

Living by Faith in Future Grace - Lesson 4

by John Piper

John Piper emphasizes that faith in future grace empowers believers to love their enemies and rejoice in suffering.

Duration: 1:19:50

Scripture: Lamentations 3:22, Matthew 6:25-34, Hebrews 11:10, Hebrews 13:13

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Overcoming Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the brevity of human life and the importance of focusing on eternity. He shares a powerful story of a man who cut off his own leg to survive, illustrating the extreme measures we should take to fight against sin. The speaker also addresses the issue of bitterness and encourages listeners to step outside their comfort zones to share the gospel. He reminds them to trust in God's future grace and cast their anxieties on Him. The sermon references passages from James, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and Philipians to support these teachings.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at www.DesiringGod.org Okay, number three. How does it work for holiness, the origins of radical love? I want to jump to Matthew 5, verse 43, to give you a pattern, I think, of how faith in future grace functions to produce the kind of love which is the hardest kind, namely the love of our enemies.

Matthew 5, verse 43, You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. So, one form of love to an enemy is to pray for persecutors.

So keep that in mind now, and I want to jump back in this chapter 5 of Matthew, back about 30 verses to the Beatitudes, and read Matthew 5, 10 and 12. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men insult you.

Now, just pause here and realize that the reason I'm connecting this verse and those is that these are enemies here. They're insulting you, and this same word, persecute, was used in Matthew 5, 44. Pray for those who persecute you.

So there he said, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Here he says, blessed are you when these enemies insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Now, what you want to do here is think about the inner dynamics of your heart that would enable you to love a persecutor and an insulter and an abuser. Which is harder? To pray for an enemy or a persecutor, like 5.44 said, or to rejoice and be glad when you are insulted and persecuted and spoken evil of? Which is harder, emotionally, for you? I think so. I think rejoicing and being glad is harder because even if you're feeling angry at an accuser, you might have the willpower to pray that he be forgiven or that he be changed.

This is hard. This is unheard of. This is wild.

This is radical. Jesus' teachings are radical. Unbelievably radical.

I mean, most people read this and they just say, no way not in a thousand years can anybody live like that. Well, the way is narrow that leads to life and few there be that find it. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil because of me.

Rejoice. Luke's version says rejoice in that day. And be glad.

So, if it's harder to rejoice and be glad, then surely if you can do this, you can do that. If you can rejoice and be glad when you are persecuted, you will surely be able to find the emotional wherewithal to pray for your enemy, bless those who persecute you, do good to those who despise you. I'm picking up text now from Luke 6 where it's expanded.

So, the key is how can you do the hardest thing? Because if you can do the hardest thing, you can do the easier thing. Tell me, you just tell me now, what is the key to this joy? Just get it from the text. What's the key? The future reward.

Rejoice and be glad for... Here's his basis. You got a basis and something that stands on it. And the future reward or blessing is the basis and on it is joy.

Therefore, my simple paraphrase is, the capacity to respond lovingly to insulters and persecutors and slanderers is faith in future grace. Do you believe that such a reward is coming to you that is so phenomenally great that even now it begins to satisfy the heart so much that the heart doesn't need the approval of other people in order to cope and be satisfied? There are so many second handers in the world who have to be liked by other people to survive. It's a deep, profound co-dependency, if you like modern words, that we need to be shed of through faith in future grace.

Grace for tomorrow and grace for eternity. Call it reward. It's because our hearts are so satisfied and excited and contented by this that we can say, though the fig tree blossom not, the vines fail, the herds are gone, there are no sheep in the stall and all my enemies are against me, yet will I rejoice in God.

That's the key to love. If you only become self-pitying and bitter towards the loss of your reputation and your house and your flocks, you won't love anybody, if you only become bitter and self-pitying. So how can you be a kind of person who loses your good name, though you've done nothing wrong to lose it, and people lie about you and they cheat you and they spread rumors about you, and it makes you so mad

because it's so unjust, and then suddenly the spouse gets a terminal illness and the child trips out and runs away, and if you don't have the wherewithal at that moment to rejoice in God, how are you going to love anybody? You will just either walk around licking your poor wounds and wanting people to say, Oh poor you, or you will be one vicious person, taking it out on everybody and expecting them to recognize how painful your life is.

The only hope for love in the midst of persecution and loss is future grace. And that's what this text says. Rejoice in the midst of this pain, for your reward in heaven is great.

So you can see why I have little sympathy with the statement that people become so heavenly minded they're no earthly good. I think the only way to become earthly good is to be so heavenly minded that you don't need any earthly goods. Yes? Okay, let me try to do that because I've thought about that.

The question is, we often connect reward with our action as a response of God to our action, and here I'm treating reward as a promise that enables us to act a certain way. Now I think both of those are true. And it is the assurance of the reward of God's presence rooted in the cross of Christ and justification by faith alone that enables me to be free to do these kinds of things.

Namely, pray for my persecutors and love my enemies. Then there will be texts that say, if you love your enemies, you'll get the reward. And that's true because the reward is rooted in your faith in Christ which is now enabling you to do the deeds which must precede the getting of the reward.

I mean, if you can't handle that now, I've wasted the last two and a half hours. And it may be that you can't because this is new and fresh and maybe complicated, so that's why I write books. I know that it takes review and meditation and thinking and underlining and scratching and putting marks in the margin.

I mean, you should read some of the books I had in seminary. No! And wrestling and underlining and three different colors over three different readings and trying to figure things out. So, that's a very complicated question that he just asked.

And I gave you a fairly complicated answer. But that's crucial that you understand there are texts in the Bible that say the reward comes as a consequence in some way of the deeds. Then there are other texts that say it's the reward that you must be assured of getting in order to do the deeds.

And those are not contradictory at all. It's the cross that's at the center. We cast ourselves on the mercy of God in the cross to reckon us righteous apart from works of the law.

We rest in the acceptance and love of God rooted in the righteousness of Christ and His love and death for us. And are thus freed from all fear and know that our future is secure and all the grace leading into it forever, which enables us now to love. And then God can say, since you have loved, I will reward you with this because the love is evidence of the faith which is a tribute to Jesus.

Oh, I hope you get that. Anybody want to ask another question about that? Dana? I'm not sure what difference, the question is from Hebrews 12, 1 and 2 where it says Christ endured the cross, despising the shame for the joy that was set before Him. So Christ got the wherewithal to endure the cross and despise the shame from the joy set before Him.

That's exactly, Dana's pointing out, what we're being asked to do here. We're being asked to endure the cross of this persecution, despise the shame, and even more, rejoice now because of the future reward.

And it was that joy that gave Jesus the power to endure, and it's that joy that gives us the power to endure lovingly.

Jesus was able to say, Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing, and to stay on the cross and other things that expressed love in those hours because His mind could see beyond it both days and centuries in which He would be raised from the dead, He would be restored to the Father and given the glory He had before, and He would be surrounded one day by a great host of redeemed people praising Him and His Father forever. And that joy sustained Him, it says in Hebrews 12, 1 and 2. And I don't see any fundamental difference here. Yeah, there are a couple of things going on there.

The question, more precisely from Dana, is besides experiencing this joy, is it legitimate to have other emotions like despising or being angry at or whatever this persecution and insult and so on. Now, let me take this in pieces. I see the word despise there in a little different light than you're seeing it.

I think what it means when it says He despised the shame, this is the picture we're supposed to hear. Shame rears its ugly head and beckons Jesus to feel ashamed. He's naked.

He's hanging on a cross. His Father isn't responding. He's vanished off the scene, seemingly.

And Satan and sin are suggesting to Jesus, Feel shame. Feel shame. Feel shame.

You're naked. You're a fool. You're dying like a criminal.

God's not answering your prayers. This is the most shameful moment in history. Feel shame.

And at that moment, Jesus says, I despise you, shame. Out of my life. That's what I think despise means.

But now your question is still legitimate. I think other emotions are legitimate in these moments. When you're hurt, you're hurt.

You can no more not feel pain when you have pain than anything. If you're hurt, you're hurt. And hurt hurts.

So, tears come. Crying comes. You can't stop it.

You're crying and you're hurt. That's true emotionally. That's true physically.

You can't stop it. It's just there. It's real.

There's no point in trying to deny it or hide it or anything. That's one kind that's legitimate, for sure. A second kind is judicial indignation at sin.

This is sin. So, if your children were abused by an uncle for a couple of years, and now they've got venereal warts, and you think their teenage years are going to be ruined, and never will they have a happy marriage, and the rage that can rise in your heart against such a perpetrator has a legitimate component to it. That's not all bad.

You remember that situation in the synagogue where Jesus reached out to the man with a withered hand, and he was going to heal him, and they were saying, come back tomorrow and do this. This is Sunday. And it says Jesus looked upon them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.

Two emotions. Very different emotions. Grief and anger.

Grief and anger. Many times people, they'll hear anger coming from a preacher or from a saint or somebody, and they'll say, well, there's no grief there. There's no brokenheartedness because of sin.

Well, for Jesus, they could both coexist, and maybe they can for a saint. So at least those several things, and maybe more. What I said last night, I stand by it, one of the emotions that's illegitimate is anger at God.

Now, I'm not saying it doesn't happen, and I'm not saying we shouldn't be patient with each other when it happens. I'm just saying I'm going to call it sin. Anger at God is always sin.

And if you said Job had it, Psalmist had it, Jeremiah had it, right, of course they did, and they repented. When Job got to the end of his book, what did he do? I repent with dust and ashes, or fork my hand over my mouth, I have spoken things I did not know, I have been so wrong in the way I've talked. It took God chapters to get Job fixed.

Many things he said were true and right, and then he crossed over the line in many places. You know, what I hear, a mistake, is that many pastors, in order to prevent hypocrisy in their church, which is something we want not to have, say, it's good to feel anger when you lose a loved one, it's good to feel anger, and even anger at God. I think what they really mean, and at least ought to say, is if you feel it, don't stuff it.

Don't lie to me. Don't lie to your wife, and don't lie to your people. If you're feeling it, say you feel it.

Be real. Be real with your sin. Stuffed sin rots the bones.

Psalm 32. I concealed my sin, and my bones rotted within me. So, yeah, I'm in favor of realness.

I try to be real in the pulpit. I try to say the kinds of struggles I have. I try to talk as a sinner among sinners.

But we're going to call it sin. So don't equate calling something sin and saying we shouldn't talk about it, or express it, if we haven't. So, for example, if you experience a struggle with lust, which most of the men probably do, you ought to go public with that in a proper setting of trust with a few other guys.

Don't stuff these things. So I don't mean to be understood as putting a lid on what we can express by saying it's sin. Now there's that hand at the back.

That's really good. Just for the tape, the analogy of childbirth. This is biblical as well as experiential.

As you're moving into the labor, and probably earlier than that as you're carrying this baby around. Oh, poor Julie Stellar for those last weeks. What she went through until she had Emma on Tuesday.

That too. So all of that, and then those last hours of pushing and straining. I've done that four times with my wife.

This woman is pointing out here that she focuses on the joy of holding the baby in her arms rather than focusing on the moment of the pain. And that enables her to love this baby and deliver it rather than abort it. I have a whole slew of texts to show you how confidence in future grace releases love.

I'll just look at these brief texts in Hebrews. Hebrews 10.32, 11.24-26, and the one that Dana pointed out, Hebrews 12.1-2, and then Hebrews 13.12-14. These texts in Hebrews, let's put them here so you can see them, and you can read them for yourself later. Hebrews 10.32-34, Hebrews 11.24-26, Hebrews 12.1-2, and Hebrews 13.12-14 show that this writer had an understanding of where radical love came from that was just like Jesus.

Let's look at this one. Remember the former days when after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings? Partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those so treated? For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property? Here you have this strange joy in the midst of adversity again. Even the seizure or the plundering of your property.

We don't know whether this was an official act or a mob violence or something like that. But what happened was, they went to visit their friends in prison. They became sharers with those who were so treated.

You showed sympathy to the prisoners. So they went to visit them in prison. And what happened when they went, and they knew it was likely to happen, is that they joyfully accepted the persecution.

Now I argue that this joy here is the key to the love that got them to the prison. You must become the kind of person who when you contemplate doing a good deed, and its possible negative consequences of pain for you, you will choose to do it at the risk of the consequences for the surpassing joy of something else. And it's here what that is.

You joyfully accepted the seizure of your property knowing... This is because you knew. This is faith in future grace. Knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

Do you see how heavenly minded that is? These people were so loosely attached to their homes. Mike Rustin pointed out to me that he knows of a situation where a sermon was preached or a rally was held about homosexuality, and the next day the church was burned down. So, perhaps the word gets out tomorrow, and some really radical gay rights people show up here who don't like to be told at all that homosexual behavior is a sin, and feeling justifiably indignant, they plunder this place tomorrow night or Sunday night.

Break all the windows, torch it. Knowing that that could happen, should we move ahead with this? Of course we should. And when it happens, we'll have a special meeting, there'll be tears, it costs a lot of money, it's sad to be hated.

I don't hate homosexuals, but to be hated hurts, and we will say, it was right and it was good to speak the truth, and we rejoice that God counted us worthy to stand true. Oh yeah, I think you are. The comment is that, thinking back to some Negro spirituals or slave songs about the focus on the future and possibly becoming imbalanced in being so future oriented that the experience of joy and the release of love in the present doesn't happen.

Well, clearly there's a disconnect there somewhere, if that's happening, that's different than this. Something here is causing a present joy. See, I can imagine these people saying something like, why should I rejoice now at the losing of my property just because I have a great reward in the future? So there's clearly a disconnect in people that think that way.

For these people, it was so awesome. You see, the reason I think that's virtually impossible if you see God for who He really is, and you see eternity for what it really is. I mean, picture yourself, and somebody says, there's going to be five seconds of pain that will be excruciating, and then you can have 8,000 years of the greatest happiness imaginable.

How many will take the deal? Okay, one at least. She raised her hand. And I would too.

I would take the deal. That's life. Because Paul said, this slight momentary affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

2 Corinthians 4.17 And some of you who have lived a long time and have lived with much pain might say, slight momentary? 70 years, 80 years, 90 years, the last 30 of which, blind, curled up, fingers bent over backwards so they touch your wrist this way, not this way, lying on the fourth floor of the nursing home for two decades. That's short. That's small.

That's light. And Paul's answer would be, yes, by comparison. By comparison.

So I think the disconnect is in failing to really come to terms with the magnitude of what we're about to fall into in a vaporous breath. Your life is a vapor, James said. It is a vapor.

So how long does a vapor last on a winter morning? Two seconds. And then eternity. We need to be a people whose minds are so fixed on the awesome wonder of eternity that the disconnect doesn't happen.

Now, I know there's more to it than that. And maybe therein is the misleading part of it. If you just take text like this, without all the other texts that say, but we have the Holy Spirit now.

We have fellowship with Jesus now. We have forgiveness of sins now. We have cleansed consciences now.

We have acceptance with God now. We have fellowship with the living Christ now. And that's true.

The future has broken in and that's what gets us to this great future. But we can't miss the dynamic of love here that because you know that you have a better possession, you can joyfully endure the cost of love. And so did Moses in chapter 11.

So did Jesus in chapter 12. And here's one more. Let's look at this and then we're going to shift down to number 4. Therefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

So, let us go to Him outside the camp and bearing His reproach. Bearing reproach with Him. This is the call of love.

Go outside the camp. There are people this morning who are doing outreach evangelism at those high-rises across the street. Perhaps right now as we speak.

Willing to knock on the door, have them open the door and say, oh, it's more fanatics. That doesn't feel good. But they're outside the camp.

Here we are in the nice, comfortable camp called Bethlehem. We're so comfortable right here. We're just all enjoying this teaching and this time and the heat is good.

Everything is so nice. We had a good breakfast. We're in the camp.

And this text says, find a way outside the camp. Let us go with Him and bear some reproach for Him. Now, where are you going to get the strength to do that? For here we have no lasting city.

That's like the fleeting pleasures of Egypt in chapter 11, 25. Here we have no lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come. Chapter 11, whose builder and maker is God, which has foundations.

We have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken. We will be freed from the addictive powers of convenience and comfort and ease in this world and released into radical, risk-taking love to the degree that we don't count Minneapolis or America or this earth as our city and our home, but we seek a city that is all-satisfying, that is to come. That's where love comes from.

Now, let's talk about some sample competitors to love. Battling the forms of unbelief. 4.1. Battling anxiety.

The unbelief of anxiety. Now, I'm calling it the unbelief of anxiety because everything I've said up till now is meant to teach that the source of anxiety is unbelief in future grace. We are anxious because we don't trust fully in future grace.

Here's my definition of anxiety. The loss of confidence, security in God owing to feelings of uneasiness or foreboding that something harmful is going to happen. The loss of confidence, security in God owing to feelings of uneasiness or foreboding that something harmful is going to happen.

Everybody has these feelings of uneasiness and foreboding. The question is what will we do with them? How will we fight them? How will we battle them in order to maintain confidence, security in God? And we battle them through faith in future grace. The point of putting Matthew 6.25-34 up here is a long text.

I'm not going to read it all. It's all about don't be worried, don't be anxious, don't be worried, don't be anxious. But when it gets down to the end of the text and he says, O you of little faith.

Faith is the issue here. Don't worry then, saying what do we eat or what do we drink or what do we wear or what do we wear for clothing. For the Gentiles seek these things and your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

Seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you in proportion, in measure, as God thinks that you need them. Don't worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will care for itself.

Each day has enough trouble of its own. Now compare that last sentence there with Lamentations 3. This is a precious discovery for many of us a few years ago at Bethlehem. When I put these texts together, a lot of lights went on for a lot of people, as I recall.

Lamentations 3.22 says, The Lord's loving kindness indeed never ceases. Kindnesses never cease. For His compassions never fail.

They are new, new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. Now compare this positive promise to this negative warning in Matthew 6.34. Don't worry about tomorrow for tomorrow has enough trouble of its own and the mercies of God are new or the compassions of God are new every morning.

Now, what's the lesson by comparing these two verses? The lesson is, faith in future grace trusts that when the trouble comes on its appointed day, there will be an appointed compassion and mercy for it,

which doesn't exist yet today. Which is why Jesus says, Don't worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will care for itself.

In other words, here's what happens. I said our troubles get stacked up. Got big trouble today.

Maybe a stack of troubles today. Then you can see possibly tomorrow would get worse this way. And after that it would get worse this way.

And after that it would get worse this way. And after that it would get worse this day. Then, having seen all those days of worsening troubles, you stand in front of the mirror and you check out your grace quotient and you don't find it adequate for all of those.

And it isn't adequate for all of those because the compassions of God are new every morning. Tomorrow's grace for tomorrow's trouble. Not today's grace for tomorrow's trouble.

Faith believes that's going to happen when it can't see it. I mean, I can imagine this young man lying in the hospital saying, I have grace to cope with this week, but if this lasts for three years, I don't have it. And my answer to that is, no, you don't have it.

No, you don't have it. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, and when that evil comes in its appointment, there will be a new grace. Tomorrow's grace and that year's grace and that month's grace will come.

So anxiety, which is the loss of confidence in God as you contemplate future negatives, things that are going to go bad in the future. You can see they're going to go bad or they might go bad, and anxiety starts to mount. You fight that with faith that there will be sufficient grace tomorrow for tomorrow's trouble.

Faith that there will be grace. I mean, I could not be a pastor. I absolutely could not be a pastor without this.

Because I ask myself so many what ifs, like, I have not started my sermon for tomorrow morning. Suppose I get a phone call at 1 o'clock that one of my members is on a ledge ready to jump off, or is in the basement with a gun to his head, and he's asking to see you. Well, believe me, I'm going.

So when's a sermon going to happen? Going to have 14, probably 1,600 people for this homosexuality sermon on Sunday. And I've got to spend all afternoon trying to talk somebody out of killing himself. I could really complicate my anxiety factor right now by piling up all the possible intrusions that might come into my life this afternoon.

I have a lot of pastors ask me, you wait until Saturday to prepare your sermons? What if... And all I know to do is say, I've got night for a buffer. That's my only answer. I've used it probably three times.

I think I've walked into this pulpit maybe two or three times never having slept Saturday night. I don't tell anybody about that because that probably would account for why I'm feisty or jumpy or not making any sense at all. But I do have the buffer to fall back on.

But if they said, oh yeah, but what if I've got to be there all night? I say, well, I would simply walk in and whisper to Chuck, we're going to sing for 60 minutes. So, however God would do it, my confidence right now is there's going to be a sermon for tomorrow morning because there's going to be grace for this afternoon. And you just add your own pieces into that.

You're all facing tough things somewhere down the line this afternoon and further. Faith and future grace is the relief of anxiety. As thy days, so shall thy strength be.

Deuteronomy 33.25 Psalm 56.3 When I am afraid, I will trust in you. This is one of the little children's fighter verses. And we all made a song about it, so whenever we get to this one, Tal says, when I am afraid, I will trust in you.

We have a little chant that we do. And what I'm pointing out, I mean, two years old is a little early to get it, but it's the wind here that's so comforting. It's not before.

The Bible is so realistic. It knows that fear creeps up on you and there it is before you can even fight. There it is.

You didn't ask for it to come, it just landed on you and you're afraid. But when you are afraid, now you do battle. What do you do with it? You put your trust in the future grace of God.

Cast all your anxieties. 1 Peter 5.7 On Him because He cares for you. This is future.

He cares for you. This afternoon He'll care for you. Tomorrow He'll care for you.

How precious is this promise that God cares for you. He doesn't want you to be anxious. He wants you to glorify His grace by resting in His care this afternoon.

Same thing in Philippians 4, 6 and 7. Let's be specific about a few kinds of anxiety. Suppose you're anxious about being useless in life. Now what I'm going to do here in these next few minutes is show you a paradigm for how you fight specifically.

The Bible is the sword of the Spirit by which you fight against the demon of anxiety. And I don't mean to take that too literally, demon. I'm not one who demonizes every sin that my own soul produces.

What I mean, the sin of anxiety comes against you. You take the sword and you run it through. The sword is specific words of God that you believe, you trust.

And here are some sample daggers for anxiety. Suppose you feel anxious about being useless in life. You take the dagger of 1 Corinthians 15.58 and believe it.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. It will not be in vain. Not be in vain.

So if Satan whispers to you that your life of obedience to God is in vain and nothing good is going to come of it and has no significance at all, you take this little dagger and you say, No! Don't believe you. I trust this promise is true that as I live my afternoon or my week or my year or my life, the grace of God will not let it be in vain. Or, suppose you have anxieties about feeling weak.

Then you take 2 Corinthians 12.9 where he says, My grace is sufficient for you and my power is perfected in weaknesses. Most gladly, therefore, I will boast about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. So you say, when you feel weak, Jesus said His grace would be sufficient for me and His power would be perfected in weakness.

I trust that that's going to be true tonight and tomorrow and as I enter into this difficult phase in my life. I trust future grace and the anxiety drains away. Or, suppose you feel anxious about difficult decisions you have to make.

Psalm 32.8 You take this promise. God says, I will instruct you. I will teach you in the way which you should go.

I will counsel you with my eye upon you. God is not eager to withhold guidance from His children. And you establish your confidence in the future grace of wisdom with a promise like Psalm 32.8 or 25.8 and 9. Good and upright is the Lord, therefore He instructs sinners.

Now there's a massive confidence giver because Satan is going to say, he's not going to instruct you because you've failed too many times. You're a sinner. And you say to Satan, I qualify then.

I qualify according to Psalm 25.8 because God is upright and therefore on the basis of His uprightness He says, I will glorify His uprightness by confessing to Him that I'm a sinner and thus qualify for guidance. That's the way you talk to the devil or to your own soul. You just juke him with these daggers.

Get out of here. I really do this. I do it before I get out of bed in the morning.

I'm juking Satan this way and juking Satan that way. And my own soul, He leads the humble. People who confess that they're sinners usually will be humble.

He leads them in justice and teaches the humble his way. So if you're feeling anxious about some big decisions, get yourself some daggers and some promises and lean on them. Trust them.

Meditate on them. Memorize them until they seep down into your soul and relieve the anxiety. Suppose you battle anxiety about opponents or enemies.

Romans 8.31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? Meaning, all your opponents in the world can't do anything ultimately harmful to you. Battling anxiety about afflictions. Suppose you fear afflictions that are coming either from enemies or from sickness or whatever.

Many of the afflictions. Psalm 34.19 of the righteous, but the Lord will deliver you out of them all. And one of these days, He'll deliver you out of them finally into heaven.

Or Romans 5.3-5 Rejoice in your tribulations. Exult in your tribulations because you know that they bring about perseverance and perseverance character and character hope and hope doesn't disappoint. You meditate on those until your tribulations become a cause for rejoicing rather than anxiety.

This is the way to live the Christian life. This is as practical as I know to get right now. This is the way I live my Christian life.

I fight anxiety and sins of unbelief by the Word of God. Suppose you have the anxiety of aging. That's a big one once you turn 50, 60 and you see that you might go blind or you might become deaf or you might have such terrible arthritic pain that you can no longer walk or your mind might fall to Alzheimer's and you'll have to be coped with for years and years.

And it isn't death so much that frightens the saints, it's dying. This text right here is a beautiful, beautiful remover of anxiety. Listen to me, O house of Jacob and all the remnant of the house of Israel.

You who have been born by me, carried by me from birth and have been carried from the womb, even to your old age, I will be the same. And even to your graying years, I will bear you. I have done it and I will carry you.

I will bear you and I will deliver you. Wow! Wow! You need to memorize those things because you may not be able to read them someday. When you need them, you can't read them.

And your memory will fail too. And so we need to read them to each other. Go to visit our older people and read them some scripture.

Just read them some scripture. Read them some wonderful scripture. Go visit them.

Visit your parents or your grandparents. When I get in the hospital and when I'm dying or when I'm old, I hope that my boys, if they're around, it's okay if they're in the mission field, that's alright. Don't stay home for me.

Somebody will be left maybe who will remember this old preacher and just come read me some Bible, would you? Just read me some Bible. Don't think of anything fancy to say. Don't try to impress me with your theology.

Just read me some Bible. Here's a... Maureen made the comment earlier that is it future grace that answers the problem of wondering whether my faith today will survive over the challenges that come so that I know I'm going to be a believer in 15 years or 20 years. I have thought how easy my life is in the sense that I am not pounded upon every day by skeptics from the university.

I can choose whether to read their books or not. But suppose I were put in a setting where every day with relentlessness the most severe and articulate skeptics bombarded me every day with the hardest biblical problems, the hardest philosophical problems, the hardest creation problems, the hardest suffering problems every day relentlessly. And then add to that maybe some physical abuse.

Where's the confidence that the faith I feel so confident in today or that I have today will survive all that? And the answer is in the promises of the New Covenant. Like this. I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

This is the New Covenant. This is what Jesus said about His blood. This cup of My blood is the New Covenant in My blood.

I just bought this. I will make an everlasting covenant with them and I will not turn away from them to do them good, even in the midst of persecution. And I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn from Me.

That's my only hope. There it is, Maureen. And everybody else.

That's my only hope that I will be a believer till the day I die. God said He will act so that John Piper will not turn away from Him. So my confidence does not repose in my past decision when I was 6 years old.

How many people look back to their conversion as the assurance that they are now born again or that they will be born again? Whereas in fact, we ought to look straight to the cross and to the promises of God today that if He did not spare His own Son for me, will He not with Him freely fulfill Jeremiah 32. And we could go to 1 Corinthians 1.8. He who called you is faithful. Same thing.

We could go to Philippians 1.6. He who began a good work in you will complete it under the day of Christ. There are numerous passages. Last anxiety here is death where it promises that we will be the Lord.

There are many, many texts that help you deal with the anxiety about death. I think what probably I should do is take 3 to 5 minutes summing up how we battle the unbelief of covetousness. Covetousness is, in my definition, desiring something not for God's glory or in such a way that we lose our contentment in God.

It could be an innocent thing. It could be a sinful thing. It doesn't matter.

It's called idolatry. Greed, which amounts to idolatry in Colossians 3.5. How shall we conquer it? We'll take this one text, Hebrews 3.5 and 6. How do you become a content person rather than a covetous person? How do you live when you see a lot of people buying second and third houses and always having a nice place to retreat to and you begin to wish you could have a second house? Or you see them driving cars that never break down because they're new. Or you see them having an income that enables them to put their kids through college with no debt.

Just on and on it goes and covetousness becomes a stormy feeling inside. Now notice the logic of Hebrews 13.5 and 6. Make sure that your character is free from the love of money. That's the freedom of covetousness in one form.

And you can apply it to every form. Keep your life free from the love of money. Being content, that's the flip side of covetousness.

Covetousness is the discontent of not having things you thought you should have or want to have. Be content with what you have for... Here it comes. Here's the ground.

Here's the faith in future grace. For He Himself said, I will future grace. I will never desert you or forsake you.

Conclusion from that promise, from that future grace? So, we can confidently say, that's faith. This is future grace. I will never leave you.

This is faith in it. We can confidently say, the Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid.

What can man do to me? He's using Old Testament quotations. That's why they're capitalized there. He's using Old Testament quotations to illustrate the satisfaction that comes from resting in the promised future grace of God.

Oh, what kind of people we would be if we were that free from the love of things. The Pope, at the death of John Calvin, said, this heretic got all his power from his utter indifference to money. Amen.

The love of money is the root of all evils. And indifference to money is the root of much power. But if you love money, and if you're always thinking about what you don't have and might have, if you had this job or that job, or if you had this or that, rather than experiencing a sweet contentment in God because of the promise, I'll never leave you.

You've got me! How blessed are those who have the Lord, whatever else they have. God will provide what you need so that you can maximally glorify Him. Oh, let's go to lust.

Here's my definition of lust. Pursuing illicit thoughts or images in the mind with a view to stimulating sexual pleasures with or without external stimuli. That is, pornography may be there in front of you, or it may not be.

A live show might be there in front of you, or a movie, or it may not be. It doesn't matter. What matters is what are you doing with your head.

And for women it's different, but it's similar. At least as I'm told and read. I'm not a woman.

I don't know how it works. But believe me, the billion dollar sales of Harlequin romance novels is not to men. Men aren't reading these things.

It's affection, sex-starved women. And by sex-starved, I don't mean so much intercourse-starved, but hug-starved, touch-starved, emotional intimacy-starved. And so recreating something that will create emotions that the husband doesn't give, or they don't get because they're not in a loving community where nobody ever puts their arm around them in a wholesome way.

So men and women, they're buried in different kinds of battles to fight here. Lust grows out of suppressing the knowledge of God and His promises according to Ephesians 4.22. See this phrase? Lust of deceit. Not lust of knowledge.

Deceit. The power of lust comes from the lie of lust. Give way to this fantasy and you will be happier than if you find a way to cut it off.

Give way to this Internet, pornographic site, and you will have more satisfaction, more pleasure, more fulfillment than if you find a way to cut it off. 1 Peter 1.14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in ignorance. Lusts were yours in ignorance.

Lust is a sign of suppressing the truth of God. You must suppress it to give way to lust because the promises of God are better than the promises of lust. They are.

And the only reason you would give way to lust instead of the promises of God is if you can successfully suppress the promises of God, which we can in the most remarkable way. And it is dangerous. Or, 1 Thessalonians 4.4 and 5 still illustrating this suppressing idea.

Each of you should know how to possess his own vessel, that either means sexual organ or wife, in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion like the Gentiles who do not know God. You see what the point is? Possess your vessel in holiness unlike the Gentiles who do not know God. They don't know God.

That's the key. Knowing God is the key. I dealt with a family a little while back where the man was given in to pornography on the Internet.

It was ruining their marriage. And they came in to see me. And I didn't have to counsel this couple at all what the problem was.

They told me exactly what the problem was. We're not praying together. We're not reading the Bible.

We're not walking with God. And especially Him. I said, okay, you know the solution.

Let's just make some covenants here and battle this thing. You know the answer. You know how to fight the fight.

And you've laid down your weapon. You've just quit fighting. And so you've got to pick that weapon up or you could be destroyed by this.

And so we made some covenants. I'll tell you the covenants we made. Just one covenant.

He will not... This wife works outside the home some. He will not go on the Internet while she's outside the home. That was the first covenant we made.

And this covenant we're going to sign on until the end of December. And we're going to review. Second covenant.

Every time he feels tempted to click the little blueprint on the email that showed up there without any choice of his own that says click here for couples copulating. That sort of stuff shows up on your email if you've got AOL or other servers like that. If he feels tempted to go click, just one click today, and you've got it in the privacy of your own home, he will go to his wife and say, I'm feeling tempted.

Please pray for me. So they knew it was a knowing God issue. It was a walking with God issue.

To give way to lust is to lose more than you gain. You've got to be persuaded of that. To give way to lust is to lose more than you gain.

It is a lie that losing sex is losing something essential. I say this to you single people especially. I dealt with a man years ago after I wrote an article on condom advertising in the television when it was a real hot item here in the Twin Cities.

Then I wrote an article that we didn't need that. I gave some arguments from Evangelical Christianity. He wrote and said, I'll have you know that I'm a human being and that my girlfriend and I will have as much sex together as we want because it would be less than human not to be fulfilled in this regard in my life.

What are you Puritans trying to do to us? That kind of thing. Well, I wrote back. He had the courage to give me his return address, which is not real common.

But he gave me his return address. So I wrote back and I said, You know, the most human and fulfilled person on the face of the globe was Jesus Christ. And he never had sexual intercourse with anybody.

Period. If you're going to accept the argument that to live your whole life without sexual intercourse is to miss out on something essentially human without which you cannot be fully human, that is the worst indictment of Jesus Christ you might be able to make. Because you're saying he really wasn't fully human, he really missed out on what it meant to be fully human, he really didn't participate in and rise to the level of what it means to be wholly a person because he never had sex.

He was single all his life and died at age 33 with never knowing what that sensation was. I won't say that about Jesus and therefore I say to every single person and I could give you texts for it, that you have the potential perhaps of living a more fulfilled, more satisfied, more authentic, more fully human life than many married couples who don't have a clue what sex is really about. You gain through purity.

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. You lose the preciousness of the sight of God when you defile your mind repeatedly through lust. And then there are these warnings on lust in the Bible.

In future grace, I tell the story of the man who cut off his leg with a pocket knife. On page 329, if you have the book, you might want to read that. A log fell on his... He was doing forestry.

The tree fell on his leg. He was trapped. He was bleeding profusely.

He called and called and called. He couldn't do it. He finally took out his pocket knife, used his boot string as a tourniquet, put it on his leg, and sawed off his leg under the knee.

Climbed in his bulldozer, drove to his truck, got in his standard transmission, clutch-working truck, and drove three miles to a farm and lived to tell the story. It was in the newspaper. I give all the credits for it.

It's on page 329. What a magnificent illustration of if your eye offends you, gouge it out, and if your hand offends you, cut it off. If a human being wants to live, they'll cut off their leg to live.

If you want to live, you will fight pornography like that. Because Jesus says it will kill you if you give way to it enough. Fight it like that.

Well, let's see. Bitterness. I will give you one key to bitterness.

Let's see which one. Here's the key I want to give you for bitterness. If you're struggling with bitterness in your life against somebody who really wronged you, and I mean real wrong, not unreal wrong, real wrong, they ripped your business off, they abused you as a child, maybe a parent or whatever it was, real wrong done to you.

These two texts, 1 Peter 2.21-24 and Romans 12.19 promise a very interesting kind of future grace, namely future judgment on those that did that to you. Listen to what Jesus experienced. You have been called for this purpose since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps who committed no sin nor was any deceit found in His mouth.

Nevertheless, He was being terribly mistreated. While being reviled, He did not revile in return. While suffering, He uttered no threats, but He kept on entrusting to Him who judges justly.

Now, love was happening here, but love is not such a namby-pamby, soft, justice-ignoring thing that it does not have a component within it that says, if there's no repentance in these people for doing what they're doing to me, they should pay. And He was entrusting to the judge who would settle it justly. He said, alright, I don't need to do that.

I will trust You, Father. You do what is right by these people. Same thing here in Romans 12.19. Never take your own revenge.

Don't hold grudges. Don't cherish bitterness. Don't try to get back.

Don't keep looking for the way to say the damning thing because they said a damning thing. Don't play that game. But, leave room for the wrath of God.

For it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. Now, that may not sound loving to you. But it occurs in a context where He says, let love be genuine.

Verse 9, 10 verses earlier, let love be without hypocrisy. Paul does not feel that this is in contradiction to love. What he's saying is this, there is in the human soul a cry for justice that's right and good.

And if you have been unjustly mistreated and you know that justice should be done, you can't stand the thought of a universe in which injustice just perpetuates and there's an indefinite sweeping under the rug of all kinds of horrors and wrongs in the world. You can't stand that kind of a universe and you shouldn't. It's right to want justice to be done.

But then what do you do with that passion? You give it to God. You say, you're the judge. I give place to wrath.

I hand it over to you. And I return good for evil. Now, get this point.

There will be no unpunished sin that has ever been committed in the world against you or anybody else. No sin that has ever been committed on the face of planet Earth will ever be without a perfectly suited recompense according to the grievousness of its evil. Either it will be punished on the cross for those who trust Jesus, or it will be punished in hell for those who don't.

And to take the vengeance yourself on your enemy is either, therefore, to belittle the cross if they happen to get converted, or to belittle the justice of God in hell if they happen not to be converted. You don't need to cherish it. You can let it go.

And you can embrace love in the hope that they would be converted and that sin then, without being swept under any rug, would be put on the back of Jesus and the heaving and the blood and the agony of Jesus then becomes an echo for how serious that abuse of you. Well, the last was impatience. And I think the only... those two texts right there, Genesis 50, 20, how to battle impatience, Genesis 50, verse 20, and Romans 8, 28 are the ones I would leave you with as we close.

The story of Joseph is a discouraging story in the sense that it gets worse and worse for Joseph. He falls into the pit, and then he gets sold into slavery, and then he gets lied about in Potiphar's house, and then he gets left in prison two years after he thought he was going to be remembered, and he goes down, down, down, down, down, down. And then he gets to be the president of Egypt.

And the point of the story is given in verse 20 of chapter 50 where he says to his brothers, you meant it for evil against me, but God meant it. Now that's the hard word in this verse. It.

What's the it referred to? Tell me what it refers to. All that stuff. The selling into slavery, the casting into the pit, the lying about in Potiphar's house, the languishing in prison.

That's it. God meant it. God meant it.

I will not accept the interpretation that those things caught God off guard because Satan initiated them and then God subsequently managed to get it turned for good. That's not what he's saying. There's a lot of people today believing that, thinking that God can't have purposes for evil acts.

They were evil. Evil. It was evil to put him in the pit.

It was evil to sell him into slavery. It was evil to lie about him. It was evil to forget him in the prison.

God meant evil for good to bring about a present result. Therefore, impatience, which was threatening Joseph at every minute, when are you going to get me out of this mess? You're God. Save me from this pit.

Down into slavery. Save me from slavery. Into Potiphar's house.

Save me from Potiphar's house. Lies about him. Save me from this jail.

Forget about him. Now, about that time, you would say, I'm finished with this God. A lot of people do.

They say, I'm finished with this God. This is 17 years. 17 years of seeming abandonment by God.

Seeming. It's just getting worse. Down, down, down.

Every time it seems to get better, it gets worse. And with this text, this text helps me to be patient. I have dreams for this church.

I had dreams four years ago for this church. And they were shattered. And they stayed shattered until this year, roughly, where we came out.

So what keeps you going? What enables you to be patient that through a season of tears, God's doing something worthwhile? It could be four years. It could be 40 years. It's a great patience giver.

And so is Romans 8.28 that God is at work to do all things together for those who love Him. Okay. Let me sum it up here and then pray with you.

Living by faith in future grace is a being satisfied with all that God promises to be for us in Jesus, expressed in the promises of God in the Bible. When you are satisfied in the superior promises of God, which are better than the promises of sin, the power of sin is broken in your life. And therefore, the fight to become a holy person and a loving person is not primarily a negative fight.

It's primarily a positive fight to become satisfied and resting in God and all of His promises. And when that happens, you sever the root of sin and they begin to fall away in your life. And if they raise their ugly head again, you cut at them again with promises.

By future grace. And then we become a really radical people. So that people might say about us, those heretics got all their power from their utter indifference to the love of money or lust or the powerlessness of impatience or whatever.

Father in Heaven, I thank You so much for the truth that You have shared from Your Word with us. It is a treasure beyond all calculation. We love the Bible.

We love Your truth. We love Your Word. And we delight in it and we want to meditate on it day and night.

I pray that the preciousness of Your Word would grip this group of people and that they would give themselves to it and meditate on it and memorize it until it fills and satisfies their souls and they could say like 1 Peter, in this we rejoice. In this we rejoice. Though now for a little while we may have to endure various trials, which is more precious than gold, our faith, which though perishable is tested by fire, that someday it might redound unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

So satisfy our hearts with You and free us from sin and make us radically loving all to the glory of Your name. Through Christ I pray. Thank you so much.

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