



THE BEACON BEAM

February 2023

TRUTH FOR TIMES LIKE THESE



I WANT HIM BACK (BUT NOT THE OLD ME BACK)

By Tim Challies

Christians have a complex relationship to suffering. We do not wish to experience suffering. It is not our desire, preference, or longing to go through times of pain and persecution, times of sorrow and loss. Yet we also know that God uses such experiences to accomplish significant and meaningful things within us. We know there are certain graces that bloom best in the valleys, certain fruits that ripen best in the winter, certain virtues that come to fruition most often in the shadows.

We want to be “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing,” yet James make it clear that the way to these graces does not pass around trials and tests, but through them. We want our faith to be tested and proven genuine, yet Peter tells us that we gain this confidence not when we avoid trials, but when we are grieved by them. We want to be able to offer comfort to Christians who are enduring times of sorrow, yet Paul tells us that it is precisely through receiving comfort in our pains that we become specially equipped to comfort others (James 1:4; 1 Peter 1:6; 2 Corinthians 1:4). A host of Christians will testify that

they have come to know the Lord more intimately, they have come to put sin to death more earnestly, they have been equipped to serve more thoroughly, not apart from their suffering, but because of it.

And, indeed, as we look back at our own lives, we often see evidence of the ways God has worked in us through our hardest times. We see how it was when a loved one was taken from our side that we truly grew closer to the Lord, how it was when our wealth disappeared that we came to treasure God more fully, how it was when our bodies weakened that our reliance upon God grew. We see that God really does purify us through the fire, that he really does strengthen us in our weaknesses, that he really does sanctify us through our sorrows. Though we do not emerge from our trials unscathed, we still emerge from them better and holier and closer to him. Though we wish we did not experience such sorrows, we are thankful to have learned what we have learned and to have grown in the ways we have grown.

As I said, Christians have a complex

relationship to suffering. And recently I have been pondering how I have a complex relationship to suffering. I have been pondering a kind of conflict that now exists in my heart and mind.

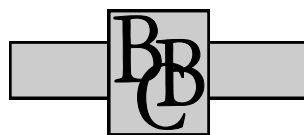
I want Nick back. But I don’t want my old self back. I so badly wish that my son could be part of my life again. But I would so badly hate to lose all the precious ways in which God has been real to me and true to me and present with me in my sorrows. There is so much I have learned, so many ways God has drawn close to me, so many blessings I’ve received from the Lord. And all of these came through sorrow, not apart from it. In some ways my greatest gains have flowed from my greatest loss, my greatest joys from my deepest sorrow.

But I suppose this should not come as a complete surprise, for God often works through paradox. After all, he is the God who says it is the poor rather than the rich who have the greatest wealth, that is those with the

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Gregory N. Barkman, *Senior Pastor*
Michael R. Karns, *Minister of Christian Education*
Robert F. LaTour, *Minister of Pastoral Care*
Gregory L. Phillips, *Minister of Music*
N. Hunter Strength, *Minister of Youth*

Sunday

Morning Worship...9:30 AM
Sunday School.....11:10 AM
Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

Wednesday

Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM
IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM
Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

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deepest hunger who are most satisfied, and that it is those who are persecuted who ought to rejoice and be glad. If in God's kingdom the way to riches is through poverty and the way to exaltation is through humiliation, wouldn't it stand to reason that the way to joy passes through sorrow and the way to growth passes through barrenness? Wouldn't it stand to reason that the way to green pastures passes through dark valleys?

And so we live with this tension: to become who we want we often have to endure what we hate. To receive what we long for we often have to release what we love. To attain the most advanced graces we often need to experience the most painful sorrows.

I need to offer a word of clarity. I do not mean to say that God's reasoning goes something like this: That guy is not growing in generosity in the way I'd like, so I am going to burn his house down to hasten the process; or that woman is not sufficiently sold out to my purposes so I'm going to take her health to force the issue. No, we need to separate the *why* from the *what*, the reason God wills things from what he may be accomplishing through them. We are far too small, far too simple, far too limited to be able to draw firm conclusions about God's reasons—about why he has willed the difficulties in our lives. "The secret things belong to the Lord our God." But what we can do and must do is ask, "How might God

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mean to use this in my life? What is God calling me to through it? How can I become a better Christian because of it?"

Sorrow does not always lead to advances in holiness, but it always can and always should, for the Spirit is present in our sorrows, ready and eager to sanctify them to his precious purposes. Through our sorrows he draws our hearts away from the fleeting pleasures of this earth to set them on the enduring pleasures of heaven. Through our sorrows he shifts our longings from things we cannot possibly keep to things we cannot possibly lose. Through our sorrows he diminishes the traits that mark citizens of the kingdom of this world and he amplifies the character that marks citizens of the kingdom of God.

We don't wish to suffer. We shouldn't wish to suffer. Yet we know that none of us escape this life unscathed.

And when the time comes that "the path that I feared is the way he has set," we can be certain that God is eager to sanctify our sorrows in ways that are ultimately for our benefit and for his glory, that behind the mysteries of his providence are wondrous treasures of sanctification, that whatever his reasons, he truly is working all things for good for those of us who are loved by him and called according to his purpose.

Tim Challies—serves as an elder at Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto, Ontario and author of a number of books.

A. W. Tozer said, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason the gravest question before the church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like."

HOPE THAT DOES NOT DISAPPOINT

By Paul David Tripp

If you pay attention and listen carefully to what you and the people around you are saying, you will realize that we are hope obsessed. Day after day, the things we do are fueled by hope. Little third-grader Sally says to her mom as she gets ready for school, “I sure hope the girls at school like me.” Mom thinks to herself that day, “I hope our marriage gets better.” Teenager Tim says to his buddy, “I got a new job after school; I hope it’s decent.” Dad worries in the hope that he won’t be one of the guys who’s caught in the downsizing that his corporation is doing. From hoping that a certain meal will be good to hoping that we will have the moral strength to do the things we should do, our lives are fueled and directed by hope.

What we’re all searching for is hope that won’t disappoint us, that won’t leave us hopeless in the end. And we all want to convince ourselves that what we have placed our hope in will deliver. What are you asking of something when you place your hope in it? You’re asking it to give you peace of heart. You’re asking it so give to give you a reason to continue. You’re asking it to help you get through difficulty and disappointment. You’re asking it to free you from envy or anxiety. You’re asking it to give you joy in the

*Hope is not a
thing, not a
location, not a sit-
uation, not an ex-
perience.
Hope is a person,
and his name
is Jesus.*

morning and rest at night. Now, that’s a lot to ask of anything. That fact confronts you with this reality—if your hope disappoints you, it’s because it’s the wrong hope.

Romans 5:1-5 talks about a hope that won’t disappoint you even in times of suffering. Maybe you’re thinking, “Where can I find that hope?” Sturdy hope that does not vanish with the constant changes in situations, locations, and relationships that make up all of our lives—hope that simply will never, ever disappoint us—can be found in only one place. It is not to be found in a certain thing. It is, in fact, a person,

Jesus. Whether you have realized it or not, he is what your hoping heart has been searching for, because what you’ve really been searching for is life, real heart-changing, heart-satisfying life—life to the fullest, life abundant. People can love and respect you, but they can’t give you life. Situations can make your life easier, but they can’t give you life. Locations can bring some changes to your life, but they can’t give you life. Achievements can be temporarily satisfying, but they can’t give you life. True lasting hope is never found horizontally, It’s only ever found vertically, at the feet of the Messiah, the One who *is* hope. Place your hopeful heart in his hands today.

Taken from *New Morning Mercies, A Daily Gospel Devotional* by Paul David Tripp—best selling author and the president of Paul Tripp Ministries. Author of numerous books related to the Christian life and pastoral ministry.

As long as our hope is set on this life and things that gratify our flesh, we will likely feel frustrated, discouraged, and even hopeless. Jesus Christ came to offer us eternal joy and freedom from sin and, although we have been set free from sin’s power, sin’s presence is still at work in and around us. Thankfully, the gospel assures us, as believers, that God is for us and works all things together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

During long (or even short) seasons of waiting, our hearts will be encouraged to remember that the best is yet to come! One day sin will be no more! We will be free from self’s demands and temptations and experience everlasting joy. So, “Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:2-4).

Linda Green is the Director of Women’s Ministries at The Orchard Evangelical Free Church in Arlington Heights, Illinois. She blogs at *Chosen and Called*.

ANOTHER LOOK AT BAPTISM

By Greg Barkman

Several years ago, two men showed up at our church who became wonderful friends and committed supporters of this ministry. They were both Presbyterian Elders who could no longer continue in the church where they had been involved for many years. They were unable to find another Presbyterian congregation in our area that was strongly committed to historic reformed doctrine. Thus, two godly Presbyterians became faithfully involved in a Baptist congregation. Though highly supportive, they could not conscientiously become members. They were Presbyterians and we are Baptists. The differences between us were not great, but the issue of baptism was a barrier to full participation. Were either of us fully satisfied with this arrangement? No, for we believed alike that every Christian should be a member of a local church, but under the circumstances, it seemed the best available solution to a less than ideal situation.

I enjoyed several fruitful discussions with the senior member of this duo, and we always parted friends with a healthy respect for the serious commitment that each had to the authority of God's Word. Several years transpired without problems until one Sunday, I dealt with the subject of baptism in the course of my exposition. The older gentlemen chided me after the service for publicly stating my conviction that infant baptism was an unscriptural practice. Because he had never heard me say anything with which he disagreed, he was shocked to hear me preach something totally contrary to his position. I responded something like this, "Dear Sir, if I were attending a Presbyterian church and the pastor presented reasons why he practiced infant baptism, do you think I should be offended and object to his teaching?" "No, I guess not," he replied.

"Then why would you object to a Baptist minister teaching his convictions about baptism to his own congregation?" "I guess I shouldn't," he replied. We never had another problem after that, and I had the privilege of conducting this dear saint's funeral when the Lord took him home. He was loved, and dearly missed by our entire congregation.

I tell this story so that my Presbyterian friends who read "The Beacon Beam," will hopefully not be offended if I use this church's publication to instruct our members and friends regarding the doctrine of baptism as I understand it.

THE BASIS FOR INFANT BAPTISM. Infant baptism is based upon the Old Covenant practice of circumcision, a sign of the Covenant God made with Abraham and later confirmed with the nation of Israel in the days of Moses. The qualification to receive this sign was rooted in physical connection to Abraham. It was applied to male infants on the eighth day after birth, as well to adult males who came into the community as slaves, or in some other way were incorporated into the nation of Israel. Infants who qualified through a bloodline connection to Abraham were circumcised and thereafter enjoyed full membership within the covenant community. This arrangement was prescribed by God. To fail to be circumcised was to be cut off from the Covenant, a serious matter resulting in eternal condemnation. Yet, possession of the sign of the Covenant was no guarantee of salvation. It simply marked one out as a member of the Old Covenant community, but personal faith in the promises of God must be exercised in the passing of time for a circumcised son of Abraham to enjoy the blessings of salvation. Thus, membership in the Old Covenant was based upon physical qualifications, either biological

descendancy from Abraham, or incorporation into a household headed by one who was a descendant of Abraham. Bloodline, not regeneration was the issue. Physical attributes and rituals qualified one for admission into the Old Covenant.

THE BASIS FOR BELIEVERS BAPTISM. To receive the sign of the New Covenant, water baptism, regeneration is required. It is a spiritual qualification, not a physical one. It signifies an internal work of God's Spirit, not an external connection through family bloodline. Thus, there is an entirely different basis for membership in the New Covenant. Clearly this understanding of how one qualifies for New Covenant membership cannot be reconciled with the external requirements of the Old Covenant. They represent two entirely different arrangements. That which qualifies one for Old Covenant inclusion cannot be transferred into New Covenant practices.

PROBLEMS WITH INFANT BAPTISM. There are several weaknesses with infant baptism. In the first place, no instruction for this practice can be found in the pages of the New Testament. The only clearly stated instructions require that baptism be given to those who have believed the gospel and can testify of their faith in Christ. Support for infant baptism rests upon assumptions of essential similarity between the Old and New Covenants. Based upon that assumption, paedobaptists believe they can detect this practice in Biblical accounts of household baptisms, even though no children are mentioned. They are simply assumed. They also think they see baptism in passages that speak of children being brought to Jesus, even though baptism is never mentioned. Thus, the practice is assumed, but

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never taught. How unlike the Old Covenant practice of circumcision, which is clearly commanded many times in such detail that no one can question either its validity or its requirement. For members of the Old Covenant to fail to circumcise their infant sons was a clear and serious act of disobedience. For members of the New Covenant to baptize their children is a speculative act void of divine authority. I am aware that this last statement is potentially offensive to those who believe in the baptism of infants, but I am convinced that it is true.

HOW THE TWO COVENANTS DIFFER. Not only is the New Testament silent regarding the baptism of children, but it actually prohibits the practice. How so? A close examination of Jeremiah 31:31-34 renders infant baptism impossible. This text, which is quoted nearly verbatim in Hebrews 8:8-11 rings the death knell for infant baptism. The passage begins with a statement that the New Covenant is not like the Old. “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, NOT ACCORDING TO THE COVENANT THAT I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt...” (Hebrews 8:8,9, emphasis mine). Instead of similarity between the covenants, Scripture emphasizes differences.

Nor are we left to speculate in what ways the two covenants differ. The essential differences are spelled out in subsequent verses. The primary difference is this: Members of the Old Covenant had no promise that God would regenerate every member in good standing within the Old Covenant. Because membership was based upon external qualifications, multitudes of Old Covenant members died unconverted. Their circumcision and covenant rituals did

not guarantee salvation, but the New Covenant is different. “I will put my laws in their mind and write them on their hearts” (Hebrews 8:10). This is a description of regeneration. “None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother saying ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Hebrews 8:11). Don’t miss what God is saying through Jeremiah and repeated by the author of

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Hebrews. Unlike the Old Covenant, every single member of the New Covenant community is regenerated. No member needs to be evangelized, because everyone is already saved. Under the Old Covenant, infants were first made full fledged members of the Covenant community by their parents’ obedience to the sign of circumcision. Thereafter, each family was responsible to evangelize their circumcised children, who belonged to the Covenant, but were unregenerate until taught to “Know the Lord” and individually believe the promises of God. This was how God designed the Old Covenant, but His design for the New Covenant is different. No one truly belongs to the New Covenant until he believes in Christ. Under the New Covenant, regeneration comes first and baptism follows. Everyone who belongs to Christ through the promises of the New Covenant is a born again believer. That’s why “no one shall teach his (New Covenant) neighbor, and none his brother saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.” That’s why

baptism is for believers alone, not believers and their children, until their children give evidence of a regenerating work of God’s Spirit, and testify that they know the Lord. This is what God has designed, and revealed to us in Scripture.

This is why I am a Baptist. I enthusiastically embrace Reformed Theology, for I am convinced it represents the true teaching of God’s Word regarding salvation. Many of our Baptist forefathers also embraced a thoroughly reformed understanding of salvation. Sadly, too many Baptists fail to understand their history, and mistakenly believe that reformed theology is contrary to Baptist doctrine, whereas the exact opposite is true. But I cannot accept infant baptism. I am convinced that it represents a failure to recognize the God designed distinction between the Old and New Covenants. I love all born again believers, regardless of their theological heritage. I have a special love for my Presbyterian brethren who believe the Doctrines of Grace as taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith. But I am a Baptist by conviction that believers’ baptism is the only doctrine of baptism taught in Scripture.

On the Feminine Side

by Marti Barkman

“Complainers and Complaint”

What picture comes to mind when you hear the word **COMPLAIN**? The spoken complaint: A child sulking at the piano, asking, as he plays the last measure of each piece if he can stop now. A toddler in the child’s seat of a grocery cart crying loudly for a treat (and occasionally stopping to take a look around...just checking on their audience!). Sometimes the complaint is unspoken, but a complaint none the less; a teenager refusing to come to the dinner table or a woman giving her husband the silent treatment; a boss who mistreats employees for personal vendetta; a friend who suddenly gives you the cold shoulder for reasons yet unknown to you. These are all forms of complaints, for what is a complaint but the expression of dissatisfaction and annoyance, the root of which is a desire for circumstances to match our expectations, not someone else’s plans. We don’t need a dictionary definition, for we learned to voice complaints before we learned to communicate with words. Most one-year-olds have a limited vocabulary, but their angry cry is easily interpreted: “Give me what I want or I’ll make enough noise to change your mind!”

Complaining, with its roots and branches, has been around since the beginning of time. We are introduced to it in Genesis 3, when Eve becomes discontent with God’s rules concerning the tree in the center of the garden. And as so often happens, she is not content to keep her complaint to herself. We can almost hear her say, “Adam, just take a bite. What can it hurt?” Could there possibly have been anything missing in their garden home, a place of per-

fection impossible for us to imagine! But there it is, a reason to be dissatisfied. Eve’s heart found one thing to desire outside the boundaries God had set. Keep reading, and when we come to Genesis 16 we see “the shadow of Genesis 3 fall across the page”¹ as the darkness of original sin begins to darken the skies over the dwelling of another woman who has become impatient with God’s plans. Her name is Sarai but in time would be changed to mean “Princess of the multitude”. Her husband had been promised a son through whom a nation would be populated and from whom our Redeemer would come. This promise was made by Jehovah God, who has always kept his word. But years added to years, Sarai was now old and had grown tired of waiting on God. Now quite sure he cannot accomplish his purposes without her intervention, she speaks. “Abram, clearly it’s not going to happen without some help from us! There is my servant. Abram, she is young! She can produce the child for us. After all, it’s what we do in our culture!”

Roots: It’s where the complaint comes from, a heart determined to have its own way.

Branches: What results from this heart, the fruit of complaining.

Do we take complaining seriously? Granted, not all complaining falls into the category of seriously damaging. Around our house you’ll likely hear complaints about the dirt created by the new neighborhood, or the RIDICULOUS AND DANGEROUS new traffic pattern where Hwy 119 crosses over the interstate. While these comments may seem redundant to the hearers, (we’ve covered the subject many times over and there’s

nothing that can be done to change it) it’s not damaging speech. But when careless complaints about others reach the ears of another, we cannot know what their reaction might be. Your complaint about a sister in Christ can become the branch that causes damage to another’s opinion of that one. But complaining can become one of those ‘respectable sins’. After all, everyone does it. What can it hurt? If this is your outlook, here are just two questions to ask yourself when you find dissatisfaction gnawing at your heart, asking desires for something God has not granted:

~ *Who is responsible for what and who I am?* God is the author of all my days. My discontent is discontent with God’s plan.

~ *Will I be part of the problem or the solution?* Have my complaints created a problem anywhere in my circle...family, friends, church, work, neighbors? If so, what will I do to join the solution?

¹ *Faith of Our Fathers*, Dale Davis

Put God's Promises into Circulation

Do as you have spoken.

2 Samuel 7:25

God's promises were never meant to be thrown aside as wastepaper; He intended that they should be used. God's gold is not miser's money but is minted to be traded with. Nothing pleases our Lord better than to see His promises put in circulation; He loves to see His children bring them up to Him and say, "Lord, do as you have said."

We glorify God when we plead His promises. Do you think that God will be any poorer for giving you the riches He has promised? Do you dream that He will be any less holy for giving holiness to you? Do you imagine He will be any less pure for washing you from your sins? He has said, "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."¹

Faith lays hold upon the promise of pardon, and it does not delay, saying, "This is a precious promise—I wonder if it be true?" but goes straight to the throne with it and pleads, "Lord, here is the promise. Do as you have said." Our Lord replies, "Be it unto you even as you will." When a Christian grasps a promise, if he does not take it to God, he dishonors Him; but when he hastens to the throne of grace and cries, "Lord, I have nothing to recommend me but this, You have said it," then his desire shall be granted. Our heavenly Banker delights to cash His own notes.

Never let the promise rust. Draw the word of promise out of its sheath and use it with holy violence. Think not that God will be troubled by your importunately reminding Him of His promises. He loves to hear the loud outcries of needy souls. It is His delight to bestow favors. He is more ready to hear than you are to ask. The sun is not weary of shining, nor the fountain of flowing. It is God's nature to keep His promises; therefore go at once to the throne with, "Do as You have said."

¹ Isaiah 1:18

Devotional material is taken from *Morning and Evening*, written by C. H. Spurgeon, revised and updated by Alistair Begg.

THE BEACON BROADCAST

Monday thru Friday

WITA 1490 AM (Knoxville, TN) 9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC) 12:15 p.m.
WBAG 105.9 FM (Burlington, NC) 12:15 p.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC) 2:00 p.m.
WDZY 1290 AM (Richmond, VA) 6:15 a.m.
WDZY 103.3 FM (Richmond, VA) 10:00 a.m.
WDZY 103.3 FM (Richmond, VA) 6:15 a.m.
WDZY 103.3 FM (Richmond, VA) 10:00 a.m.
WSKY 1230 AM (Asheville, NC) 7:15 a.m.
WYYC 1250 AM (York, PA) 5:00 p.m.
WYYC 98.1 FM (York, PA) 5:00 p.m.

Monday thru Sunday

WXTH-LP 101.7 FM (Richwood, WV) 10:05 a.m.
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Sunday

WCRU 960 AM (Charlotte, NC) 9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC) 10:30 a.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC) 10:30 a.m.
WDRU 1030 AM (Raleigh, NC) 10:30 a.m.
WLES 590 AM (Richmond, VA) 10:30 a.m.
Harbour Light of the Windwards 9:30 p.m.
1400 AM/94.5 FM (Caribbean)
WGNQ mixlr.com/wgng-radio (M-F)
8:45-9 a.m. & 4:45-5:00 p.m.
(Internet station based in Greenville/Washington, NC)

BEACON HIGHLIGHTS FOR FEBRUARY

CALENDAR

01 IMPACT Clubs
05 ESL
08 Annual Congregational
 Business Meeting
12 ESL
14 Coffee n' Courage
 Elders/Deacons Meeting
15 IMPACT Clubs
19 Members Meeting
 ESL
21 Coffee n' Courage
22 IMPACT Clubs
26 Lord's Table
 ESL

MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

03 Joanna Isley
04 Mae Counts
 Hazel Garcia
06 Rob Conrad
07 Wendy Lynch
14 Pam Owens
19 Mike Kelleher
21 Tommy Blanchard
22 Amanda Abernathy
24 Larry Byrd
26 Sherry Kane
 Greg Mullis
 Larry Norris

MISSIONARY BIRTHDAYS

08 Gabriel Bixby*
20 Miriam Bixby*
21 Caroline Vaughn*

*Children of Missionaries

*We express our heartfelt
sympathy to the families of:*

Rus Elliott
 Bobby Donald Stewart
 Eian Urban

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