

LIGHT WILL COME BURSTING IN: **The joy of getting to the other side of the testimony**

Zach Churchill on 3-26-23
New Baltimore Community Church

1. I believe you have already heard the incredible news that our family finally made it to the other side of the testimony! With great joy, we introduce to you the newest addition to the Churchill family: Jonathan Rowan David Churchill! How this all came to be is an amazing story. After three years of waiting, God did a miracle for us. Things felt pretty hopeless when I came here to preach back on July 31st, but little did we know what God had in store for us. Actually, He did try to tip us off and I believe that most of you heard the story. One of your own, Sherry Lowry, came up to us after the service that day and told us that she felt like God was telling her that the next time we came back, we would have a baby with us. We believe that God speaks in this way so we took this word of knowledge seriously. But it still felt too good to be true. We joked on the way home that maybe we should come back the next week to force God's hand. We were definitely weary in the waiting and longing to get to the other side of the testimony. We knew there would be joy there and we were right. The joy in our hearts right now is hard to put into words. All I can say is that God ... is ... AMAZING!

INTRO: Our starting point today is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. It is a reminder that no matter how hopeless things get, God can change everything in a heartbeat. The verse is Psalm 112:4 and this is what I read the first time I encountered it as a college student in 1999: "When darkness overtakes the godly, light will come bursting in." I love this verse. What an incredible promise from God! I think we can all relate to moments where it felt like darkness and hopeless was closing in on us — but then God supernaturally intervened. He came through. He did a miracle for us and got us to the other side of the testimony! As I thought and prayed about what to share with you today, an idea came to mind. I thought it would be fun to walk through all of Psalm 112 together and flesh out this amazing promise in context. So let's take a moment now and read Psalm 112 together.

- 1 Praise the Lord! How joyful are those who fear the Lord and delight in obeying his commands.
- 2 Their children will be successful everywhere; an entire generation of godly people will be blessed.
- 3 They themselves will be wealthy, and their good deeds will last forever.

4 When darkness overtakes the godly, light will come bursting in.

They are generous, compassionate, and righteous.

- 5 Good comes to those who lend money generously and conduct their business fairly.
 - 6 Such people will not be overcome by evil. Those who are righteous will be long remembered.
 - 7 They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the Lord to care for them.
 - 8 They are confident and fearless and can face their foes triumphantly.
 - 9 They share freely and give generously to those in need.
- Their good deeds will be remembered forever. They will have influence and honor.

I believe that there are four wonderful truths to pull out of this passage. Let's explore them.

TRUTH #1: OBEDIENCE LEADS TO JOY AND MEANING.

"How joyful are those who ... delight in obeying his command." (Psalm 112:1)

The last time I was here, I talked about how God's primary love language is FAITH. But I also briefly mentioned that His secondary love language is OBEDIENCE. In John 14:15, Jesus says, "If you love me, obey my commandments." When we obey, we speak God's love language. We're demonstrating our trust in Him and proving the depth of our relationship with Him. God feels so loved by us when we obey Him. And the knowledge that He feels so loved by us should fill our hearts with joy. We can probably all think of times that we really poured our hearts into expressing love to someone in a way that we knew would be meaningful to them. It probably involved a lot of time, effort, and sacrifice. But it wasn't a drudgery at all. In fact, the time, effort, and sacrifice made it even more meaningful as we imagined the moment when the love would be expressed. This makes me think of the moment that I proposed to my wife. I put a ton of work into making it meaningful. I laid out rose petals from 36 dozen roses to create a pathway to where I was waiting for her. For those trying to do the math, that's 432 roses and I laid them out one by one in a catcher's stance. I could barely walk the next day, but it didn't matter. She said "yes!", she cried, and I was engaged! Seeing her joy brought me joy. The time, effort, and sacrifice just made it more meaningful. **SO HERE'S THE MAIN TAKEAWAY:** When we obey, God feels loved and it should bring us joy that He feels loved. And there's blessing in obedience.

To obey God is to walk in wisdom and walking in wisdom is the path to the “life to the full” that Jesus talks about in John 10:10. Jesus says that as we know the truth (and walk in it), the truth will set us free. And there isn’t just blessing in obedience, there is meaning. As we obey, we become more aware of how our obedience fits into God’s overall plan. Sherry obeyed God in sharing with us what she did and because of that, she has now become a part of our story ... part of something beautiful. Our obedience brings deeper meaning to our lives. Sherry, I hope it is meaningful to know that our kids will grow up hearing your name and how God used you in our lives when we were ready to give up.

TRUTH #2: OBEDIENCE IS REWARDED WITH PROTECTION AND HOPE.

“When darkness overtakes the godly, light will come bursting in.” (Psalm 112:4)

I believe that Psalm 112:4 is a promise of protection for those who walk in obedience. This doesn’t mean that godly people will be spared from adversity and tragedy. We all know godly people going through unbearably hard things right now. But we also know that God meets those people in their suffering and gives them the grace to endure and to persevere. They are carried by a strength that is not their own. The Holy Spirit empowers them to keep going and to harness their suffering for eternal purposes. I love the imagery of Psalm 23:5. God promises to “prepare a table” for us in the presence of our enemies. It’s almost as if God invites us to enjoy a meal with him on the battlefield as bullets fly all around us. And this reminds me of the moment where Peter walked on water. As long as he kept his eyes on Jesus, he could walk in the supernatural power of God. It was only when he took his eyes off Jesus and allowed what was going on around him to overwhelm him that he began to sink. God’s promise is this: When darkness overtakes you, He’ll be there right with you. Keep your eyes on Him. He’ll absorb the bullets. He’ll absorb the blows. I love this promise from God in Psalm 91:14-15:

“The Lord says, ‘I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name. When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honor them.’”

And obedience isn’t just rewarded with the promise of protection, there is also the promise of hope for the future. I love the end of Psalm 23: “Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.” One of the coolest moments in my life was when I got to email everyone I work with at CVCA with the news that we would be able to adopt Jonathan. This was the first line of my email: “Sometimes, God’s goodness doesn’t just run after us. Sometimes, it chases us down and tackles us with joy.” Each day, we wake up with the promise that good is on the way. This isn’t just a reference to Heaven; Jesus is clear in John 17:3 that eternal life begins here on earth the moment we come to know Him. God rewards obedience with hope — hope for this world and the hope of glory ... eternal joy in Heaven.

TRUTH #3: THE PROMISE OF PROTECTION AND HOPE FUELS CONFIDENCE AND FEARLESSNESS.

“They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the Lord to care for them. They are confident and fearless and can face their foes triumphantly.” (Psalm 112:7-8)

God wants us to live each day with joyful expectancy. God’s got plans for us and if they’re God’s plans, they’re good plans. They are plans that He crafted in love for your good and for His glory. Obedience is rewarded with hope and Romans 5:5 reassures us that this hope will not lead to disappointment. Or as another translation says, we will not be put to shame. This verse and Psalm 25:1-2 meant so much to us on our adoption journey. After three years of waiting, it started to get a little embarrassing. We felt like the last people waiting to be picked in a game of dodgeball. We were part of a group of waiting families from our adoption agency that would do a Zoom call each month and we saw every other couple get matched except us. We cried out to God, “Lord, don’t let us be put to shame. Don’t let this journey end in disappointment.” And when things seemed utterly hopeless ... when darkness was overtaking us, light came bursting in and everything changed in a moment. I love Psalm 18. David wrote it after God rescued him from Saul. David’s words are full of confidence in the Lord. Here’s a small part of his praise to God: “28 You light a lamp for me. The Lord, my God, lights up my darkness. 29 In your strength I can crush an army; with my God I can scale any wall. 30 God’s way is perfect. All the Lord’s promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection. 31 For who is God except the Lord? Who but our God is a solid rock? 32 God arms me with strength, and he makes my way perfect. 33 He makes me as surefooted as a deer, enabling me to stand on mountain heights.”

HINDS' FEET ON HIGH PLACES — “The Sovereign LORD is my source of strength. He gives me the agility of a deer; he enables me to negotiate the rugged terrain.” HABAkkUK 3:19 (NET)

I love this summary of the book that I happened to read this week: “Much-Afraid was guided to the High Places of the Shepherd by her companions Sorrow and Suffering ... the High Places where perfect love casts out fear. Let God’s perfect love make you fearless as you grow in your trust in Him.

Our family dealt with our share of sorrow and suffering. Going through two miscarriages and waiting three years to adopt was gut-wrenching and we wouldn’t wish that kind of pain on our worst enemy. But **THERE IS JOY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TESTIMONY!** “There is joy on the other side of the testimony.” (Say that to someone sitting next to you). “Weeping may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5). I love this promise in Psalm 34:5 — ““Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces.” There is joy on the other side of the testimony. Let sorrow and suffering lead you to the Shepherd and to the High Places where God’s presence and perfect love changes everything.

TRUTH #4: THE PROMISE OF GOODNESS FUELS GENEROSITY AND A PASSION TO PAY-IT-FORWARD.

“They are generous, compassionate, and righteous. Good comes to those who lend money generously and conduct their business fairly ... They share freely and give generously to those in need. Their good deeds will be remembered forever. They will have influence and honor.” (Psalm 112:4b, 5, 9)

If God is watching over your life and He has promised that good is on the way, there is no reason to hoard resources to ensure that you are secure. You are secure because God is watching over your life, not because you have a certain amount of money in your bank account. A great indicator of how much we trust is God is how easy it is for us to be generous. The bottom line is this though: Truly godly people listen to God. If He leads them to give, they give. It’s all about obedience and recognizing that whatever resources are entrusted to us are still God’s resources. (TGI Fridays credit card story). Mary’s inspiring example: “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.” When we are generous and exhibit a desire to pay-it-forward, it shows that we understand the grace that we have received. This is illustrated powerfully in the Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor.

FINAL CHALLENGE: THE GODLY ARE BOLD AS LIONS. ARE YOU WALKING IN VICTORY?

The end of Psalm 112 speaks about the enduring legacy of those who honor God with their lives. Just like we’ll remember Sherry Lowry’s obedience, their obedience will be remembered. I’m not great at remembering movie quotes, but I do remember this one from the movie, *Gladiator*: “What we do in life ... echoes in eternity.”

God wants us to live lives of eternal impact and that is only possible if we live lives of boldness.

Proverbs 28:1 says that the godly are bold as lions. I don’t know about you, but I really struggle to be bold.

Story from 3/1/23 — Wednesday Morning Worship time where students were invited. Feeling led by God to go to the cafeteria, where a lot of students were waiting, to invite them, but really struggling to muster up the courage and strength of will to do that. Thankfully, God gave me the strength I needed and I went in there and said, “Worship is about to start in the chapel. You’re all invited!” I then hustled out without even making eye contact with anyone. It’s really kind of sad. If I could barely will myself to obey God in something like that, what am I going to do if God leads me to do something much more challenging? I desperately need God to breathe on me and fill me with the boldness I so desperately need to obey His voice and walk in victory. I had a chance to go to India while I was in college and I remember learning that Christians in parts of India developed a unique way to greet each other. Apparently they say, “Jai Masi Ki!” It means “the Messiah is victorious!” or “the Messiah has conquered!” What a cool reminder to walk in victory! I wish there was a better word than “swagger” to describe the kind of confident spiritual boasting that God encourages us to partake in. Boasting in the Lord gives honor to God. It’s calling attention to God’s greatness and power. When is the last time you boasted in the Lord? When was the last time you were bold in sharing your faith? My wife and I recently watched the movie, “Jesus Revolution” and I was struck by the boldness of the people that God used during that time. There wasn’t really anything special about them beyond their willingness to be led by God and to speak when He called them to speak. The church grew simply by believers initiating conversation with those who don’t know Christ. In the end, you have to put yourself out there and risk rejection and an awkward conversation. So let’s listen for God. Let’s speak when He tells us to speak. Let’s be bold. In John 20, the disciples were hiding in fear in a locked room. Then Jesus appeared and gave them a mission: “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” From that moment forward, they were bold as lions. They shared the Gospel without fear. And God used them to change the world. **BREATHE ON US, OH GOD!**