

Break Free...

*A Thought for the Week From Patrick Kemper at
No Strongholds Ministries*

Week 16

Sweet Incense Rising

Psalm 141:2 (MSG)

2 Treat my prayer as sweet incense rising; my raised hands are my evening prayers.

1 Corinthians 3:11-14 (CEV)

11 because Christ is the only foundation. 12 Whatever we build on that foundation will be tested by fire on the day of judgment. Then everyone will find out if we have used gold, silver, and precious stones, or wood, hay, and straw. 13 14 We will be rewarded if our building is left standing.

I was in my worship time this morning, listening to music that referred to our lives as a love song, and I wondered if that could really be an accurate picture.

We know, from the book of I Corinthians, we are going to be judged for the way we lived our lives. I guess I always imagined it being on a big screen, like a movie.

But what about the way our lives are being received in the throne room... now?

Every day I sit in my office, desiring to get to back to a posture of humble obedience through worship. I long to connect with God, but some days it's a longer trip than others. I imagine myself offering authentic admiration outside His throne room in an effort to help me remember how much I owe... and how much I need Him every minute of every day.

Today I found myself imagining my life as a song, one with lots of verses. There are good verses where I am making great choices and following His instructions, and painful verses where my mistakes and poor choices make it extremely difficult to listen for very long.

But then there's the chorus.

Lamentations 3:21-24 (HCSB)

²¹ Yet I call this to mind, and therefore I have hope:

²² Because of the LORD's faithful love we do not perish, for His mercies never end.

²³ They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness!

²⁴ I say: The LORD is my portion, therefore I will put my hope in Him.

It's a recurring theme that always comes back around after each verse. A perfectly

blended, strategically harmonized reminder offering an opportunity to set things on the right track again. God sings the chorus to us, extending His grace and mercy, and offering to make things new again if we will just submit.

Application

You run through your day, navigating the hills and valleys (dodging the potholes hoping to get to each destination without a ticket) and fall into bed knowing it starts all over again with the rising of the sun.

God waits for you to come back, prior to the starting of each new verse (each new day), to worship Him.

Genesis 28:18 (CEV)

¹⁸ When Jacob got up **early the next morning**, he took the rock that he had used for a pillow and stood it up for a place of worship. Then he poured olive oil on the rock to dedicate it to God...

Joshua 7:16 (CEV)

¹⁶ Joshua **got up early the next morning** and brought each tribe to the place of worship...

1 Samuel 1:19-20 (CEV)

¹⁹ Elkanah and his family **got up early the next morning and worshiped** the LORD. Then they went back home to Ramah. Later the LORD blessed Elkanah and Hannah
²⁰ with a son. She named him Samuel because she had asked the LORD for him.

As you choose to submit and worship, honoring God for who He is and what He has done in your life, you allow Him the opportunity to sing His chorus (His mercies are new every morning) so you can begin another verse.

One of the great things about God is that He is able to see the truth regarding your efforts. Human eyes and hearts are not capable of always accurately interpreting the condition of someone's efforts.

But God can see...

Psalms 139:1-5 (HCSB)

¹ LORD, You have searched me and known me.
² You know when I sit down and when I stand up; You understand my thoughts from far away.
³ You observe my travels and my rest; You are aware of all my ways.
⁴ Before a word is on my tongue, You know all about it, LORD.
⁵ You have encircled me; You have placed Your hand on me.

He has no trouble interpreting motivation or authenticity...

1 Samuel 16:7 (HCSB)

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or his stature, because I have rejected him. Man does not see what the LORD sees, for man sees what is visible, but the LORD sees the heart."

With God, even though you may have just written a really crappy verse into your

song, if you are repentant and consistently, intentionally headed back to the drawing board (with a heart striving to get it right), He will meet you with a chorus so your next verse can be... new. He is always willing to conduct you back to the bridge, connect you to the chorus (the part where you can become humble and dependent again), and help you segue right into a new verse.

No matter how fraught with disastrous verses your song (your life) may be, it can still be like David's prayer from Psalm 141:2... *sweet incense rising*.

Authentic persistence in your actions, rising from a heart intent on obedience, will lead you to the chorus that causes your Father to sway with a smile on His face.



Homework for the Week...

1.) What is the condition of your song (your life), right now? Can you even hear God's chorus? Can you recognize and follow the breadcrumbs from a crummy verse to His chorus? Do you have a consistent, uninterrupted worship time every day? How does your answer to the previous question impact your ability to get back to the chorus? Take some time to submit and then ask God to sing His chorus to you. Let it flow over you and allow it to provide for you inspiration and encouragement to start a new verse with new conviction and commitment. Write out what actions you will take this week to familiarize yourself with the path to His chorus.

2.) Mid-week check. List the opportunities you have had and how you responded (this is your obedience indicator). If you are still posting a doughnut, more than likely you weren't all that truthful when you asked God for chances to respond and improve. Check your heart; be authentic. Ask God to show you the way through what is blocking you from submitting in obedience.

3.) How are you doing compared to the way you started the week? If you still need improvement, refuse to move on to the next session. Stay here, submit, and choose to be obedient no matter what it takes. Explain how you have improved, or make a commitment to continue working. When you are operating in obedience in this area of your life... turn the page and move to the next session.
