

# Oak Grove Church of Christ Newsletter - 2023.04.23

Website: oakgrovecofc.org

Facebook: facebook.com/oakgrovecofc

## Sermon recordings

Click or type the short URL, or visit oakgrovecofc.org/Recordings/.

**Speaker-AM:** Josh Vinyard

**Title:** Lessons From God's  
Questions

**Recording:**  
[tinyurl.com/JoshQuestions](https://tinyurl.com/JoshQuestions)

**Speaker-PM:** Tyler Glidden

**Title:** Jesus Is ...

**Recording:**  
[tinyurl.com/TylerJesusIs](https://tinyurl.com/TylerJesusIs)

JESUS ANSWERED,  
I AM THE WAY AND THE TRUTH  
AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO  
THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME.

*John 14:6*

I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

Psalms 32:5 KJV

### Stepping On Toes, 4/23/23 By Sam Bunyard

The prophecy of Isaiah 2:1-4 regarding the coming church of God is uplifting and happy in its tone (e.g., “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore”). Yet, in the midst of this hopeful rhetoric is a line about God “rebuking many people.” This may seem contrary to the tone of the rest of the prophecy but, if we think about it from a spiritual perspective, we find perfect harmony with the thoughts.

Modern pulpits are full of messages that tell people they are perfect just the way they are. Rather than preaching messages like, “repent of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you” (Acts 8:22), preachers tell people that they have nothing that requires repentance! They say that God is love, and therefore accepts people despite their sin.

Biblically, love and acceptance are not the same thing. In fact, biblical love requires rebuke. “Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov. 27:5-6). It is easy to tell those who are our true friends, because they will tell us when we are wrong.

‘Fluffy’ messages that don’t demand change aren’t going to help anyone, but “like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear” (Prov. 25:12). The qualifiers in this proverb are important. When we rebuke someone, we must be wise – hence the proverb: “do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you” (Prov. 9:8). Likewise, when we receive rebuke, we must be humble and obedient.

“Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid” (Prov. 12:1). It may sound funny, but the message is clear: the sermons that step on our toes are the ones we should seek the most!



## Learning to Fly, 4/9/23 By Jefferson David Tant

Among the many things that I have learned from my work in Jamaica are the “Lively Choruses” that they love to sing. Here is one:

‘Tis easy to smile, when life flows along like a song,  
but the man worthwhile, is the man who can smile,  
When everything goes dead wrong.”

Have you ever experienced any difficulties, hardships, or obstacles in your life? If not, be patient, for they will come. Didn't the disciples we read about in Acts suffer difficulties and persecution, as well as our Lord Jesus Christ? We know they were scorned, beaten, imprisoned, suffered shipwrecks, and some were crucified. Paul listed some of the things he suffered.

*“Are they servants of Christ? -- I speak as if insane -- I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches” ([II Corinthians 11:23-28](#)).*

Then Paul goes on in the next chapter, writing again of things he has suffered. *“Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong” ([II Corinthians 12:7-10](#)).*

Was Paul ever discouraged, wanting to give up? I don't think so. So, what was Paul's attitude about the things he suffered? Notice his words in [II Corinthians 12:10](#): *"for when I am weak, then I am strong."*

How did Paul acquire the strength to endure, to go on, and not give up? Perhaps a hint can be seen in what he wrote in [I Corinthians 9:25](#): *"Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."*

What were the "games" he referred to? Very likely the Olympics, as they began in 776 B.C. and were still going on in the 1st Century.

Note that Paul wrote of those who "compete" in the games. The King James translation says *"that striveth for the mastery."* We can obviously see some effort put forth in the use of the word "striveth." This is from the Greek *"agonizomai,"* which is defined as "to struggle, literally (to compete for a prize), figuratively (to contend with an adversary), or genitive case (to endeavor to accomplish something):--fight, labor fervently, strive." (Strong's Greek Dictionary)

Perhaps you have never trained for the Olympics, but you can imagine the strain, exhaustion, and aching muscles that come with the rigorous training that enables an athlete to compete. And no matter what the pain, they don't want to give up, for they are looking forward to competing for the prize. Paul says they compete for a "perishable wreath, but we an imperishable," which would be heaven. Is it worth it for us to compete? Obviously so.

I read the story of a man who found a butterfly chrysalis that had a small opening. He watched for some time as the butterfly struggled to squeeze through the small opening in the chrysalis. After some time, he got some scissors and snipped off the remaining bit, and allowed the butterfly to emerge. It had a swollen body and small shriveled wings.

The man expected the butterfly to expand to full size and fly, but that never happened. He did not understand that the butterfly's struggle to exit the chrysalis forced fluid from the butterfly's body into its wings, which would enable it to fly and fend for itself. The struggle was what strengthened the butterfly. But without the wings, the butterfly soon died.

Likewise, it is our struggles in life that strengthen us. As the athlete's struggles strengthen the body so our spiritual struggles can strengthen our faith.

I asked for strength, and God gave me difficulties to make me strong.  
I asked for wisdom, and God gave me problems to solve. I asked for prosperity, and God gave me brains and brawn to work.  
I asked for courage, and God gave me danger to overcome.  
I asked for love, and God gave me troubled people to help.  
I asked for favors, and God gave me opportunities.  
I received nothing I wanted but gained everything I needed.  
(Glenn, Mercedes and Lauren Hitchcock)

Too many people never achieve spiritual success, because when opportunity knocks, they are either too busy with things of the world to take notice, or they decide they don't want to give up the pleasures of sin they enjoy, or possibly they decide they just don't want to endure the struggles and pain they know they will endure. But it is the struggles from which we can learn to fly, as with the butterfly.

Question: Will it be worth it to enjoy the pleasures of the world for a season, and then to spend an eternity in the fires of hell? Yes, the world offers temptations, and there are struggles that young people face, but it is through overcoming them that we learn to fly, as does the butterfly. Then, you can smile, "when everything goes dead wrong." Do you remember what Paul and Silas were doing while in prison after being beaten? "...*they were praying and singing hymns of praise to God*" ([Acts 16:25](#)) That's called "overcoming."

Some think, "I plan to become a Christian later." There are three things wrong with this.

1. Some get so caught up in the world that they never change.
2. Some die before the "time" comes. I have been to too many funerals for young people or older who died before the "time" came.
3. We are given no timeline for when Christ will return, and the Judgment will come.

"Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour" ([Matthew 25:13](#)).