

Irony – God’s Power

Matthew Vander Els • 2023-08-13 • foundedintruth.com

MAIN VERSES

Jesus Shalom, everybody. Welcome to Founded in Truth Fellowship. If this is your first time visiting with us today or watching with us online, thank you for joining us for services. We are a community of people and families that come from a lot of different backgrounds. We love the Torah of God. We love the entirety of the Bible. We love the Sabbath and the rest that we find in it. But most of all, we are focused on being a community that orbits the person of Yeshua, our King. And so welcome to Founded in Truth.

Desmond Doss: The Medal of Honor

Did you guys know there was a Sabbath keeper that received the Medal of Honor in World War II? During the brutality of this war, a unique soldier emerged who, against all odds, became an emblem of true valor and conviction. Desmond Doss was his name. And unlike his peers that were entering into the war, so anxious to fight, Doss chose not to arm himself in battle. He chose not to carry a gun or a sword or a knife, a killing machine, unlike his peers. Instead, his arsenal consisted of his convictions, of his unwavering faith and profound commitment to the sanctity of life. And he is possibly one of the exceptional stories of the war that manifests a spirit of courage.

And it wasn't just a mere religious verse to him that he tried to figure out a way to jump over or wrestle with or justify in certain situations and not others. No, for him, it became a principle of his life. So when the dark clouds of war loomed large, young men around the country took up arms, Doss chose to join the army and serve as a medic, hoping to mend the broken instead of contribute to the destruction.

This noble intention, as awesome as it may have been, was not initially seen as such by his comrades, his peers. His refusal to bear arms, even in training, attracted a storm of disdain, resentment, and skepticism from his fellow soldiers. They viewed his pacifism as weak, a mask for cowardice. He endured not just verbal jabs, but also physical torment. Some tried to get him

discharged on grounds of mental instability, while others threw boots at him during prayer sessions.

His personal beliefs put him at odds with the very men who he would later save in the theater of war. Amidst the barrage of abuse, Doss' faith never wavered though. And a true test of his resolve came during the Battle of Okinawa. The cliffs at which the American forces had to scale up to even enter the battle were later nicknamed Hacksaw Ridge. They made a movie about it a decade or so ago and became just such a gruesome theater for what war really is. And it was here that Doss's intentions and his convictions shined.

Under relentless enemy fire, without any weapon to defend himself, Doss ran into gunfire. He was ordered to retreat, to get back. "Do not go back up there and into that fire. We've lost too many." And he disobeyed orders, and he managed to rescue 75 soldiers. Each time he ventured into the hellfire, it's recorded that he whispered a prayer. "Dear Lord, help me just get one more." As he ran back in.

And his compassion, through some reports, was not limited to his allies. Sanctity of all lives, right? He even treated and tried to save several Japanese soldiers. The enemy. His actions reminded many that even in the brutal theater of war, human kindness could prevail.

For his unparalleled valor and the embodiment of his convictions amidst all adversity, Desmond Doss was awarded the Medal of Honor, becoming the first conscientious objector to receive such an award. His life story stands as a testament to the idea that real bravery is not always about wielding weapons, flexing your muscle, shutting someone up by breaking them in half. No, but by holding on to the steadfast conviction of one's beliefs, even when the entire world seems to stand against you.

Can you imagine? It makes a great movie, let's be honest. Great movie, fantastic. Can you imagine getting enlisted and they say, "We're going to have marksman training. Here's your gun." And you say, "No, I don't touch that. I don't sign up for the wrong thing. Don't touch that. I don't believe in killing. I want to be a medic."

God. Can you believe? Can you imagine actually getting shipped out to the Pacific theater of all places? Man. The world says we're at war and you need to kill. You need to kill. And he says, no. You at least need to carry a gun. No. You at least need to try to bring harm to others. Why? Why? Because they want to bring harm to you. No. He did not carry a rifle into battle. And that looks pretty dumb, right? It looks pretty weak. You're not even going to fight. What, you can't fight? You're scared to fight? These are the things that he heard. He was mistreated and abused by fellow Americans because he looked weak.

Irony in God's Kingdom

But at the end, he received the Medal of Honor for disobeying orders of all things. During this series on irony, we've discussed many aspects of how irony plays a key role in the message and the story of the Bible. From the irony of how God judges people for the very sins that they commit in their lives, to the irony of how we tend to evolve and become the things that we worship. And this is almost described literally in the Bible for how Israel transformed into the very idols that they worshipped, no longer being able to see or hear or speak as if they were just stone idols, the very things that they worshipped.

The irony as well is how God saves in the Bible, not through brute force overpowering the enemy, but by humility and grace and mercy on Calvary. God works in mysterious ways, right? Maybe. Maybe. But God definitely tends to work in ironic ways, according to the Word.

And as believers and followers of this ironic one—what do we call him, the beast killer named Yeshua—guess how we are called to live our lives? We are called to live our lives just as ironically as Yeshua did. That's the whole Sermon on the Mount, right? Or the Sermon on the Plain in Luke. Read from Luke.

Blessed Are You Who Are Poor

"Blessed are you who are poor. Poor. Talked about money, announcements. Poor. Poor. For yours is the kingdom of God." No, to inherit anything, you have to have money. You can't be poor. To have any status of power in the world, any status of authority, any status, period, you have to be something other than poor. But here Yeshua says no, blessed are the poor, because that's the status that the kingdom of God is founded on. Ironic. Kingdom of God? I mean, poor.

"Blessed are you who hunger." Why am I going to be blessed? Because you're going to laugh. It's an ironic switch up. That's going to make me blessed? Yeshua teaches us to look at the world for what it is and call out the lies and the mask that it wears. That all these things and all these rules and structures and constructs it has, that it tries to push on us, aren't real. Poor will inherit the kingdom of God. The hungry will be satisfied. Those who are rejected by the world will be rewarded most of all.

"Woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort."

A New Mission for a New Humanity

Yeshua came to not simply conclude the long story of the Bible and the story of creation. He did not come simply to overcome and conquer sin and death and the devil. I mean, that was a big deal, and that's the climactic victory. But Jesus did not simply come to establish his own kingdom, defeating the empires of the world and launching forth a new creation.

Yeshua came to ignite a mission, a standard, a new humanity, a rebirth of what being human is actually supposed to look like. A mission that found its origin in the garden at the expense of the serpent. But guess who's involved in all of that? Guess who's involved in that? You. If you claim to be a follower of this king, you're now involved in the mission.

So many times, the spirit of religion loved the prophetic words that Jason spoke before. The spirit of religion. So many times we are taught that we just, Jesus is over there. We worship from afar. And we just acknowledge that the kingdom is real. And that's religion. That's it. We're good. And that's not at all what Yeshua says and speaks. Not the apostles and disciples. No, he says, let's be reborn in a new creation today. That is in this in-between place, one leg still in the old world and one leg in the new. And now you're on a mission. And now you're carrying that weapon called a cross. And now you're living out the ironic life of the kingdom of God. And you're bringing healing. And you're showing what heaven looks like in a world that has created hell everywhere. You're on a mission now. You're on a mission.

Called to Imitate Christ

Jesus died for you so that you could be raised to life to imitate him. That's the mission. In its essence, that's what the word Christian means, the reflected Christ or the little Christ. As believers who claim the faith, we're called to be followers of this Yeshua, but not simply for the sake of following, but as imitators, even as I dare say embodiments of who Yeshua is.

[2 Corinthians 5.20](#), Paul speaking, he's encouraging the community, and he says, "Now then, we are ambassadors." What does it mean to be an ambassador? What's an ambassador of Christ? Well, an ambassador is like an emissary. It's a royal emissary of the king.

When emissaries were sent out in the ancient world to deliver messages, they weren't just some messenger that rode up on a horse. "Hey, let me tell you about the good news of my king back in Babylon or Persia or Africa or whatever." No. No. They were treated and honored as if they were the king that they represented because that was the status. If the messenger was mistreated, it was understood as a mistreatment of the king himself. It was an insult of the king himself.

You are called an ambassador of Christ.

When you walk into the world, the world may treat you like they did Christ, but if you invert the example, you're supposed to treat them like Christ treated them. You're supposed to represent the identity of who Yeshua is. By extension, the king's presence is supposed to go wherever you are. How many of us think that way on a daily basis? When we arrive at work, when we arrive home, when we engage with the people around us at the grocery store. Emissary of the king, the people around us should feel the presence and the love and the mercy and the grace and the reign of Jesus because you're there. At least that's the expectation from Paul and living a life that resembles the reign of Yeshua. That does not look like a person that resembles the world.

The Joseph Example

Take Joseph, the story of Joseph. We find, of course, Joseph hated by his brothers. Appropriately so, I guess you could say. He started having these dreams and bragging about it. He told his brothers he was going to rule over them one day. You little pipsqueak, what are you talking about? Joseph's brothers chose to get rid of him. They sold him as a slave to traitors, and he found himself in Egypt. And he had a hard life. During this time in a strange land where he could have totally gotten away with acting like Egypt, he chose to stand for righteousness. He had the opportunity to be with the wife of his master. In the ancient world, what greater opportunity to shame your master? I know we always think of that, okay, that's adultery and that's a sin. Yes, it was, but there is a cultural weight to that scenario that we don't even think about. Joseph said no. Not only did Joseph say no, he was imprisoned because he was falsely accused as if he was pursuing Potiphar's wife. And he found himself in prison, still holding on to a sense of integrity.

Until, of course, Pharaoh had a dream. And if Joseph was anywhere else, he never would have had the opportunity to be a part of what happened next. See, the Pharaoh was having nightmares and no one could interpret the dreams. But because specifically Joseph was put in prison and endured so many hardships, someone mentioned to Pharaoh, hey, there is this guy in prison that can interpret your dream. You know the story. Joseph interprets the dream, then gives some advice on how to keep Egypt from being overtaken by famine. And he gets put in charge of all of Egypt. He became the ruler.

The most striking part of this story is after Joseph is reunited with his family, that whole cringe, awkward moment like brothers are coming back in, but now he knows who they are, and so there's this tension, right? But everybody's back together. And his father dies, Jacob dies, and Joseph is mourning his father, that he spent most of his life away from. And his brothers, the

ones that sold him into slavery, became so scared. What if Joseph gets angry with us now and resents us after the father has died? And so they were so worried because Joseph is all but Pharaoh in Egypt, and he can have anything done to them. And they throw themselves on the floor, and they beg Joseph, please make us your slaves. Make us what we sold you into.

And all of that culminates in this verse, which is in Genesis chapter 50, verse 19. And it says, but Joseph said to them, don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? There's something that I'm never tempted to say when I'm in a place of hardship in my life and I feel the need to grasp hold of justice. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done. You don't know how God is using your situation to pour out his blessing to others. Sometimes we get so consumed with the me in this world, because that's what we're taught, that we forget what God is capable of. God is big enough to do the things that we can never imagine him doing. And sometimes we need to be reminded of that.

You intended harm for me, but God intended it for good for why? To accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. God's plan wasn't even about you guys. It was about everybody under the reign of Egypt, the entire empire. All these people were going to starve to death. And God used your bitterness, your resentment, and all these things to put me in a place so that he could save them. God used the hatred of a few to bring the salvation of many. This is not a story about brothers learning a lesson after abusing their younger brother. It's a story about millions of people being saved because a few wanted to destroy one. Seems to be a theme in the Bible, right? The irony. Desmond Doss kicked, screamed at, called a traitor. Through all of this, arriving at the right place at the right time to save so many in the midst of a horrific circumstance that we celebrate as war.

Citizens of Heaven

See, if we're truly ambassadors of Christ and we believe Christ is reigning in heaven now and he's reigning through us now, then we live out our lives not as if we are living in the world, but as if we are citizens of heaven who are displaced on the earth. [Philippians 3.20](#) says, Citizenship, allegiance. We are citizens of heaven where the Lord, the King Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly awaiting for him to return as our Savior. We are citizens of a kingdom. Do you guys know that? Do we take that as seriously as when we look at our passport or when we pay our taxes and think of ourselves as citizens of the United States of America or of Canada or wherever people are watching from? Because that's a serious thing. That's an identity thing, right?

And we see things like this. Oh, we're citizens of heaven. I mean, that's like a spiritual. No, it's a reality. It's a reality because you have a king. And this is the paradox of a Christian. We are born again into a new reality where Christ reigns, where Yeshua reigns, a reality where the devil has lost all his power, where sin and death have been conquered. And we are given the same power and spirit of Yeshua himself to walk out that authority and reign of the king here in a world that does not recognize it. We see things that others do not. When the world sees people doing evil things, we see people in shackles needing to be set free. When the world responds to them tit for tat, we respond to them like Yeshua did for us. When the world tells us that we need to take up arms against their enemies, we don't see any enemies of ours. We see everything through the lens of what has taken place on the cross, on Calvary. And we are ambassadors and representatives of that.

Fighting Evil in the Kingdom Way

But our job is not simply to stand by and allow evil to take place by no means. We're still conquerors, right? More than conquerors. If we've been given power and authority in the name of Yeshua, and we're taught how to bear the armor of the kingdom, that means that we still got to fight. Just not how the world tries to tell us to. We don't stand by and let evil think it's reigning. No, we're called to stand in the way of evil at all costs. We call it out. We fight against it, but in a way that is actually productive, intentional, wise, in a way that reflects the kingdom of Yeshua, not just the world.

And that is where we mess up. We love to stand up to evil. We love to call it out, but we tend to always do it at the expense of our testimony and the expense of the evildoer, not realizing that they are our mission too. And that is what makes a Christian different than the world. We see evildoers as prisoners of sin because each one of us has a testimony of being in that same place. That's the irony in how we fight. And we appear foolish when we refuse to obey the voice of the beast, as we spoke about last time. And we look weak when we refuse to kill and strike people the world says are our enemies. And we look naive when we say, I forgive them. And we don't look all alpha, alpha. When we say yes to mercy, when the world wants to see blood, it is not a light thing to call yourself a follower of Yeshua.

And although nations will try and redefine what a Christian is to conform to what they want it to be, a Christ follower, a Messiah follower. Christ is another word for king. That's what it means, the anointed one. The king, a king follower. The world and the nations around us will always try and redefine what a Christian is to conform to what they want it to be, which is something that they can tame. Because our citizenship is to the kingdom of Yeshua and no

other. We're called to be conscientious objectors, every one of us, when the world tries to take the reins of good and evil and force us to participate in them their way. And I know I use Desmond Doss and going to war as an example. Okay, Matt, war's not a good thing. We know that. Bring it into everyday life and your everyday interactions. Bring it into the way that your heart works on how you respond to the world and other people. Bring it into your everyday life spirituality. What goes into your ears, your eyes? What do you do, your heart's intentions? Bring it into how you respond to others when they allow things to go into their ears or eyes or out their mouth or their intentions. Do we have what it takes? Do we have what it takes to rise up and take a stand in a way that looks like weakness in the eyes of the world, but topples empires?

Who Overcomes the World

1 John 5:4 says, "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Yeshua is the Son of God, is King. Who overcomes the world? The one who recognizes God. Who is really in charge and who has the power? The one that empowers us with true strength and true power of resistance. And it's resistance to the things of the world. Things like lust.

How Casual Sexuality Has Become

In a world where sexuality has become so casual—so casual. I grew up in the 90s. For some of you, you're like, "Man, young." Others are like, "Man, that's so old." So, fellow millennials, in the 90s, right? People think about the 90s now like we thought about the 60s. Yeah, it's different. I know. I remember when there was a shift in the late 90s of how sexualized media was and the messages for TV shows and movies and stuff. And of course you have the ratings, but it was interesting because I remember seeing a seeping of the rating system of G and PG and PG-13. And they started to kind of merge and overlap a little bit. It was the strangest thing. I don't know if anyone has noticed that. It was like, "Huh, that's in a PG movie?" Odd, right? "That's in a PG-13 movie?" Right?

And now I'm turning on children's shows on Netflix or in other places, Disney. And I'm like, "Whoo." I am acting like my parents did when the same thing occurred at its level. It's just a bizarre place to be, surreal place to be. Whole different world.

But the objective hasn't changed and neither has the mission. The world has made sexuality so casual. But you still have the power to resist the manipulation of it. Don't fall for it. You can resist lust.

Keep Your Allegiance Front and Center

Injustice. The world loves to define what is justice and what is not. Oh my goodness. And we, path of least resistance, turn on the TV and listen and be like, "Yeah, that's justice" or "That's injustice." Don't fall for it, guys. You know better. Keep your eyes open. Keep your heart open. And keep your allegiance front and center.

The easiest way for people to control you is to make you angry and scared. And so if you turn on media and you are getting angry or scared, catch yourself on what's going on.

An Alarming Trend Among Pastors

There was an interview recently involving the chief editor of staff of Christianity Today. And I believe he was the president of the Moors and Values of the Southern Baptist Convention a couple years ago, until he stepped down from that. But he had an interview earlier this week on Tuesday. And it was shocking. It was shocking.

He said it is an alarming trend among evangelical Christians and the pastors that he is friends with—and he's hearing the same story. At first, I'm like, "I don't know if that's the same." He's like, "It's the same story over and over again. It's happening more and more where pastors, his conservative friends, are being called woke liberals because of the sermons they are giving on the Sermon on the Mount."

So I'm like... All right, he's using that politically charged language. Turned up. What's he got to say? What is he talking about? What has he got?

Several pastors were explaining to him after reading through the Sermon on the Mount or the plain Luke's Matthew's account. They were approached after and were asked, and I quote, "Where did you get all of those liberal talking points?" Like turning the other cheek. And the pastors, they say that they responded, "Those are literally the words of Jesus."

And here's the shocker, at least from the interview: The pastors, these friends that said, they expected to hear, "Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, man, I didn't even notice." Like, "Oh, I must have been distracted. Oh, man, that's embarrassing." He says, many people totally are like, "I wasn't listening. I didn't. Man, that's embarrassing." But he said most of the time a response came that

said something like, "Yes, but that doesn't work anymore because that's weak. The things that Jesus is saying about how his followers, his ambassadors, his soldiers should fight the world are weak."

It seems like such a bizarre occurrence to hear that story, right? But I believe it because I've seen it. I've seen it. We've been conditioned in this country and in this world to understand that power only comes through force. And so it's only natural that we would take the Bible and the words of Yeshua and conform them to that doctrine. Because anything else is, well, weakness, right? And we don't want to be weak. We don't want to be weak.

My Kingdom Is Not of This World

If anyone calls you weak for being a conscientious objector of the brainwashed, satanic agenda of the world, then you know that you have not compromised.

When Yeshua was standing before Pilate, about to be stripped naked in front of everyone, beaten, the skin mercilessly stripped from his back, pinned to a pole in agony, he not putting up an ounce of a fight—being weak according to the world—before Pilate, before this took place, he said this in [John 18](#), verse 36: "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

Can you imagine? All Yeshua had to say was, "Let's go, let's go." Remember how he was treated as the king that was going to start the revolution and usher in the kingdom of God that's going to overthrow Rome into Jerusalem on a donkey? Remember everybody that was cheering? "Yeah, son of David, here he's at. This is it. The warrior David has come. He's going to do it. Better watch him. We're ready, man."

We have accounts of followers after the crucifixion who didn't know anything about the resurrection and were sad, depressed because they thought, "Oh, he's obviously not the real Messiah because they killed him. We didn't kill all the Romans. They killed him."

All he had to say—everyone was waiting on it: "Let's go. Don't let them steal our kingdom away any longer. Rise up, people. Rise up. Take a stand. Let's defeat the evildoers and the wicked. Everyone in Jerusalem, come on." They were all waiting and willing to take a rock and smash the faces of the Roman soldiers. They were ready to rush the armory, take the weapons, and kill as many Roman occupiers and their Jewish sympathizers as possible. That was the tension that was happening right here.

And Yeshua says, "I will be dead right now if I just said one thing. But my kingdom is not of this world, and I don't fight like this world. Because if I fight like this world, I'm just going to be a part of the world. And that's what I've come to overturn."

But Jesus says, "I'm not weak, and my kingdom's not weak, and my followers are not weak, because that's not what weakness looks like." I love that. Love that.

Strength Comes Through Weakness

Strength, honor, bravery, according to the Bible, comes through finding yourself at home as weak in the world, knowing that our God's power is manifest in irony, knowing that the stories always tend to be overturned.

And I've been at a place where I've been so consumed about what's going on in the world out there that I've conflated it with the words of Yeshua to try to make the words of Yeshua work. And that's called idolatry. I know I've done it in the past, and I still catch myself and audit myself: "Am I remaining true to the heart of the king?"

Paul says in [2 Corinthians 12:9](#), this was his war cry. He says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me."

Do you want to be known as the soldier who has Christ's power resting on you? Do you want to be known as an emissary of the king who reflects his reign, strength, authority, and boldness in the face of the world? Do you want to be an example of that person to your children? It's hard. It's hard.

How God's Power Is Shown in the Bible

This is how God's power is shown in the Bible: through the ironic reversal of his power and victory being manifest in ways that the world would never try to emulate. And it happens over and over and over and over again.

And when the canon was closed, it kept happening throughout history in the lives of believers just like you and me. And I believe that it's still happening today. Sometimes we're just in the prison like Joseph and we don't see it yet, but it will come.

Stand With Me

And so please stand as we conclude services. And worship team, I don't know how you were gonna conclude services today, but I wanna give an opportunity to some of the men to stand up here with me as witnesses proclaiming that we want to see God move in our lives and we want to see God move in our marriages and we want to see God move in how we're raising our children and we want to see God move in how we are interacting with our communities and we want to see God move through our lives.

And so I will ask: ladies, you guys were amazing on your boldness to come up here during worship. And you can come up again if you want to stand with us. But I want to ask the men, will there be one man that will come up here and stand with me today as I stand here and proclaim that and we worship?

Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all of eternity. May the Lord bless you and may he keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May he lift up his countenance toward you and give you his perfect shalom, his peace. Hallelujah.

Thank you, Father. Thank you, Abba, for what you're doing in this place. Thank you for your spirit. Continue to draw those, Father, that need community.

Continue to work in our lives and in our homes. Pray, Abba, that you would just move in our lives, Father. Give us divine appointments this week, Father, wherever we're at, wherever we go. Give us an expectation of just your presence and your love, Father, that we carry, that we are truly image bearers. And let us not forget that. Let us silence the world and the things of the world, Father. But living in this world as image bearers and as changed lives, restored lives.

Revival and Restoration

Send that spirit of revival and restoration in our homes and our hearts, and in our families and all those around us. Help us to be salt and light in our neighborhoods where you've placed us. Help us to look for opportunities to love on people. That we would have testimonies, Lord, even next week, of what you're doing in our community and in our lives.

Gratitude and Blessing

Thank you so much. We love you. We praise you. And we thank you, Abba, for this time, this Shabbat, this community. We ask for your blessings. In Yeshua's mighty name. Amen. Amen. Hallelujah. Shabbat Shalom.

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