**TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:**

**December 2024**

## December 1, 2024 - Delight in the Lord

*Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)*

The quest for pleasure is not even optional, but commanded (in the Psalms) such as in our verse. The psalmists sought to do just this: "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1–2). "My soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1).

The motif of thirsting has its satisfying counterpart when the psalmist says that men "drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; and You give them to drink of the river of Your delights" (Psalm 36:8 NASB).

The goodness of God, the very foundation of worship, is not a thing you pay your respects to out of some kind of disinterested reverence. No, it is something to be enjoyed: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:8).

"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103).

As C.S. Lewis says, God in the Psalms is the "all-satisfying Object." His people adore him unashamedly for the "exceeding joy" they find in him (Psalm 43:4). He is the source of complete and unending pleasure: "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). Let us delight ourselves in the Lord.

## December 2, 2024 - Sovereign, Almighty Love

*"The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." (Exodus 34:6)*

God abounds in steadfast love and faithfulness. At least two images come to mind: The heart of God is like an inexhaustible spring of water that bubbles up love and faithfulness at the top of the mountain. Century after century the spring keeps on flowing. The heart of God is like a volcano that burns so hot with love that it blasts the top off the mountain and flows year after year with the lava of love and faithfulness.

When God uses the word "abounding" — "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" — he wants us to understand and feel that the resources of his love are not limited. You can drink at this mountain spring all day, year after year, generation after generation, and it never runs dry.

You might even risk saying that God is like a government that simply prints more money when there's a need. Inexhaustible, right? Well, there's a difference. God has an infinite treasury of golden love to cover all the currency he prints. The government is in a dream world.

The absolute existence, the sovereign freedom, and the omnipotence of God are the volcanic fullness that explodes in an overflow of love. The sheer magnificence of God means that he does not need us to fill up any deficiency in himself. Instead his infinite self-sufficiency spills over in love to us — to sinners — who need him, and the gift of himself in Jesus.

We can bank on his love precisely because we believe in the absoluteness of his existence, the sovereignty of his freedom, and the limitlessness of his power.

## December 3, 2024 - Joy Forever

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

That's what Jesus prayed the night before he died. Imagine being able to enjoy what is most enjoyable with unbounded energy and passion forever. This is not now our experience. Three things stand in the way of our complete satisfaction in this world.

One is that nothing in this created world has a personal worth great enough to meet the deepest longings of our hearts. Another is that we lack the strength to savour the best treasures to their maximum worth. And a third obstacle standing in the way of complete satisfaction is that our joys here come to an end. Nothing lasts. But if the aim and the prayer of Jesus comes true, all this will change.

If God's pleasure in the Son becomes our pleasure in the Son, then the object of our pleasure, Jesus, will be inexhaustible in personal worth. He will never become boring or disappointing or frustrating. No greater treasure can be conceived than the Son of God.

Moreover, our ability to savour this inexhaustible treasure will not be limited by human weaknesses. We will enjoy the Son of God with the very enjoyment of his Father. That's what Jesus prayed for!

God's delight in his Son will be in us and it will be ours and this will never end, because neither the Father nor the Son ever ends. Their love for each other will be our love for them and therefore our loving them will never die, nor ever diminish as we will then have joy forever.

## December 4, 2024 - The Wisdom of God

*We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:23–24)*

Over against the terrifying news that we have fallen under the condemnation of our Creator and that he is bound by his own righteous character to preserve the worth of his glory by pouring out eternal wrath on our sin, there is the wonderful news of the gospel.

This is a truth no one can ever learn from nature. The truth of the gospel has to be told to neighbours and preached in churches and carried by missionaries. The good news is that God himself has decreed a way to satisfy the demands of his justice without condemning the whole human race.

Hell is one way to settle accounts with sinners and uphold his justice. But there is another way. God provided another way. This is the gospel. The wisdom of God has ordained a way for the love of God to deliver us from the wrath of God without compromising the justice of God. There it is. The gospel.

And what is this wisdom? The death of the Son of God for sinners! The death of Christ is the wisdom of God by which the love of God saves sinners from the wrath of God, all the while upholding and demonstrating the righteousness of God in Christ.

## December 5, 20224 - Serving God

*"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." (Acts 17:24–25)*

We do not glorify God by providing his needs, but by praying that he would provide ours — and trusting him to answer and living in the joy of that all-providing care as we lay down our lives in love for other people.

Here we are at the heart of the good news of the gospel. God's insistence that we ask him to give us help so that he gets glory. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me" (Psalm 50:15). This forces on us the startling fact that we must beware of thinking he needs us. We must beware of serving God, and we must take special care to let him serve us, lest we rob him of his glory.

This sounds very strange. Most of us think serving God is a totally positive thing. We have not considered that serving God may be an insult to him. But meditation on the very meaning of prayer makes this plain.

Which means there is a way to serve God that would belittle him as needy of our service. Oh, how careful we must be not to pre-empt the mighty grace of God in Christ. Jesus said, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He aims to be the servant. He aims to get the glory as the Giver.

## December 6, 2024 - A Jealous God

*"The Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." (Exodus 34:14)*

God is infinitely jealous for the honour of his name and responds with terrible wrath against those whose hearts should belong to him but go after other things, like a spouse running after another lover.

I urge you to listen to this warning. The jealousy of God for your undivided love and devotion will always have the last say. Whatever lures your affections away from God with deceptive attraction will come back to strip you bare and cut you in pieces. It is a horrifying thing to use your God-given life to commit adultery against the Almighty.

But for those of you who have been truly united to Christ and who keep your vows to forsake all others and cleave only to him and live for his honour — for you the jealousy of God is a great comfort and a great hope.

Since God is infinitely jealous for the honour of his name, anything and anybody who threatens the good of his faithful wife will be opposed with divine omnipotence. That's good news for the faithful wife — the faithful people of God.

God's jealousy is a great threat to those who play the harlot and sell their heart to the world and make a laughing stock out of God (James 4:3–4). But his jealousy is a great comfort to those who keep their covenant vows and become strangers and exiles in the world.

## December 7, 2024 - Love One Another

*No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. (Ephesians 5:29–30)*

Paul said two verses earlier that Christ gave himself for us "so that he might present the church to himself in splendour." In two different ways, Paul makes plain that Christ pursued his joy in pursuing the holiness and beauty and happiness of his people.

The union between Christ and his bride is so close ("one flesh") that any good done to her is a good done to himself. Which means that the clear assertion of this text is that the Lord is moved to nourish, cherish, sanctify, and cleanse his bride because in this he finds his joy.

By some definitions, this cannot be love. Love, they say, must be free of self-interest — especially Christlike love, especially Calvary love. Yet what Christ does for his bride, this text plainly calls love: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church . . . " (Ephesians 5:25). Why not let the text define love for us, instead of bringing our definition from ethics or philosophy? According to this text, love is the pursuit of Christ's joy in the holy joy of the beloved.

There is no way to exclude self-interest from love, for self-interest is not the same as selfishness. Selfishness seeks its own private happiness at the expense of others.

Christlike love seeks its happiness in the happiness of others — not at their expense. It will even suffer and die for the beloved in order that its joy might be made full in the life and purity of the beloved. This is how Christ loved us, and this is how he calls us to love one another.

## December 8, 2024 - Hallowed Be Your Name

*"Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." (Matthew 6:9)*

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches that the first priority in praying is to ask our heavenly Father to cause his name to be hallowed. In us. In the church. In the world. Everywhere.

Notice that this is a petition, a request. It is not a declaration or acclamation. It is not an expression of praise, but petition. People misread the Lord's Prayer as if it begins with praise: "Praise God, the Lord's name is hallowed, revered, honoured!" But it is not acclamation. It is supplication. It is a request to God that he would see to it that his own name be hallowed.

It is like another text, Matthew 9:38, where Jesus tells us to pray to the Lord of the harvest that he would send out labourers into his own harvest. It never ceases to amaze me that we, we labourers, should be instructed to ask the owner of the farm, who knows the harvest better than we do, to add on more farm hands.

But isn't this the same thing we have here in the Lord's Prayer — Jesus is telling us to ask God, who is infinitely jealous for the honour of his own name, to see to it that his name be hallowed, which means honoured, revered, exalted as supremely precious?

Bring your heart into line with the jealousy of God to hallow his name, and you will pray with great effect. Let your first and all-determining prayer be for the hallowing of God's name, and your prayers will plug into the power of God's that his name be hallowed.

## December 9, 2024 - Christ and the Church

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31–32)*

Here Paul is quoting Genesis 2:24, which Moses spoke — and Jesus said God spoke through Moses (Matthew 19:5). Paul says this word of God, spoken before the fall into sin, is a reference to Christ and the church and contains therefore a great mystery.

What this implies is that when God engaged to create man and woman and to ordain the union of marriage, he didn't roll the dice or draw straws or flip a coin as to how they might be related to each other. He patterned marriage very purposefully after the relationship between his Son and the church, which he had planned from all eternity.

Therefore, marriage is a mystery — it contains and conceals a meaning far greater than what we see on the outside. God created man male and female and ordained marriage so that the eternal covenant relationship between Christ and his church would be imaged forth in the marriage union.

The inference Paul draws from this mystery is that the roles of husband and wife in marriage are not arbitrarily assigned but are rooted in the distinctive roles of Christ and his church.

This mystery of Christ and the church is the foundation of the pattern of love that Paul describes for marriage. Each should seek to live after the distinctive model of God's pure and glad design for Christ and the church.

## December 10, 2024 - God's Final, Decisive Word

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son. (Hebrews 1:1–2)*

The last days begin with the coming of the Son into the world. We have been living in the last days since the days of Christ — that is, the last days of history as we know it before the final and full establishment of the kingdom of God.

The point for the writer of Hebrews is this: The Word that God spoke by his Son is the decisive Word. By the Son's own design, that word has been captured for the ages in the writings of the New Testament. He explicitly made provision for this, lest every generation be left to itself to dream up the decisive word of God. This word will not be followed in this age by any greater word or replacement word. This is the Word of God — the person of Jesus, the teaching of Jesus, and the work of Jesus, captured by inspiration in the apostolic writings we call the New Testament.

If we complain that we don't hear the Word of God, when we feel a desire to hear the voice of God, and get frustrated that he does not speak in ways that we may crave, what are we really saying? Are we really saying that we have exhausted this final, decisive Word revealed to us so fully and infallibly in the New Testament?

God is calling us to hear his final, decisive, inexhaustible Word — to meditate on it and study it and memorize it and linger over it and soak in it until it saturates us to the centre of our being.

## December 11, 2024 - The Radiance of the Glory

*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. (Hebrews 1:3)*

Jesus relates to God the way radiance relates to glory, or the way the rays of sunlight relate to the sun. Keep in mind that every analogy between God and natural things is imperfect and will distort if you press it. Nevertheless, consider for example,

There is no time that the sun exists without the beams of radiance. They cannot be separated. The radiance is co-eternal with the glory. Christ is co-eternal with God the Father.

The radiance is the glory radiating out. It is not essentially different from the glory. Christ is God standing forth as separate but not essentially different from the Father.

Thus the radiance is eternally begotten, as it were, by the glory — not created or made. So Christ is eternally begotten of the Father, but not made or created.

We see the sun by means of seeing the rays of the sun. So we see God the Father by seeing Jesus. The rays of the sun arrive here about eight minutes after they leave the sun, and the round ball of fire that we see in

the sky is the image — the exact representation — of the sun; not because it is a painting of the sun, but because it is the sun streaming forth in its radiance.

I commend this great Person to you that you might trust in him and love him and worship him. He is alive and sitting at the right hand of God with all power and authority and will one day come in great glory, he is the radiance of the glory of God.

## December 12, 2024 - The Great Missionary Hope

*Even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved. (Ephesians 2:5)*

The great missionary hope is that when the gospel is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, God himself does what man cannot do: he creates the faith that saves. The call of God does what the call of man can't. It raises the dead. It creates spiritual life. It is like the call of Jesus to Lazarus in the tomb, "Come out!" And the dead man obeyed and came out. The call created the obedience by creating life (John 11:43). That is how anyone is saved.

God's call can summon into being things that are not (Romans 4:17). God's call is irresistible in the sense that it can overcome all resistance. It is infallibly effective according to God's purpose — so much so that Paul can say, "Those whom [God] called he also justified" (Romans 8:30), even though we are only justified by our faith.

God's call is so effectual that it infallibly creates the faith through which a person is justified. All the called are justified but none is justified without faith (Romans 5:1). So the call of God cannot fail in its intended effect. It irresistibly brings into being the faith that justifies.

This is what man cannot do. It is impossible. Only God can take out the heart of stone (Ezekiel 36:26). Only God can draw people to the Son (John 6:44, 65). Only God can open the spiritually dead heart so that it gives heed to the gospel (Acts 16:14). The sovereign grace of God, doing the humanly impossible, through the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the great missionary hope.

## December 13, 2024 - Pay Much Closer Attention

*Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. (Hebrews 2:1)*

We all know people that this has happened to. There is no urgency. No vigilance. No focused listening or considering or fixing of their eyes on Jesus. And the result has not been a standing still, but a drifting away.

That is the point here: there is no standing still. The life of this world is not a lake. It is a river. And it is flowing downward to destruction. If you do not listen earnestly to Jesus and consider him daily and fix your eyes on him hourly, then you will not stand still; you will go backward. You will float away from Christ.

Drifting is a deadly thing in the Christian life. And the remedy for it, according to Hebrews 2:1, is: Pay close attention to what you have heard. That is, consider what God is saying in his Son Jesus. Fix your eyes on what God is saying and doing in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

This is not a hard swimming stroke to learn. The only thing that keeps us from swimming against sinful culture is not the difficulty of the stroke, but our sinful desire to go with the flow.

Let's not complain that God has given us a hard job. Listen, consider, fix the eyes — this is not what you would call a hard job description. In fact, it is not a job description. It is a solemn invitation to be satisfied in Jesus so that we do not get lured downstream by deceitful desires.

## December 14, 2024 - Filling Up What Is Lacking

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. (Colossians 1:24)*

Christ has prepared a love offering for the world by suffering and dying for sinners. It is a perfect sacrifice. It pays in full for all the sins of all his people. Nothing can be added to make a better gift. It is lacking in nothing — except one thing, a personal presentation by Christ himself to the nations of the world.

God's answer to this lack is to call the people of Christ to make a personal presentation of the afflictions of Christ to the world. In doing this, we "[fill] up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." We finish what they were designed for, namely, a personal presentation to the people who do not know about their infinite worth.

Paul says that it is his own sufferings that fill up Christ's afflictions. Paul exhibits the sufferings of Christ by suffering himself for those he is trying to win to Christ. In his sufferings they are to see Christ's sufferings.

Here is the astounding upshot: God intends for the afflictions of Christ to be presented to the world through the afflictions of his people.

God really means for the body of Christ, the church, to experience some of the suffering he experienced so that when we proclaim the cross as the way to life, people will see the marks of the cross in us and feel the love of the cross from us.

## December 15, 2024 - Joy is Suffering

*"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." (Matthew 5:11–12)*

Christianity says that there are different ways to rejoice in suffering as a Christian. All of them are to be pursued as an expression of the all-sufficient, all-satisfying grace of God.

One way of rejoicing in suffering comes from fixing our minds firmly on the greatness of the reward that will come to us in the resurrection. The effect of this kind of focus is to make our present pain seem small in comparison to what is coming: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16–18). In making the suffering tolerable, rejoicing over our reward will also make love possible.

Another way of rejoicing in suffering comes from the effects of suffering on our assurance of hope. Joy in affliction is rooted not only in the hope of resurrection and reward, but also in the way suffering itself works to deepens that hope. Paul says, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Romans 5:3–4).

Paul's joy is not merely rooted in his great reward, but in the effect of suffering which solidifies the hope of that reward. So whether we focus on the riches of the reward or the refining effects of suffering, God's purpose is that our joy in suffering be sustained.

## December 16, 2024 - God is Most Glorified

*He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. (Hebrews 11:26)*

We do not choose suffering simply because we are told to, but because the One who tells us to describes it as the path to everlasting joy.

He beckons us into the obedience of suffering not to demonstrate the strength of our devotion to duty, or to reveal the vigour of our moral resolve, or to prove the heights of our tolerance for pain, but rather to manifest, in childlike faith, the infinite preciousness of his all-satisfying promises — the all-satisfying greatness and beauty of his own glory as the fulfillment of all of them.

This is the essence of Christian living. In the pursuit of joy through suffering, we magnify the all-satisfying worth of the Source of our joy. God himself shines as the brightness at the end of our tunnel of pain.

If we do not communicate that he is the goal and the ground of our joy in suffering, then the very meaning of our suffering will be lost. The meaning is this: God himself is gain. That's the meaning of our suffering.

The chief end of man is to glorify God. And it is truer in suffering than anywhere else that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

## December 17, 2024 - A Great Salvation

*How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? (Hebrews 2:3)*

Is there a sense of greatness in your mind about your salvation? Or do you neglect it? Do you respond to the greatness of your salvation? Or do you treat it the way you treat your last will and testament, or the title to your car, or the deed on your house? You signed it once and it is in a file drawer somewhere, but it is not a really great thing in your mind. You rarely think about it. It has no daily effect on you. Basically, you neglect it.

But when you neglect your great salvation, what are you really neglecting? Here's what he is saying when he says, "Don't neglect your great salvation!" Don't neglect being loved by God. Don't neglect being forgiven and accepted and protected and strengthened and guided by almighty God. Don't neglect the sacrifice of Christ's life on the cross. Don't neglect the free gift of righteousness imputed by faith. Don't neglect the removal of God's wrath and the reconciled smile of God. Don't neglect the indwelling Holy Spirit and the fellowship and friendship of the living Christ. Don't neglect the radiance of God's glory in the face of Jesus. Don't neglect the free access to the throne of grace. Don't neglect the inexhaustible treasure of God's promises.

This is indeed a great salvation.

## December 18, 2024 - Draw Near to God

*[God] gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. (James 4:6–8)*

James teaches us that there is a precious experience of "more grace" and God "drawing near" to us. Surely this is a wonderful experience — more grace and a special nearness of God. But I ask: is this experience of

the love of God unconditional? No. It is not. It is conditional on our humbling ourselves and our drawing near to God.

There are precious experiences of the love of God that require that we fight pride, seek humility, and cherish the nearness of God. Those are the conditions. Of course, the conditions themselves are the work of God in us. But they are no less conditions we fulfill.

If this is true, I fear that the unqualified, biblically careless reassurances today that God's love is all unconditional may stop people from doing the very things the Bible says they need to do in order to enjoy all the peace that they so desperately crave.

Let us proclaim, loud and clear, that the divine love of election, and the divine love of Christ's death, and the divine love of our regeneration — our new birth — are all absolutely unconditional.And let us declare untiringly the good news that our justification is based on the worth of Christ's obedience and sacrifice, not ours. Romans 5:19

But let us also declare the biblical truth that the fullest and sweetest experiences of the grace of God and the nearness of God will be enjoyed by those who daily humble themselves and draw near to God.

## December 19, 2024 - Stay Our Minds on God

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusts in thee" (Is. 26:3)*

The modern age is replete with resources, institutions, and technologies, yet modern man battles with worry, anxiety, and endless fretting about what he cannot control. For Christians, worry should be absent, but one might ask, "How can you suggest we do not worry when life is fraught with uncertainties, trials, and tribulations?"

Our Lord was clear that worry cannot add a single cubit to one's stature (Matt. 6:27). This means worry is powerless to change the circumstances we're concerned with, yet we devote our "heart, soul, mind, and strength" to it.

The greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to make so much room there for worry is to walk in contradiction to God's best for us.

If we were to stay our minds on God, it would be our greatest expression of trust because we would not give our circumstances any consideration when they are begging for attention.

If we practice this form of daily devotion, we not only experience His "perfect peace," but we also drive out the darkness from ourselves and make room for the light of God's law, which should be our meditation (Psalm 119:15). We cannot call our worrying, anxiety, and fretfulness a sign of godly concern and faith without at the same time implying that our Lord is a liar.

## December 20, 2024 - God's Sovereignty Over Satan

*Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. (James 5:11)*

Behind all disease and disability is the ultimate will of God. Not that Satan is not involved — he is probably always involved in one way or another with destructive purposes (Acts 10:38). But his power is not decisive. He cannot act without God's permission.

That is one of the points of Job's sickness. The text makes it plain that when disease came upon Job, "Satan . . . struck Job with loathsome sores" (Job 2:7). His wife urged him to curse God. But Job said, "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). And again the inspired author of the book (just as he did in 1:22) commends Job by saying, "In all this Job did not sin with his lips."

This is a right view of God's sovereignty over Satan. Satan is real and may have a hand in our calamities, but not the final hand, and not the decisive hand. James makes clear that God had a good purpose in all Job's afflictions.

So, even though Satan was involved, the ultimate purpose was God's, and it was "compassionate and merciful." For God's elect children, Satan cannot destroy us, and God turns all his attacks finally against him and for us, all of which shows God's sovereignty over satan.

## December 21, 2024 - Because of Unbelief

*To whom did [God] swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. (Hebrews 3:18–19)*

Even though the people of Israel saw the waters of the Red Sea divide and walked through the Sea on dry ground, the moment they got thirsty, their hearts were hard against God and they did not trust him to take care of them. They cried out against him and said that life in Egypt was better.

That is what the book of Hebrews was written to prevent. How many professing Christians make a start with God. They hear that their sins can be forgiven and that they can escape hell and go to heaven. And they say: "What have I got to lose? I'll believe."

But then later, the test comes — a season of no water in the wilderness. A weariness with manna. And subtly a growing craving for the fleeting pleasures of Egypt.

This is a terrifying condition to be in — to find yourself no longer interested in Christ and his word and prayer and worship and missions and living for the glory of God. And to find all the fleeting pleasures of this world more attractive than the things of the Spirit.

If that is your situation, I plead with you to listen to the Holy Spirit speaking in this text. "They were unable to enter because of unbelief!" Give heed to the word of God. Do not harden your heart. Wake up to the deceitfulness of sin. Consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our great confession, and hold fast to your confidence and hope in him.

## December 22, 2024 - The Marvel of Creation

*Someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each of the seeds its own body. (1 Corinthians 15:35–38)*

Paul is comparing how a seed is planted in one form and comes forth in another form with a "body" different from all other bodies. This is a remarkable statement of God's intimate involvement in the way God designs each seed to bring forth its own unique plant. Paul is showing how he takes God's intimate involvement with creation for granted.

Psalm 94:9 says, “He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?” The psalmist assumes that God was the designer of the eye and that he designed the way the ear is planted in the head to do its hearing work.

When we marvel at the wonders of the human eye and the remarkable structure of the ear, we are not to marvel at the processes of chance, but at the mind and the creativity and the power of God.

It is not as though in some impersonal way God set it all in motion a billion years ago. Rather, he is the one who owns it because he made it. It is today his handiwork and bears the marks of his Creator claim on it.

This should call you to be utterly God-conscious and God-exalting and God-saturated in all your observation and admiration of the marvel of creation.

## December 23, 2024 - Change Is Possible

*Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:24)*

Christianity means change is possible. Deep, fundamental change. It is possible to become tender-hearted when once you were callous and insensitive. It is possible to stop being dominated by bitterness and anger. It is possible to become a loving person, no matter what your background has been.

The Bible assumes that God is the decisive factor in making us what we should be. With wonderful bluntness, the Bible says, “Put away . . . all malice” and be “tenderhearted” (Ephesians 4:31–32). It does not say, “If you can . . . ” Or, “If your parents were tenderhearted . . . ” Or, “If you have not been terribly abused . . . ” It says, “Be . . . tenderhearted.”

This is wonderfully freeing. It frees us from the terrible fatalism that says change is impossible for me. It frees us from mechanistic views that make our background our destiny.

And God’s commands always come with freeing, life-changing truth to believe. For example, God adopted us as his children. We have a new Father and a new family. (Matthew 23:9). God loves us as his children. We are “loved children” (Ephesians 5:1). God has forgiven us in Christ. Be tenderhearted and forgiving just as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32). Christ loved you and gave himself up for you. “Walk in love, as Christ loved [you]” (Ephesians 5:2).

Don’t be a fatalist. Be a Christian. Change is possible. God is alive. Christ is risen. The promises are true.

## December 24, 2024 - The Power of the Word

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)*

The word of God is our only hope. The good news of God’s promises and the warnings of his judgment are sharp enough and living enough and active enough to penetrate to the bottom of my heart and show me that the lies of sin are indeed lies.

Abortion will not create a wonderful future for me. Neither will cheating, or dressing provocatively, or throwing away my sexual purity, or keeping quiet about dishonesty at work, or divorce, or vengeance. And what rescues me from this deception is the powerful word of God.

The word of God’s promise is like throwing open a great window of bright morning sunlight on the cockroaches of sin masquerading as satisfying pleasures in our hearts. God has given you his good news, his

promises, his word to protect you from the deep deceptions of sin that try to harden your heart and lure it away from God and lead it to destruction.

Be of good cheer in your battle to believe. Because the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, it will penetrate deeper than any deception of sin has ever gone and reveal what is truly valuable and what is truly worth trusting and loving. Thank God for his powerful word.

## December 25, 2024 - God's Indescribable Gift

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

How do we practically receive reconciliation and exult in God? We do it through Jesus Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4–6, Paul describes conversion in two ways. In verse 4, he says it is seeing "the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." And in verse 6, he says it is seeing "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In either case you see the point. We have Christ, the image of God, and we have God in the face of Christ.

To exult in God, we exult in what we see and know of God in the portrait of Jesus Christ. And this comes to its fullest experience when the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, as Romans 5:5 says.

So here's the Christmas point. Not only did God purchase our reconciliation through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:10), and not only did God enable us to receive that reconciliation through the Lord Jesus Christ, but even now we exult in God himself, by the Spirit, through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:11).

Look to Jesus this Christmas. Receive the reconciliation that he purchased. Don't put the gift on the shelf unopened.

## December 26, 2024 - Refreshment to Your Bones

*Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. This will bring healing to your body and refreshment to your bones. Proverbs 3:7-8*

Since its inception, the Church has been known for its care for the poor, the sick, and those deemed socially "untouchable." This disposition was a way of following and mimicking Jesus Christ, whose life and example challenged the social norms of the ancient world. Christians across cultures and centuries followed suit, especially in times of plague, famine, and natural disaster. Eventually, this behaviour changed the world. The modern health care system, disaster relief work, and many other charities exist because the Christian ideal that all people have dignity was embodied by people of faith.

According to a recent Religion News Service article, Christians are at the forefront of helping those with mental health struggles. New research from New York's largest healthcare system has found that Christian clergy, faith leaders, and other "nonspecialists" are often more effective than specialists "in treating and even preventing symptoms of anxiety and depression."

Much of what is labelled "psychological trauma" is, in fact, spiritual brokenness. The fundamental problem people face is relational brokenness, especially the relationship for which we were ultimately created. The answer is found in reconciliation, first and foremost with our Creator. In other words, our healing must

ultimately be turned outward and upward. The radical turn inward that characterizes so much modern mental healthcare today will ultimately fail to help. Counselling and even medication may be necessary but does not alleviate our need for a Saviour. In Christ, we find "healing to [our] flesh and refreshment to [our] bones".

## December 27, 2024 - We All Need Help

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

Every one of us needs help. We are not God. We have needs. We have weaknesses. We have confusion. We have limitations of all kinds. We need help.

But every one of us has something else: We have sins. And therefore at the bottom of our hearts we know that we do not deserve the help we need. And so we feel trapped.

I need help to live my life, and to handle death, and to cope with eternity — help with my family, spouse, children, loneliness, job, health and finances. But I don't deserve the help I need.

So, what can I do? I can try to deny it all and be a superman or a superwoman, who doesn't need any help. Or I can try to drown it all and throw my life into a pool of sensual pleasures. Or I can simply give way to the paralysis of despair.

But God declares over this hopeless situation: Jesus Christ became a High Priest to shatter that despair with hope, and to humble that superman or superwoman, and to rescue that drowning wretch.

We all need help. None of us deserves the help we need. Look at what God says. Because we have a Great High Priest, the throne of God is a throne of grace. And the help we get at that throne of grace is mercy and grace to help in time of need. Not deserved help but gracious help.

## December 28, 2024 - Death Is Gain

*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21) How is it "gain" to die?*

1) Our spirits will be made perfect (Hebrews 12:22–23).

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.

2) We will be relieved of the pain of this world (Luke 16:24–25).

"[The rich man] called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.'"

3) We will be given profound rest in our souls (Revelation 6:9–11).

I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer.

## December 29, 2024 - Awakening of Humble Gratitude

*But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful . . . (2 Timothy 3:1–2)*

Notice how ingratitude goes with pride, abuse, and insubordination. In another place Paul says, "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking . . . but instead let there be thanksgiving" (Ephesians 5:4). So, it seems that gratitude, thankfulness, is the opposite of ugliness and violence.

The feeling of gratitude is a humble feeling, not a proud one. It is other-exalting, not self-exalting. And it is glad-hearted, not angry or bitter. Bitter thankfulness is a contradiction in terms.

The key to unlocking a heart of thankfulness and overcoming bitterness and ugliness and disrespect and violence is a strong belief in God, the Creator and Sustainer and Provider and Hope-giver. If we do not believe we are deeply indebted to God for all we have and hope to have, then the very spring of gratitude has gone dry.

The rise of violence and sacrilege and ugliness and insubordination in the last times is a God-issue. The basic issue is a failure to feel gratitude at the upper levels of our dependence.

When the high spring of gratitude to God fails and when gratitude goes, the sovereignty of the self- condones more and more corruption for its pleasure. Pray for a great awakening of humble gratitude.

## December 30, 2024 - Spiritual Maturity

*Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:14)*

Now, this is amazing. Don't miss it. It could save you years of wasted living. What this verse is saying is that if you want to become mature and understand and appreciate the more solid teachings of the word, then the rich, nutritional, precious milk of God's gospel promises must transform your moral senses — your spiritual mind — so that you can discern between good and evil. Getting ready to feast on all God's word is not first an intellectual challenge; it is first a moral challenge.

The pathway to maturity and to solid biblical food is not first becoming an intelligent person but becoming an obedient person. What you do with alcohol and sex and money and leisure and food and computers, and the way you treat other people, has more to do with your capacity for solid food than where you go to school or what books you read.

This is so important because in our highly technological society we are prone to think that education — especially intellectual education — is the key to maturity. There are many Ph.D.'s who choke in their spiritual immaturity on the things of God. And there are many less-educated saints who are deeply mature and can feed with pleasure and profit on the deepest things of God's word and are spiritually mature.

## December 31, 2024 - I Will Bless You

*Since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." (Hebrews 6:13–14)*

There is one Person whose worth and honour and dignity and preciousness and greatness and beauty and reputation is more than all other values combined — ten thousand times more — namely, God himself. So, when God takes an oath, he swears by himself.

If he could have gone higher, he would have gone higher. Why? To give you strong encouragement in your hope that he would bless you. What God is saying in swearing by himself is that it is as impossible that he will break his word of promise to bless us as it is that he will ever despise himself.

God is the greatest value in the universe. There is nothing more valuable or wonderful than God. So, God swears by God. And in doing that he says, “I mean for you to have as much confidence in me as it is possible to have.” For if more were possible, Hebrews 6:13 says, he would have given us that. “Since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself.”

Now this is our God, the God who is reaching as high as he can reach to inspire your unshakable hope in him. So, flee to God for refuge. Turn from all the superficial, self-defeating hopes of the world, and put your hope in God. There is nothing and no one like God as a refuge and a rock of hope. So, believe him when he says, “I Will Bless You”.