

(Remnant Meeting 2013) the Goodness of God and Testimonies

by Brian Long

The sermon emphasizes the goodness of God and how it is seen in His presence, provision, and redemption through Jesus Christ.

Duration: 1:41:30

Scripture: Exodus 33:11, Exodus 34:5, Matthew 7:15, Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 6:45, Romans 8:28, James 1:22

Topics: "Remnant"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares their personal testimony of how they went from being rebellious and hating God to experiencing His goodness and being transformed. They emphasize the importance of recognizing and appreciating the goodness of God in our lives. The speaker also highlights the power of prayer and how God answered their prayers and delivered them from addiction. They conclude by encouraging the audience to understand that God is good and that His goodness leads us to repentance, emphasizing the need to turn to God and experience His transformative power.

Transcript

Praise God, it's so wonderful to see everybody here tonight. I want to share a scripture with you that's already been shared tonight. Exodus chapter 33.

Exodus chapter 33. Something happens, brothers and sisters, when you encounter the presence of the Lord. The more that God manifests His presence to us, the more we want to know Him.

There's a dissatisfied kind of satisfaction. It's true that nobody but Jesus satisfies. He's the living water.

But once you've tasted and seen that He's good, you hunger and thirst for more. And more and more and more and more of God. Well, Moses was a man who spoke to God face to face, even as a man speaks to his friend.

And he was a man who hungered and valued the presence of the Lord. And here's a passage of scripture where Moses, after just having spoke with God face to face as a man speaks to his friend. After having just cried out for God's presence to go with him.

And after God assuring Moses and giving him His promise that, yes, my presence will go with you. Moses is still not satisfied. He wants more of God.

And here is his request. One more request after God assuring him, my presence will go with you. Moses goes deeper.

He hungers for more. And this is what he says in Exodus 33, verse 18. He said that as Moses said, please show me your glory.

And I love the old King James here because he says, I beseech thee, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. I beseech thee means, God, I beg you, I'm pleading with you, I beg you, show me your glory. There was nothing more important to Moses than the presence of the Lord.

There was nothing more important to Moses than the glory of God. He wanted to see the glory of God. Well, God was going to answer his request.

But when he did, what would he show Moses? Would he show him his justice? God is a just God. Would he show him a revelation of his holiness and righteousness? God is holy and righteous. Would he reveal to Moses his power by just shaking the mountain and breaking the rocks apart? He's a God of all power.

He's omnipotent. Would he show to Moses his wrath? He's a God of wrath. What would be the number one attribute that God would reveal to Moses in answering his request to see God's glory? Watch this carefully.

I beseech thee, Lord, show me your glory. And verse 19, God says, I will make all my goodness pass over you. I will make all my goodness pass before you and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you.

I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But he said, you cannot see my face for no man shall see me and live. And the Lord said, here is a place by me and you shall stand on the rock.

So it shall be while my glory passes by that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and will cover you with my hand. While I pass by, then I will take away my hand and you shall see my back. But my face shall not be seen.

There is only so much of God that we could handle right now. If God were to show us his glory, his splendor, his majesty and all of his glory. In other words, if he were to completely pull back the veil, none of us would be left standing because he is far more awesome and far more glorious and far more holy than any of us can even perceive him to be.

But God wants to grant Moses his request. Show me your glory. And God says, I'll show you this.

I'll cause all my goodness to pass over you. We learn from that that the glory of God is seen in his goodness. The glory of God is seen in his goodness.

Do you remember what happened when King Solomon dedicated the temple to God? And the moment he finished praying, the glory of God filled the house. And all the priests fell on their faces on the pavement to worship God. Do you remember what they cried out? For he is good and his mercy endures forever.

The attribute of God that penetrated their hearts at this revelation of his glory was his goodness. Brothers and sisters, our God is a good God. He is good.

He is good. He is the one who defines what is good. Everything he does is good.

All that he is, is good. Everything that God does is good. It is always right.

It is always wise. It is always good. God is good.

And his goodness is always passing by. Well, let's go on to read before I go further to see what happened. If you skip down to chapter 34 and verse 5, it says, now this was the next morning, early in the morning, and it says in verse 5, Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord.

And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in what? Goodness. Abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation. So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped.

You want to see my glory, Moses? You will see my glory when you see my goodness. You will see my glory when you see that I am good. God's goodness passed by, and in essence, His glory passed by Moses.

God is good, brothers and sisters. That is His very nature. Just as the sun shines and the sky is blue and ice is cold and fire burns, God is holy.

God is good. That is His nature. He cannot be other than good.

He is good, and He is good all the time, and His goodness is passing by all the time. The question is whether we have eyes to see it, whether we have eyes to behold the goodness of God. There's a verse in Romans chapter 11 that says, Behold the goodness.

Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God. God wants us to behold His goodness. His goodness is seen tonight.

I see the goodness of God when I look into your faces. I see the goodness of God when I see marriages right here this evening that have been restored by the power of God. I see the goodness of God when I see people here who have passed from death to life, that Jesus Christ is saved.

It is the goodness of God that He kept your heart beating last night. It is the goodness of God that you're breathing right now, that you're alive. God holds your very breath in His hand.

He is a good God who does that. His goodness is seen in you. His goodness is seen in good brothers and sisters in the fellowship that He gives us.

It's seen over all creation. God's goodness is seen in all of His creation, all that He's made. He created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and I see His goodness everywhere.

I see the goodness of God when I look up at the stars at night and you see this vast, awesome creation that God had created. Why? He didn't have to do all of that. He created it for His glory.

He created it for us to enjoy, to look upon, to know. My God created that. He is a good God.

I see His goodness when I see the majesty of the mountains, the colors in a rainbow. When I smell the fresh fragrance after a rain. When I see the beautiful colors of a wildflower, I see the goodness of God and I see His goodness not only in His creation, but in the way that He cares for His creation.

Our Father, He feeds the cattle on a thousand hills. He feeds the little sparrow in my backyard. He knows when one of those sparrows falls to the ground and dies.

He takes note of that. But even more than that, He knows the very number of hairs upon your head. And He takes note when one single hair falls to the ground.

He is a good God. He is a good God. He is good in that He takes care.

He is close to the broken hearted, the scripture says. He saves those who are crushed in spirit. He is a good God who gives this miracle of a brand new baby.

Some of you have had the experience. God is good. He's given me children.

He's given me a good wife. He holds the hand of a lonely widow. He is a good God.

He is a good God. He will never leave me. He will never forsake me.

That is His promise. He will never let the righteous be forsaken, nor their seed begged for bread. He is a good God.

He is good. But you know where His goodness is most clearly seen? In the face of Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians chapter four says in verse six, For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who is shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The glory of God is most clearly seen in the face of Jesus Christ. And if the glory of God is His goodness, then where is the goodness of God most clearly seen? In the face of Jesus Christ. Behold the goodness of God tonight by beholding the Lord Jesus Christ, who always went about doing good, and who is still going about doing good.

Behold the goodness of Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save that which was lost. He is called the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd who would leave that 99 and go after that one lost sheep that was me, that was you.

He's a Good Shepherd. He came to set the captives free. He is a Good Savior.

He is a Good Savior who delivers the rundown drunk, delivers the drug addict who takes the prostitute off the street and cleans her up and saves her and washes her whiter than snow. He is a Good God. He goes about doing good.

He's a Good Savior. He's a Good Savior. He's a Good God who delivered the demon possessed.

Constantly going about doing good. A Good Savior who forgave an adulterous woman when every religious, self-righteous man wanted to kill her. He is good.

He is good. And His goodness is most clearly seen at Calvary. Some people say, well, why do bad things happen to good people? That only happened one time ever.

And that was at the cross of Calvary. There is none good but God. There is one good, Jesus Christ.

And at the cross of Jesus Christ, you behold both the goodness and the severity of God. The goodness and the severity of God meet at Calvary. It's the severity of God that the Son of God was crushed for our iniquities, that He was crucified for your sins and mine.

It is the goodness of God that He gave His only Son for sinners like you and me, that He paid the price for my sins on the cross. That is the goodness of God. Justice and mercy kissed at the cross.

And I see the goodness of God at Calvary. I see the goodness of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And I see the goodness of God in our redemption and the way Jesus Christ has redeemed us.

It is not the leading of the Lord to me personally tonight to continue to preach. This is what He's led me to do. Proclaim to you that He is good and not continue to preach about it.

I want you to see it as brothers and sisters will come up here and give testimony to the goodness of God and how they've experienced the goodness of God personally. The goodness of God is passing by all the time. The goodness of God is going to pass by you tonight if you have eyes to see it.

They will stand up here and they will proclaim to you not some cheap little cliché. God is good. That's not a cliché.

Some people may use that as a cliché. God is good all the time. Do you do you know it? Do you believe it? Do you know that to be true, that He's good all the time? It doesn't mean He's just good when the sun is shining.

It means that He's good when the sun is shining and also when it's raining. It means that He's good when you're up on the mountain and He's good when you're down in the valley. And I'm convinced there is certain revelations of the goodness of God that you and I can't see any other way except through tears.

And except through trials. When do you notice that bright, warm, beautiful sun the most? After it's been shining all day and at midday? You don't notice it so much then. You notice it when it comes up in the morning after you spend a whole night in the dark.

You notice it. You notice the warmth of that sun, not when it's so hot like it is this time of year, but after you've come through a long, cold winter. Then that sun is precious to you and your eyes are open to see it.

When do you notice that cold, fresh water that so refreshes you? It's not when you're living at the spring. It's when you've been in the desert for a while and you're thirsty and you're hungry and you're desperate. Then that is precious to you.

The goodness of God is all around you, brothers and sisters. He's a good God and you will see it tonight. You will see it tonight.

The people who will profess and proclaim that He's good when life is pleasant and He's good in times of pain. He's good when you're up on the mountain and He's good when you're being tried and you're going through the trial of your life. And I pray that God would give us the faith to believe that we will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

That's what David said. He said, I would have lost heart. I would have fainted.

I would have lost heart unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. I pray tonight our eyes would be open to how good our God is and it will demand two responses. When you behold the goodness of God.

It demands a response. If you really see the goodness of God, you cannot help but worship Him and cry out with all those in Scripture. He is good and His mercy endures forever.

There's another thing the goodness of God does. It leads us to repentance. It leads us to repentance.

It draws us to the cross. It draws us to Christ. How can I continue in sin against a God who is so good to me? He's so good.

Jared and Anna, would you come first and share your testimony? This is a precious couple that God has brought down here. It's clearly the Lord has led them to Barnesdale. They've been here, I think, for about six weeks, but I feel like I've known them all my life.

And they've been a tremendous blessing to this fellowship. And I've asked them first to share a testimony as to how they personally experienced the goodness of God. God bless you both.

Anna's going to share first and then I will. We just like to pray before we start. Father God, we just come to you this evening and we praise your holy name.

You are a good God. And I believe we can leave right now, Father, and be blessed by what has been shared through the praise and worship and what Brother Brian said. But Father, you're leading some of us to share testimonies.

And we just pray, God, that what would be said would not reflect us, Father, but you and what you have done. So we just commit this into your hands, Father, for you bless my wife as she shares on her spirit. And I pray, God, that our testimonies, Father, would truly show your goodness.

Pray this in Jesus name. When Jared told me that we were to share on the goodness of God, I started grinning because this attribute of God, perhaps more than most of them, has been the source of my foolish contentions with God. And through it, he has been able to teach me the most.

I specifically remember in Colorado when we were trying to sell our house, telling God that there is no way he can teach me of his goodness if he does not sell our house. It's just not possible. It would be the good thing to do if he did sell it.

But he did teach me in a very short time in the midst of my despair and burdened with our debt. He taught me how good he is. And our house didn't sell for three years.

But and that was the first time that I realized that God can teach me something without answering my prayer. When he did allow our house to sell, wow, it was amazing. He did more than I could think or ask.

God was good when he allowed me to be born into a family with a dad and a mom who love each other. And just here lately, I've been realizing what a gift that was. And I don't think I'll take it for granted again.

He was good when he gave me intelligence. Note, I did not say common sense and the ability to learn and do well in school. I know this is a huge gift because I had five siblings who all struggled.

My father, my father proved his goodness when he reached down at the age of 16 and pulled me out of the web of drunkenness, immorality. And a list so long, I probably couldn't remember them all if I tried. When I say that he reached down, I mean, when I turned my back on sin, it was totally through his voice talking with me in my spirit.

God was good to me when because of giving my life to Jesus and wanting to leave the Amish religion, I was brought up in every Amish and some who weren't. Friend, family member and neighbor turned away from me and treated me as an outcast. They thought I was lost.

My dad didn't want me around unless I would contaminate my siblings. I went to live with a widow woman and her young son. Through all this, I kept thinking, it's so weird.

I hardly had any emotional pain. Looking back, I realized it is indeed true. Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows.

From Isaiah 53, 4. Physically, I suffered from all the stress, but emotionally, he set me free. It was the oddest thing. I've never experienced it since.

God has been good to me many times in my last nine years of marriage, though it was rocky, to say the least, as many people have stated before me during the darkest times, his light and his love ministered to me the brightest. But most of all, God revealed to me his great goodness by giving me, as Brian said in a sermon, the gift of the thorn in the package of PCOS, the cause of our infertility. Jesus has held and comforted me through the pain, emotional and physical, the tears and the longing.

It seems to me that he chooses to break us with the things that we have the tightest grip on, the thing we want the most control over. Since I was probably 12 or younger, I longed to be a model. I lived for it.

I planned for it. Thought about it all the time. I was going to be one and do it well.

Parenting and how to be a good wife books intrigued me. It took about seven years, but he finally brought me to the place where I could say I would rather be holy and totally surrender to you, God, than have a baby of my own. Looking back, I could even see his good wisdom in not bringing children into the home that we were struggling with.

Our marriage would be a whole nother essay on his goodness. But I'll say, wow, God is good. He has definitely made beauty from our ashes.

Praise him for his beautiful love he has poured on us. As I told Lori, since he did our miracle, goodwill flows out of us for each other. And we can't help but be nice most of the time.

And it's not it's not us like we can feel that it's not us. We're just it's easy to be nice. God was so good to me when Jesus said those three words that gave me this chance that I'm living now.

It is finished. Psalm 13, five and six. I have trusted in thy good mercy.

My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with me. And if you guys could help me sing a little song, it's a really simple song.

I don't know if you all know it or not. But you'll catch on pretty quick. He's so good to me.

He's so good to me. He's so good to me. He's so good to me.

Follow up that, but typically I will jot a few notes down and then fly with the rest of it. And just a couple of hours ago, literally, I sat down at the computer and the Lord just started. I think it's the fastest I've ever typed and I can't type well.

It's like the seeking you shall find method. But the Lord just really gave me some stuff here. So I'm going to read most of it, which is very unlike me.

But I believe that's what he wants. I've just titled this. My testimony, the goodness of God, and I will say the first part of this almost sounds like blasphemy.

I don't mean it like that. I'm just it's just where I was. OK, I hope you understand.

When I was 13 years old, I accepted Christ. I put that in quotations. I think of that scripture.

That go out across land and sea trying to make disciples just like you make nothing more than a twofold son of hell. And that's what I became. Shortly after that, I turned into a rebellious, hateful, mean, disrespectful sinner that hated God with all my being.

I didn't think God was good at all. I have done the most terrible, wicked things that anyone could imagine, and I could shock you tonight with details, but I won't. Let's just say that I sinned with all my might.

So is God good? At age 18, I got into porn, pornography. How could God be good and let me live in that? When I was 19, I met Anna and I had to wait for her to grow up before I could marry her. I was 24 and she was 17 when we got married.

At that time, I thought God was really good. A few weeks later, I wondered what I had done to deserve a marriage like this. God wasn't good anymore.

And so it went on and on like this. And I lived in pornography for the next 14 years. We went to church all this time, but I hated it.

I hated Christians, I hated family, I hated almost everything except porn. We, for those of you who don't know, we grew up in northern Indiana, so that's where we were living at this time. In 2006, we moved to Colorado.

I thought that maybe we could escape all our problems out there. Not. The problems just increased out there.

I found a taxidermy school that I went to, and I found what I loved to do the most, taxidermy. I lived taxidermy. I breathed taxidermy.

I talked taxidermy. I wanted nothing more than to be the best in the world at it. Also, at this time, my wife got sick.

She couldn't work more than a couple hours at a time at the most. So what did she do? She read her Bible. Then she read her Bible.

Then she read her Bible. Then she watched a cooking channel. And then she read her Bible.

What happened? She got scripture in her heart and in her mind. And she got closer to God. And I got madder and madder and madder.

You see, we had to go into debt for this taxidermy passion of mine. And I needed her to work. And she couldn't work.

But she did read her Bible. And then she would share with me what she had learned. But who cares? I have work to do.

And so it went on for the next four years. In 2010, we moved back to Michigan to be close to my parents. My dad had gotten cancer, and we didn't know how long he had to live.

We went back to the church we used to attend before. But I hadn't changed at all. I started listening to Paul Washer, and something seemed to connect.

This man spoke truth. I knew that. Let's back up a little bit.

At about 12 years old, I felt a calling from God to preach. And I always had a passion for truth. So when I heard Paul Washer preach, it was like, I want to be like him.

I quoted him. I listened to him a lot. I have probably listened to 10 indictments against the modern church close to 20 times, and I can almost quote that whole sermon to you.

But I still hated God. God wasn't good. God was awful.

God was mean. God let my dad die without me hearing him tell me he loved me. God made my wife sick.

Oh, yeah. And God let me stay addicted to porn. On the night of July 29, 2012, I went into my office, and I decided that I would not come out till God came to meet me.

And I didn't care how long it took. I was prepared to go all night and all the next day if necessary. It took less than one hour, and the presence of God came into that little room and delivered me from the chains of darkness and gave me new life.

Is God good? My God is good. Romans 2, 4 says, Or despises thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? What had happened? I had quit running from God. My hatred toward God was gone.

I went in the bedroom, and I told Anna, and she was like, oh, OK. I told her often that I had changed, and I never had. This is one time my wife was wrong.

God had truly changed me. My God is so good. The goodness of God let me see how wicked I really was.

The goodness of God let me see Jesus not only hanging on a tree for my sins, but He let me see that He became sin for me. And the Father God crushed His Son under the full force of wrath for me. Looking back, I can truly see the goodness of God in my life.

The goodness of God kept me from slicing my throat with a knife as I sat looking at myself in my bedroom mirror when I was 15 years old. The goodness of God kept me from blowing my brains out at the edge of a mineshaft in Colorado with my rifle. The goodness of God helped me write a suicide note to my wife.

Which then scared me so bad, I couldn't pull the trigger once again. The goodness of God let me marry Anna, and the goodness of God restored our marriage. The goodness of God made Anna my best friend in the world.

The goodness of God let her forgive me for all that I've done against her. The goodness of God gave me, gave my precious wife PCOS to teach me serious lessons. The goodness of God did not allow any children to be born to us with me living as I was.

The goodness of God has brought me out of religion. The goodness of God made me realize I was following a man named Paul Washer instead of God himself. The goodness of God is teaching me scripture on my own now.

And the goodness of God has brought us to Barnesdale. The goodness of God made so that none of you actually ever seen the old Jared. The goodness of God gave us a whole new family called Cornerstone Community Church.

Since our family has decided we are following a man instead of God and are being deceived into following a false gospel. The goodness of God is making me want only him. The goodness of God opened my eyes to how wrongly I had used the pulpit in times past to declare the word of the Lord.

It was all my own flesh and it was usually quoting someone else. The goodness of God made me not care if he ever used me again to share his word. And the goodness of God allowed me to preach Wednesday night in our new building with the word that he had given me.

And the goodness of God will lead me and you and all of his church to a deeper and deeper relationship with him if we just let him. Praise be to my good God. Well, Brian asked me to share my experience of when God.

I would like it when he moved my theory and theology of God's goodness into my reality. And you would think that he would reveal his goodness to me during a time of blessing. And that has been the case.

But like with so many, many of the times he reveals himself more through pain than blessing. I'm going to read a little bit of mine, too. Many people have asked me what the Lord has taught me or shown me since my now 60-year-old son, Luke, was diagnosed with cancer almost four years ago and has to endure two bone marrow transplants.

And, of course, I don't have the time to touch on all of that, but I will touch on one testimony of what God showed me. He did teach me the difference between excellent theology and theories and the relationship with Christ. If all we have is excellent theology and theories and Christ and his sacrifice is not personal, blessings from God will lead to pride and suffering will lead to bitterness, anger, and cynicism.

But if he is yours and you are his, then blessings will lead to humility and suffering will lead to a deeper intimacy. One of those areas through suffering that God moved my theory into my reality was when Luke was diagnosed with cancer. Not so much right when he was diagnosed, but shortly thereafter.

I'm going to be a little bit graphic about what a child or a person goes through with a bone marrow transplant because some of you probably--I know when I was told that Luke was going to have a bone marrow transplant from the doctors, I knew it wasn't going to be good, but I was really clueless at how horrible this procedure is. Essentially, they give them--the doctor looked at us and told us that it's the atomic bomb of chemotherapy. They will give him as much chemotherapy as they can give him without hopefully killing him.

His first transplant, 25% of kids don't survive the first transplant or the transplant. Walking into a transplant unit, the first one that he had, it was just surreal. The closest picture I can give you, and it's a very close picture, is if you've ever seen people in the Holocaust where they have no hair and they are literally skin and bone, that is what the children look like that are in transplant.

It's very, very different than just the sweet little kids you see on pictures with bald heads. That is not what you see in a transplant unit. It is the absolute most suffering I have ever witnessed, ever.

Some of the things that I saw that was very, very difficult, apart from my own child, which I will get to that in a minute, the kids--what happens is the chemotherapy literally strips you of any mucus membranes from your mouth all the way down to your rectum, which doesn't sound like a big deal, except usually kids will get marble-sized sores in their mouth, and literally one boy, it literally ate his lip off, and they had to do surgery to place his lip back on. It's just horrible what you see in those units. But this particular day, Luke was in the heat of the transplant.

The doctors had tried to prepare us for what we were going to see when we got to this point as best as they could, but there's no way they could fully explain to you what you're about to encounter. But this particular day, Luke's membranes were gone, and he was vomiting up the lining of his stomach. It would get stuck in his throat, and we would have to suck it out because it was just there.

It wouldn't come out. He was suffering very, very bad. It was just really bad.

He had just gone through a really bad episode where he was just vomiting literally the lining of his stomach. And so, after he finally settled down for a little bit, and he had fallen asleep, I just had to leave the unit for just a little bit. I didn't leave at all, really, but just to get outside of the unit, just to walk the halls.

I couldn't sleep. As I was walking the halls, it was one of those things that I had the theology. I knew that God was good, but my reality was not matching my theology at that point.

My reality was telling me, this kind of suffering? You're good even with this? I did not want to question it, but it was coming out in the bucket loads, just in my heart. I just was really wrestling with the goodness of God. But thank God, He has a way of moving that into your reality, if you will trust Him.

As I was walking the hall, I came across these fresh roses. They do not allow fresh flowers of any kind in a transplant unit, and that's another story. All you see are walls, cold walls, and it's kind of like an ICU unit with glass doors, so you get to see the other kids very, very sick as well.

Occasionally, you would see one of them, the curtains would close, the doctors would go in, and you knew the unit would get quiet, and that child did not make it. Occasionally, you would see that. So, when I walked past these fresh roses, it was the most beautiful thing I'd seen in a long time.

I just sat there and stood there and just looked at these roses. I just looked at them, and I just remember thinking how perfect they were. They were just so beautiful and so perfect.

As I looked at these roses, I just thought, God did not have to make roses. He didn't have to make those, and all of a sudden, just this flood of the awareness of His goodness. It's like suddenly He moved it into my reality in a time that you would never, ever be able to imagine that you could see or understand the goodness of God.

From that point on, the suffering did not go away. The emotional pain did not go away, but I knew that God was good, and I just remember being overwhelmed with the reality that He chose to suffer for us. We didn't choose to be in this situation.

I can assure you, I would have not put my child in that situation for any amount of money in the world. I could not have done that. Just the awareness of what God chose to put His Son through.

Again, it moved from my theology to my reality. A lot of us have the right theology, but it's still not necessarily our reality. Luke enjoyed two years of remission and then relapsed and had to have a second bone marrow transplant.

Again, the second one was more deadly than the first one. The suffering was worse than the first one. At the first one, He was vomiting His stomach up.

The second one, He was coughing up His lungs, literally. So, without going into more detail, after the second transplant, during the second transplant, I never doubted His goodness. The first one I did, the second one was worse, and I still never doubted His goodness, because God had already moved it into the reality to me.

I knew God was still good. In spite of everything I had seen and everything that He had gone through. In Nahum 1.7, it says, The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust Him.

You cannot trust God unless you trust His nature. You have to really, you have to rest in the nature of God, and His nature never changes. Our circumstances may change.

Life, this world, is a very hard world. Few escape it without some sort of suffering. But His nature never changes.

Charles Spurgeon said, God is always good, His dispensations may vary. But His nature is always, always the same. Well, unlike Jared, I've usually got everything wrote down, even my name.

Because I don't do so well in front of everybody. And I felt a great peace when we sang Amazing Grace a while ago. Because it's through His grace that our fears are relieved.

We was asked to share a little testimony. Wasn't really sure where to start. And like I said, I didn't even know how to put it on paper.

But Lord, through His goodness, He brought two broken families together. I had a son, and she had a son and two daughters. And about four years ago, her son was killed, our son was killed.

Because we had been united as a family, and I thank God for that. We lost a son in a car crash. At first, it drew us near.

We looked to God for strength and comfort. But without being able to understand or comprehend, there began a separation between me and my wife. A separation at first I didn't even recognize.

And as I began to recognize it, I was still going to church. I was still going to Bible study. I was still seeking God.

But I was becoming, it was easier for me to become a passive husband. Not to fulfill my role as head of the household and as a leader. I'm sorry.

I dedicated my life to the Lord in 09. We were married on September 29th, and I got baptized the 30th. And I'll have to say that the day I dedicated my life was the best day.

I haven't been to church my whole life until I met Clint. So I didn't know what it was like to love God. And I loved him with my whole heart until my son passed away.

And for a long time, I blamed God. And I did everything I could to put a smile on my face and pretend when I came to church. And I didn't know for a long time that my church prayed for me.

I didn't know that they loved me as much as they did, especially Linda Kelly. But I knew in my heart that I needed God back. But the more I sinned against him and the more I sinned against my husband, it made me feel better towards God because he hurt me, so I was going to hurt him.

And I know that sounds weird, but that's the way I felt. So this May 29th, me and my husband sat in our living room. And we both prayed to be the godly mother, the godly wife, and husband and wife that we should be.

But that day also, for the first time since my son has died, that I had peace in my heart. That was the first time. So as far as the goodness of God, he has brought me a long way.

But I know I was living in darkness for quite some time. And John 1, verse 5, Brother Brian gave this to me, and this has really spoke to my heart. This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you, God is the light, in him there is no darkness at all.

If we claim to have fellowship with him, yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. And the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, purifies us all from all sin.

And I lived in darkness for so long and blamed God for so many things. But now I can say, I am living with a new heart. God has been good to us.

He has restored our marriage. And I, I love him. I have no notes, because if I had them, I probably could not have read them.

Because I am right, I am sloppy. But when Brian came and asked me what I gave my testimony, and you all know me, I do not like talking in front of a lot of people. But for a few weeks before he ever came and even talked to me, I started thinking, what a great honor it is to talk about the Father.

And I felt so privileged when he called and asked me, because I had just been pondering on that. You know, that when someone starts talking to me, and then I can actually go in and start talking about the Father, how it is just, I enjoy that conversation. But I guess when I, you know, he said to speak about the goodness of God.

And wow, there is so much that I can speak of. But 35 years ago, 38, I was sitting in my living room one day, and this one Lord first showed me on this one, because I had been raised that I thought I was saved, you know. And, but when he showed me, when he showed me with the Scripture, for God to love the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.

And it is the first time, I had always known the Scripture, but it was the first time that it was spoken, that I truly believed and knew what it meant. And I thought about, through the years, I thought about the sacrifice that God gave, that I nailed, I nailed him to the tree with every sin that I had ever committed. And I learned what it was, he showed me such grace, such kind grace.

But I want to skip, because y'all have heard that testimony. But I would like to share with you something from the Lord. He has been showing me about mercy.

And it's just like he did in showing me for God to love the world. In Ephesians 4-2, he talks about his mercy and his great love for us. And when I was in the hospital, and I don't remember a lot because I, um, was, you know, sick.

But things were being said, and there was moments that I would wake up and hear things. And these things were scary, you know, they were scary what I was hearing. But it seemed like the Lord just seemed to intervene in everything when there was fear, a contact.

And I remember so well, I heard him say, all is well, we'll see. And that's when I started realizing the mercy that God showed me there in the hospital. And then I started thinking about the depth of love God has towards us all.

You know, our father, how much he loved us. He showed us grace on the cross, and this is the way the Lord, I seen it just not even too long ago. In that living room, and I was born again, it was like a father helped me and was so proud.

You know, I've heard you speak about the apple of my eye. And that's what the Lord makes me feel like sometimes, even though all that I've done wrong. He makes me feel like I'm the apple of his eye.

You know, and I asked him, and I'm still asking this question, Lord, how can I reflect the same love that you show me so much? I want to know that. He says, I'm not a respectful person. I want to see people in his eyes.

I want to love him in his eyes. And that's my greatest prayer right now is Lord, please show me how to love the people like you loved them, and how you do love them. You know, I guess it's my testimony to y'all tonight is that I want to understand God's love for us in depth.

You know, I've seen a depth when I was saved, and then I've seen another depth when he had mercy for me. But there's a depth that's so much deeper. And he's showing me that while we're in the flesh, we know in part, you know, when we get to heaven, we'll know it all.

But I've just, we've all just touched such a small amount of what his love and goodness is. But I want to know more Brian, I want Bodie, I want to know more. I want to know what is more of his love.

You know, not for me, I want him to show me how to love the people like he loves the people, you know. I just want to acknowledge the people who have testified tonight. They said that the number one fear in America is public speaking.

And the number two fear is death. People fear public speaking more than they fear death. I find that to be true in so many people's lives.

And it's a remarkable thing to stand up here. It takes tremendous amount of courage to, if you were speaking on any subject, be one thing and that'd be terrifying enough. But to speak of things that's deeply affected your heart, and deeply affected every part of who you are, and to stand and share it in front of people is a very difficult thing.

So I commend all the brothers and the sisters that came up and shared their heart with us tonight. And what they all did is they declared the goodness of God. And that is one of the reasons we gathered here together in these meetings, because to make declarations.

And what you do when you give your testimony, you're making a declaration. Because God is good. And who doesn't want, who doesn't want you to hear that? Who doesn't want you to hear that? Who wants to consume you in the darkness? Who wants to destroy your marriages, and take your children away, and cover you in the darkness of pornography and sin? Who wants to do that? What author wants to do that? But God is good.

And we declare that tonight, that God is good and his mercy endures forever. And we're not ashamed of that truth. And I would just encourage the saints to pray for the boldness to make these kinds of declarations, because we're moving into a time in this country of great darkness.

And it's time to be bold and to stand up and declare the truth. And it'll take courage. The testimonies that you've testified tonight is life itself.

Life itself. How many marriages have been destroyed in this country? But the goodness and the mercy and the love and the forgiveness of God has restored and reconciled this brother and this sister. And it's a testimony and a trophy of his grace and his mercy that he's done that.

Praise God. That's the life and the light of God working in the hearts and the souls of men. It is good to declare the things of God.

It is good to speak about the glory of God, to speak about the goodness of God, the mercy of God, the vastness of God. We just want to speak about God this weekend. That's all we want to speak about is God.

That's why we have testimonies tonight. That's why Brian didn't take a very long time to do a sermon, because this brother could preach for two hours, as most of you probably know, and preach very well. But there's nothing more powerful than the stories that we've heard tonight.

This is about God himself. God himself. That's why these people fought the desire not to come up on this stage.

I've been there and it's happened to me. I know the fear that can overwhelm me. It's terrifying.

But there's a power that you release even into the atmosphere itself when you declare the glory of God, the goodness of God. Even now as we're speaking, we're making declaration to the glory of God and the enemy doesn't like it, because ultimately our battle is about darkness and light. Anybody who loves the Gospel of John, you know it's about darkness and light.

And darkness can't exist in light. And when we declare the goodness of God, the glory of God, the mercy of God, darkness can't stand. It can't stand.

And that's what we're doing tonight. And that's what I'm declaring the goodness of God tonight. I make that declaration unashamed of the goodness of God tonight.

I say it into the enemy who could hear us right now about the goodness and the mercy. Have you seen these people, enemy? Devil, have you seen these people? Have you heard their testimony tonight? That's because you're defeated. You're a defeated enemy and we stand victorious in Christ, don't we? We stand victorious in Christ.

He doesn't want these stories out. You know, if you go, if you travel a lot and you go to a lot of churches around the country, you don't hear a lot of victory songs. You remember in the old days they used to sing a lot of songs about victory in Jesus and soldiers marching into war, you know? You don't really hear that anymore.

And I think it's because the darkness is beginning to surround us and he wants to cower us, you know? And if you know us about the Scottish culture, we usually go the opposite way when we see that. I want to run to the battle. And I think God is raising up a people who want to run to the battle, just like David, in the power of God.

When everything says hide or keep quiet, don't speak. And I know that the saints who give their testimony tonight would have really been struggling with that, you know? Everything in them just goes against the flesh. And so I appreciate that and appreciate the beauty that my sister saw in the rose.

That really touched me, the beauty in the midst of suffering, God's beauty, God's glory, God's majesty in the midst of suffering. And I want to declare God's goodness tonight. Brian said he read a poem to his church not so long ago about the thorn.

And it really touched my heart, you know? I have three children and we lost our first child. And our third child, my wife and I were very dysfunctional. So I relate to a lot of the drugs and the alcohol and that kind of background and even my own father before that.

So a long line of dysfunction. And when we had our third child, I'd just been a Christian for about two years. And I thought everything was going to be wonderful.

I'm a Christian now, you know, we'd lost our first child, our second child had been burned 60 percent. But now I'm a Christian, everything was going to be good. And our third child was born and he had Down syndrome.

And I was devastated. I didn't react like a strong... I was a Christian two years, but I was very zealous. And there went my zealousness right out the window.

I was absolutely shattered. I didn't know a lot about Down syndrome. I knew what it was.

I'd seen Down syndrome kids before, but didn't know any details. And I was just absolutely shattered. And I could feel this hardness overtaking my heart.

And it was like ice. I could feel the fingers just beginning to cover my heart. And it terrified me because that's the way I used to live.

Because of my own childhood, because of all that background, I had a hard, hard heart. And that's how I dealt with having a black heart. And I could feel that coming back.

This is how I was going to deal with it. What could be good about a mentally handicapped child? We could barely function, my wife and I, because we're so dysfunctional ourselves. You know, the Lord was just kind of cleaning me up.

And it was a tough battle anyway. And here comes a mentally disabled child into that picture. That can't be good.

What psychiatrist in the world would look at my wife and myself and think, I know what they need. They need a mentally handicapped child. That'll fix their marriage.

You know, in that community, I've been in that. My son's 20 now. The divorce rate is in the high 70s.

Almost 80% of people who have a mentally handicapped child, their marriages end in divorce, just because the stresses and the pressures that brings to bear. And if there's any weaknesses in your marriage, things like that will find it out. So there was no psychiatrists in the world that do that.

And Daniel was born on a Friday. And he was very sick. And they took him to a Children's Mercy there in Kansas City, from the hospital he was born in.

So I was separated from my wife. I went down that night, stayed up all night with him. I felt nothing for him.

Isn't that horrible? I felt nothing for my child. I felt no connection. I was keeping him at arm's length.

And I went home on a Saturday, and dog tired. I had a list of people because we didn't know he was going to down syndrome. It wasn't something that we knew prior to him being born.

I had this list of people I was going to call about the happy event, you know. And I looked at this list, and I couldn't bear the thought of even calling one person. I couldn't bear the self-pity or the awkwardness that was going to be on the other end of the phone when you told them that you had a child, but it had down syndrome, you know.

So I remember crumpling that list and throwing it on the floor. Crawled into bed, and not for the first time in my life didn't care if I woke up. I wasn't suicidal, but you know one of those feelings where you just didn't care if you ever woke up again.

You pull the covers over your head, and maybe the world will go away. But as everybody knows here, the world doesn't go away, does it? It keeps on turning. And I got up on Sunday morning, and actually I looked out the window, and people are going about their business.

And I feel this inner scream, don't you know my whole world's in tragedy and in turmoil, and you're just going about your business. And that is true, isn't it? People just go about their business, and your life is falling apart. People will come and talk to you about silly stuff when your life's falling apart.

You don't want to hear nothing like that. It focuses you like a laser, doesn't it? I went to church on Sunday morning desperate, desperate to hear from God. And I was crying out to God, because I knew what was happening to me.

I was reverting back to this person. And I sat down, and God always, I love worship, and God always would speak to me in worship. So they sing one song, and it's God will make, remember that song back in the 90s, God will make a way where there seems to be no way.

Well, I was slightly encouraged by that song, so that's good. That's a good start. But then the singing finishes, which was unusual, because we usually worship for about 30 minutes.

But that morning, twice a year this church, they would have baby dedications. And this was the Sunday they were going to have baby dedications. All these perfect little babies getting brought up there to be dedicated, and the oohs and the aahs from big church, you know, a couple thousand people, all the oohs and the aahs and the claps.

And it just drove it, drove the truth and the reality of my situation. And I thought, Lord, is this some kind of irony? That's what I say to them. Is this your idea of irony, Lord? Not really with any kind of anger, but just with a dreadful apathy.

And I sat there, and they began to sing again, and I began to cry. I think I was feeling sorry for myself. But it was a Pentecostal church, so, you know, crying is not an unusual thing.

You see a lot of tears in Pentecostal churches, and so I shouldn't have been out of place. But I was sitting in the chair. There was an empty chair beside me, and the person on that next chair again tips me and hands me a note.

Never been handed a note before or since. But I opened up the note, and it says, and I looked, there's a young girl, probably about Kaylee's age. I couldn't help notice that you were crying.

I'm right in the middle of the road, a big, big church. Couldn't help notice that you were crying. Is there something I can pray with you about? And I didn't want to pray with her.

I didn't want to pray with anybody. I said, oh, my goodness. I looked, but there was an empty seat beside me.

I couldn't even, you know, there was a space for her to come. So I beckoned her over, and she sat down in her youthful zeal, you know, and she says, you know, what's wrong? And I said, well, just had a little baby, and he has Down syndrome. And she looked at me, and she looked, she had a confused look, and I was immediately annoyed.

I was angry. You're stupid. I'm just, that's what I felt, that stupid, confused look, you know.

You're looking confused, and I know, I have no desire to try and explain to you what Down syndrome is. I felt like saying, why don't you just go away, leave me alone, you know. But as she was looking confused, the Spirit of God, the goodness of God, fell upon me, and I felt Him.

And like Martha was talking about, all your theories go out the window when you're facing great tragedy, right? Theories are not good enough. We need God Himself. We need the goodness of God in the midst of these situations.

And so, the Spirit of God fell on me, and her face became fuzzy, and now it was looking like I was looking at Jesus. I couldn't really see the features, but I knew I was looking at Jesus, and Jesus was looking confused. He had the same confused look as that little girl had, and he says, Frank, I don't know what Down syndrome is either.

All I know is that I've given you a perfect gift from the treasures of heaven. And my heart just exploded. It just exploded.

The goodness of God exploded in my heart, and now I could see it all different. God Himself had come down and told me, I have given you a perfect gift, which many people would have considered a thorn. I've given you a perfect gift, and it penetrated that hard heart of mine.

And my son's 20 now, and we have the most dynamic relationship, just the most wonderful, loving relationship. I could even go to far as to say that the Lord used Daniel to save our marriage, because now, I think, my wife is not a Christian. We could have pulled apart, but we pulled together, and He used that because we knew that we were weak people, and just one of us couldn't do it alone.

We needed each other. And so the goodness of God, in the midst of a situation that didn't seem good, but the goodness and the mercy of God, such mercy to give us a mentally handicapped child. And it's not a platitude.

It's truly a wonderful miracle and a joy in our life. I can't imagine life without Daniel. I can't imagine life without my son, who has taught us so much.

God has taught us so much through this little mentally handicapped child. I've discovered even more about the goodness and the mercy of God through what many people would consider a thorn. So praise God for that thorn.

And I just declare the goodness and the glory of God tonight. Before we close in a hymn, I would just like to encourage, if there's anybody else who would just like to, I want to give the opportunity, and it doesn't have to be lengthy, it doesn't have to be, it could be anything you want, but just to declare the goodness of God. If there's somebody that wants an opportunity, and I can tell you it's very, very powerful.

It's absolutely powerful. You're speaking truth and love. You're speaking light into darkness when you make declarations about God.

When he filled you with power and holiness and boldness to stand up and declare his goodness in the midst of a wicked generation. And I don't even want to focus on the fact that we're living in a wicked generation. I want to focus on the fact that for those in this building tonight who know the Lord Jesus Christ, the gates of hell shall never prevail against you.

And no matter how wicked this world gets, or this country gets, and we see things that are changing rapidly before our very eyes, the goodness of God is on the rise. He's rising up in his saints here in Barnstall Hill, all over the country. He's rising up in the sense of his people, because now there's becoming thorns in their life.

Now they've got to count the cost of what it means to be in Christ. But there's something released when there's this boldness that comes into you and you can boldly declare to the darkness. And as I listened to all those testimonies tonight, I thought about when God said to the enemy, to the devil, have you considered my servant Job? Right? And the things that should have blown us away and destroyed us and destroyed our lives and typically destroy people's lives.

The testimonies that you have heard tonight has made these people stronger. Your marriage will be stronger and go from strength to strength because of the goodness and the mercy of God. And look at the faith that has risen up in the people because of Luke and the things that he went through with his leukemia.

And Barbara, as she's had her trials and the battles of what our brother Jared and his wife was talking about, this is all marvelous light and life testimonies. And it's the most powerful thing. So just raise your hand if there's somebody here who wants to declare something about the goodness of God in their life.

Is there anybody who wants to declare something about the goodness of God in their life? I know it's difficult. I appreciate that. But I assure you there's power in it.

Okay sister. I would like to share something tonight. A miracle happened in my life.

I was married to a lovely man for 11 years and we did everything together. He was my best pal and he was a great father to my two daughters. And one day we split up.

That man decided to leave me and my two wee girls. And I can only describe to you tonight that my life smashed up. I describe my life as if it was in a bad car crash.

It smashed to smithereens. I could not go with that. I couldn't do it.

I would see my husband, he met somebody else. They met a girl 10 years younger than me. And I would see them two together and that was painful.

I would be sitting in my living room eating my dinner and that man would phone and I would lose my appetite like that. I loved that man with all my heart. And I'm going to tell you what happened.

I go to a Pentecostal church in Scotland in a little place called Greenock. And one Sunday night they spoke about the healing. How God, how our God comes to heal.

And the man asked that night, no sorry it was Grace our pastor, asked that night if anybody would like healing, put up their hand. I put my hand up and I went up the stairs to the little room up at the back of the church. And this man come over to me and he never asked me about my story.

He never asked me what type of healing I would like. Do you know what he did? Christ knew. He laid his hands on me and he said, Christ has come to heal the broken hearted.

I wept in a way that I have never wept before. I am going to tell you something and a miracle happened. I was driving up the road in my car and I believe that God spoke to me and he said, it's time for change.

Time for change. And I got a phone call from my husband. He never phones me.

He never phones me. And he said, Maureen, my brother's up from England. I was very close with my brother-in-law.

And I thought, that's strange. Why are you telling me? And my daughter, who was 17 at the time, and I said, Paula. She was driving the car.

I said, turn the car around. I said, I'm going home and I got myself ready. And I went over to my sister-in-law's house and my brother-in-law opened the door and he nearly died when he saw me standing because my husband was there and my husband's girlfriend was there.

And a miracle happened that day. I could go. It was a lovely sunny day and I went into that back green and I could talk to my family.

I could talk to my husband. I had nothing against the girlfriend. That was a miracle.

I get in my car and I was not emotionally touched at all. And I'm going to tell you another thing that happened. My husband got married again and see the day of that wedding.

I was not emotionally touched. Christ has taken his place. Christ is everything to me now.

He's been like a husband to me. He's been like a father to my children and I'm going to tell you something. My husband now has got a lovely wife, a lovely big house, two cars, expensive clothes, a lovely wife.

Me, I live in a wee flat. I've not got a job. I've not got a lot of money but I'm going to tell you something.

I feel sorry for him. I feel sorry for her. They've not got what I've got.

Do you know what I've got? I've got hope. I've got a God who is faithful. I've got a God whom I can go to any time of the day.

Me and Aileen, Aileen here is my best pal and as we've come along here, we've had our ups and our downs. Do you know what we do? Today, Aileen was having a tough time today. I said, Aileen, let's pray.

Let's pray and we sat in the room and we prayed and the presence of God came into that room. The anointing came into that room. His anointing came.

Do you know as we left that room, I looked at her face and I thought, what a change. We have a good God, a very good God and I've come tonight to give him all the praise and I've come tonight to give him all the glory. Glory to God.

And I think what Maureen forgot to tell you that her husband left her because she became a Christian. So that was the backstory there. So Maureen paid a price for coming to Christ and her husband is not as Christian as his new wife.

So she has something that they don't have. She has the goodness and the glory of God and it's marvelous because what would typically destroy people, God takes it and he turns it around and he uses it to edify and to build people up and it confounds the world. It doesn't make any sense.

These are the things that should destroy us but they don't destroy us because when we throw ourself into God's arms and let's face it, what else are we going to do? Is that our death really a lot of the times, isn't it? You're just going to die. You throw yourself into the arms of God and God glorifies himself. Brothers

and sisters, as Frank said, I'm blind.

I don't use the term legally, what do they call it, visually challenged. I am legally blind. I am a blind man.

I was born with 2200 sight. That means that what you can see at 200 feet, I've got to get 20 feet to see it. So you don't want me driving in the good state of Oklahoma or Arkansas for that matter.

One of my verses, one of the verses that God has given to me when he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth and his disciples asked him, Rabbi Hussein, this man or his parents said he would be born blind. Jesus answered, it was neither that this man's sin nor his parents but was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him. Without borne you with the testimony, I've been told you will never amount to much.

Matter of fact, you'll never amount to nothing. You belong in a state colony. You're mentally retarded.

These were the things I grew up with as a child. Praise God, I had an aunt who would not take that. When I came to Christ, I was told the same thing, you're irresponsible.

You'll never be much. What God did, and I testify to the greatness of God, is that through a friend of mine, she challenged me to a ministry of prayer. And I'm not one.

I said, no, I don't want that ministry. But through a combination of circumstances, God led me into a ministry of prayer and I started praying on what we call con calls, conference calls. I'm just going to share with you one area how God, the goodness of God, how he took a blind man.

Frank and Brian know I have a passion for what we call the persecuted church. There's a suffering church around the world. Brothers and sisters are spilling their blood for Christ in places like North Korea, Eritrea, Vietnam.

And as I was praying on these con calls, I saw that there were prayers for Israel, prayers for revival, but there was no prayer for the persecuted church. I Googled because I wanted to find, was there a con call for the persecuted church? And nothing was there. And I started asking, inquiring of the Lord.

I said, well, Lord, there is no conference call for the persecuted church. Be careful what you ask of God, because when you say there's nothing about it, the Holy Spirit will come back and say, what are you going to do about it? So I called a conference center. We got a con call.

We got a number and an access code. And our call was birthed called the Persecution Watch. On August 10th of 2010, the day, it's ironic.

I won't say ironic. There is no irony in God. Providentially, the call was launched the same day we had a Voice of the Martyrs conference in North Little Rock.

I was at that conference. It was October 10th, 2010. We had people like the late Tom White and others were speaking at that conference, and that was the first night of our call.

And by God's sweet grace, our call has gone for three years. And as far as I know, we are the only conference call in the country that God has birthed where we prayed for the persecuted three nights a week. And God took a blind man who would never amount to nothing and used him to facilitate that call.

And the Lord has allowed us to bring together a team of intercessors who we have prayed against demonic powers over places like North Korea and Iran, Eritrea. And I share this. I testify to the goodness of God's grace because don't let the world define you.

You let Jesus Christ define you. Because when Paul says he boasts in his, that's why I say people, I have my charismatic friends come and say, oh, you shouldn't say that you're a blind man. Saints, I will testify to you.

I will boast in my witness. I am a blind man. But I testify to the goodness of God's grace, to the goodness of God's grace that he took a blind man and used him to start a prayer call that will be going into its third birthday three nights a week where we pray for the persecuted.

I boast in my weakness that God took a blind man to do this. That's why Paul says, I would rather exalt in my weakness for in your weakness grace is made perfect. And the testimonies that we've heard here from brothers and sisters, and I hope you're hearing from me, if God can take a blind man and use him to start a prayer call, he can take anybody and use, don't let the devil come up and say you'll never amount to anything.

That's of the devil. And that's a load of rubbish. God says, I am looking for saints.

They say the best ability is availability, but he's looking for people that are weak, that may be blind physically. I don't mean spiritually. Praise God.

My spiritual eyes have been open. My favorite verse is not by sight, but by faith. So my exhortation for what he's done in me testifying of the reality of the goodness of God is that he can take anybody irregardless of their physical limitations, irregardless of the background that they've come from.

God can take any weak saint and use them to accomplish great things. God can take any weak saint and use them to accomplish great things. So I just want to testify that I love that verse when he said this man was born blind so that the works of God might be demonstrated in him.

And I just want to leave you with this quote. Some of you may have heard of Johnny Erickson Tata. Anybody heard of her? Johnny Erickson Tata, paralyzed, paraplegic, marvelous woman in a wheelchair.

Something like 20 ministries have sprung out of her ministry. It's my blessing to meet this woman at a John MacArthur conference. If you find yourself, much like you come into Richard Wurmbbrand's presence, they said you would find yourself weeping.

I found myself weeping in her presence, but she's made this marvelous statement. She said, I would rather know God being in this wheelchair than have my legs and not know God. And saints, I want to tell you one thing right now.

I would rather be with my 2200 legally blind vision and know God than have 2020 signed and not know him. That's my exhortation. The goodness of God.

Anybody else like to declare the goodness of God? Thank you. I'm going to pray real quick. Dear Lord, I thank you so much for who you are.

And I worship you and I praise you, God. And I thank you that you are infinite, God, and you're never ending. That you go on and on, Father, in every way, Lord.

I love you, Jesus, with all my heart. I pray that you would fill me with your spirit, Lord, and be glorified and let the world know you, God, through me in Jesus' name, amen. I knew that tonight was going to be on the goodness of God.

And immediately when my dad told me that, what came to me is that you are good, you are good when there's nothing good in me. And while God has been good to me so many times in pain and in trial, and good to me so many times in sunshine and joy and in pleasant circumstances, God has been most good to me when there was no good in me. At college, which I've recently been in, I've, you know, been in a lot of stuff.

I've grown busy and stuff. And during this time, for a while, I did feel a block from the presence of God. And I was searching, like, what am I doing wrong? What do I need to be doing? And God has shown me things.

But in this time, I wrote a song, and I'm just going to read the words to you. It's kind of a poem. But it is, Where are you? Where are you, my friend? Did you knock, and I not open? Did you call, and I turn away? Where are you? Where are you, my friend? Just the other day, we sat together, and I looked at what you've done, everything you've made, and all you are, and I said, I love you.

Just the other day, we sat together, and you took me by surprise, touched my heart, and let me know, my child, I love you more. Then he came marching in to my door. Sin tugged so very hard, and I let him win the war.

I forgot so quickly what my priorities were. My hand felt free, yet in miserable captivity, the tie tied so tight between you and me was broken, broken. Now, where are you? Where are you, my friend? You knocked, and I didn't open.

You called, and I did not, and I turned away. Where are you? Where are you, my friend? Lord, I feel like I'm gone for good. You say that you forgive me, but for some reason it hurts to think you should.

You say that I'm anew. You forgot the things I did or neglected to do. So why do I punish myself? Why do I cling to guilt? Jesus, plead your blood for me.

Jesus, Jesus, intercede for me. Where are you? Where are you, my friend? Please knock, and I will open. Please call, and I will not turn away.

Where are you? Where are you, my friend? Here am I. Here am I, my child. I'm knocking. Please open.

I'm calling. Do not turn away. I love you.

I desire to do good to you. I want you, and I've washed away all your sin. Seventy times seven and an infinity more, you will always be precious, my precious beauty, most precious to me.

As I love my son, I love you, and we are one. I reply, oh my Lord, my God, you are good to me. And that's what God has shown me within the past two weeks, is though I will fail him seventy times seven, though I, you know, I've hurt him, and in ways, you know, I've, I've, you know, I've been guilty of adultery on the Lord.

I've had other loves than him, and even in that, God has still loved me. He's still been good to me in all of that. John chapter eight, verse one says, But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives at dawn.

He appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus' teacher, this woman was caught in an act of adultery, and the law of Moses commanded us to stone such a woman.

Now what do you say? They were using this question as a trap in order to have a basis for accusing him, but Jesus bent down and started a ride on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and he said, if anyone of you is without sin, let him cast the first stone at her. Again, he stooped down and rode on the ground.

At this, those heard, at this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older one first, until only Jesus was left. With the woman still standing there, Jesus straightened up and asked her, woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? No one, sir, she said. Then neither do I condemn you, Jesus declared.

Go now and leave your life of sin. You know, I've been that woman, except instead of cheating on an earthly husband, I've cheated on God in my priorities and my love, and even yet God has said, I don't condemn you. I love you.

That's the goodness of God. And that is the biggest proof that when the angel came to Mary, he said, you shall call his name Jesus, because he'll forgive the people from their sins. I have no other argument.

I have no other plea, save Jesus died and he died for me. God is good. Sister, will you want to come up now? And sister's going to play us out with a hymn.

I just want to read this scripture before we leave. Somebody mentioned tonight about being given beauty for the ashes. That might be the story, you know, but all these testimonies from the ashes of our life, God makes something very beautiful and very glorious.

And who could make something from ashes? Something's all burnt up, nothing left of it, but God could make beauty from the ashes. And we've testified to that tonight. And we testify to that in our lives.

And you've released a power in yourself by testifying that. You've said to the darkness that not only has he restored you, not only has he made beauty from the ashes, and I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The power of God is the power of God unto salvation.

It's a glorious thing. And so as I read that, if I read this little scripture tonight, think about yourself. And if anybody needs a prayer, we're going to have that.

We'll have an open altar just as Aileen prays and sings. The scripture is, and I read it last night at the prayer meeting, but the Lord's laid it on my heart. Somebody else has read it too.

I think the Holy Spirit is saying something. The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted.

To proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God. To comfort all who mourn.

To console those who mourn in Zion. To give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning. The garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness.

That they may be called trees of righteousness. The planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. And that's the purpose in all of this.

That he may be glorified. He takes beauty from the ashes. He builds it up.

He makes it something beautiful. And then he puts those roots down deep into the ground. That they may be called trees of righteousness.

Like the tree in Psalm 1, the very first Psalm. That we can take and partake of being connected with God. Finding God again.

As Kaylee was testifying there, she seemed to have lost them in all the busyness of life. And then she finds them again. And maybe you've lost them in all the busyness of life.

And that can happen. But there's nothing that happens outside the presence of God. And we need to walk in the presence of God.

So I think Aileen's going to sing create in me a clean heart. And for those who know it, they'll know that that Psalm was written by David as he considered his sin. His grievous sin.

He had slept with another man's wife. He had that man murdered as you know. And this is David.

The man after God's own heart. The beautiful thing about David was he had a broken and a contrite heart. And God, that's what God loves.

And then Isaiah also talks about that who dwells where God dwells. Those with a broken and a contrite heart. Because his presence, he dwells in eternity.

He inhabits eternity. Think about that brothers and sisters. He inhabits eternity.

And those who are broken and humble and contrite, they dwell where he is. That's his promise. Because he resists the proud, doesn't he? And he gives grace to the humble.

He draws the humble into himself. And so if you've lost the Lord's presence in all of your busyness and it's been a long time since you've felt the sweet presence of God, God calls his saints back to himself like Kaylee testified. He's a good God and he's a merciful God.

He's a faithful God. He's very very patient. So let's just for a moment before we leave tonight and I'll just, unless Brother Brian wants to say a blessing, we just want to have aliens sing, creating me a clean heart, oh God.

And just let's be very quiet. I think I want to be just quiet and I want to call upon God's presence down just to touch deeply into the hearts of all the saints here tonight. Because we also want to encourage the saints.

And so consider the presence of God tonight. Consider maybe it's been a while since you've come into the presence of God tonight. He's faithful, brothers and sisters.

So let's just seek his face tonight as we close out with this hymn. God bless you.

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