



# THE GOSPEL IN LIFE

23 Devotions Connecting Life with the Gospel

faith  
FAITH BIBLE SEMINARY

## A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

**Y**ou hold in your hands the devotional fruit of several Faith Bible Seminary pastoral students. The first two years of training in the FBS Masters of Divinity (M.Div.) program focus on understanding the original languages and theology of the Bible. The third (and final) year of the program focuses on taking knowledge of the Scriptures and equipping believers in Jesus Christ to grow in their love of their Savior and to live out their faith in practical ways.

When the Apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthian church, he ended his letter by reminding his fellow-believers of the gospel message. He spoke of it not only as a message which they received, but as one “in which [they] stand” (1 Cor 15:1). As believers in Jesus Christ, the truth of the gospel—that God offered His Son as a sacrifice for us so that we may spend eternity knowing and loving our Savior—should guide how we live every day.

The 23 devotions contained in this booklet look at daily situations and struggles that we face as believers and answer the question of how the gospel intersects with them. The students who wrote them have been challenged in their studies and counseling training to look at Scripture and see how it applies to life in practical ways. This devotional booklet was written for your encouragement in Jesus Christ, and it is our prayer that you will taste, see, and delight in Him and His redemptive love in a refreshing way today.

I would encourage you to read one devotion per day and rejoice in the good news of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Pastor Brent Aucoin*  
President, FBS



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# THE GOSPEL AND HUMAN WEAKNESS

“Weak” is a word that no one wishes to describe themselves with. Nevertheless, it is an unavoidable reality of living in a fallen world. After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God sent a curse on creation, bringing disease and toil to sinful man. After that, sinful men spread throughout the world, performing grievous atrocities against each other.

We still experience the fruits of this today. Surely you or someone you love has suffered from disease, whether that is cancer, COVID-19, influenza, or something else. Our Lord also promised that we as Christians would experience persecution in this world, which we have witnessed on television in these past decades. We don’t desire these experiences—and we certainly don’t ask for them—but they are an inevitable part of living in our fallen world.

That is what Paul deals with in this passage. He is given a “thorn in the flesh.” Regardless of what exactly this was, the point is that Paul was suffering, and he maximized this opportunity to glorify God amidst his weakness.

Our culture today tells us that weakness is to be shunned. But that is not Paul’s mind. Paul found strength and gladness in his weakness. We don’t normally use the word “glad” in the same sentence as “weakness” or “suffering.” But for Paul, this is not only the correct response but even the natural or logical response to his experience of suffering.

Yes, we should mourn our suffering, but we should also rejoice. Why? Because God’s power is made perfect in our weakness. When we receive a frightening diagnosis, God’s power is made perfect. When we receive insults from the world because of our faith, God’s power is made perfect. When a natural disaster strikes our home, God’s power is made perfect.

Or when we stand on the brink of death, God's power is made perfect. Our weakness provides a stage in which God's strength can be displayed more intensely.

So, what should we do in such situations? Set our minds on the power of God. We may not like it, but we do not have the power to change such circumstances. That power belongs to God alone. Paul prayed that God would take away this thorn in his flesh, but as in Paul's situation, God's plan for our lives does not always include deliverance from our weakness—at least, not immediately.

But we still have hope, for two millennia ago, the Son of God came to earth in the form of man, beset with weakness. He endured the vilest form of “weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities.” He carried the very cross on which He would cease to breathe. He didn't have to die; He didn't have to endure weakness. But He took on our human weakness so that through Him we might display and inherit the power of God. Christian, look to the cross! There at the cross, the greatest display of human weakness unites with the greatest display of divine power.

And when Christ returns, we will be raised in strength. We will have bodies that do not deteriorate. We will no longer suffer persecution. We will behold the fullness of God's power. And we will rejoice forever for His great power displayed through weakness. So next time you are discouraged with a diagnosis, a disaster, or with persecution, look to Christ and remember that the strongest Man to ever live became weak so that through Him we might be made strong.



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## THE GOSPEL AND INTEGRITY

“**A**rise, Sir Lucan, knight of the round table!” The royal hall burst into cheers as the kneeling armored knight stood up before King Arthur. Sir Lucan had pledged his fealty, his love, and his life to the king, and he was now appointed as a revered member of the esteemed round table counsel. This was the greatest moment and honor of his life.

This sounds like a great start to a story of brave knights and battles, of defending the weak and promoting justice. Stories of heroes like this capture our imaginations because of the adventure and, for me at least, because of the great picture of lived integrity and high honor that some men and women had for their God and their king.

This picture of being knighted into King Arthur’s inner circle can be seen as an analogy to the moment of salvation, where a commoner is brought into close fellowship with the King and asked to sit at His table and be His representative and warrior in the realm. But just like with a knight’s code of honor, the gospel is not something we respond to only once, it is rather what should be guiding our steps and strengthening our hearts every day afterwards.

Integrity can be defined as the alignment of actions, words, and beliefs based on truth and gospel principles. When the gospel is the foundation of our lives, it transforms our worldview and shapes our character and actions, resulting in integrity. Second Corinthians 5:17 points out how the redeemed are new creations in Christ. This is not a process that we must work out in our own strength; this is the position we have been knighted to, the absolute truth that is declared over us in the Lord. This is glorious news!

But what now? If you have accepted Christ and embraced His new life (as I pray you have), then what does living out the gospel really look like every day? According to 1 John 1:7, it looks like living in the light. When we embrace our new identity in Christ, we should live in the truth of who we now are, truly living in integrity.

If a pink flamingo lives as though he is a rocky mountain, not only is that absurd, but he is also wasting his life as a flamingo and is living against reality. If a Christian is a new creation filled with life and light, then that person should not live as though he is dead and dark. But that is what anyone does who turns away from the gospel to go back to live in their sin! That is choosing a way contrary to reality. To treat the gospel like a one-time oath that doesn't need to be lived out is to choose to live in a lie.

Like knights of old, we are called to live out the truth of the position we have been given, and we have armor and weaponry in the gospel to fight for integrity through Christ. The gospel is the code of honor that describes our reality. To actively embrace the gospel is to live in it, to let the reality of our position in Christ inform our daily decisions, empowering us to face challenges and shine as witnesses to Christ's transformative power.



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## THE GOSPEL AND HEARTBREAK

**Y**ahweh is a God of intimate covenant relationship. It should be no surprise, fellow image bearer, that you have the capacity to intensely desire and experience love, passion, romance, and commitment. From the very beginning, God's good plan for man and woman was for them to come together in marriage. In a most beautiful and unique way, God designed marriage to celebrate and reflect the sacrificial covenant love that Jesus has for His Church. Chances are that you desire and hope to be married if you are not already. According to God's design, that is a good desire to pursue for His glory. So, as the Lord equips you, pursue it with joy!

Nevertheless, this pursuit is difficult in a fallen world. Heartbreak, rejection, and waiting are all too familiar. You may know the sting of unrequited love or feel discouraged when the hope of marriage seems further away than ever. It's no strange thing to wrestle with fear and despair, wondering if you'll ever experience the joy of marriage. Proverbs 13:12 captures this struggle well: "deferred hope makes the heart sick," leaving us crushed and weary. Yet it also points to the joy and flourishing that comes when good desires are fulfilled. So, what do we do when a relationship doesn't work out the way we hoped? What do we do when the hope of marriage feels out of reach? It's all too easy to feel hopeless in the face of heartbreak.

Yet, there is hope. Don't lose heart! The gospel speaks a far greater hope into the despair of the brokenhearted. Just as deferred hopes pain the heart, our sin separated us from God, leaving us spiritually heartbroken and condemned to eternal judgment. But Jesus, the Son of God, stepped into our despair. He was despised, rejected, and forsaken in our place so He could restore us to a loving relationship with God. Simply out of His faithful covenant love for us, Jesus redeemed us through His sacrifice. We certainly didn't earn His love; He loved us first! Indeed, by faith in Him,



Christ becomes our ultimate desire fulfilled—our eternal Tree of Life.

Perhaps you're in a season where marriage feels out of reach, or you carry the pain of past heartbreaks. It's okay to grieve. Lament to the Lord and mourn hope deferred, but don't lose sight of the truth. Your worth and hope are not tied to marriage or any earthly relationship. They are ultimately found in Christ, who never changes. You are already deeply loved and cherished in Him. His love for you is eternal, and He has called you His own. That truth will never change.

Even if marriage doesn't happen in this life, a far greater wedding awaits. Jesus didn't stay in the grave. Resurrected, He now stands as our perfect Bridegroom, preparing us for the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. On that final day, we'll be united to Him in perfection forever. Until then, rest in His faithful, steadfast love. So, if you're feeling hopeless or burdened by past relationships, take heart. You are loved beyond measure. Jesus' love is your unbreakable anchor, and His commitment to you is eternal. Let that truth fill you with hope and peace. No matter what happens in this life, Jesus loves you forever!



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## THE GOSPEL AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jesus gives a stark teaching in his Sermon on the Mount that challenges the status quo for those who claim to be His disciples. In contrast to the teaching of the day, which minimized the Law and used human traditions to dilute its intent, Jesus brings back in full force the purpose of the Law (Gal. 3:23-24) to teach us that righteousness is only found in Christ.

Much like the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, we can sink back into a works-based righteousness mindset. We think that we must fulfill the “letter of the law” or else we will not be right before God. Not only does this refer to entering the Kingdom in a salvific sense but also to our standing before God amid the already not-yet tension as disciples. This is exaggerated by the world in which we live.

We are surrounded by a works-based system. Think of the economy: you work and receive a paycheck. If you want to purchase something, you give money in exchange for it. You do something nice for someone, and they expect to pay you back in kind. Someone blesses you, and you struggle with the need to be in their indebtedness. So, it’s no wonder that a mentality like that has made its way into how we relate to God. It’s because it feeds our need for self-worth and self-reliance. It fuels our pride. This is what was fueling the Pharisees and teachers of the Law and it is what led them to be so focused on their work. This mindset is extremely burdensome. It causes the never-ending hamster wheel that we must keep on preforming. We must keep on doing good work without an attainable end. It fuels the wildfire of anxiety and covers us in the darkest doubt. It is a weight that we were never meant to carry. It’s one that is looming over us and will ultimately crush us.

However, Jesus says that your righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. These were the religious elites. The

ones who outwardly had everything put together and were the most disciplined. Those who devoted their entire lives to righteousness. Think of the most righteous or godly person you know. The ones you know you could never be like but want to. Maybe it's a pastor, a bible teacher, a parent, or a family friend. Jesus says that unless your righteousness surpasses them you won't make it. You will not enter the kingdom of heaven. If even their righteous can't get them into the kingdom then what hope do we have?

Here is where the good news of the Gospel of Jesus comes in. You are right in questioning who can fulfill the Law if surpassing righteousness is the standard. Jesus' surpassing righteousness is given to us in His sacrificial death on the cross. It is when we believe in faith in His finished work that God imputes or transfers His righteousness to us. God made Jesus sin for us, so that we can become righteous (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus's surpassing righteousness becomes our surpassing righteousness. We exchange our heavy, unattainable and ambiguous burden with His light already attained and specific one (Matt. 11:28-30). So, when we are tempted to think we have something to do with our own righteousness, we remember Jesus and are delightfully humbled. When we doubt God's love for us when we sin, we marvel at His grace.



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## THE GOSPEL AND DISCOURAGEMENT

Every one of us goes through times when we find ourselves in a period of discouragement. The Christian life can be tough and when we stumble repeatedly into sin, we might want to give up hope. But when a faithful brother or sister in Christ lets us know that they are praying for us, it can really boost our spirits. Their words let us know that they notice what we are going through, that they care for us, and that they desire to see God preserve us through our struggles.

Now, while we can find encouragement in the prayers of our brothers and sisters, how much more should we be encouraged by the prayers of our Savior himself? We may be discouraged by the sins with which we have been struggling for far too long, but because we are Christians, we can find hope in the truth that the sins that so often discourage us have been paid for through the death of Christ. But not only that, after Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day, he ascended to the Father's right hand. This is also a source of great encouragement because of what he does there. He prays for us!

Hebrews 7:25 is a verse that speaks of Christ's perfect success rate as a savior. All who draw near to God through him will be saved. And the salvation of his people is guaranteed in large part because he "always lives to intercede for them." The preservation, protection, and ultimate salvation of us as Christians is secure because Jesus prays for us. He, as a faithful elder brother, takes notice of our struggles and cares for us. So when we are tempted to despair because of our sin and while we might not know how we are going to endure, we can find great encouragement in the truth of Christ's intercession. As the perfect high priest, having made the perfect sacrifice, he has entered God's holy presence to pray that we might be preserved and sustained to the end. This is good news because Jesus always receives what he asks for.

There are several reasons why God might not hear the prayers of an individual. It could be due to unrighteousness, it could be that they fail to pray in God's will, or they ask with wrong motives. But when it comes to Christ, we know that he is "the Righteous One", that he always does the will of his Father, and longs to glorify him. So, if God is going to hear the prayers of anyone, it is going to be Jesus.

So, when we find ourselves discouraged because of our sin, we can find encouragement in Christ's intercession. Why? Because he prays for us and he always gets what he asks for! It is the Father's will that all who believe in the Son be kept secure till the Last Day, and the Son asks for this. So, while we might feel discouraged, and we might not feel as though we have the strength to endure, be encouraged! We have one who has gone before us, cares for us, atoned for our sins, and is seated at the right hand of God and has prayed that we might be preserved, strengthened, and kept until the Last Day.



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## THE GOSPEL AND ANXIETY

Each person values different things in their lives. Some care about what schools their kids attend, others the opinions of those around them, and yet others the political climate of the country. The truth is that everyone assigns value to certain things that they deem as important, spending time and other resources to accomplish desired outcomes.

Now, these things are not inherently bad; in fact, they can be used for good. For example, desiring success is not a bad thing but allowing it to consume and drive your affections and attention is sinful. So, how should we respond when we begin to become overwhelmed with despair when these things do not happen as we think they should?

This is one of the things that Jesus talks about in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 6:25–34, he addresses a term that means to be overly concerned with or troubled for something: anxiety. At its core, anxiety demonstrates a lack of trust in God to provide in the manner he sees fit. In discussing this heart posture, Jesus points out how to combat anxiety and reorient our heart's affections and mind's attention.

Being anxious is pointless when we understand who is in control. Overwhelming concern for the physical things of the world does not add a single hour to our lives. In fact, it distracts us from being able to live on mission. Jesus points out how God provides for the birds of the air and the grass of the field and yet, he still values humanity more. In his sovereignty, God knows our needs and gives us what we need when we need it.

Take time to reorient your heart's desires. When our hearts and minds are so focused on spending energy to get what we think we need or desire, we display the idols of our hearts. Taking time to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness is essential to reorienting your heart's desires. Many times, anxiety reveals misplaced desires, and we can get so laser fo-

cused on what we want that we miss out on what God is trying to do right in front of us and inside our hearts. When we take intentional time to ask God for help in wanting what he wants and living the ways he has called us to live, our desires will more closely align with his.

Focus on today and not tomorrow. Often, when anxiety feels most overwhelming, it is because we focus on the “not yet” instead of what is right in front of us. We cannot control what happens tomorrow and obsessing over it only leads to fear and despair. Instead of focusing on tomorrow, assess how you can refocus your mind’s attention on today’s problems instead of worrying about what has not taken place.

God is sovereign over all things and knows our deepest desires. He provides exactly what we need, and we can trust in his steadfast nature. Because of the power of the gospel in our lives, God changes our hearts to love the things that he loves and realign our desires and will with his, helping us see the world the way that he designed us to. Rather than being concerned with what may or may not happen, we are able to trust in God and fully live our lives on mission for him and his glory. Jesus Christ is the anchor of our souls and no matter what the world throws our way, we can trust in his unfailing character and love to guide us!



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## THE GOSPEL AND PARENTING

Parenting is a beautiful yet challenging calling. Sometimes, as parents, we mistakenly believe that raising children is simply about providing food, shelter, education, and taking them to church. However, this falls short of the life God has called us to. Jesus shows us that God desires intentionality in every part of our lives, including how we raise our children. God calls us to a purpose-driven approach, guiding our children not only in practical needs but in faith, wisdom, and character. Scripture reminds us to lead with purpose, faithfulness, and diligence. When we attempt to parent without relying on God, we end up striving in our own strength—struggling to bear fruit apart from the true source of life.

I want to present two different approaches to parenting: one that is unintentional and relies solely on personal strength, lacking direction and purpose; and the other that is marked by discipline, faithfulness, and a commitment to intentional guidance.

The story of Samson's parents in Judges 13 offers a sober illustration of what happens when we fail to depend on God. Even with miraculous intervention in Samson's birth, his parents did not raise him with the intentionality and faithfulness God required. This raises doubts about whether he was truly taught to walk in God's ways as his parents were commanded. Although God declared that Samson would be a Nazarite, it's clear that he grew up without a strong understanding of how to live according to the Lord's instructions. Samson's life, marked by poor choices and wasted potential, reflects the consequences of parenting without a heart fully aligned with God's purposes. Like Samson's parents, we may find ourselves leaning on cultural norms or our own abilities, missing God's purpose for our children.

In contrast, the story of Joseph, Jesus's earthly father, shows what it looks like to parent from a place of obedience and faith. When Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy, he responded with humble trust, following God's leading even when it required sacrifice. "And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him" (Matthew 1:24). The same happened in chapter two, twice, in verses 13-14 and 20-21. Joseph's example demonstrates that true parenting fruit comes not from our own strength but from abiding in God, trusting Him even in uncertainty.

The Gospel offers us hope in this journey. Through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, we receive more than forgiveness—we receive new hearts that can bear the fruit of the Spirit. When we surrender our parenting to Christ, we find the power to love, guide, and forgive our children in ways that point them to Jesus. Each parenting struggle becomes an opportunity to show them God's grace and patience.

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." - Matthew 11:28-30

By leaning on Christ, we turn our homes into spaces where the Gospel is seen daily, allowing our children to witness the power of God at work. Through His grace, we're not just raising children—we're intentionally nurturing disciples who can bear fruit for eternity.



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## THE GOSPEL AND BOLDNESS

I'm a seminary student. Oftentimes, people at my church forget that or don't understand what that means. I frequently get questions like: "What show are you and Lily watching?" "Did you guys watch the game last night?" I tend to look at them and patiently remind them that I've been binge-watching Tim Keller's sermons and biblical theologies of the New Testament, and the only game I watched last night was between my sleepiness and the two or three papers I have. People frequently wonder: "Why in the world do I put myself through this?!" And although I ask myself the question every once in a while, in the end, I remember how worthwhile it is!

Why is it worth doing all the things that the Christian life calls us to? Why is it worth putting ourselves in the "fire line" of this world to share this message? Why is it worth being bold when boldness often results in more problems? The disciples faced this reality throughout their lives. In Acts 4:19–20, Luke recalls Peter and John's radical commitment. After healing a lame beggar outside the temple and preaching the name of Christ, they were brought before the Sanhedrin, those who had crucified Jesus a couple of weeks before, and asked to stop preaching! One might expect fear, but Peter and John, looking at the faces of a threatening crowd, boldly tell them: "We cannot stop, actually, we won't stop."

The question jumps out of the text! What have they seen and heard? What has such value, worth, and transformational power that two men who previously ran away in the face of persecution are now willing to lay down their lives? Peter explains it clearly in v.8–12. Peter is not fearful about or concerned about their opinions, sensibilities, or preferences. He has seen that which is more worthy and greater than all things! He has seen the name that saves! He has seen and heard the resurrected Christ. The King who turns fearful men into bold preachers. For this King and his message,

he's ready to lay it all down!

The disciples' boldness comes from Christ. John 14:12 states that "whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."

In Jesus, Peter and John have the ultimate picture of sacrifice, the king who gives his life for the lowly. We have all we need in Christ. Jesus is their savior and their example. These "uneducated and common men" had their desires transformed, their fears dulled, and boldness surge because they have experienced the beauty of the saving King Jesus, who gives his life for the needy.

Whether we know it or not, our lives communicate and preach a message. For some, that's sports, politics, economics, or even theology. For Peter and John, that message was Christ, who didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but humbling himself to the point of servanthood, he laid down his life for the sake of our salvation! Jesus saves broken, lame, and needy people!

In a world of many messages, there's only one message that's worth risking it all—the Gospel of Christ. Boldness is an act of obedience, and it often starts with the smallest decisions. Share the Gospel with a coworker or neighbor. Start a Bible study at home. Commit to speak truth in your office.

The Gospel is worth it!



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## THE GOSPEL AND PEACEMAKING

Few things fracture our lives as deeply as unresolved conflict. Broken relationships – whether within families, workplaces, or churches – can leave deep wounds and feed bitterness and resentment. The problem isn't just external; it lies within our hearts, where pride and unforgiveness take root. The temptation to escalate arguments, defend our pride, or isolate ourselves when hurt, often leads to further disunity and pain. Without intervention, conflict can erode peace and hinder our testimony as followers of Christ. To what degree is unresolved conflict present in your life and relationships?

This beatitude highlights that peacemaking is not optional; it's an essential mark of being God's children. A true peacemaker reflects God's own heart for reconciliation. Paul, in Colossians 1:20, emphasizes the depth of this calling: "and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross." Our ultimate peace with God came at the highest price—the sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus, the only One to deserve peace with God through His own merit, chose to take on our sinfulness at Calvary to win for His people peace with God.

So then, the heart of the gospel is reconciliation. Jesus' work on the cross turned the hostility between humanity and God into peace. Before we knew Him, we were estranged, living in conflict with our Creator and each other. But through Christ's death and resurrection, God did what we could not do for ourselves—He restored our relationship with Him. When we understand that we were enemies of God, yet were reconciled to Him purely by grace, we find the power and motivation to extend that same grace to others.

The gospel attacks the root of conflict: sin. Pride, selfish ambition, and unforgiveness are ultimately symptoms of a heart that hasn't fully absorbed

the reality of grace. When we truly grasp the cost of our reconciliation to God—Christ’s blood—our perspective changes. The gospel gives us the humility to admit our own wrongs and seek forgiveness, knowing we already stand forgiven by God’s mercy. It also empowers us to forgive, not because the offense was insignificant, but because we have been forgiven of far more by Christ.

Practically, applying the gospel to relational conflict should involve specific effort:

**Examine your heart in light of the cross.** Reflect on how God’s grace has met your sin and failure. This humbles our pride and reminds us that we have no reason to withhold grace from others.

**Choose a posture of forgiveness.** Just as God forgave us in Christ, choose to let go of bitterness. Forgiveness doesn’t erase the offense but releases the power it holds over you, mirroring the gospel’s liberating work.

**Pursue reconciliation actively.** Much like Christ’s peacemaking act for us, relational peacemaking requires action. Whether through an honest conversation, prayer, or seeking help from a trusted mentor or pastor, “so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”

**Root your efforts in God’s strength.** Human effort alone cannot achieve true peace. Depend on the Holy Spirit to soften hearts and guide your words. Peace that flows from the Spirit reflects the deep, abiding unity that only the gospel can produce.



*Dylan Lundy*

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## THE GOSPEL AND PAIN

Painful moments are an inevitable part of life, which often leave us feeling vulnerable and lost. It is a universal part of the human experience. From loss and disappointment to physical suffering and emotional turmoil, everyone encounters moments that seem unbearable. These experiences often challenge our faith, and leave us questioning God's presence and purpose. Though these painful moments may sometimes be the consequence of sin, that is not always the case, and it is never because God is powerless to keep us from pain. But as humans living in a fallen and cursed world, painful moments and suffering are expected. These are the consequences of Adam and Eve's rebellion against God's command to not eat of the fruit in the garden. Also, God, in His divine plan, often ordains pain in order to bring glory to His name (Jn 11:4).

The good news is that the Bible does not just present us with the reality of pain and leave us in despair, it offers hope in the midst of these tough times. Jesus specifically tells us in John 16 that, "In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart for I have overcome the world." Through the gospel, we learn that our painful moments are not meaningless. They are opportunities to encounter God's presence, lean on His strength, and trust in His redemptive purpose.

As believers experiencing moments of pain, we should remind ourselves of the truth of God's word, that He is always with us. The gospel reveals a God who empathizes with our struggles and promises a greater hope beyond our pain. Jesus' journey shows us that God does not distance Himself from our pain; He enters it. In Jesus' life, we find a Savior who fully embraced the human experience, including its deepest suffering. From His temptation in the wilderness, to the anguish of Gethsemane, and the agony of the cross, Jesus took our greatest pain upon Himself. On the cross He took on the physical pain of bruises, beating, and the piercing of



nails through His hands and feet, that we may escape the pain of hell. He also took the pain of separation from His Father which brought him to cry out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" Christ underwent the pain and suffering of the loss of His Father's presence on the cross. He voluntarily forfeited the comfort He enjoyed with His Father so that we may have the promise of the Father's presence with us always.

When you are suffering, dwell on the truth of God's Word and know that just as God used Jesus' suffering for His greatest purpose, He can also bring beauty and purpose from your suffering.

Believers, Christ called us to come to Him in painful moments. He alone is familiar with our grief and offers comfort. When pain hits you, always remember that God is with you, and also know that the pain is not meant to destroy you. Instead, God in His sovereignty is using the trials to refine your faith and deepen your dependence on Him. Turn to Christ in your painful moments, and you will find the strength to endure, for our present sufferings are temporary compared to the eternal glory that awaits us in Him.



*Monday Wonah*

Faith Church Lafayette, IN

## THE GOSPEL AND TRANSITION

Transition can be a difficult experience to face. Transition can bring about uncertainties for what the future may hold. What gives triumph during these times is the gospel, which stands solidified and unchanging while developing a plan to keep it going amid the experienced leader moving on. At some point in our lives, we have either been witness to or have seen a “passing of the torch” moment.

During the days leading up to the Olympics, the Olympic torch is carried from person to person for miles toward the grand opening ceremony for the world’s elite athletes. As one runner nears the end of their route with the torch, they hand the torch to a new runner, who is rested, ready, and prepped to continue moving the torch forward.

In 2 Timothy chapter 4, we see Paul’s final encouragement to a young pastor as he experiences transition while ministering in a difficult church. Paul shares with Timothy the importance of continuing the gospel advancement regardless of what type of situation or season one may be in. (4:2) This is the heart of the gospel, the good news that Christ has come, has died, ascended to Heaven and offers the redemption of the gospel freely to all who accept it. Paul writes knowing that the end is near for his life, emphasizing the significance of the gospel and the importance of passing the torch of faith to future generations.

In vs. 3-4 we see the focus of Paul’s urgency that Timothy continues the advancement of the gospel. The reason being that many will not listen, so it is vital that “once the torch is passed” that Timothy stays strong, sober minded, and focused (vs. 5).

As Paul begins his final encouragement to young Timothy (who has matured with transition), he has stated what many workers, teachers, preachers and athletes have said. “I am quickly approaching retirement,

and my time working is completed. I wish you all the best.” Paul was looking toward eternity rather than retirement. The task of advancing the gospel in the church will now rest on Timothy as a younger pastor, and ultimately the generations that follow after him (4:7-8).

Transition is always inevitable. The torch is always being held out for the next person to grab, but the gospel is unchanging.



*Chris Bowles*

Hillcrest Baptist Church, Carlisle, OH

## THE GOSPEL AND SHAME

What is the most embarrassing thing that has ever happened to you? Did you ruin a surprise? Maybe you wore something that you didn't realize had a hole in it? For many of us, our most embarrassing moment was something we said. We opened our mouths and as soon as the words were uttered, we wished we could take it back. In these moments we are keenly aware that we have not measured up. In a strange sense, we feel naked. We feel as if our bodies, minds, and even our hearts are on full display for everyone around us, and it does not feel good. We look for a way of escape. We cover our mouths, run out of the room, and curl up into a ball inside. We are ashamed.

Adam and Eve's most embarrassing moment was their eating of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden and bringing sin into man's world. When we face shame, having "realized [we] were naked," we are faced with a decision just like Adam and Eve: What kind of covering will I put on? Adam and Eve turned immediately to fig leaves to cover their nakedness. These leaves did solve part of their problem. They no longer felt naked. However, these leaves could hardly be the final solution they needed. The fig leaves Adam and Eve picked off the tree were now dead themselves. Death trying to cover death. We need something better. Even more than just making us feel covered, we long for a solution that can take us back to being naked and unashamed, being fully known and fully accepted.

God promised this solution to Adam and Eve. The serpent that deceived Adam and Eve into sinning against God and creating shame would be crushed by the woman's offspring. God's perfect solution for shame was to send his Son to win the victory we could not. Jesus was perfect in every way, having no reason to be ashamed, yet He took our shame on the cross. He was hung naked on the cross and forsaken by the Father as He took

the judgment for our sins. He did this so that we who experience shame could be fully known and fully accepted. For God to fully know us is for him to see every part of us, no matter how hard we try to cover up. He sees all of our brokenness and hurt. We are naked before Him. But when God looks at us, instead of seeing our inability to measure up, He sees Christ's righteousness. We are naked and accepted before God because of Jesus.

The author of Hebrews commands us to consider this Jesus. We who experience the deep shame of not measuring up are to look to Jesus Christ who took on the ultimate shame. His rejection brings about our acceptance. When you are tempted to be drawn into feeling ashamed, look to Jesus and remember His sacrifice on your behalf. He has already measured up for you and He alone enables you to walk worthy of your calling. Put on Jesus Christ, for He is alive!



*Mitchell Ramp*

Heritage Baptist Church, Clark Summit, PA

## THE GOSPEL AND DISCONTENTMENT

If there is one clear message that is being communicated in our culture on a daily basis it is this: “You are lacking something that will ensure your greatest happiness and bring you lasting fulfillment.” While the “something” may change, the message remains constant. It doesn’t matter if you are watching your favorite television program or commuting to work on the expressway, this message is consistently being delivered to us. A TV commercial promises relief, vitality, and serenity if the viewer will only purchase a certain healthcare product. A billboard entices drivers with images of juicy cheeseburgers, refreshing soft drinks, and golden french fries. We must have the latest sneakers, the trendiest devices, and the whitest teeth. Otherwise, we are missing out, since each of these things, and many others, will improve our lives by giving us confidence, bringing us comfort, and ultimately making us happy.

Unfortunately, as believers, we are often tempted to take the bait and believe the advertisements. This is best illustrated in my own life when I think back to my childhood. Each year I could hardly wait for the release of the Sears catalog, which highlighted all of their newest products. When it arrived in the mail, I would dogear pages and make extended wish lists of items, mainly toys, that I was convinced would bring me great joy. If I’m honest, I still feel the pull to do this today, though in much subtler ways. If you’re honest, you do, as well.

Psalm 107:4-9 teaches us that the goodness of God brings contentment to those who lack it. The person with the longing and hungry soul is portrayed as someone who has wandered in a desert wasteland with no food or water. When they cry out to the Lord for help, He delivers them from this distress. What does this deliverance look like? God leads them out of the desert wasteland into a city filled with good things. They experience the steadfast love (or grace) of God through His wondrous works. They

are satisfied by God and filled with His goodness.

While it may seem that we are currently living in great cities filled with many good things to satisfy us, we will be left hungry and thirsty if we seek fulfillment from anything other than God's goodness. There is no clearer display of God's goodness than Jesus' gracious death on the cross for sinners. There is no work of God that is more wondrous than Jesus' resurrection. Jesus, who fulfilled every requirement of God's law on behalf of sinners and died a sacrificial death in place of sinners (i.e. those who cry out to Him for deliverance in their distress), will lead his people by a straight way to the city of God where they will live with Him forever.

We likely understand that believers will experience God's all-satisfying goodness in the future. How do we fight discontentment right now, though? Psalm 107 begins with a call to thank the Lord for His goodness, and it ends with an exhortation to consider His grace. There is no greater good than God. The key to being content is seeking God with a thankful heart, calling to mind the good things He has done for you. When your heart longs to be satisfied with something lesser than God, remember that beauty fades, sports cars rust, fancy clothes wear out, vacations end, stock markets crash; but the steadfast love of God endures forever! God is enough. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" (Psalm 107:2).



*Daniel Caldwell*

Reilly Springs Baptist Church, Sulphur Springs, TX



## THE GOSPEL AND AUTHORITY

If you have ever hung out with toddlers for an extended amount of time there are several things that you probably noticed about them. They contain both the ability to be one of the most endearing people you have met and one of the most rebellious. I have heard it said that one of the scariest places in the world is a room full of toddlers. Truly, if toddlers were the size of adults and had their physical strength, this world would be even scarier. The rebellion seen in toddlers may seem strange at first, but when you consider the rest of the world and humanity as a whole, they are not so different from us. As teenagers, we roll our eyes at our parents and mutter things under our breath. We gossip about what our bosses said to us last week. We often even slander our leaders.

The reason we see rebellion as early as the toddler age isn't because there is some partially developed brain. What we are seeing is their heart. We are born rebels. We need new hearts, and this is precisely what God does in our lives. Paul tells Titus to remind those in Crete to be "...subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed..." This includes difficult bosses, annoying parents, and, yes, even foolish governmental authorities. Why does Paul give us this command? Why do we need this reminder? Because we were once "foolish...disobedient, deceived, and enslaved to various lusts and pleasures..." Those bosses that we think are ridiculous are more like us than we realize. We were once like them. You may still be like them. That may sting, but it's true.

But God did something amazing. Even though you (and I) were full of unrighteous works, He sent Christ to die for us. What awaited us was God's wrath, but God mercifully poured out His wrath on the Christ on the cross for our sins. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then what I'm about to say is true of you. He was merciful towards us, and he saved us. He regenerated us and renewed us. Because He saved us, we have the ca-

capacity, through the work of the Spirit, to obey the authority in our lives. That's not even the best part. We have eternal life through Christ. If you haven't exercised faith in Christ, then I offer you the gospel. Without the gospel, you will always frivolously beat at the air as a sinful rebel. The only end for you is God's wrath. But if you repent and turn to Christ, you will receive forgiveness and this washing, reserved for those who put their faith in Christ.

The gospel helps us be obedient to authority because it reminds us that we have everything we need in Christ. We can freely obey authority because we don't need anything from them. We can deny ourselves and come to them willing and ready to obey because our satisfaction is found in Christ. Whether you are a Christian or not, my encouragement is the same: deny yourself and turn to Christ and His work on the cross for your sins and obey the authority in your lives with willing hearts.



*Taylor Horton*

Grace Baptist Church, Saint Charles, MO

## THE GOSPEL AND HOPELESSNESS

**I**n life's darkest moments, it can feel as though we're surrounded on all sides by enemies, hemmed in by setbacks, failures, and the weight of sorrow. Take Seth, for instance—a devoted husband and father who just lost his job, the main financial support for his family. As bills stack up, his wife's health deteriorates, adding even more pressure. Each day brings a new blow: the savings they have is not enough, and he feels as though he's failing everyone. He begins to despair, yet again. With no relief in sight, Seth feels pushed back into despair, each trouble mounting like a soldier with spear in hand. Exhausted and with nowhere to turn, he gasps for comfort, but relief seems out of reach.

When the enemy of hopelessness advances, we feel isolated, questioning whether our pain has any meaning. In these shadows, doubt whispers that our suffering is deserved punishment. We wonder, "Is God angry? Am I too flawed, too broken, to have hope?" Our struggles stir the fear that we're our own greatest enemy. As the throng of fears and doubts presses in around and within us, we feel a piercing need to escape, to make it stop. And when it doesn't, when we can't escape ourselves, the weight becomes crushing. Despair clouds our vision, making life all about us and what we think we need, sowing seeds of doubt about God's love. In our pain, we may misinterpret His discipline as rejection.

REMEMBER, the gospel gives us an enduring hope.

The author of Hebrews reminds us that, even in pain, God's discipline is not punishment but a pathway for our good. When we feel encircled by despair within and without, imagine a gate opening, a safe city with walls of refuge welcoming us in. Hebrews 12:6-7 assures us that this discipline is God's love, not His wrath. Every trial we face is God's invitation to step into the city of His care, transforming hardship into spiritual training.

These trials are not meant to destroy or crush us but to build us up, deepen our faith, and grow our trust. He prunes us, not as punishment, but as part of a loving process to foster true, enduring growth.

Jesus Christ endured the ultimate trial on the cross, facing the depths of abandonment and despair so we would never have to. He walked the darkest path, forsaken by the Father, and emerged victorious. From His suffering, God brought forth eternal hope. Jesus conquered sin and death, securing the promise of life and redeeming our struggles with purpose. His victory assures us that our trials are never wasted in God's hands. They are purposeful, leading us to endurance, faith, and an unshakeable hope. Furthermore, we may enter into the city because He bore the weight of our brokenness. Though we still struggle with shadows within, Christ has already delivered us from our deepest fears and flaws.

When you feel besieged by life's trials, the discomfort squeezing you, see yourself carried through that open gate, shielded by God's love. Jesus' victory over pain assures us of our purpose in every hardship. Believer, rest in this truth: God's purpose in every struggle is not punishment, but a loving process of strengthening you. Trials—rather than breaking us—can be transformed to produce a hope that endures forever. Knowing this, we find strength to seek Him and trust Him even when darkness surrounds, trusting that God is working all things for His glory and our good.



*Nick Bruno*

Faith Church Lafayette, IN

## THE GOSPEL AND BURDENS

**I**magine you're taking a brisk walk through the woods, crunching the fall leaves under your feet. As you're trekking, to your dismay, you discover a close friend laying on the ground struggling, with their leg caught in a spring trap. Though this is a wild scenario to consider in everyday life, this is what it's like when you find out a Christian brother or sister is caught in the trap of habitual sin, a far more common situation.

A believing friend succumbs to sin and rather than immediate repentance, they sit in the sin, letting it seep in. Before they know it, they're caught, snagged, ensnared, trapped. As a Christian brother or sister, you recognize that you've got to get them out of there! You love this brother or this sister deeply and you want to see them overcome their sin in the Spirit's strength. What can often happen however, is as a restorer, you become overburdened. You might place a yoke on yourself that you can't bear. In your flesh, your pride might even swell.

Paul walks through this situation in Galatians 6:1–2, as he encourages the church to bear one another's burdens. He exhorts the one who is spiritual (a believer in Christ) to restore their brother or sister in gentleness. He then warns not to let pride overtake the restorer, as it could be easy for the restorer to elevate themselves (“God, I thank you I am not like other men...”), Paul makes it clear that the fellow believer plays a crucial role in helping their brother or sister caught in a trap of sin.

You may be walking with a brother or sister in Christ through their besetting sin. They're caught in a spring trap and they were baited into it by their flesh, the world, and the Enemy. The teeth are sunk in and they feel they can't move. You see their pain—their agony—in knowing that what they're doing is transgression against God, but they feel stuck and enslaved (though fully responsible for their decisions). Careful with your

own pride, you've involved yourself in their situation. You provided wise counsel, exhorted in Scripture, tirelessly went before the Lord on their behalf, and stood in the gap. Your sleeves were rolled up and Paul would call you a restorer.

In doing this, you may have become exhausted. You may have fallen into anxious worry for your friend. You may have discovered your own pride swelling as you compare yourself to your friend.

To address the weariness and the anxious worry: you are not responsible for your friend's sin! You should work diligently as the Holy Spirit has directed through Paul's words, but remember that each person reaps what they sow. Your heart will hurt for them, but rest the burden you're carrying on the Savior, whose yoke is easy and burden is light.

To address the pride in helping your friend: there is forgiveness in Christ for you, too. You're not alone in needing the gospel, and if you are truly a believer, you can come to the throne of grace with a repentant heart and know that you're forgiven and Christ's righteousness covers you.

Bear your brother or sister's burden, but do not forget that it is Christ who first carried your burdens to the cross.



*Lucas Frank*

Seminole Baptist Temple, Springfield, MO

## THE GOSPEL AND JUDGMENTALISM

One of our favorite places to sit is high upon our judge's bench, looking down upon the rest of humanity, administering judgments, and prescribing plans of correction. When we lose sight of the gospel, we tend to revert back to our old way of seeing others through the lens of our pride, noticing all the specks in the eyes of those around us. Not only taking account of others' specks, but also trying to pick at them and pluck them out. All the while completely neglecting the log that is protruding from our own faces. Seeing all the faults and sins of everyone else, while completely neglect our own. More often than not, our interpretations of what we believe we are witnessing are marred, blurred, or downright deceived, leading to potential misinterpretation while we justify our own sinful circumstances and think we are better or less sinful than those whom we are sentencing. The epitome of hypocrisy.

But the gospel tells us that there are none who are righteous, none who are good, and none who seek after God. This is the default position of all of humanity. This is who we all are apart from Christ. Seeking after our own sinful desires and passions, forsaking the One who created us. Our natural disposition is a posture opposed to God. This is who we are without Christ.

However, the gospel tells us that while we were yet sinners—while we were in this rebellious state—Christ died for us! Not because of anything within us that made us worthy, but simply because God chose to love us. We have nothing to boast in. Nothing to look to that makes us worthy. Nothing that allows for us to think we are better than anyone else. In fact, we are so evil and wicked that Jesus Christ had to die for how sinful we are, not because of how good we are.

The response then to, in light of the gospel, should never be one of pride



or arrogance, which is really where our heart is when we are passing judgment upon others. Rather, it should be a posture of humility and thankfulness, seeking to help our brothers and sisters honor Christ more, rather than placing ourselves above them. And this is precisely what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 7:1-5. Jesus does not say we should not judge at all, but He admonishes His children to judge correctly, by first examining their own walks, taking the “log” out of their own eyes, so that they may be able to help our brothers with their “specks” adequately. By first looking at and taking care of their own issues, we foster an attitude of humility by acknowledging our faults.

Notice Jesus also calls our issues a “log” while our brother’s problems are considered a “speck.” We need to be much more concerned with our own areas of stumbling than with someone else’s. We need to make our own sin big and count other’s as minor to us.

We must take the mantra of Paul and understand that each one of us are the chief of sinners.

The gospel obliterates any form of judgment that puts one Christian above another. We are equal at the foot of the cross. We all are wicked sinners that Christ had to die for. So, what then are we to boast in? In Christ, and Christ alone.



*Eddie Smith*

Faith Church Lafayette, IN

## THE GOSPEL AND LAZINESS

What picture comes to mind when you think of a lazy 35-year-old man? Do you picture poor personal hygiene? Is it someone living with their parents and having a full gaming setup in the basement? One who never can show up on time and can't find consistent work because of the incompetence of others? What about the 35-year-old who is the father of four, has held the same job for 9 years, coaches his child's sports teams, and serves faithfully at his local church? Is it possible that this man can wrestle with the same thing as the one whose normal diet is pop tarts and ramen? I think people can fall into the danger of confusing a busy schedule, high productivity, and a frantic pace with diligence.

What do I mean? Consider the father who is experiencing some sinful behavior from their 10-year-old that may require some additional time in discipline and instruction, but who also has a lawn to mow, a baseball league meeting to attend, and one of the students in his small group wants to talk about some issues.

Sometimes it's easier for that person to mow the lawn than it is to address the issue going on at home. It requires less effort and follow-up, so rather than do nothing at all, push off the difficult in exchange for something easier. This way it outwardly appears that one is being productive with their time, but inwardly they have avoided their God-given responsibility. People often equate laziness with inactivity as opposed to activity, but laziness can take the form of avoiding the difficult in exchange for the easy.

In laziness, one is choosing convenience, ease, and personal comfort over the God-given responsibility. At the core, one is choosing to do what is more pleasing to oneself rather than what is Christ-honoring, and it is a choice to love oneself rather than love the Lord and others.

When Jesus was faced with decisions between ease or difficulty, between painless and painful, and between self-interest or service, He chose the path marked with hardship, suffering, and sacrifice.

The greatest demonstration of this is seen in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was found praying on the night where Judas would betray Him. As He was facing a painful death, bearing the wrath of His father, and being forsaken by loved ones, our Lord prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” In praying this, Jesus chose to do what required the very giving of Himself for the sake of others. His choice was not motivated by His own convenience or love of self, but was rooted in love for others.

So whenever we find ourselves with a choice to make between comfort and sacrifice, between ease or difficulty, or serving self or others, we can pray, not my will Lord, but yours be done. When we are tempted to take the road of minimal effort, we can consider the One who gave it all and be challenged to love others by giving in the same way the Lord gave of Himself. If our schedules are busy and responsibilities abound, our Lord’s choice in the Garden of Gethsemane encourages us to choose not according to our convenience, but to what best serves others.



*Ryan Diffenderfer*

New Life Bible Fellowship Church, Oley, PA

## THE GOSPEL AND MANHOOD

**W**hat does it mean to be a godly man? Is it to be soft, submissive, or easily swayed by the winds of culture? Does biblical manhood call us to be weak, indecisive, and passive? Absolutely not. Paul, in his final charge to the elders of the Corinthian church, issues a resounding call: “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong”. In a world determined to emasculate men, to soften their edges and dull their convictions, Paul points to the opposite. The answer to Corinth’s chaos—to its moral decay—was clear: men who act like men. Not men who create division in the church; not men who engage in sexual immorality; not men who compromise; not selfish men; and not confusing men.

So, what does it mean positively to be a man? The greatest example of manhood in all of human history is the man who conquered sin and death: Jesus Christ. The Scriptures do not depict our Lord as fragile or effeminate.

Jesus was a carpenter—a man who knew the grit of labor, who worked by the sweat of his brow, and made a living by the strength of his hands.

Even so, Jesus was a man of God. He did not sacrifice his time with His Father, but instead rose early, before anyone else, and readied His heart and mind for the day ahead of Him through prayer and time with God.

When faced with the temptations of the evil one, Jesus held the line and fought off the deceiver by using the sword of truth—God’s Word—all while staying the fury of wild beasts.

Even betrayed by His closest friends, Christ did not falter. He faithfully rung in the New Covenant in His blood, marched with purpose to the cross, stood fast before kings, and sacrificed His life in the ultimate act of love and duty.

All of this to simply say: Jesus is no mere man—He is *the* man. Jesus is the God-man who perfectly embodied the roles and responsibilities of a man: strength, discipline, integrity, courage, drive, and love.

Our Savior did not suffer and die for men to stand idle while the nations crumble in rebellion against God. He didn't endure a courageous and manly death for us to shrink back from our roles and responsibilities as men. Christ's death was a warrior's sacrifice, one that crushed the head of the serpent and reversed the curse of Adam. Through faith in His atoning, substitutionary death, we are no longer slaves to sin. We have been liberated from the chains of effeminacy and equipped for battle by the Spirit. We must take up the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, and the sword of the Spirit, for we are called to be men. Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, be strong, act like men!



Jason (AJ) Walls

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## THE GOSPEL AND TRIALS

Where do you turn when life feels like it's falling apart? In moments of crisis, where do you find your hope?

Psalm 46 was likely written during Israel's national crisis. Some scholars believe it was composed when the Assyrian army threatened Jerusalem under Sennacherib. After Jerusalem was rescued from seeming doom, the psalmist penned these powerful words of hope and trust in God.

The Psalm opens with a bold declaration: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." In these verses, God is portrayed as a protective fortress, a source of strength, and a constant helper. Even as the world crumbles around us—mountains falling into the sea, waters roaring and foaming—we can find security in God's presence.

Today, we might face different "earthquakes" – job loss, health crises, and relationship breakdowns. Yet the truth remains: God is our unshakeable refuge.

The psalmist then paints a picture of a peaceful city, contrasting with the chaos outside. "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God." This imagery reminds us that even in turbulent times, God provides inner peace and joy to His people.

The refrain "The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress" echoes the promised Immanuel—"God with us." This fore-shadows the coming of Christ, as prophesied in Isaiah and fulfilled in Jesus' birth.

The final section invites us to "Come, behold the works of the Lord." It depicts God as the ultimate peacemaker, ending wars and bringing desolations on the earth. The command to "Be still, and know that I am God"

is not a call to passive inaction but to cease striving and recognize God's sovereignty.

Today, we might not face literal wars but battle against fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. We're called to be still in these struggles and trust in God's ultimate victory.

So, where do we turn in turbulent times? The answer ultimately lies in the gospel. Jesus Christ went through the most tumultuous time ever experienced by a human when He hung on the cross—separated from the Father—for you. The promise of “God with us” finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is our Immanuel, the Lord of Hosts who came to dwell among us.

Jesus invites us: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28–30). Through faith in Christ, we have a hope that serves as “an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebr 6:19).

In our distressing situations, we can find refuge, peace, and victory in Christ. He is our unshakeable fortress, our source of inner peace, and our ultimate victor over sin and death. As we face life's turbulent waters, may we anchor our hope in Him, finding strength and comfort in the truth that the Lord Almighty is indeed with us.

The next time you feel hopeless and troubled, think about the marvelous truth that God is with us and...

**Remember God's character:** Meditate on God's unchanging nature as our refuge and strength in times of trouble.

**Reflect on God's works:** Take time to “come and see” – recall God's faithfulness in Scripture and your life.

**Rest in God's sovereignty:** Practice being still before God, surrendering your anxieties, and trusting in His control.

**Rejoice in the Gospel:** Let the truth of Christ's finished work on your behalf be your ultimate source of security and peace.



*San Jean Richard*

Faith Church Lafayette, IN

## THE GOSPEL AND CHRONIC ILLNESS

**W**e often hear about the suffering of the chronically ill, disabled, or oppressed. These believers need the counsel of God's Word to handle their sorrow and lament. One often overlooked group in need of biblical counsel are the caretakers of the chronically suffering. These caretakers stand behind the sufferers and become sufferers themselves. 1 Corinthians 15 offers hope for caretakers, focusing on the hope of the resurrection without corruption, victory over death and sin, and empowered living because of future gospel resurrection.

Jesus went to the cross with a body broken by the sin of others, bleeding, beaten, and downtrodden, ending in the ultimate sting of sin, death. But because He rose again, all believers will be resurrected with renewed, imperishable, unstained bodies. The ongoing destruction of our present bodies due to the decaying acid of sin and death will be overcome by God's great recreation act! This death of death provides hope for sufferers!

For caretakers who have lost loved ones: Be comforted that your present sorrow cannot compare to the glory at the resurrection. They will be raised with a body empty of tumors, muscles without tremors, no longer physically or emotionally marked by how they looked when you said goodbye. They will hug you with gratitude for how you cared for and loved them.

When Christ renews all things, even though they are truly loved by God, those elect with disabilities will fully comprehend their Savior, fully worship God with their whole body, and better know those whom God used to care for them. Caretakers will worship alongside them, no longer assisting them, but praising the One who renewed them both. Caretakers will cry out with relief and joy, knowing their loved one is not worshipping in pain. When the pain and well-doing become weariness to our



souls, bodies, and emotions and we think we will become numb to their suffering, we must lament the pain we experience alongside creation. That lament must drive us to respond in hope for future victory.

Verses 57-58 give us two responses: gratitude and service.

We give thanks to God because...

...our trials produce a longing for the New Creation, God's glory, and present gratitude for God's future renewal through Christ's resurrection.

...our loved ones of all abilities are welcome into the Kingdom and you will worship alongside them without disability, pain, and the sting of sin on their minds and bodies.

...although you gladly bear their burdens (and so fulfill the law of Christ), your burden will be lifted at the resurrection.

Though death and sin seem to win daily battles, leaving us exhausted in caring or caring at all, the war is won through Christ's resurrection.

The second response is that we abound in good works. Caretakers do not always find their reward on earth. We are promised that bearing burdens, or caring for others, is not in vain! Luke 14:14 tells us that we will find our rewards in the New Creation. Because our reward is confidently in the resurrection and our works are not derived out of self-recognition but the compassion shown us by Christ, caretakers are encouraged to continue to joyfully, compassionately, and enduringly serve and counsel those who are in need by meeting their physical needs and counseling them with God's Word. Their physical needs are vital, but their spiritual needs are of life and death. Your individual suffering as a caretaker produces sanctification as you evangelize your loved one and you grow in your reliance on God as you labor for Him toward your loved one.



*Katy Krawczyk*

Grace Baptist Church, Saint Charles, MO

## THE GOSPEL AND DECISION MAKING

**I**n a world full of many options, it can be hard to make decisions. Making decisions can be terrifying because they can be opportunities that we mess up or make a less-than-ideal choice which can impact our lives negatively. How is one to navigate decision making in this life? Is there any hope for the indecisive?

King Solomon was one of the wisest men on earth because he asked the Lord for wisdom and the Lord granted it to him. He was king of Israel, so his decisions were far weightier than most of ours. Proverbs is composed of Solomon's wisdom, and he urges his son to pursue the wisdom of God as well as to live according to it. Proverbs 2 is all about wisdom and the value of pursuing it. In verses 1-8, Solomon shares three important principles in biblical decision making: 1) listening to the wise, 2) asking the Lord for wisdom, and 3) studying the Scriptures.

First, Solomon recognized that the wisdom he had was a gift of God, so he encouraged his son to listen to this wisdom. The person who values wisdom will pursue it by listening to the wise. Those struggling to know how to make a wise decision are encouraged to find wisdom by asking godly individuals for advice and by heeding their wise words and commandments.

Second, Solomon's own experience is a testimony to how asking for wisdom results in receiving it since he asked the Lord for wisdom and became the wisest man in the world. Therefore, Solomon's son should also ask the Lord for wisdom because the Lord gives wisdom to those who ask.

Third, Solomon was well aware that out of the mouth of God flows wisdom. This means that God's word is to be utilized when one is trying to make godly decisions. Solomon's son should study Scripture because it is the wisdom of God revealed to man.

Well, this is great for Solomon and his son, but is there any hope for the indecisive today? Indeed, there is, and this hope is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel brings the indecisive into a community with fellow believers who have wisdom and input to offer in decision making. The community of Christ has a wealth of wisdom for those struggling to make a wise decision.

The gospel gives the indecisive access to ask God for His wisdom and to get this wisdom. Jesus is the mediator between God and man who bore man's sin upon himself so that man could have a relationship with God. In Christ, God listens to man's cry and gives them His wisdom generously.

The gospel gives believers the capacity to not only understand the word of God, but also the power to do what it says through the Holy Spirit. Wisdom is useless without the application of it to one's life, and Jesus gives His followers the capacity to put off foolishness, have their minds renewed in alignment with Scripture, and then to put on His wisdom. He empowers us to live it out through the Holy Spirit.

Christian, when you are struggling to make decisions, listen to the wisdom from the people Jesus bought with His blood and made wise. Ask the Lord for wisdom since Christ has granted you access to His wisdom, and search the Scriptures for wisdom that pertains to your circumstance.



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## THE GOSPEL AND CONTENTMENT

**D**o you remember the last time you were hungry? Not just craving, but hunger. Hunger is a reminder of a need. A need for sustenance and nourishment. Everyone needs food. It's at the top of the list of needs necessary for everyday life. People hunger and live in want because they have needs that they worry will not be met. During elections, people hope for someone who can deliver on prosperity for not just today, but tomorrow and the next. Leaders come and go, but hunger and want stays.

Imagine, however, someone who promised that if elected, he would end hunger. Not just hunger but all worries for provision. You would listen to his every promising word and marvel as he delivers. His name would be all over social media and the conversation of every meal. You would still need food, but would no longer be left in want for food because you know he will provide. You would just have to vote for him. You would just have to believe in him.

2000 years ago, one man made such a promise. That man was Jesus Christ. He said that He was the Bread of Life and that whoever came to Him would not hunger.

The significance of bread in John 6 often goes unappreciated. Most of us when going to a restaurant think of bread as an appetizer. Bread is something to be enjoyed on the side. In Jesus's day, bread was your main meal. The bread was not an addition, but the main course. For the most part, it was all that people ate. People today think of bread as something that lots of people might like, but not everyone needs. The symbolism of bread needs to be understood for the meaning of Christ's words to be appreciated. Bread symbolizes life.

More important than physical hunger, Christ provides eternal life and satisfies spiritual want. All over Galilee, thousands of people stopped work to hear Jesus speak. By stopping work to go listen to Him, they grew hungry, reminded of their need for bread. The miracle Christ performed feeding the crowd presented Him an opportunity to offer eternal life. This offer could seem to be too good to be true. Unlike the crowd's endless labor for bread, they did not even have to work for it. They just had to believe.

Too often we are discontent and left wanting because of our disbelief. Whether it be relationships, careers, sleep, finances, education or food, contentment is not contingent on whether or not we obtain our physical needs. Not that they do not matter. They do matter! These are needs for life and health. Discontentment comes when we believe that these things are more important than Christ. When we do not believe that Christ is the main course, but a side dish, we are discontent. Contentment is not derived from a confidence in earthly necessities met, but in a hope in Christ's promise of life. Our satisfaction in life will reflect whether or not we believe Christ deserves to be at the forefront of our minds, or afterthought on a Sunday morning.



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## THE GOSPEL AND FILTHINESS

**B**eliever, have you ever had a moment, perhaps when faced with an object or memory of former sin, whereby shame rears its ugly head just to remind you that you are filthy? Joshua, the High priest of Israel following the captives return from Babylon, knows the reality of times like this.

See, Joshua served as priest over Israel at an interesting time in the nation's history. The Babylonian exile had just ended, and God brought Israel back to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the temple. Spiritual warfare raged at this time as Satan aimed at stopping all worship of Yahweh. He sought to do this through accusations regarding the shortcomings of Israel's leaders. That's where we find ourselves in Zechariah 3:1-5. We find ourselves witnessing a divine interrogation in the courts of heaven, with Joshua standing before the Lord as Satan stood close by to accuse him of filthiness. And, perhaps the most difficult portion of this text is that Satan was right - Joshua was clothed in filth, and Satan let him hear it.

Yet, despite Joshua's obvious guilt, the Lord said to the accuser, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan!" The angel followed suit, saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him," and, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." Despite Joshua's guilt, the true accusations of the enemy regarding Joshua's filth, and the shame Joshua undoubtedly felt as accusations rang out against him from the lips of the accuser, the Lord himself is the one who plead Joshua's cause and took away his dirt and grime, replacing it with pure vestments.

This is the kind of shame-shattering truth that must be a regular fixture in the life of a believer - you are guilty and filthy, yet, the same God against whom you have sinned also serves as your defender. Jesus himself stands ready to come to your defense against the enemy's accusations of your

filth as he hopes to put you to shame.

So, praise God, that unlike Joshua who was an imperfect priest, there is a perfect High Priest who completed the process of redemption once for all for believers - who never sinned, never had dirty spiritual garments, yet went to the cross to bear the guilt, shame, and filth of believers so that he might give the filthy his cleanliness. His name is Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he lives day and night to intercede for the saints and to defend the dirty, just as he did in Zechariah 3, saying, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?"

Now, I ask you, shame-stricken believer—are you not a brand plucked from the fire, for whom the Lord has died to give new life and clean, righteous garments, and for whom the Lord rushes to defend? Believer—who may now successfully bring a charge against you, when the Judge has hung your guilt and shame not just on another, but on the perfect One. Let your heart delight in Jesus Christ the Righteous, this perfect one, and let your eyes be fixed on your Savior, not to the filth that surely yet resides in you or the shame that makes its ugly boast. Instead, boast in Christ alone, and shame over confessed and forsaken sin will begin to flee as the Lord himself pleads your cause.



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