

Tell Yourself the Gospel of Grace Every Day (Eph 2:12-13)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on May 8, 2011

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This past week we heard the news of Osama Bin Laden's death. In the 21st century, he has claimed responsibility for more acts of evil and terror than any other. We can be thankful for our government in light of Romans 13, that it bears the sword to restrain such evil. There are psalms in Scripture that pray for God to bring enemies of Israel and God's people to justice, to bring them even to their end, and bin Laden certainly was a violent enemy of Israel, Christians, not to mention America's most wanted public enemy #1 since 9/11/2001.

The same Scriptures, though, also tell us God takes "*no pleasure in the death of the wicked*" (Ezek. 33:11). Dr. Al Mohler of SBTS, commented in his blog on seeing patriotic 'open celebration in the streets. While we should all be glad that this significant threat is now removed, death in itself is never to be celebrated ... All people of good will should be pleased that bin Laden is no longer a personal threat, and that his death may further weaken terrorist plans and aspirations. But revenge is not a worthy motivation for justice, and celebration in the streets is not a worthy response.'¹

Another wrote: 'It is a sad irony that many of those who are rejoicing over Bin Laden's death, will spend eternity in Hell along with him, because they have rejected the gospel (2 Thess. 1:8-9) ... It is the height of deception to think that you are better than Bin Laden,- more deserving of God's favor (Rom. 3:10,11) ... Those who die in their sins, trusting in their "good works", religiosity, good intentions will face the same harsh condemnation as Osama Bin Laden [eternal terror in eternal fire, which is not just for people in Al-Qaida, but also for many in America as well!] ... Let us be thankful that this evil man has been silenced. Let us be humbled in the knowledge that while God condemns all men as evil ... He has graciously provided a way for us ... in Christ ... Without His grace, we would be no better than Bin Laden.'²

Ephesians 2:1 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,* ²*in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air* [Satan himself], *of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.* ³*Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath [or objects of wrath], even as the rest.*

God's wrath is not just for suicide bombers, it's also for self-righteous sinners. Hell is not just for terrorists, it's for all who are too proud to come to Christ for grace as a spiritual beggar or leper.

... ¹² *remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.* ¹³ *But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

Remind yourself you're a big sinner but you have a bigger Savior. Remind yourself that God's grace is greater than your greatest sins. Remember the gospel. Remain in the gospel. Never move on from it. Never forget spiritual ground zero in v. 1. *You were dead*, v. 1, *but God* (v. 4).

God wasn't a mere fireman who raised a ladder to your burning building and you chose to climb out. Christ came to seek and save from an even worse predicament. You were dead spiritually as much as people were physically in the bottom of the rubble after 9/11, those who had fallen with the twin towers. When God found you under the ruins, you had no vital signs spiritually, no life, no response, you were dead (v. 1), no hope at all (v. 12b).

But God in v. 5, when we were dead made us alive with Christ! He came on His search and rescue mission, rolled away the stone that was on us, brought us to life spiritually just like He had done with Lazarus physically, He regenerated us -- how could we not respond and receive His hand helping us up at that point? We did respond to Him but if you believe v.1-9 we can't even boast in our response

Your only boast is Christ, who saved you in that hopeless lifeless state, and who rescued you from ground zero, by holding up the rubble so your regenerated soul could get out, knowing full well the weight of that would collapse on Himself in the process and He would be pierced through and He would be crushed by it for us (Isaiah 53)! Greater love has no man than He who lays down His life for His friends – and Christ did that for His enemies (Rom 5)!

We can never hear the gospel of grace too much or make too much of Christ. We can never give Him too much credit in our salvation or too much glory for bringing our salvation about. All boasting is to be suffocated by the gospel (v. 9b), the atmosphere of grace is to suffocate and wilt our pride that naturally thrives everywhere else. We need the gospel of grace everyday because the weeds of pride keep sprouting up every day in all their varieties, and we need to keep them down with this double-edged gospel sword of the Word.

The command in v. 11-12, “remember” is present tense, continual, perpetual, ongoing, daily remembering of gospel truths (v. 1-10). We need the gospel everyday, not just Sundays (1 sermon once a week not enough). What Paul is doing in v11-12 is telling *us to tell ourselves* the gospel again and again. It's not up to the preacher. You're called to *recall* the gospel; you must *rehearse* verses on the gospel.

We all speak to ourselves, already, many even do it out loud. The *Wall Street Journal*, March 2008, said 96% of people studied say they talk to themselves while they're at work. This has become a problem particularly in workplaces where there are cubicles and low walls, reports say. Whether we do it out loud or not, all of us *listen to ourselves* during the day. But Scripture calls us to *speak to ourselves God's truth*. One synonym for this command “remember” is “meditate,” which in the OT includes a verbal element, reciting or rehearsing God's truth, regurgitating it, reiterating it, repeating it. Whether it's out loud or inward, we're commanded to meditate on God's Word day and night so we'll be careful to keep it (Josh 1:8-9).

If OT saints were to remember God's Law, how much more should NT saints desire to remember the gospel, as v. 12 commands, rejoice daily in good news. Replay your pre-Christ state, v. 12, renew your mind with what Christ has done for you, v. 13, re-focus your natural bent from self to Christ each day, re-orient your thinking to grace daily, so you don't slip back into a works-based relationship with Christ.

This Greek word “remember” doesn’t imply *forgetfulness*, it has more to do with *focus*, what you’re consciously focusing on. It is what you choose to think of, dwell on, set your mind on (Phil 4:8). God never forgets, but when the OT says “*God remembered Noah / Israel / Abraham / His covenant*” it means God is calling to mind something or someone to devote His attention and affections there in a personal pre-eminent way, and to act. *Remember the gospel* = call to mind, to devote attention and affections to it, to act/respond.

Revelation 3:3 “**Remember, therefore** [same phrase as Eph 2:11], *what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.*” (NIV)

When we remember something truly, it leads to some response or action, to do something. I give myself physical reminders on my calendar, computer, phone, sticky, so I’ll do something, not just so I’ll think about it. God’s reminders also go beyond our thoughts to an intended response, repentance if needed, right-hearted action.

Peter O’Brien says to “remember” in Scripture language ‘was not simply a recalling of certain facts or situations, nor was it just a mental activity. It involved an evaluation of what had happened, and an acting upon it as a result ... It is “not intended to bring any new instruction but simply to remind the readers of the knowledge” they had already received in order to make them more aware of it and to encourage them to respond appropriately.’”³

Ecclesiastes 12:1 “*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.*” It means to live in light of our Creator, constantly remind ourselves it is He who made us, not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. He owns us. He is God and I am not. Let God be God. Fear God and keep His commands, is how Eccl. 12 ends.

In the context of Eph. 2, *remember* has to do with God’s greatness, not in creation, but in salvation, His great grace for our great need. Remember how you were (v. 12) and how good and glorious He is. Rejoice in the fact that Christ’s blood alone (v. 13) brings you to Him! Your standing with God is never based on your performance or life; it’s based completely on the performance and life of Jesus.

Jerry Bridges explains further why Christians need the gospel daily in his book I would highly recommend *The Discipline of Grace*:

‘Regardless of our performance, we’re always dependent on God’s grace, His undeserved favor to those who deserve His wrath. Some days we may be more acutely conscious of our sinfulness and hence more aware of our need of His grace, but there is never a day when we can stand before Him on our own two feet of performance ... Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the *reach* of God’s grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the *need* of God’s grace.’⁴

Bridges says it better than I why Christians need the gospel daily. But I don’t want you to take his word, or mine, take Paul’s, God’s. If you look at Ephesians 6, one of the ways Paul applies the gospel to believers is that we must stand in the gospel to resist temptation.

6:13 *Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.* [And what do we stand in or with? Paul tells us, v. 15:] ...*having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL*

Our feet are to be fitted with the “shoes of good news,” the gospel. ¹⁷ *And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION ...* Our mind is protected by the gospel, that’s why Christians need to remember it every day. To stand against the enemy we need the gospel from head to toe.

The full armor of a soldier in the Lord’s army is “gospel armor”:

- “*belt of truth*” in v. 14 (gospel truth girds, holds together)
- “*breastplate of righteousness*” (Christ’s righteousness put on us in the gospel, imputed righteousness which becomes ours)
- Our only weapon in this fight is this Word (v. 17), a Word sharper than any 2-edged sword that can cut through all the lies and lame excuses and lay bare a soul. It’s not my word that is living and powerful; it’s God’s. Not my good ideas, His good news. The gospel alone pierces hearts (Acts 2:37)

The hymn “Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross” says “Put on the Gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer.” In v. 19, Paul brings both the gospel and prayer together – he asks for prayer that he would have more boldness in opening his mouth to speak the gospel to others. This should be our prayer as well. #1 prayer request of Paul in this book, the only one, is for boldness to speak the gospel. Christians need to keep hearing the gospel so it is always fresh in their minds and warm in their hearts and ready on their tongues to speak to others. If the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and if we were really as bad as 2:1-3 say we were before Christ, if the gospel was powerful enough to save us ... it can save anyone, so may God give us boldness to proclaim it!

But we’re not just to tell others. Eph 2:11 is a command to us of our responsibility to tell ourselves, remember it, rehearse it daily. And Ephesians 6 speaks of the gospel as pieces of armor we must put on each day like a soldier preparing to go out to battle. Soldiers don’t just put on their gear on day one, they put it on everyday. It’s not the drill sergeant’s job to dress his soldiers each day, to lace up their boots and strap on their helmets...it’s your job, soldiers! This Christian life is warfare. Don’t go out without body armor, without gospel reinforcements. Put on the gospel armor, take up the sword.

Milton Vincent, in a book I highly recommend, *A Gospel Primer*: “That God would tell me to “*take up*” and “*put on*” this gospel armor alerts me to the fact that I do not automatically come into each day protected by the gospel. In fact, these commands imply that I am vulnerable to defeat and injury unless I seize upon the gospel and arm myself with it from head to toe. And what better way is there to do this than to preach the gospel to myself ... Christians should become expert in their knowledge and use of the gospel, not simply so they can share it faithfully with non-Christians, but also so they can speak it to themselves every day and experience its benefits ... Over the course of time, preaching the gospel to myself every day has made more of a difference in my life than any other discipline I have practiced ... There is simply no other way to compete with the forebodings of my conscience, the condemnings of my heart, and the lies of the world and the evil than to overwhelm such things with daily rehearsing of the gospel⁵

In Eph 2:12 Paul gives 3 gospel reminders to Christians, 3 realities each of us are responsible to remember and tell ourselves each day, 3 radical problems God reversed at the cross for redeemed Gentiles. Never Forget:

1. You were without Christ
2. You were without hope and without God
3. You were outside God's people and promises (we'll develop this next time with v. 14)

#1. You Were Without Christ

¹² *remember that you were at that time separate from Christ ...*

One version has “*without the Messiah ...*” These Gentile people in Ephesus did not have the Messiah come to them (Christ=Messiah). They were “*once far off*” (v. 13), far from Israel and the Messiah that had come there a few decades before Ephesians was written. But in v. 12, the problem was not just geographical, it was spiritual

Lloyd-Jones: “*without Christ ...* can be translated as ‘apart from Christ’, ‘outside of Christ’, ‘not in fellowship with Christ’, ‘not in relationship with Christ,’ or even ‘living apart from Christ’ ... There is nothing more terrible that can be said about anybody than this ... When the apostle looks for a term in which he can show these people how far away they were, and the utter hopelessness of their position, this is the term he chooses, ‘without Christ.’ ... ‘In no loving relationship to Christ.’ There is nothing worse than that. But on the other hand there is nothing more wonderful than to be ‘in Christ’ ... We are all of us either ‘in Christ’ or else ‘outside Christ’. Do you know exactly where you are? ... This is the thing that is going to determine our eternal destiny.”⁶

How do we know? Those in Christ in v. 5, God made alive to spiritual things with Him. If He made us alive, spiritual desires, changes began in us, v. 10, “*created in Christ*” (re-created to a new nature, 2 Cor. 5:17).

Ephesians 2:13 *But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

Christ came for them, and brought them to Himself by the gospel.

How do we apply this point in speaking the gospel to ourselves?

2 Timothy 2:2 “*be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus ...*

... ⁸ **Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel** [personal and powerful remember]

... ¹³ **If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.** ¹⁴ **Remind them of these things** ... [i.e., remember, Eph 2]

... ²⁴ *The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,* ²⁵ *with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth ...*

If God granted us repentance and gave us faith as a gift, us who were lost as lost could be apart from Him, He can do it *with them!* If Jesus was kind, patient, and gentle with me, I can with others if I remember Jesus Christ and His grace, rely on it, and remind myself these things.

How does preaching this part of the gospel work practically in us?

- when condemning thoughts come, you remember Rom. 8:1 “*there is now no condemnation for those **in Christ Jesus***”
- when thoughts come that what you have done separates you from the love of Christ, you remember the end of Rom. 8
- when your sin seems bigger than grace, remember Rom. 5:20 “*...where sin abounded, grace much more abounded*”
- if frustrated that you keep on sinning, remember Rom. 7 and if you identify with Paul in fighting sinful tendencies within and truly desire what’s right, PTL you’re in the fight
- when thoughts of pride come, you remember 1 Cor. 15:10 “*by the grace of God, I am what I am ... [and whatever good we do, we say with Paul] not I, but the grace of God*”
- when the devil tells you you’re a sinner, remember Lk 5:32 says the gospel is only for those who know they’re sinners, that qualifies you for grace, so thank him for that reminder!
- when he tells you you’re not worthy, agree, and thank him for the reminder of Lk 17:10, which says: “*when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘**We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.**’*” We are always to think of ourselves that way, so thanks for the reminder, devil! I’m worthy of death and hell, but worthy is the Lamb who was slain in my place

1 John 1:7 “*... the blood of Jesus ... cleanses us **from all sin.*** ⁸ *If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.* ⁹ ***If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*** ¹⁰ *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.* ^{2:1} *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, **we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;*** ² ***and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins ...***

We don’t need to deny our guilt within, or deny our sin, we need to confess our sins, say the same thing about them that God does, say our sin is even worse than the devil knows, he doesn’t know the half of it! Tell the devil he’s preaching to the choir, then sing back:

When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of my guilt within,
upward I look and see Christ there who made an end to all my sin

1. You were without Christ
2. **You were without hope and without God**

¹² ***remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise*** [this is part of being without Christ/Messiah, exclusion from God’s people and from God’s promises to Israel, we’ll come back to these re: v. 14], ***having no hope and without God in the world.*** ¹³ ***But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.***

Now because of Christ you are no longer like the rest of the world who have no hope. Before we had no hope without God, but now we have God and hope. Our greatest need is God. God's greatest gift, then, is Himself. 2 John 9 '*Anyone who...does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching [i.e., the gospel], he has both the Father and the Son.*'

God's greatest gift is Himself. The blood of Jesus (the gospel) is the continual source of hope for the Christian. "*But now in Christ*" you have hope. *But now in Christ* you have God. You have God!!! Romans 8:17 astonishingly calls us "*heirs of God...*" We get God! *God is the Gospel*, as John Piper writes,⁷ its gift is God Himself. And the climax of the gospel a few verses later in Romans 8 is "*God is for us ...*" (v. 31) and the climax of hope in v. 28 is that nothing can be ultimately against us, God uses it all for our good!

So now God relates to me only with grace,
The former wrath banished without any trace!
And each day I'm made a bit more as I should,
His grace using all things to render me good.
Yes, even in trials God's grace abounds too
And does me the good He assigns it to do ...
He even will send me some heart-rending pain,
So I'll learn new ways and His holiness gain.
His disciplines always are with love imbued.
A love that seeks ever my ultimate good.
So this is my story; ongoing it is.
How shall I thank God for this gospel of His?
A gift that keeps giving, the gospel confers
The bounty of heaven each time I rehearse.
Deserve it? I don't on my holiest day;
But this is [the gospel] and herein I'll stay.⁸

Milton Vincent, who wrote that poem: 'the gospel is not just one piece of good news that fits into my life somewhere along all the bad ... the gospel makes genuinely good news out of every other aspect of life, including my severest trials. The good news about my trials is that God is forcing them to bow to His gospel purposes and do good unto me ... making me more conformed to the image of Christ ... a gospel-generated heavenward focus yields enormous benefits while on earth ... Hope of eternity with Christ in heaven also enables my heart to thrive during the most difficult and lengthy of trials here on earth ... this glorious eternity is part and parcel of the gospel ... Preaching the gospel to myself every day is a great way to keep myself established in "*the hope of the gospel,*" so that I might experience the practical benefits that such hope is intended to bring me here on earth.'⁹

Col. 1:5 *because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel* ⁶*which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth*

See, the gospel not only gave them hope in v. 5, future-oriented hope, but in v. 6 the gospel has been bearing fruit and increasing, and he says of the gospel "*it has been doing [this] in you since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God.*"

The gospel of grace isn't just for getting you to heaven in the next life, it bears fruit in this life! This gift keeps giving fruit, hope, all we need

... ²³***if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard*** ... - again, never move away from the gospel, continue it, established, entrenched, enthralled, encouraged in hope

How to remember our need and grace daily?

1. Remember to pursue hope and help in God alone every day

Psalm 63:1 *O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly* [another psalm says *in the morning*]; *My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.* ²*Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.* ³*Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.* ⁴*So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.* ⁵*My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips.*

Joy, contentment, satisfaction in God's sufficiency, seeking God earnestly, starving for God, soul-thirsting for God, panting like a deer for water to see and savor the God's supremacy every day. A practical benefit of tasting and seeing God is good is in temptation.

Vincent again writes:

'fleshly lusts are vicious enemies, constantly waging war against the good of my soul. Yet [sins] promise me fullness, and their promises are so deliciously sweet that I often find myself giving into them as if they were friends that have my best interests at heart ... When my soul sits empty and is aching for something to fill it, such deceptive promises are extremely difficult to resist ... it is in the gospel that I experience a God who glorifies Himself by filling me with His fullness. He is the One, Paul says, "*who fills all in all.*" [Eph 1:22]. He is the One who "*fill[s] all the things*" with the gifts He gives [Eph 4:7-10]. And He lavishes gospel blessings upon me with the goal that I "*be filled up to all the fullness of God.*" [Eph 3:14, 19]. This is the God of the gospel ... He says to me now, "*be filled.*" [Eph 5:18].

What happens to my appetites for sin when I am filled with the fullness of God in Christ? Jesus provides this answer: "*He who continually comes to Me will never hunger again, and he who is believing will never thirst again.*" [John 6:35, literal translation]. Indeed, as I perpetually feast on Christ [who calls me to as the Bread of Life who satisfies heart hunger] and all of His blessings found in the gospel, I find that my hunger for sin diminishes and the lies of lust simply lose their appeal. Hence, to the degree that I am full, I am free. Eyes do not rove, nor do fleshly lusts rule, when the heart is [full] with the love of Jesus!

Preaching the gospel to myself each day keeps before me the startling advocacy of God for my fullness ... [Rom 8:31 "*God is for us ... v. 32 ... will He not with Christ freely give us all things?*"] 1 Peter 2 talks about putting off sin and craving God's Word like a newborn babe craves milk, "*if you've tasted that the Lord is good*" ... nothing so mortifies fleshly lusts like satisfaction in Him.¹⁰

2. Commit to remember God and His truth every night

Ps 63:6 *When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You...*

I'm no longer without God (Eph 2:12). I'm never without God. What better way to end the day: remember God, rehearse grace. What better way to end this day today than to obey Paul's words in Eph 2:12 – remember what you were and are, what you would be but for grace, then remember God and what He did in Christ for us.

77:5 *I consider the days of old, the years long ago. ⁶I said, "Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart."* ¹¹*I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. ¹²I will ponder all your work, and meditate...*

There is a conscious choice and commitment: "I will remember ..." Who's he talking to? "I said, 'Let me remember...'" He's talking to himself, training self, coaching self, committing to memory. NKJV, v. 6: "I call to remembrance..." KJV "commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search." Calling to memory, communing, contemplation, consideration, cogitation. You can rehearse, recite, re-orient your thinking to God's at the end of each day, remind yourself nightly who God is and what He's done, repeat it to yourself, replace worried anxious thoughts in your bed with hope in God, rebuke yourself with the truth even. Refute your bad thinking with what you know to be true from God's Word, redirect your heart from its feelings (what you say) to what God says. You can rebuff the devil's lies. You can rest in Christ in bed, cease striving, be still and know God is God.

Psalm 111:2 *Great are the works of the LORD; They are studied by all who delight in them ... ⁴He has made His wonders to be remembered; The LORD is gracious and compassionate.*

Studying God's Word and works should be a delight, not just duty. We should wonder and marvel as we remember His grace and love and in even greater measure than the psalms, this side of Calvary! If OT Israel had sufficient grace in remembering what God did for them in the Exodus and their redemption and bringing them to an earthly land, how much more should these Psalms do the same and more for us looking back to our *eternal* redemption in the gospel! The gospel of Luke says Mary pondered things about Jesus in her heart, and so should we, treasuring and pondering His words/works

Psalm 119:11 "Thy word have I hid in my heart" or NASB "Your word I have *treasured in my heart*, That I may not sin against You."

The key in the warfare against sin is what ammunition you have and use. If you have as your hidden treasure in your heart what Peter calls the "precious and magnificent promises" of the gospel, you are armed. You won't be as tempted to defect to the other side when you find superior value, treasure in the Word, and in the God of the Word.

⁵⁵ *O LORD, I remember Your name in the night* [i.e., who you are, "name" in Scripture is one's nature, character] *and keep Your law.*

Maybe you say, “I have a hard time remembering ...” I recognize a lot of what you hear in a sermon or read you won’t just remember automatically. That’s one of the reasons Scripture is *written down*.

- Let me encourage you to write down things as you listen to a message or as you do a study of God’s Word, notes help!
- I write down the notes of everything I say and put them on our website each week so that every verse, quote, point, or application is there on www.goldcountrybaptist.org and the audio is there if you’re one who learns more by listening
- Writing down verses on cards to take with you during the day is a way to help memorize so you can meditate in bed
- Some people ask how do I remember things? I use helps ...

3. Preach to yourself to hope in God and His Gospel

119:52 *I have remembered Your ordinances from of old* [some versions “think on / meditate”], *O LORD, And comfort myself ...*

⁵⁰ *This is my comfort in my affliction ... Your word has revived me.*

Again, if this OT saint found the OT scriptures sufficient to give him spiritual life and comfort in his affliction (he may have only had the first 5 books of Moses available to him at the time), how much more comfort and soul-reviving grace should we find who have all 66 books, and in particular, the gospel to read every day!

Ps 42:3 *My tears have been my food day and night, While they say to me all day long,* [in other words, his feelings are saying this 24/7:] “Where is your God?” ⁴ **These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me.** [NKJV “When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me”, i.e., when he listens to himself] *For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, With the voice of joy and thanksgiving...[i.e., “woe is me!”]*

⁵ **Why are you in despair, O my soul?** *And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence.* ⁶ *O my God, my soul is in despair within me; **Therefore I remember You ...***

... ¹¹ **Why are you in despair, O my soul?** *And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.*

What we choose to remember, call to mind, set our mind on, dwell on (in language of Phil. 4:8) makes all the difference for us. To borrow a line from a classic English poem, “two roads diverge ... I could not travel both... Two roads diverged... and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”¹¹ The road most take is to listen to their feelings, but at the crossroads of faith, there’s a road less traveled that makes all the difference. The road of believing God’s promises, not your perspective, listening to what your Father in heaven says, not feelings, confronting the emotions talking to you, and talking back with the eternal gospel.

Will I listen to faith or feelings? Will we listen to what *we say* or what *God says*? Is our hope dependent on good things or on God? This is the fight of faith

I've quoted you Martyn Lloyd-Jones before in his book *Spiritual Depression*, but it bears repeating: 'Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning.

You have not originated them, but they start talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. [But in Lam. 3 and Ps. 42]; instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' he asked. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says: 'Self, listen for a moment, I will speak to you.'....

The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul: 'Why art thou cast down' ... You must turn on yourself, [admonish] self ... exhort yourself, and say to yourself: 'Hope thou in God.'¹²

This is not psychological self-talk, this is Scriptural self-preaching. Don't listen to the bad news that our soul, our self is telling us, we are responsible to tell our heart the good news, the gospel.

C.J. Mahaney, who I also quoted before: 'The psalmist does not repeatedly and endlessly review and rehearse and describe the state of his troubled soul. He does not ignore his soul. He does not excuse his soul ... instead, he interrupts his soul. He interrupts this unending conversation taking place within his soul. He questions his soul. He interrogates his soul. He challenges his soul. He rebukes his soul. And he exhorts his soul to trust in God. And this, ultimately, makes all the difference in his soul, and this will make all the difference in your downcast soul as well. Too often this practice of talking to yourself and talking to your soul is neglected by those who are troubled in their soul ...

See, what we have each day is an internal conversation that never ends. It is ceaseless. It continues always within us. And so each day, throughout the day, we have two simple choices: We can either spend the day listening to ourselves, listening to ourselves in our constantly changing feelings and circumstantial interpretations, or we can spend each day talking to ourselves. We can talk truth to ourselves. We can preach the gospel to ourselves, and we can address our troubled and tormented soul with Scripture and ultimately the gospel ... The more time you spend talking to yourself and speaking to God, the more time you spend speaking the gospel to your soul and humbly reminding God of his promises, the less time you will spend listening to your soul, and the more you will experience a joyful and hopeful soul rather than a downcast and a troubled soul.'¹³

¹ <http://www.albertmohler.com/2011/05/02/the-trial-that-still-must-come-the-death-of-osama-bin-ladin-and-the-limits-of-human-justice/>

² Private email sent from a fellow pastor.

³ Peter O'Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, p. 185; citing Schnackenburg.

⁴ Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace* (NavPress, 1994), chapter 1.

⁵ Vincent, *Ibid.*

⁶ Martyn Lloyd Jones, *God's Way of Reconciliation*, p. 165, 168.

⁷ John Piper, *God is the Gospel* (Crossway, Wheaton, Ill., 2005).

⁸ Vincent, 84-88.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Vincent, 45-47.

¹¹ Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken," published in 1916 in the collection *Mountain Interval*.

¹² D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Its Cure* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 20-21.

¹³ Mahaney, *Ibid.*