared from his employment record. We need to continue speaking the truth.

November 13, 2024 - Has the salt lost its savour?

If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? Psalm 11:3

Our world is swamped by discussion of issues, and this focus on issues is by design. It is a focus that ensures that no solution for the issues will be found. Once we grasp what an issue actually is, we'll see that issues have to be resolved at another level entirely: a level beneath the issue that modern man has no interest in

discussing. Issues, in effect, are symptoms, and usually superficial ones at that. The core problem, the actual cause, is glanced over while men agitate over the surface of reality.

If men don't deal with the determining causes, they will be perpetually swamped by issues. The more issues we're awash in, the less that men care about core causes: they're too busy swatting at the effects to bother with foundational causes. The few that acknowledge the causes sing a song of despair: we can't possibly deal with such deep-rooted causes, so we need to be busy alleviating the issues radiating from the problem to reduce suffering.

But this pragmatic counsel, focused on expedience, fails to see how cause and effect are bound up in one another covenantally. The first steps toward dealing with the cause will send more meaningful, lasting relief of the negative effects than the cheap Band-Aids we're hellbent on applying in lieu of dealing with our core problems. We want to vanquish the effects of covenantal disobedience without ever considering faithfulness to the covenant.

When men deal only with issues, they ensure round-the-clock crises in their world. Christians, of all people, should be actively securing the blessings of God's covenant in the way the covenant prescribes. Humanists refuse to see a God behind a binding covenant with creation, so they have no basis to expect results from obeying God's laws. But why do so many Christians adopt the view that God no longer governs according to His Own Word? Has the salt lost its savour?

November 14, 2024 - Reasons Not to Worry

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:25–26)

Jesus says in verse 30 that our anxiety comes from little faith in our Father's promise of grace: "O you of little faith."

These verses (25–34) contain at least seven promises designed by Jesus to help us fight the good fight against unbelief and be free from anxiety. Let's look at a couple now.

Since your body and your life are vastly more complex and difficult to provide than food and clothing are, and yet God has, in fact, created and provided you with both, then surely he will be able and willing to provide you with food and clothing. Moreover, no matter what happens, God will raise your body someday and preserve your life and body for his eternal fellowship.

If God is willing and able to feed such insignificant creatures as birds who cannot do anything to bring their food into being — as you can by farming — then he will certainly provide what you need, because you are worth a lot more than birds. You, unlike the birds, have the amazing capacity to glorify God by trusting, obeying, and thanking God. For these, and many other reasons, let us not worry but have faith.

November 15, 2024 - Turn Away from Evil

Turn away from evil and do good. Psalm 34:14

According to the new bombshell report from the group Do No Harm, nearly 14,000 minors underwent transgender surgeries, took puberty blockers, or were given cross-sex hormone injections, between 2019 and 2023. This report directly counters a refrain often thrown at anyone who expressed concern for the wellbeing of children, that "it's just not happening." In fact, just three months ago, researchers at Harvard's

T.H. Chan School of Public Health announced that “gender-affirming” surgeries were “rarely performed on transgender youth .”

Ideas have consequences, and bad ideas have victims. This report from Do No Harm reveals that there have been victims of trans ideology, and many of them have been children. This is an ideology with no basis in medicine, science, or observable realities. And yet, it is an ideology that has given birth to atrocities performed in doctors’ offices and hospitals by “experts” we were supposed to “trust.” We should not have trusted them. This ideology shatters the lives of young people and the lives of their parents and now we know how many. Let us turn away from this evil and instead do good.

November 16, 2024 - In View of God’s Mercy

In view of God’s mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Romans 12:1

Scripture offers a holistic understanding of the human person. In its view, purity is not reduced to mere abstinence. Rather in Paul’s words, it is offering our entire “bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Romans 12:1). Or, as a young lady put it, purity is “being presentable to God,” something which only Christ accomplishes for us.

There’s no shortage of articles, books, and blogs critiquing “purity culture.” Some of these critiques are fair, but most are not. In fact, more than a few critiques of “purity culture” reject all Biblical teaching about sex and marriage and justify everything from promiscuity to homosexuality to transgenderism.

The call to sexual purity in Holy Scripture is quite plain and was proclaimed by teachers, preachers, priests, and pastors over the centuries. In fact, if you think the books and seminars of that era were rough, you should check out what the Church Fathers had to say about sexual purity. Or, for that matter, Paul.

The Biblical call to sexual purity is best understood and taught within a more complete picture of how God designed and destined us as His embodied, image-bearing creatures. Most importantly, it is only possible within the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, the spotless Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Unless the call for sexual purity is anchored in these truths, it will be rare and elusive, especially today.

November 17, 2024 - Put Away Anxiety

“And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” (Matthew 6:27–30)

Matthew 6:25–34 contains at least seven promises designed by Jesus to help us fight the fight for faith and be free from anxiety. We previously looked at Promises 1 and 2; today we look at 3 and 4.

The simple promise of reality that you can discover from experience is : Being anxious will simply not do you any good. That’s a promise. Sometimes we just have to get tough with ourselves. Anxiety accomplishes nothing worthwhile. That’s a promise. Believe it. Act on it.

Compared to the flowers of the field you are a much higher priority for God, because you will live forever, and can thus bring him eternal praise as his loved children.

God has such an overflow of creative energy and care, he lavishes it on flowers that last only a matter of days. So, he will certainly take that same energy and creative skill and use it to care for his children who will live forever. The question is: Will we believe this promise, and put away anxiety?

November 18, 2024 - The Great Robbery

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Ephesians 6:13

The greatest robbery of our day is the stealing of the church. The church properly belongs to Jesus Christ. It exists in His name, and its purpose is to preach the Word of God, administer the sacraments, and faithfully apply godly discipline to Christ's members. But the church has been stolen. The thieves are the modernists, socialists, humanists, all of which adds up to one fact, anti-Christianity. Using the name of Christ, these sanctimonious thieves have crept into the church, gained control of it, captured the pulpit and the bank accounts and endowed funds, and they are using the church to advance their anti-Christian purposes. Instead of proclaiming Christ, the church is now preaching social revolution and financing it. First of all, then, the church has been stolen from Jesus Christ.

Second, the church has been stolen from the people of God, from faithful Christians. In numerous cases, faithful Christians, whose money built the church and supported the pastors, have seen a minister or priest assigned to their church who denounced his faith, preached doubts concerning Christ, promoted social revolution, and drove out of the church the very people whose faith, work, and dollars had built it. These Christians have been robbed: their church has been stolen from them. When they protest the theft, these faithful believers are actually denounced as troublemakers!

The church must be rebuilt, not in terms of any man's wishes, but in terms of the Word of God. If it is to be Christ's church, it must be governed by God's Word and Christ's saving purpose.

November 19, 2024 - Joy is Being with Jesus

"You have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." (John 16:22)

"No one will take your joy from you" because your joy comes from being with Jesus, and the resurrection of Jesus means that you will never die; you will never be cut off from him.

So two things have to be true if your joy is never to be taken from you. One is that the source of your joy lasts forever and the other is that you last forever. If either you or the source of your joy is mortal, your joy will be taken from you.

How many people have settled for just that! Eat, drink, and be merry they say, for tomorrow we die, and that's that (Luke 12:19). Food doesn't last forever, and I don't last forever. So let's make the most of it while we can. What a tragedy!

If you are tempted to think that way, please consider as seriously as you possibly can that if your joy comes from being with Jesus, "No one will take your joy from you" — not in this life, nor in the life to come.

Not life or death, or angels or principalities, or things present or things to come, or powers or height or depth, or anything else in all creation will be able to take our joy from us in Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 8:38–39). Joy in being with Jesus is an unbroken line from now to eternity. It will not be cut off — not by his death or ours.

November 20, 2024 - Pleasures Forevermore

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)

God is not unresponsive to the contrite longing of the soul. He comes and lifts the load of sin and fills our heart with gladness and gratitude. “You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!” (Psalm 30:11–12).

But our joy does not just rise from the backward glance in gratitude. It also rises from the forward glance in hope: “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 42:5–6).

“I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope” (Psalm 130:5).

In the end, the heart longs not for any of God’s good gifts, but for God himself. To see him and know him and be in his presence is the soul’s final feast. Beyond this there is no quest. Words fail. We call it pleasure, joy, delight. But these are weak pointers to the unspeakable experience:

“In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

November 21, 2024 - What is True Freedom

Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31–32)

What is true freedom? Are you free? Here are four things that need to be true if we are going to be fully free.

1. If you don’t have the desire to do a thing, you are not fully free to do it. You may muster the willpower to do what you don’t want to do, but nobody calls that full freedom. It’s not the way we want to live. There is a constraint and pressure on us that we don’t want.
2. And if you have the desire to do something, but no ability to do it, you are not free to do it.
3. And if you have the desire and the ability to do something, but no opportunity to do it, you are not free to do it.
4. And if you have the desire to do something, and the ability to do it, and the opportunity to do it, but it destroys you in the end, you are not fully free — not free indeed — when you do it.

To be fully free, we must have the desire, the ability, and the opportunity to do what will make us happy forever with no regrets, and only Jesus, the Son of God who died and rose for us, can make that possible.

If the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed (John 8:36).

November 22, 2024 - Our Unspeakable Privilege

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” (Exodus 3:14)

One implication of the magnificent name, I AM WHO I AM, is that this infinite, absolute, self-determining God has drawn near to us in Jesus Christ.

In John 8:56–58 Jesus is answering the criticism of the Jewish leaders. He says, “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” The Jews then said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

Could Jesus have taken any more exalted words upon his lips? When Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I am,” he took up all the majestic truth of the name of God, wrapped it in the humility of servanthood, offered himself to atone for all our rebellion, and made a way for us to see the glory of this infinite, absolute, all-sufficient God — without fear.

In Jesus Christ we who are born of God have the unspeakable privilege of knowing Yahweh as our Father — I AM WHO I AM — the God, who exists, whose personality and power is owing solely to himself, who never changes, from whom all power and energy in the universe flows and to whom all creation should conform its life.

May those who know the name of God put their trust in him (Psalm 9:10) as we enjoy this unspeakable privilege.

November 23, 2024 - More Blessed to Love

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” (Matthew 6:19–20)

The message that needs to be shouted from the houses of high finance is this: Secular man, you can get more!

Quit being satisfied with the little 2% yields of pleasure that get eaten up by the moths of inflation and the rust of death. Invest in the blue-chip, high-yield, divinely insured securities of heaven.

Devoting a life to material comforts and security and thrills is like throwing money down a rat hole. But investing a life in the labour of love yields dividends of joy unsurpassed and unending:

“Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. [And thus] provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail” (Luke 12:33).

This message is very good news: Come to Christ, in whose presence are fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. Join us in the labour of Christian love and action. For the Lord has spoken: It is more blessed to love than to live in luxury! More blessed now, and forever.

November 24, 2024 - His Kingdom is Forever

Recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. (Hebrews 10:32–35)

These Christians have earned the right to teach us about costly love. The situation appears to be this: In the early days of their conversion, some of them were imprisoned for their faith. The others were confronted with a difficult choice: Shall we go underground and stay “safe,” or shall we visit our brothers and sisters in prison and risk our lives and property? They chose the way of love and accepted the cost.

But were they losers? No. They lost property and gained joy! They joyfully accepted the loss. In one sense, they denied themselves. It was real and costly. But in another sense, they did not. They chose the way of joy. Evidently, these Christians were motivated for prison ministry the same way the Macedonians (of 2 Corinthians 8:1–9) were motivated to relieve the poor. Their joy in God overflowed in love for others.

They looked at their own lives and said, "The steadfast love of the Lord is better than life" (see Psalm 63:3). They looked at all their possessions and said, "We have a possession in heaven that is better and lasts longer than any of this" (see Hebrews 10:34). Then they looked at each other and said — perhaps sang — something like Martin Luther's great hymn:

Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also, The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.

November 25, 2024 - Hope for Sinners

"I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." (Exodus 33:19)

Moses needed hope that God really could have mercy on a stiff-necked people who had just committed idolatry and scorned the God who brought them out of Egypt.

To give Moses the hope and confidence he needed, God said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious." In other words, "My choices do not depend on the degree of evil or good in man but solely upon my free, sovereign will. Therefore no one can say he is too evil to be shown grace." That would imply God is not free, and election is not unconditional.

The doctrine of unconditional election is the great doctrine of hope for the worst of sinners. It means that when it comes to being a candidate for grace, your background has nothing to do with God's choice. That's good news.

If you have not been born again and brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ, do not sink into hopelessness thinking that the excessive rottenness or hardness of your past life is an insurmountable obstacle to God's gracious work in your life. God loves to magnify the freedom of his grace by saving the worst of sinners.

Turn from your sin; call upon the Lord. Even in this devotion, that you are hearing, he is being gracious to you, and giving you strong encouragement to come to him for mercy. "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool" (Isaiah 1:18). This is great hope for sinners.

November 26, 2024 - Joy set before Him

[Look] to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

Does the example of Jesus contradict that love is the way of joy and that one should choose it for that very reason, lest one be found in begrudging obedience to the Almighty or chafing under the privilege of being a channel of grace or belittling the promised reward? Our verse says clearly that Jesus did not contradict this principle.

The greatest labour of love that ever happened was possible because Jesus pursued the greatest imaginable joy, namely, the joy of being exalted to God's right hand in the assembly of a redeemed people.

The writer gives Jesus as another example, along with the saints of Hebrews 11, of those who are so eager for and confident in the joy God offers, that they reject the "fleeting pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:25) and choose ill-treatment in order to be aligned with God's will.

At least part of what sustained Christ in the dark hours of Gethsemane was the hope of joy beyond the cross. This does not diminish the reality and greatness of his love for us, because the joy in which he hoped was the joy of leading many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

His joy is in our redemption, which leads to God's glory. We share the joy with Jesus and God gets the glory.

November 27, 2024 - Word of God's Power

He said to them, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess." (Deuteronomy 32:46–47)

The word of God is not a trifle; it is a matter of life and death. If you treat the Scriptures as a trifle or as empty words, you forfeit life. Even our physical life depends on God's word, because by his word we were created (Psalm 33:6; Hebrews 11:3), and "he upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3).

Our spiritual life begins by the word of God: "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth" (James 1:18). "You have been born again . . . through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:23).

Not only do we begin to live by God's word, but we also go on living by God's word: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3).

So our physical life is created and upheld by the word of God, and our spiritual life is quickened and sustained by the word of God. The Bible is "no empty word for you" — it is your life! The foundation of all joy is life. Nothing is more fundamental than sheer existence — our creation and our preservation. All this is owing to the word of God's power.

November 28, 2024 - Live Confidently in God

The immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe . . . (Ephesians 1:19)

The omnipotence of God means eternal, unshakable refuge in the everlasting glory of God no matter what happens on this earth, and that confidence is the source and power of radical obedience to the call of God.

Is there anything more freeing, more thrilling, or more strengthening than the truth that God Almighty is your refuge — all day, every day, in all the ordinary and extraordinary experiences of life?

If we believed this, if we really let this truth of God's omnipotence get hold of us, what a difference it will make in our personal lives and in our ministries! How humble and powerful we would become for the saving purposes of God!

The omnipotence of God means refuge for the people of God. When you really believe that your refuge is the omnipotence of God Almighty, there is a joy and a freedom and a power that spills over in a life of radical obedience to Jesus Christ.

I invite you to accept the terms of his covenant of grace: Turn from sin and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; and the omnipotence of God Almighty will be the reverence of your soul, the recompense of your enemies, and the refuge of your life — forever, as we live our lives confidently in God.

November 29, 2024 - Walk in Freedom

I shall walk in freedom, for I have sought your precepts. (Psalm 119:45)

An essential element of joy is freedom. None of us would be happy if we were not free from what we hate and free for what we love. We find true freedom in God's word.

God's word frees us from smallness of mind. "God gave Solomon . . . breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore" (1 Kings 4:29). The word frees us from threatening confinements. "He brought me out into a broad place" (Psalm 18:19).

Jesus says, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). The freedom he has in mind is freedom from the slavery of sin (John 8:34). Or, to put it positively, it is freedom for holiness.

The promises of God's grace provide the power that makes the demands of God's holiness an experience of freedom rather than fear and confinement. Peter described the freeing power of God's promises like this: "Through [his precious and very great promises] you become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" (2 Peter 1:4).

When we trust the promises of God, we sever the root of corruption and sinful desire by the power of a superior promise. How crucial is the word that breaks the power of counterfeit pleasures! And how vigilant we should be to light our paths and load our hearts with the word of God!

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11).

November 30, 2024 - Battle Unbelief

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:16–17)

When I am anxious about getting old, I battle unbelief with the promise, "Even to your old age I am he, and to grey hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save" (Isaiah 46:4).

When I am anxious about dying, I battle unbelief with the promise that "none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Romans 14:7–9).

When I am anxious that I may make shipwreck of my faith and fall away from God, I battle unbelief with the promises, "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6); and, "He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Join in this battle! Let us make war, not with other people, but with our own unbelief. Unbelief in the promises of God is the root of anxiety, which, in turn, is the root of so many other sins. Let's battle unbelief.