

KEY TEXT

Job 3:25-26 (NKJV) – For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me.

INTRODUCTION

1. Nightmares in our dream

2. What is a nightmare?

- A **frightening** or **unpleasant** dream
- A **terrifying** or very **unpleasant** experience or prospect
- A person, thing or situation that is very **difficult** to deal with.

3. About our key text

Title:

'OUR GREATEST NIGHTMARE'

Outline:

- **What are the four greatest nightmares in this life?**
- **Why are we having the nightmares?**
- **What specifically are our nightmares pointing at?**
- **What is the gospel solution to our nightmares?**

(I) WHAT ARE THE FOUR GREATEST NIGHTMARES?

1.HUMILIATION

What is “humiliation”?

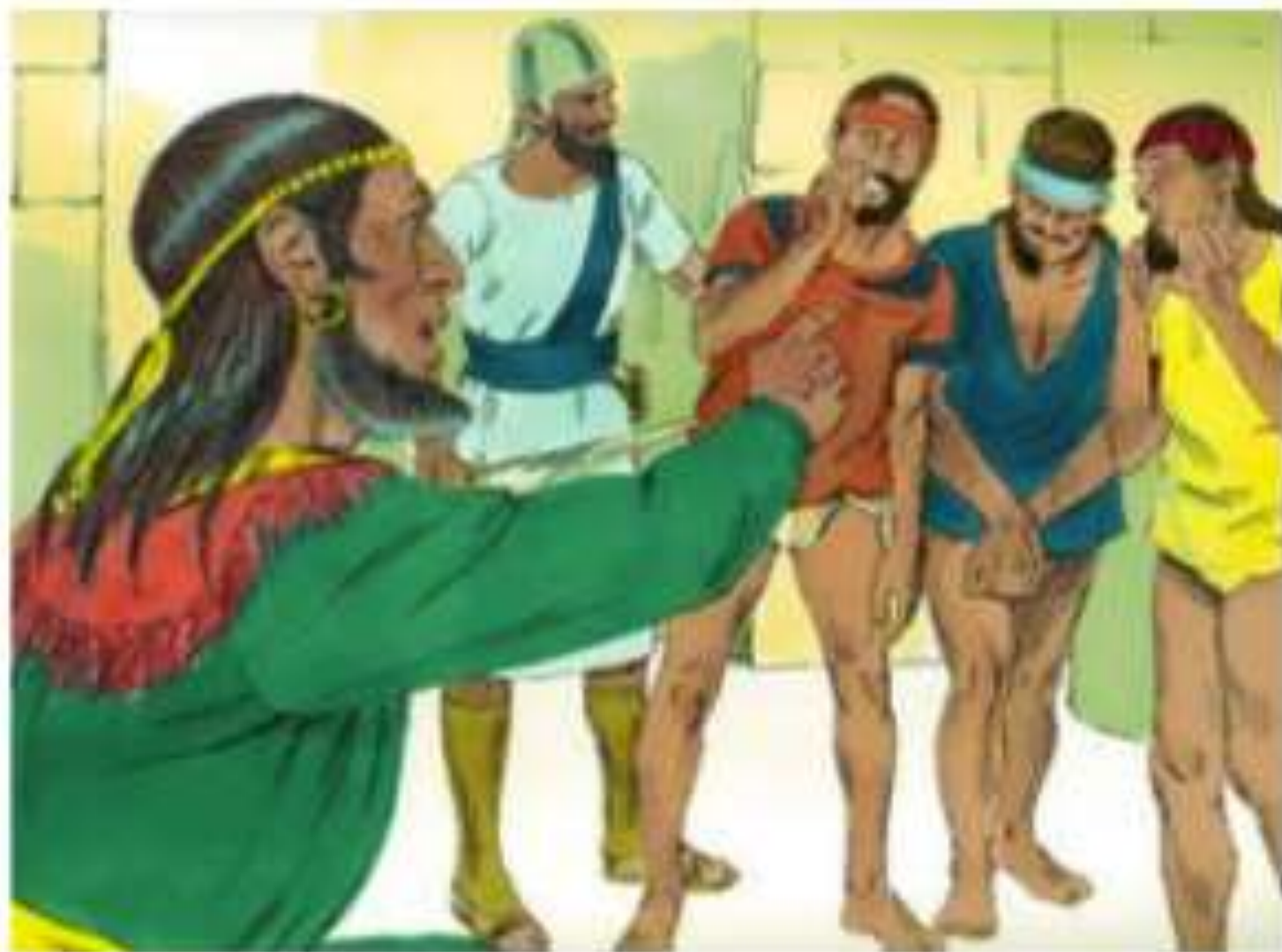
Humiliation refers to some experience or life event that is considered **SHAMEFUL AND DEGRADING**, depending on one’s standard.

“To humiliate” is to “make someone feel ashamed and foolish by injuring their dignity and self-respect, especially publicly.”

The goal of the humiliation is SHAME AND DISGRACE.

E.g. Hunan humiliating David's men

2 Samuel 10: 4- So Hunan took David's servants, and shaved off half the beard of each, and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away. When it was told David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, "Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown and then return."



A price to pay for humiliating others.

FALSE ACCUSATION is always the HOOK OF HUMILATION.

The Ammonites here represents **our enemy.**

There is an un-announced warfare going on against the believer.

The enemy is employing every strategy to bring the believer into shame and disgrace.

The plot of the enemy is the very antithesis of the promise of God in Joel 2:26- "You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again BE PUT TO SHAME."

The Devil, who is the ACCUSER OF THE BRETHREN, employs our human mistakes, shortcomings, errors, personal challenges to amplify the opportunity for shame and disgrace.

Humiliation.....

- **It is a negative force that disorganizes the state of person's emotion.**
- **It is a spiritual force empowered on demonic altars.**
- **It has the potential powers to disappoint people and can often lead to anxiety, depression, stress and low self-esteem.**
- **It can cause a lot of chaos in someone's life.**
- **It is a painful feeling that comes with regret and dishonor.**
- **It can bury someone's life when he is still alive.**

- **It can put you in a situation where you can even be forgotten by your own children, family members and close friends.**
- **It brings death.**
- **It can tarnish your life and lead the whole world to turn their back on you.**
- **It affects people from the inside and destroys them internally.**
- **It eats away the strength of the confidence of a person.**
- **It disables and amputates a person completely and makes him ineffective in the service of the Lord.**

2. REJECTION

Rejection is the most painful of all of the **emotions we face.**

Rejection goes straight to the core of the person of **WHO WE ARE.**

Rejection can come from our family, our peers, our loved ones, our spouse and even by ourselves.

Effects of rejection.....

- **Feel less respect for yourself**
- **Feel less worthy**
- **Very critical about yourself (self loathe)**
- **Inferiority complex**
- **Superiority complex**
- **Quick anger**
- **Easily hurt**
- **Suspicious**

E.g. Bible examples of rejection: Joseph; Moses; David; Apostle Paul and even Jesus

3. STRESS

An enemy striking the land.

It is not a respecter of persons.

It seeks to devour the PEACE AND HAPPINESS of everyone it touches if not properly controlled.

This enemy is called STRESS.

Each year:

- **It causes billions of dollars to be lost in wages to workers**
- **It is a major contributor to heart attacks**
- **It plays significant role in raising the blood pressure of millions of people**
- **It is suspected as a cause of cancer**
- **It produces endless sleepless nights**
- **It causes problem at home**
- **It contributes to divorce**
- **It leads to depression and anxiety**
- **It contributes to decision to commit suicide**
- **It causes fatigue, headaches, backache, allergies, nervousness, tiredness, dizziness, ulcers and a host of other symptoms**

What is stress?

The dictionary defines stress as:

- **Strain, pressure. Force exerted upon the body that tends to strain or deform its shape**
- **Urgency, importance**
- **Tension, strained exertion**

Stress is the result of DEMANDS MADE UPON THE BODY.

STRESS is the WEAR AND TEAR OF LIFE.

It can be considered anything that tends to change the control that one would ordinarily have over their body and or emotions.

It is the weight placed upon the inner nature of a person.

The stress on our lives is related to the responsibilities we have and our abilities to deal with them successfully and effectively.

Sources of stress:

- ***Stressed by Time***
- ***Stressed by Tasks***
- ***Stressed by Temptations***
- ***Stressed by Turmoil***
- ***Stressed by our Temperament***

We all deal with stress that is related to time, tasks, temptation, turmoil and temperament.

Those things and some others create what we can call **THE LOAD OF STRESS.**

And if we do not set boundaries, all these stresses can kill us physically and mentally.

4. LOSS OF CONTROL

Have you ever known someone who could have this label attached to them?

People who feel they have to control you, the situation and everything?

There are people who like to micromanage things.

There are people who get very upset if you don't take their advice.

People who have a tantrum when things don't go according to plan?

What makes us behave this way?

What is at the heart of being a **CONTROL FREAK?**

Having a desire to control isn't altogether bad.

Keeping things in order is beneficial. Otherwise you have **CHAOS.**

Being uncontrolled leads to poor decisions which leads to more uncontrolled behavior.

Take away **structure and discipline** and we will get ourselves into precarious situation.

Being neat and orderly and self-controlled are safeguards for us and reduces stress and anxiety.

But we can take being neat and orderly **TO AN EXTREME.**

E.g. OCD: obsessive compulsive disorder – They take being neat and orderly to **AN UNHEALTHY LEVEL.** They are **CONTROLLED BY THEIR DESIRE TO KEEP EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.**

Why are we so controlling?

- **FEAR OF FAILURE**
- **PRIDE....** You appoint yourself as the Messiah of your life and future.

So, your greatest nightmare is – after controlling people and circumstances, people still mess up and fail you; sudden crisis happens, **UNCERTAINTY AND DISORDER** sets in – you begin to meltdown with insomnia, depression, panic/anxiety attack and mental breakdown.

It is easy to think because we can control **SOME things that we should be able to control **ALL**.**

Such kind of mindset is fueled by modern technology.

Why COVID happened?

It is to remind us in a particularly frightening way – that some very significant things are beyond our control.

Not having control is hard.

But it is important to remember that we never really had it in the first place.

We may have had the **ILLUSION of control but it was only an illusion.**

"That there are only three days of the week that we have no control over – yesterday, today and tomorrow."

We are not God. We are not sovereign.

Even if you usurp the role of God to be your own Messiah, there is limitation to what you can plan and control.

What is our **security?**

And who is to be the one giving us that security?

For many of us, we have assumed the role of the false messiah to craft the security by ourselves and for ourselves and when that security goes bust, our mind and hope also get busted.

(II) WHY ARE WE HAVING THE NIGHTMARES?

IMBALANCE IN OUR LIFE.

When life becomes like a nightmare to us; when life and people becomes too difficult for us to handle, it shows we are living an **IMBALANCED life.**

The world as God created it was designed with **PERFECT BALANCE.**

What is balance?

It is everything in its RIGHT PLACE DOING WHAT IT WAS MEANT TO DO.

We cannot even picture such a world, where everything is predictable and there is nothing to worry about, where life is easier to live, decisions are easier to make and relationships are easier to maintain and enjoy.

**That is how it was meant to be by God's design –
CREATION IN ITS PROPER PLACE DOING WHAT IT
WAS MEANT TO DO, PEACE REIGNING FROM THE
EARTH'S DEEPEST VALLEYS ALL THE WAY UP TO THE
HIGHEST HEAVENS.**

**No brokenness, no dysfunction and no impending
problem around the corner – everything, everywhere
and in every place, **IN BALANCE.****

The Bible has a name for the balance – **SHALOM.**

Shalom is everything in its right place, doing what it was meant to do, in the way God intended it to be done.

Shalom was the way it was meant to be, but like a fine crystal goblet now in shards on the floor, shalom has been shattered.

THE WORLD IS OUT OF BALANCE, so much so that Paul says in Romans 8 that the whole world groans.

It groans in need of help.

It groans in need of repair.

It groans in the pain of imbalance.

It groans for a redeemer.

Paul tells us that it is not just the created world that groans, **we too groan.**

Why?

We groan because the imbalance that has inflicted our world is not just outside us. It is also **INSIDE US. We are out of balance.**

Our **HEARTS struggle to keep things in their right place, so we don't always think, desire, live, relate, plan and decide with a **proper sense of balance.****

Certain visions, desires and created things take on **GREATER WEIGHT in our hearts than they were meant to take and throw our lives out of balance.**

What is important to God is not always important to us.

What God knows is needful for us is not always needful to us.

What God says we should treasure, we don't always treasure.

Things gobble up more space in our hearts than they should and things that should have prominence in our hearts don't.

The brokenness, drama, pain, nightmares and sadness in our lives are the result not just of the **IMBALANCE AROUND US but also **THE IMBALANCE THAT STILL EXISTS INSIDE US.****

Thankfully, by the power of divine, transforming grace, we are being progressively brought into greater balance and we live with the surety that someday balance will be fully restored, inside and around us and things will be where they were meant to be, doing what they were intended to do.

**The Bible has another way of talking to us about
IMBALANCE.**

IDOLATRY.

Idolatry is not just when a religious god replaces the
ONE TRUE GOD, and it is not just when your heart is
ruled by an evil thing.

**In its most fundamental everyday form, idolatry is
**WHEN GOOD THINGS ARE OUT OF BALANCE IN OUR
HEARTS.****

Idolatry is when things, good things, take on a greater weight in our hearts than God does.

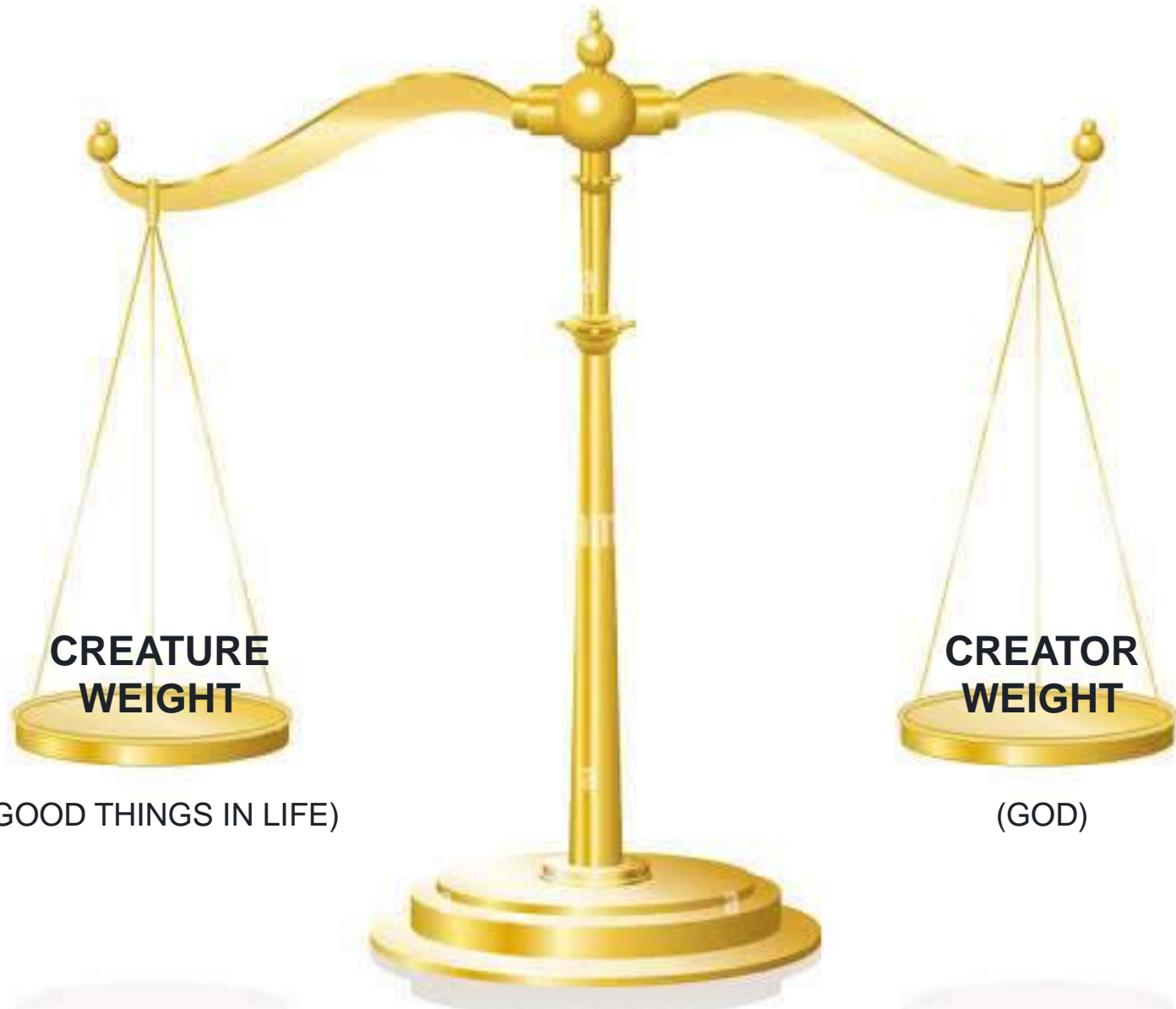
Romans 1:23,25- [They] exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping thingsThey exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Here Paul expands his definition of idolatry from the formal religious dimension to the dimension of the **DEEPEST WORSHIP, that is, THE DEEPEST MOTIVATIONAL FUNCTION OF THE HEART.**

Idolatry is WHEN THE GLORY OF GOD THE CREATOR IS EXCHANGED FOR THE GLORY OF THE CREATED THING.

The Hebrew word for glory is "*Kabod*" and at its root means "**WEIGHT**".

Think now of an ancient scale with weights on either side.



**CREATURE
WEIGHT**

(GOOD THINGS IN LIFE)

**CREATOR
WEIGHT**

(GOD)

Think of your **HEART** as a Christian as an **ANCIENT SCALE** with weights on either side.

On one side is the ***CREATOR weight*** and on the other side is the ***CREATURE weight***.

In God's design, the **CREATOR weight** is meant to be hugely heavier than anything on the creature side.

Sadly, sin throws the scale out of balance, causing **CREATED THINGS** to have more control over your thoughts, desires, choices, words and actions than God does.

This means that as long as sin lives inside you, you will struggle to keep things in your life in proper balance.

Our lives get out of balance, not first because of the demands of our job description but because of LACK OF BALANCE IN OUR HEARTS.

In our life, GOOD THINGS BECOME THE RULING THINGS.



GOOD THINGS
IN LIFE

GOD

(III) WHAT SPECIFICALLY ARE OUR NIGHTMARES POINTING AT?

To correct this imbalance in our heart with all its distorted longing for the good things in this life, God sovereignly permitted the greatest fear of your life like Job, called **NIGHTMARES** to happen in your life.

“There is no smoke without a fire.”

So, every nightmare becomes like **SMOKE LEADING US TO THE FIRE.**

Every nightmare that happens to us is like a smoke leading us to the fire – **the idols in our heart- the good things that we have put more weight in our heart than God.**

Don't just cry for divine deliverance in the midst of your nightmares.

Sit down and let the Holy Spirit use these nightmares to expose our idols and imbalances.

What idol in our heart does each nightmare specifically expose?

What is the fire that each smoky nightmare is trying to expose?

SMOKE/NIGHTMARE

HUMILIATION



REJECTION



STRESS



**LOSS OF CONTROL
(DISORDER/UNCERTAINTY)**



FIRE/IDOL

IDOL OF POWER

APPROVAL OF MAN

COMFORT

CONTROL

As you can see there are four root idols that drive our behavior to be out of balance.

These four root idols are **DISTORTED LONGINGS in our heart that occupy more weight than God in our life.**

These longings are not bad things but good things becoming the **RULING THINGS IN OUR HEART.**

- **POWER:** a longing for influence or recognition. It is self-exalting and seeks to control and influence and use others. We seek power through relationship, success, beauty, wealth, health, food, intellect. Status is at the throne.
- **APPROVAL:** a longing to be accepted or desired and even respected. It seeks the approval of man. Respect and praises of man are at the throne.

- **COMFORT:** a longing for pleasure. It is a sense of entitlement. It seeks a stress-free and trouble-free environment. Self and the good life are at the throne.
- **CONTROL:** a longing to have everything go according to MY PLAN. It seeks order and certainty in life. It seeks to maintain or attain high personal standards. Security and certainty for the future are at the throne.

Someone may long for a promotion and the accompanying salary.

There is nothing wrong with either; the **INTENSITY of the desire is what makes it sinful.**

Calvin says, *"The evil in our desires typically does not lie in what we want, but that WE WANT IT TOO MUCH."*

The person's root idol could be different from someone's else longing for the same promotion.

- **A person with **power idol** wants the bigger salary, not because of the money but because of **status** the money can offer.**
- **A person with **control as an idol** wants the bigger salary to save more money to eliminate **uncertainty** and gain more **security** for the future.**
- **A person with the **comfort idol** wants the **new "whatever"** with the increased salary**
- **The person with the **approval idol** wants to use the new "increment" to **win friends.****

So, with all the **creature comforts occupying the greater weight in the scale of our heart, our jealous God has to come in to disrupt our “good life”.**

He does it by allowing our greatest fear – nightmare - to happen so we can look honestly into the imbalances of our heart and to reorder our desires to be only for Him and Him alone.

(IV) WHAT IS THE GOSPEL SOLUTION TO OUR NIGHTMARES?

How do we repent of the idol beneath the surface?

How do we keep ourselves from idols?

"The best way to overcome the world is not with morality or self-discipline. Christians overcome the world by seeing the beauty and excellence of Christ. They overcome the world by seeing SOMETHING MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN THE WORLD: CHRIST."

We repent of our idolatry not by looking ourselves in the mirror and telling ourselves we can displace it in our energy, might or goodness.

We repent of our lesser gods by REMEMBERING THE GREAT GOD WHO IS ABOVE ALL GODS.

We can repent of our distorted longing for:

- **POWER** by pursuing what Jesus gave up in His life and death. Jesus gave up **His power and authority** as the Son of God to become weak even to the point of death, so that we may know the power of God. Therefore, we can repent of our distorted longing for **POWER** by **SUBMITTING TO HIS GOSPEL POWER**, given to us especially in our **weakness** and this gospel power is the power to empower us to love and serve God and others without ulterior motive of using God and people.

- **APPROVAL** by pursuing what Jesus gave up in His life and death. Jesus gave up **His acceptance by God the Father** on the cross when He took all our sins on the cross. Jesus was rejected by God so that we may be accepted in Him. Therefore, we can repent of our distorted longing for **CONTROL** by **REJOICING IN HIS GRACIOUS APPROVAL UPON US.** That is **GOSPEL APPROVAL** given on account of Christ's work, not earned by any of our merits. Having received this divine approval and acceptance frees us from human approval to love and serve others.

- **COMFORT** by pursuing the things that Jesus gave up in His life and death. Jesus gave up both **HEAVENLY RIGHTS AND EARTHLY COMFORTS** so that we may be comforted. Therefore, we can repent of our distorted longing for COMFORT by **REMEMBERING** **HE IS THE GREATER COMFORT**. That is **GOSPEL COMFORT** – given and not demanded. And it is present especially in the midst of our suffering.

- **CONTROL** by pursuing the things that Jesus gave up in His life and death. Jesus gave up **CONTROL OVER HIS WHOLE LIFE** by wholly submitting to His Father so that we may know true control. Therefore, we can repent of our distorted longing for **CONTROL by SURRENDERING TO HIS ULTIMATE CONTROL**. That is **GOSPEL CONTROL**. It is defined as **RESTFULNESS IN GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CONTROL** and it seeks to God's standard through the fruit of self-control.

His power is greater. His approval is eternal. His comfort is satisfying. His control is perfect.

There is no god like our God.

CONCLUSION

Nightmares are our greatest fear coming alive in our life's experiences and trials.

Don't waste it. Don't just shake it off. Don't just pray for divine deliverance.

Rather, use all your nightmares as smoke leading you to the fire that is burning in the scale of your heart, causing imbalances and distortion in your life.

God is a God of jealousy. He cannot tolerate another idol in our heart.

He cannot tolerate a rival love or rival throne being set up to be of more importance and weight than Him.

If you want your nightmare to end, use it to expose all the imbalances in your heart – the wrong idols, the distorted longing and let the Gospel of Christ renew your life so that **Shalom can reign in your life again – **PERFECT BALANCE.****

How did Job respond while going through all his nightmares? “Naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked shall I return; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:20).

The LORD still weighed the heaviest in Job’s life.

end

