

Antifragile

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[0 : 00] Father, you know that the fragility of each of us, the different ways that we're very fragile, and you know the weaknesses of each of us, and you know our sins and our failings, you know our strengths and our glories, you know the plan that you have for each one of us as well.

Father, we give you thanks and praise that you know each and every one of us completely, fully, perfectly. And yet you love us, and yet you sent your Son to die for us.

And we thank you, Father, that when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, that he comes and dwells each person who puts their faith in him. So, Father, we ask that you grow within us a deep hope in Christ, the hope of glory.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. It's Thanksgiving weekend.

That's why we have these roses here at the front. There's a lot of fear in the world right now.

There's a lot of tension.

[1 : 15] Not everybody's filled with hysteria or filled with fear, but there's a lot of fear around. And I regularly come into contact with people, and it just seems to emanate from them, their fear.

And I don't want to get into a bit of a discussion about the lockdown and how people are responding to it. People ask me how I'm doing. I tell them I'm trying to live free and without fear.

That's what I tell them. And it actually often surprises them when I say that's my goal. I want to live without fear, and I want to live a free life, free and without fear. In fact, when I was just between the services, I mentioned that to a person.

They looked at me quite surprised, and you could tell that they were a person very fearful. But then again, they're also working in a coffee shop, and they're probably fearful for their jobs as well.

But even before, we had the different types of lockdowns. And we can see this in the States more than we can in Canada because of the election year and because of other issues connected to the real problem of racism is that there was a lot of fear in our country, and there's a lot of fear down south about a whole range of issues.

[2 : 21] And university campuses actually are often a place with lots of fear, where it's there, it's from places like that that we're most likely to see concerns about trigger warning, being triggered, or microaggression, or, yeah, triggering safe places, microaggression.

Now, I bring these things up not to mock them at all, but just to think about them for a bit and to consider how a lot of people, not everybody, but how more and more people in our society often think. And I'm going to use two inspirational quotes.

The tech guy and I were having a bit of a question about this beforehand. There's sort of two versions of the same quote. And if you could put the first one up, that would be very helpful.

And we are balloons filled with feelings in a world full of pins. Many of them, this is actually sort of a not very inspirational-looking poster.

But if you go and Google this, you can get T-shirts, cups, and posters. And a lot of the posters are clearly of the inspirational mode, the soft colors, you know, the young person, the balloon floating up into the air.

[3 : 35] And it's obviously intended to be a bit of an inspirational idea. We are balloons filled with feelings in a world full of pins. And that's sort of a graphic way to explain or to get at.

Maybe not in that particular image. But human beings are weak and fragile. And there's lots of danger out there in the world.

And we have to do what we can to stop the danger because I'm weak and fragile. And challenges to me are really threats to me. And even the smallest little challenge is actually a threat to me.

And if you threaten me, I could burst and be irreparably damaged. In fact, basically almost completely and utterly come to an end. And what is very central to me are my feelings and my

emotions.

That's what's really very, very central to me. In fact, you know, even to say this, I think it's maybe safe on this, although I don't, I never know who watches this online. And occasionally we get comments about things online at the online service to our online congregation.

[4 : 48] But in fact, actually much of the rhetoric around Black Lives Matter. Now, even when I say something like that, many people say, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, old white guy making comments about that.

Well, actually, isn't that reaction a little bit like this balloon that was just up there a moment? The world, we are balloons filled with feelings in a world filled with pins.

And so if I make any type of comment about it, then that's actually a bit of a triggering type of thing. And maybe I'm a pin that's going to burst it. But in fact, actually in much of the rhetoric that comes out of critical theory, but come into the mainstream of society, mainstream of university, mainstream of media, is in fact, you can't, a person's feelings about how they're being treated, trump any type of research or objective things.

Because what really matters about us is our feelings. And if I'm feeling oppressed in any type of way, if I'm feeling threatened, then that's not on me, that's on you. Because there should be nothing that ever makes me feel threatened or makes me feel challenged.

Because fundamentally, why? I am a balloon. We are a balloon filled with feelings in a world full of pins. And so whether it's the state or some other sort of university administrators, those pins have to be dealt with because I'm fundamentally fragile.

[6 : 09] But this is actually even better seen in the second version of the same quote. So I'm not sure which version came first, by the way, and it seems as if it's an anonymous type of quote. It just developed somewhere in the ether.

Maybe somebody online or one of you folks can tell me afterwards which is first. But notice this. There's just two words difference. But the two words are very, very significant because it goes to identity.

Right? We are just balloons filled with feelings on a world full of pins. We are just a world, a balloon filled with feelings on a world filled with pins.

This is really, in many ways, I mean, for many people, once again, these are inspirational ideas that we are balloons filled with feelings in a world full of pins.

And note one of the things about it which is very, a bit worrisome is that it actually, at the very, very heart of it, has we, they language. There's we, the good people, the precious people.

[7 : 16] We, the balloons, filled with feelings. And then there's they, pins, the world of pins. But this permeates the consciousness of much in media and much in the university and much in our culture.

Sort of the complete opposite end of all those technocratic ideas of self-improvement and self-empowerment and the secret. But it's something which is growing and growing in our society and I think helps to understand a lot of the fear which is going on in our world right now.

Now, once again, I'm not expressing any of these things to mock triggering and to mock safe places. I'm not doing that at all. It's something we need to think and understand. And in fact, many people would push back and say, George, Christians have their own version of this, don't they?

In fact, I think I heard Shane say when he was reading the scripture text that this was the text that you're going to preach on. And doesn't that whole text encourage Christians to understand themselves in the same way?

Wasn't it seeming to be very, very afraid of studying philosophy or having arguments or conversations with people because if you do, you're going to get captured? Like, isn't that sort of, like, aren't what you're describing like almost something which the Bible teaches?

[8 : 30] Well, people who comment like that have a lot of validity because, in fact, it's been a very consistent Christian problem. I'm ancient of days.

I heard Rex Murphy say that he was wrapping the pharaohs in his linen cloths before he became a mummy. And I sort of feel almost like I'm getting that old myself.

But in the church that I grew up in, and then when I became a Christian that I attended, there was very much a deep fear about knowledge and about the world. In fact, I had people take me aside and say that I shouldn't go to Carleton to study philosophy.

I should go to Prairie Bible College because if I went to Carleton to study sociology and philosophy and things, psychology and things like that, I would end up losing my faith. And there is, in fact, a

very large Christian evangelical or very Catholic.

There's different types of subcultures where you just read the right type of literature, you read the right type of blogs, you watch the right type of movies because there are, in fact, many Christians who feel that we are Christians.

[9 : 35] We are balloons filled with Christ in a world full of pins. And so we have to be very, very careful. Well, just before we look at this, I just want to, you know, when I was playing around with this, you always have to be careful about rabbit trails.

But if you could put the first point up, that would be very handy. There's actually like a type of biblical image which is sort of similar to this image of we are balloons filled with feelings or we are just balloons filled with feelings on a world filled with pins.

And it's actually a biblical idea which is sort of similar but profoundly different. And different, in fact, if you compare the two things, I don't know how you'd make a poster out of this, an inspirational poster.

But this is actually a very, very, very different way to understand things even though it has some similarities to the balloon imagery. And what I've done is I've put together Genesis chapter 1 with basically a big part of the book of Ecclesiastes.

And in the book of Ecclesiastes, which begins vanity of vanities in most translations, but vanity of vanities is a very poor translation, it's better to understand the Hebrew word which is all the way through the whole book, like constantly, as the word vapor.

[10 : 48] Something which is very, very transient. In fact, for Canadians, the best image of what the Hebrew word is trying to communicate is when it gets very cold out in the winter in January or February, and when you breathe, what do you see?

You see your breath. You see vapor. And that's actually the type of image which the book of Ecclesiastes is trying to communicate about the fact that human beings and all reality is temporary. It changes. It's fragile. It's like the breath that you breathe on a very cold winter's day, and you can see the breath, but you don't see it very long because it passes very quickly.

And it's a message all the way through the book of Ecclesiastes. But at the same time, I think it's in chapter 3, it has this profound image of how God has put eternity into the human heart. And he puts eternity into the human heart in its context.

It's talking a little bit about our longings and our yearnings, that even though we are vapor, there's a longing and yearning for eternity and a knowledge that there is something that is eternal that isn't just something which is transient.

[11 : 58] And so if you put the Old Testament idea of the image of God, you get something like this. You are like a vapor, yet you bear the image of the triune God, and he has put eternity into your heart.

Similar to the balloon image, but very different. But let's look at this whole question. If you turn in your Bibles to Colossians chapter 2, verse 9, verse 8 and following, let's look at this text and see if in fact this text could be used to say that Christians are like balloons and world filled with pins.

And in other words, there's danger all around us and that challenges to us or hard times to us will just fundamentally we're weak and we're only going to get weak and challenges will just make us weak and so we need to live very, very protected and closeted lives.

Well, let's look at the text again and see what it says. And at first, it says this, see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ.

I'll read that again. And in fact, actually, if this was all you knew of this whole topic in the Bible, then you'd have to sort of maybe think that it's talking about this type of a balloon imagery of us being very, very fragile.

[13 : 11] See to it that no one takes you captive. It's clearly a warning, by the way. It's a warning, a threat. That's very clear in the original language as well. It's a warning that there's a threat, there's a danger.

And it puts it like this, see to it that no one takes you captive and here the idea is that you'll become a slave. Whether it's ships in battle taking another ship, defeating another ship and making the crew captive or whether it's an army that defeats another army and so the soldiers are caught and are captive and when you're caught as captives at the time that Paul was writing, then you're sold into slavery.

And so there's just clearly a type of a threat that there's a way of encountering people, there's ways of encountering arguments that can lead to you being kept, being taken captive.

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit. Why? Well, because you see this philosophy is empty, it's deceptive and it's according to human tradition.

In other words, it just comes out of human beings that are in rebellion against God. That's just what it emerges out of. And it is according to the elemental spirits of the world. And that's a reference to demons, by the way, fundamentally.

[14:27] So, in other words, there's things which will deceive you, they're empty, there's philosophies, and philosophy here means any system of knowledge. It can refer to a religion, it can refer to an ideology, it's just any system of knowledge.

It would be sort of a more literal way of translating into our language any system of knowledge, any system of thinking, any system of discourse or conversation or of religion is ultimately just something that comes merely out of human beings in rebellion against God or from demons.

And you have to be careful they don't make you slaves. And so this, in fact, does sound very much almost, doesn't it, as if the world is filled with danger and we have to be very careful. But, but, if this was the only verse, that's, I think, how we'd have to take it.

But it's not the only verse. And the verse goes in a very surprising direction immediately after that in verse 9. And just before I start reading verses 9 and 10, I'm going to put the big idea behind verses, one of the big ideas behind verses 8 to 15, and in fact, the whole book of Colossians.

If you could put the point up here, I'll explain it in a moment. It is this, in Christ, you are anti-fragile. In Christ, you are anti-fragile.

[15:50] It's the big idea of the text. I'll explain what it means in a moment. But let's look at verses 9 to 10. So, here we have this apparent danger, but yet what happens in verse 9? It doesn't go on and on and on and on about the danger.

In fact, it goes in a very, very different tact to help us to understand the danger. It goes like this in verse 9. For in him, that's Christ, in him, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

It's a very, very, it's the, these two verses are the memory verse for this week. Those of you who look at my blog, I know there's two or three of us, and after the blog comes the growing in grace, and I always suggest a memory verse to try to memorize for the week.

And for this week, our memory verse is verses 9 and 10. For in him, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

And rule and authority there are references to demonic powers in this particular case. So notice this very, very, very powerful image that when you put your faith and trust in Christ, you go in him.

[17:09] And yet, in a sense, when you go in him, he fills you with all of his fullness. It's a little bit like, it's almost as if, in a sense, the vapor.

Remember I said that you bear the image of God, and your vapor that bears the image of God, and God has put eternity, the longing for eternity into your heart.

It's as if when the vapor enters eternity, eternity fills the vapor. When you put the vapor into eternity, eternity fills the vapor.

And if eternity fills the vapor, it's eternal. So what does this mean? So you see, the very, very first thing it's trying to communicate to us is, yes, the world is dangerous, and I'm going to return to that at the end if I don't yell at me or something like that, and I'll make sure that I talk about it.

But yes, there are dangers, there are demons, and there are, in fact, systems of thought that are just human tradition and rebellions against God. That's absolutely true.

[18:17] To not think that is to be foolish. To not think that is just literally to be foolish. There really are dangers. However, when you're thinking about the dangers, remember this. Remember that when you put yourself in Christ, Christ filled you, and now you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority, and he is the fullness of deity, and he now is filling you.

In Christ, you are anti-fragile. So what is this idea? It's a very, not very, very well-known idea, being anti-fragile. It was developed by a Lebanese thinker about eight years ago, and it was developed by a Lebanese thinker because he thought that English was missing a word for an important idea, and because English was missing a word for an important idea, we kept being misled in how we understood and analyzed things because it's easy for human beings, and he's writing this in 2012, to think that we're fundamentally fragile, that chaos or threats are going to always just make us

weaker, and so he uses these two analogies leading up to the third one.

Imagine for a moment now that rather than this being a Starbucks coffee cup, which happens to have water in it right now, and I have a wine glass here because when it comes time for communion, I don't want just a little tiny bit of wine.

I want a wine glass of wine during communion, so I brought my own wine glass, and it's up here, and sometimes I get talking like this, and I go like this, and I knock the wine glass off of the table, and it falls on the ground, and what's going to happen?

It'll break. Why? Because wine glasses are fragile. So I do that one week, and then the next week, Lisa, realizing that I've just broken a wine glass and that given how I talk, I'm going to break them every week, she brings me, out of the goodness of her heart, a plastic wine glass so that when I get excited and I move my hands like this, I knock the plastic wine glass down to the ground, and nothing happens to plastic, right?

[20 : 16] I just pick it up, wipe it off, and I can use it time and time. Every week, I can knock that plastic wine glass down on the ground, and I'll just keep going and going and going. But human beings, and much in reality, is neither fragile or plastic.

There's a different category, and that's where he developed this term anti-fragile. That there are, I mean, obviously, things which are anti-fragile can die, but a characteristic of being anti-fragile is that, in fact, challenge is necessary for it, and challenge and threat makes it stronger, not weaker. And he uses two examples to try to communicate that. The first is bones. If I was to decide over the next week that I want to protect my bones, my skeletal structure, and so all I'm going to do is just sit on a couch.

Occasionally, I'll have people lift me up so I don't get bed sores, but I'm just going to sit on the couch for a whole year. At the end of the year, my bones will be weaker, not stronger, because the fact of the matter is if you want to have strong bones, walk.

If you want to have strong bones, do other things with your upper body, because if you don't, your bones will actually get weaker. Your bones are anti-fragile.

[21 : 34] I can fall off of something and literally break my bones, which obviously isn't a good thing, but my bones need constant stress to actually be healthy and to be healthy for a long time.

The other example that he used was an immune system, believe it or not. If I got all of a sudden very, very unbelievably terrified about COVID-19 and I call up Bill Gates and say, could you lend me a billion dollars to create an environment where for the next six months or nine months or a year before a vaccine is found, I'm going to be in an environment that has no germs, no viruses, it's completely, utterly, 1,000% sterile.

And I was to live in there and somehow all of the food that came in was always protected against that. At the end of the year, my immune system would not be stronger, it would be weaker.

because immune systems actually need, like right now, for those of you who are paranoid, welcome to Church of the Messiah, I will make you more paranoid.

But the fact of the matter is we're always in contact with viruses, we're always in contact with germs, we're always in contact with all that type of stuff, and it helps make us healthy. Which is why sometimes if you use too much antibacterial things in your soap, it'll actually be worse for you than using non-antibacterial.

[22 : 56] You need to have experience with bacteria to be healthy and strong. And so, what the Bible is saying here with this profound truth, it's saying, yes, there's dangers, okay?

There are people, there are movements who will try to make you captive. There are, in fact, demons. There are, in fact, teachings which are influenced by demons to some degree.

And there's human tradition that just merely comes out of rebellion against God. Yes, that's true.

But you are not a balloon filled with the Holy Spirit in a world full with pins.

You are anti-fragile. And, in fact, if you just live in your ghetto, it's only going to make you weaker. I mean, one of the things which is so profound about this text, which is missed by people who interpret in a fragile way rather than an anti-fragile way, is that Paul wrote this while he was in jail. Why was he in jail? He was in jail because he told people about Jesus. And when he told people about Jesus, they would have arguments with him. And quite literally, they weren't able to beat him because he could respond.

[24 : 12] So what did they do? They threw him in jail. It's the same thing with the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They couldn't beat Jesus in arguments. So how did they respond? We've got to kill him. And so the message of this text is to say, Christian, you are anti-fragile when you are in Christ.

That's who you are. And if you're anti-fragile, that means you need to seek to do good in your workplace. And anytime you seek to do good in your workplace, there'll be people who will push back at that.

You need to seek to make sure that in your workplace there's justice. And if you do that, there will be people who push back. In your neighborhood or in your community, you need to speak against racism or any type of prejudice or discrimination.

And if you do that, there'll be people who push back at you. And you need to share Jesus. You need to tell him that in fact, there is a God that does exist. And the God that does exist isn't the God of Canadians.

The God that does exist is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons, one God. And this sounds like a bit of an odd idea, but in fact, it is in fact the true nature of God. And this is a wonderful truth.

[25 : 23] And Jesus is the only way to heaven. And he is the one who can fit you for heaven. He is the one who can make you anti-fragile. He is the one that you who are vapor, made in the image, bearing the image of God and with eternity in your heart, that he is the means by which you enter into eternity.

And when you enter into eternity, you are filled with eternity. You are no longer just vapor. And when you say that, people will push back. But that's good.

That's good. Still do good. Still be kind. Still pursue justice. Still share the gospel. Brothers and sisters, you are anti-fragile in Christ.

You are anti-fragile. And by the way, because what happens in Christ is we are restored to true humanity, it means that the model of human beings fundamentally being anti-fragile, which is so common in our culture, is wrong.

I mean, people in our culture being fundamentally fragile is not true. I mean, obviously, on one hand, it's true, people are fragile. But this idea that to be in a world where you can never have anybody question you or challenge you is a good world is actually fundamentally wrong.

[26 : 39] It's an anti-human idea and will only lead to harm in any school, community, neighborhood, or country where the idea grows.

Paul goes even deeper into this to try to argue and try to bring home to you how important this idea is about Christians being anti-fragile. Look what comes right after verse 10 in verse 11.

In him, so he continues to deepen the idea and he's going to use an Old Testament image, what our Jewish friends call the Tanakh and Christians call the Old Testament. He uses an Old Testament image and he uses a New Testament image and he shows how both of them, how they point to something, these rituals and symbolism, the symbolism of circumcision, for Israel and the ritual of baptism, point to a reality that only God can do.

And just by the way, the Bible only talks about male circumcision, never female circumcision.

Female circumcision would have been viewed, it should be viewed as abhorrent. No woman should ever be circumcised.

It's an abhorrent idea. And whenever you see circumcision in the Bible, it's only referring to male circumcision, never female circumcision. But listen to this. Verse 11.

[27 : 56] In him also, you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of flesh of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.

It's a, and having been buried with him in baptism in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead. They're very, very dense sentences and I don't want to spend a whole lot of time with it, but what it's saying is that if you go through and read the whole Old Testament, you'll see that to be a Jewish person, you had, the male had to be circumcised, but it also said that in fact circumcision pointed to a spiritual reality that God wanted people to enter into.

It pointed to something that only God could do and circumcision was a, in a sense, by dealing with the whole process of life, there's a sense of a cutting away of mere human life to be separate for God and that's something which Christ does for us on the cross and in the same way in baptism, there's this picture, the wonderful picture of a human being being in a sense dying but also being immersed in the water so they're immersed in Christ, they're immersed in death but they're united with Christ because they're immersed in water, they're immersed in death by being with Christ and then they're raised from the dead and it's the same image that when we put our faith and trust in Christ that we are immersed in eternity and we're immersed in his dying, we're immersed in his

resurrection, we're now immersed in life and this is only something that God can do and then he continues to sort of double down on this image of what it is that Christ does for us in verses 13 and 14.

Look how it goes. And you who are dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him having forgiven us all our trespasses by, and the word here is cancelling but a better word, a more literal word would be expunging and I think the reason the translators didn't use the word expunge is that not many people know what that word means but it means a complete, it would be to completely erase everything, it would be to completely remove. It would be as if somebody who's been very, very bad and very, very naughty wanted to run for president and they were very worried about all of the things that they'd said in social media for the last 20 years of their life and there was some, one of the smart person came up with a way to expunge all of it from the internet and from everybody's computer so that it's not even there anymore, that's the word.

[30 : 27] And so by expunging the record of death that stood against us with its legal demands and rather than legal demands, a better word is regulations there, this he set aside or expunged, nailing it to the cross.

And here's the image here which is very, remember this is all him doubling down on this image. So we have cut flowers here, we have roses. After the service, everybody here is welcome to take a rose home.

Just happy Thanksgiving. But here it is. If you could put up the point, Andrew, that would be very helpful. What the Bible text is saying here is this, that apart from Christ, a human being is a cut rose.

Apart from Christ, a human being is a cut rose. You see, these roses, they're in water. I learned the hard way that it has to be cold water, not hot water.

And there's whatever that little preservative food stuff is that you get when you buy roses, it's mixed into the water. But these roses are dying. In a sense, they're dead, aren't they? I mean, they look beautiful.

[31 : 35] But they're not planted in the ground. And that means they're cut off from life. They're literally cut off from life.

And every human being apart from Christ is a cut rose. Beautiful. Every human being is beautiful. But a cut rose. And one of you can correct me afterwards.

I looked on Google and I seem to get an answer on Google. And if Google tells you it's true, it must be true, as we all know, because they only tell you the truth on the Internet. But from what I understand, it's literally impossible to take one of these and go take home and plant it or to splice it into a rose thing.

That it's literally, there's no hope for this. Each rose that you take will only wither and wilt and die. There's absolutely no hope from it. And you see, this is what actually Paul is trying to say.

You know, the whole image, the whole image of circumcision, of cutting, is to help emphasize that you are a cut rose. But what actually, there's this profound, if your heart is circumcised, what God does is he takes that part of your heart, that part of who you are, that who you are, which is in rebellion against God, and he cuts it away so that you can be reattached to God.

[32 : 51] It's a miracle. A miracle of grace that God does for you. And let's use the image of, remember, I was using that type of image of being filled with Christ. You're in him and you're filled in him because you're in him.

And it's the same type of thing, is that, is the same image that God does this miracle by which this cut rose, which is, can't be replanted and you're like that and there's nothing you can do about it, but in Christ you are now immersed in Christ in his death and immersed in his life.

And now you are immersed in life and God does this miracle whereby the cut rose, is now replanted in the source of life. You and I are in Christ.

You and I are in eternity. And only eternity, which is a bit of a symbol for God, can do that. You can't do it yourself, but he does it for you.

And then just to close and then we're going to wrap it up, look at the very final word. We'll read verse 14 again by canceling the record of debt. This is this idea that every time you do something wrong, there's a type of debt.

[34 : 05] And then when it said, that stood against us with its legal demands and a better image is actually regulations. And like the different regulations of the world, Paul's going to develop this

image in the next week we'll look at it.

But everything that in fact is truly done wrong by God's perfect standards and everything that's done wrong according to human regulations and how human beings think, all of those things that cause us a sense of guilt and a sense of shame, God will sort out all of those things that are human regulations that have a grain of truth to them and those which are just foolish or even evil or demonic, but they feel like they're against us.

And so, Paul, it's this double image of, in a sense, real moral truth and human regulations. That's the double image here in this verse is that what you and I have to understand is that whatever it is, the things which are really wrong that you've really done where there's really a debt and you can't deal with it and all human regulations and God will sort out which ones are true and which ones are just stuff you shouldn't even think about, all of those are nailed to the cross when Jesus dies to understand that Jesus is bearing that for you.

And then in verse 15, he disarmed the rulers and authorities, once again a reference to demons, he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. So two things. Most of our culture now believes in demons. When I was preaching back when I first ordained in 1985, probably very few people did.

[35 : 44] And so I'd have to argue for the existence of demons. Now we have to argue for other types of things because the majority of our culture accepts them, but they don't really accept them in the sense that they still believe foolish things like in Ghostbusters that an evil spirit can be put in a box because if you have some type of electricity or something like that, which is just foolish.

But if there really is, in fact, a being which is invisible in spirit that can affect you and is hostile to you, then it means there can be no greater enemy.

You can't shoot it. You can't poison it. It doesn't care about Twitter. You can Twitter mob the devil all day around the block and only make him happy.

You can't shoot him. You can't do anything. You can't starve him. And if there is a being like that, and that being and the demons have in fact also been disarmed, then Christian, in Christ, you are anti-fragile.

How does he disarm them? Because the main way that the demonic world affects human beings is through accusation, lies, and slander. You're a terrible person.

[37 : 06] You're a failure. You'll never be a success. You see that thing that you said the other day in the party? Everybody's thinking about it and they all think you're a terrible, evil person. You're ugly.

You weigh too much. You don't weigh enough. You're not strong enough. You're too over too many muscles. It doesn't matter. That little voice that sits on your shoulder that speaks to you and to me all the time, that's how every human being experiences slander.

Nobody will ever forgive you. You will never forgive yourself. This is the end of you. You're terrible. And if, when the demon does whisper into your ear, this is a text to say, in Christ, I am anti-fragile. In Christ, demon, when he died on the cross, every real thing that I've done wrong was named by God and put on that cross and he paid for me because he loved me and every regulation, and I can't figure out whether I, what I should care about all these cultural things and which are right and which are wrong.

I can't figure out if I should lose weight, put on muscle, have more money, give more money away. I can't figure out all your regulations, but I can tell you this, whatever regulations there are, that was on the cross too.

[38 : 28] He paid them all. So shut up, demon. Cling to the cross. Christian, you're anti-fragile.

I want to conclude with the final idea and I'm going to just talk a little bit about the earlier text. If you put up the final point, that would be wonderful. Here's the message of the text. Christian, brother and sister in Christ, if you are here and you've put your faith and trust in Jesus, you are my brother, you are my sister, you are my brother or sister, you walk in the dying days of the doomed dragon. That's where we live right now. We live in the dying days of the doomed dragon. So remember, you have been filled in Christ in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells.

do justice, do kindness, do mercy, share the gospel, cast out demons, counsel people who are thinking that they get weaker and weaker and weaker all of the time and live free, live without fear.

Now, the earlier text warns us against presumption. That's what it warns us against. See, presumption is the great substitute to faith.

[39 : 54] In faith, and by the way, if you've never read the Narnia Chronicles, read, I think it's Prince Caspian. There's this spectacular image in the middle of Prince Caspian where there's this poor kid called Eustace who's really a miserable kid who does all these terrible things and he does something that turns him into a dragon and Aslan is this Christ figure and Aslan comes and attacks Eustace and he feels these, the Aslan's claws ripping at the flesh but what he doesn't realize is that as Aslan's claws are ripping away at the flesh that what he's doing is he's killing the dragon so that the real Eustace can stand before him.

It's a very wonderful image. You should read it. It's in the Narnia Chronicles by C.S. Lewis. I know it's written for 12-year-olds but it's just spectacular stuff and you should read it. And guess what I'm going to say is that no human being's faith is so unbelievably pure without any type of presumption that God's waiting until there's no presumption until you're only 100%.

That's another type of works. He weighs, he doesn't weigh my merits. He pardons my offenses. He's not waiting for me to have only 100% pure faith with no presumption.

He takes that little tiny mustard grain of faith in the forest of presumption and he takes me as his own. Praise God.

That's so wonderful. But the presumption is the substitute of faith. Presumption is this sense that somehow or another it's because of who I am. It's because I'm white.

[41 : 24] It's because I'm black. It's because I'm Asian. It's because I'm African. It's because I'm American. It's because I vote for Trump. It's because I hate Trump. It's because I'm good at church. It's because I do all of these types of things that God loves me and it's a type of presumption and this type of presumption means you're already dead and you're going to fall prey.

You're already filled with human tradition. You're already filled with the seed and you're just going to be more prey to it. Because you see, real faith says, Father, grow in me more and more and more a sense that apart from you I am a cut rose.

And it's only by the miracle of your grace that you have done the miracle of giving me new life and new birth. nothing in my hands I have.

And it's not my sanctification that determines my justification. It's all grace, all grace, all the time. So if you have a world with a doomed and dying dragon, the dragon's dangerous.

But Christian, you're anti-fragile. You are going to die, by the way. And maybe you'll end up being thrown in jail. And maybe all sorts of other types of things will happen to you.

[42 : 42] But remember, what? You walk in the dying days of the doomed dragon. So remember, we need to remember it. That's why we come to church. That's why we have small groups.

That's why we have spiritual and Christian friends. That's why we read the Bible. Because we need to remember, you have been filled in Christ in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells.

I invite you to stand. And we're going to close by saying together the general thanksgiving from the Book of Common Prayer, which I think is just a wonderful, especially in the Book of Colossians, a wonderful reminder of grace and how we are to live our lives.

So please pray it with me. Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we are unworthy servants to give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all people.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life. But above all, for your inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace and for the hope of glory.

[43 : 57] And we beseech you, give us that due sense of all your mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth your praise not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honor and glory, world without end.

Amen.