

River News



FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN

~ *Pastor Sarah Flack*

Let the morning bring me word of Your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in You. Show me the way I should go, for to You I entrust my life. Psalm 143:8

As a young child, I had a stuffed gorilla named “Sandy” that I carried with me at all times. She went to the store with me, to play outside with me, and even accompanied me on vacation. I had to have her tucked in beside me at night to fall asleep, and I cried hopelessly when she came up missing one afternoon (if I remember correctly, my neighbor found her and returned her to us). Yet as much as I loved Sandy, a year or two later I outgrew her, and she was retired to the bottom of the toy box with the other toys of that time period.

I am so thankful that God’s love is unfailing. He doesn’t outgrow us or forget about us or decide that He is tired of us. Because He is love, He can no more stop loving us than He can stop being God--it is His nature. The word used for love in Psalm 143:8 and again in 143:12 is **חֶסֶד** (hesed). It is one of those Hebrew words that is hard to translate into other languages. In English, we affix unfailing or steadfast or faithful to love, or we use the word lovingkindness to try to capture the meaning of hesed. These all tell part of the story but fail to show the complete picture, and it’s an important word to grasp because it is used well over 200 times to describe God’s relationship with His people.

Hesed is the perfect marriage of emotion and action, thought and behavior, that we have learned about in our study of James these past few weeks. It describes God’s feelings of love and loyalty for us that are manifested in His mercy and compassion toward us. In traditional wedding vows, the pledge is made to one’s spouse “to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part.” This is an imitation of the covenant pledge God makes toward His people, that He our eternal God will love us and stand by us on our good days and bad days, no matter our situation or station in life, and, through Jesus, not even death will bring our relationship to an end. How incredible is His hesed toward us!

As believers who are loved so faithfully and dearly, we are called to love our God and our neighbors in the same way (Matthew 22:37-39). When we love others in the way that we are loved--with grace and mercy and compassion--then we truly are being a light for Jesus in our world. We can only do this with the help of the Holy Spirit--so consider making your “love life” a focus of your prayers this month and ask God to guide you to love like He does.

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GRIEF MINISTRY

~ Laura Schafer

Here are some verses I have compiled about grief. I find them helpful in explaining the grieving process, grief itself, and, ultimately, how to cope with grief and sadness.

For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard. Psalm 22:24

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. II Corinthians 1:3-4

My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Psalm 73:26

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit. Psalm 34:18

For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning. Psalm 30:5

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.
Jeremiah 29:11

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17



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Elder Ministry

~ *Dean Wilkie*

Hello you chilly saints of God;

Greetings in the name of our Lord n Savior, Jesus Christ the Righteous One.

There, In the dead of winter, the ol' ground hog just had his big annual debut, we sleep in our winter hibernation, the frozen chosen of the north. It's easy this time of year to be glum and lethargic. The days are short and even then lack sunshine to clouds. Even the church has been cloudy this winter with our ailing furnace. With that I say "but God; According to His covenant to His people , according to His riches in glory, For God so loved the world."

In His written word to us, we can find many promises to us of His love, care promises that his love for us, his care and nurture to us, his provision upon us, his deliverance from the circumstances, and his promise to always be with us and never forsake us. It's in this that we repeatedly see in David's Psalms that he often pleas to God for relief, for deliverance, or salvation in the New Testament, and in Ps 74:2 he starts right out with "remember your congregation which you have purchased, of the tribe of your inheritance which you have redeemed." Those words of the Old Testament are specifically speaking of his chosen Israel, but we as believers in Jesus Christ His son, are the chosen today! We don't eclipse his chosen people Israel, but we are his chosen also, we are the mingled wine; the wine of Israel and we are the water that they often would mingle with their wine. It took the Jews and the Gentiles to make up the wine of the chalice.

We see David using terms of endearment, when he refers to "your congregation", or "your inheritance which you have redeemed". We also see David repeatedly use "the sheep of your pasture". David cries out to God's faithfulness to his chosen people repeatedly and we all know David's story. David made many mistakes in his life and if we made much of a study of it we would look at the fact that David wasn't much of a father to his multitude of children. Still, God proclaims David a man after his own heart. That's because in the midst of it all David cried out to God continually, he saw God's faithfulness, and he depended upon His faithfulness. So, if we couple David's readiness to repent and proclaim his sin before God, and to cry out to God's faithfulness to deliver him, we see the basis for why God called him a man after his own heart. We should be the same as David. We do not need to commit the same roster of sins, but we need to be readily repetitive when we sin. We need to be aware of his faithfulness and deliverance and we need to be people that can readily list God's attributes, and strong direction in our life. As we continue in Ps 74, we see that David list many other things that the God from of old has done; "you've divided the sea by your strength, you've broken the head of the leviathan and the serpents in the water, you've opened the fountains and the flood, and you've dried up mighty rivers. The day is yours and the night is yours also; you've prepared the sun and moon. You have set all the borders of the earth; you have made summer and winter." He continues saying do not forget the life of your poor, have respect to the covenant, and do not let the oppressed return ashamed. Let the poor and needy praise your name. The closing versus says "the tumult or the clamor of those who rise up against you increases continually".

In reading this Psalm recently I was mindful that not only are we going thru a gloomy time in the season of our calendar, but we're in a tumultuous time in our nation and country too. So as we turn to God to look for a personal deliverance through this season of our life, and the season of the calendar, let us be mindful of the season of unrest our nation is in, and pray for our leaders. The Lord will bring us out of this winter season into a glorious spring; in the song of Solomon I find these words to be a great promise. Songs 2:11-13, "for lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away." God calls us, he's invited us to come. To come and dine, he changed the water into wine, come away turn to God alone, be ever in his presence in prayer, with thanksgiving, knowing that as the 3 Hebrew men said before being thrown into that fiery furnace. The God whom we serve is able to deliver us ! Have faith in God !

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MISSIONS

~ Pat Dennis

Good news for the Missions program. Pat Dennis will be joined by Steve Dettmer and Ariel Cherchio on the missions team. Pat is looking forward to working with these young people!

More good news from CareNet for Pregnancy Center. CareNet has been able to pay their mortgage down from 140,000 to 107,000 during the last year thanks in part for our contributions to them.

CareNets 6th Annual Baby Steps for life 3K/5K Walk will be on March 6, 2021 at Salmon Run Mall. Stay tuned for more info!

Also, we are working on getting the baby bottles ready for distribution to anyone who would like to use them to save coins for CareNet. Char has volunteered to wash the bottles in her dishwasher.

Also note that anyone wishes to donate to CareNet w/o using the bottle can give your donation directly to Pat or any other member of the mission team.



Breaking The Chains

~ Ken & Michelle Kavanagh

"Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh,"

Ezekiel 11:19

The heart is a vital muscle that pumps blood throughout the body. It delivers oxygen and nutrient-rich blood to tissues and organs and carries away waste. Without the heart pumping the blood, the body would die. There is an actual disease called Stone Heart Syndrome which is an irreversible ischemia-induced cardiac rigor mortis (I won't even try to explain further!). Just as someone could suffer from a stony heart physically, they can also suffer from it emotionally which can effect them spiritually. Just as there are causes to a physical heart of stone, there are causes to an emotional heart of stone. One can lead to a physical death while the other can lead to a spiritual death.

Though the heart is a strong muscle, emotionally it is a delicate one and must be handled with care. Just as we must feed ourselves good nourishment and exercise physically in order to keep the heart strong, we must do the same spiritually. In a lifetime, we will go through many trials and difficulties that can test our faith. These trials can produce spiritual maturity in the end as seen in James 1:2-4:

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

There are many things that can cause a spiritual heart of stone...sin, abuse, betrayals, anger, hurt and pain, unforgiveness, etc. If we continue to nourish ourselves with the Word of God and exercise what we learn from it, our heart will remain strong and loving and we will be able to move forward. However, if we nourish ourselves instead with sin or allow our difficulties and hurts to consume us to the point of unforgiveness, we will in time suffer from a heart of stone.

Whatever you are dealing with today, go before the Lord and ask Him to remove your heart of stone and to give you a heart of flesh so you can become right with God which will produce a healthy and loving heart.



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Who Made The Tracks?

Can you guess what animal made these tracks? We never know who will be visiting the church when we arrive each day, and this visitor was certainly unexpected! He (or she) took a thorough tour of the outside of the building before heading across the road to explore new territories.

Even as close as we are to the village, we still have an abundance of wildlife on this beautiful piece of property. Over the years we have observed many deer, a skunk, several cats, numerous bats, birds of all kinds, mice, foxes, frogs, praying mantises, and now our mystery guest. When our weather warms up--or before, if you don't mind the cold--feel free to spend some time sitting near the fire pit in the church "backyard." It's a great place to pray, and you might even have some friendly animal company!



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Announcements

Breaking The Chains - BTC Biblical Recovery Ministry will resume meetings on Tuesday, February 16th at 6:30pm after being postponed due to the heating situation at the church. All are welcomed to attend. For more information, please see Ken or Michelle Kavanagh or call 315-408-1354.

Virtual Bible Study - Join Wanda Collins on Tuesdays beginning February 23rd - March 30th from 7-8pm via Zoom for a Bible Study called "Breaking Free from Fear". For more information or to join, please contact Wanda at 315-222-5618 or wandacollins16@gmail.com .

Laura Schafer is currently holding in-person Bible Studies on Tuesdays from 12:30-1:30pm at the church. The current study is "Breaking Free From Fear". For more information, please call the church office.

Men's Ministry - Men's Ministry holds their fellowship the first Saturday of each month. The next Men's Ministry fellowship will be held on Saturday, March 6th @ 9:00am at the church. For more information, please see JD Flack.



*If you see the following people,
wish them a very Happy Birthday!*

02/05 *Joseph Scibona*

02/13 *Grant Dier*

02/16 *Norman Ashland*



Lent Together

In the weeks leading up to Easter, there will be two opportunities to observe Lent together as a church:

Bible Study - On Monday nights from February 22nd - March 29th from 7-8pm Pastor Sarah will hold a Bible Study in the Sanctuary for all to attend. The study is called "The Last Days of Jesus". Each week will include a video presentation and discussion; homework is optional.

Please RSVP with the church office so your book can be ordered.

Church-wide reading plan - On February 17th, we will begin a reading plan through John, with short daily readings and optional opportunities to share online.