

May Devotions

That Is Amazing

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).” Ephesians 2:4-5

Some people have the mistaken idea that because they have lived life morally upright, by their own standards, and they have given to charity and done many good deeds they believe they have earned their way to heaven. Not so! God is very clear in His word in Isaiah 64:6 “We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind.” (NLT) But God’s love is so great that even when we were living sinful lives His grace was poured out for all, so that we might be saved. That is amazing! God’s love for us is beyond understanding. This is why our hearts desire to know the one who loves us so much, that He would willingly die to save us. He makes His presence known when we seek Him with a pure motive. He is always available. He is not distant. “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.”

(Psalm 91:15) God loves you and will never leave you. That is a promise. He also tells us, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...” (James 4:8a)

Romans 5:8, Jeremiah 29:13, Hebrews 13:5

Prayer: Help me to spend more time in Your presence so that I may know you. Amen

Mercy & Grace

Have you ever been angry at someone who did you wrong and you wished you could make them hurt as much as they hurt you? Or at least see them suffer a little (or a lot) for what they did? I admit, I've been there too.

But as believers, that's not what we're supposed to do. God tells us that vengeance is His and we are to let Him take care of the situation. **Deuteronomy 32:35**

He shows both mercy and grace to all of us. Mercy withholds a punishment we deserve and grace gives us a blessing we don't deserve! In mercy, God chose to cancel our sin debt by sacrificing His perfect and sinless Son in our place. But He goes even further than mercy and extends grace to His enemies. **2 Corinthians 5:21**

When we accept Christ's free gift of salvation and place our faith in His sacrifice, He offers us forgiveness, reconciliation, abundant life, eternal treasure, His Holy Spirit, and a place in heaven with Him.

We have all fallen short of the glory of God. **Romans 3:23** And we are all equally sinful before God. But, in Christ, we are made righteous. We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Not only does vengeance belong to God, we are also told to forgive the person who wronged us so our Heavenly Father will also forgive us. **Matthew 6:14**

Grace is God giving the greatest treasure to the least deserving – which is every one of us – not just those who have hurt us.

Prayer Points:

- Ask God to handle your hurtful situations rather than taking matters into your own hands.
- Forgive those who hurt you so God will also forgive you when you repent.
- Thank God for His mercy and grace.

Citizenship

The dictionary defines citizenship as “the state of being vested with the rights, privileges, and *duties* of a citizen”; a citizen being defined as “a native or naturalized member of a state or nation who owes allegiance to its government and is entitled to its protection (distinguished from alien).” (The Random House College Dictionary - emphasis added) The takeaway is that to enjoy the rights, protection and privileges, there are certain requirements and duties attached.

First - one needs to be “naturalized.” In the United States that means you must generally be at least 18 years old, have a green card, meet residency requirements, demonstrate good moral character, pass an English and civics test, and take an oath of allegiance.

As Christians (aka citizens of the Kingdom of God), there are certain requirements and responsibilities attached as well. Sitting in church, or even leading a Bible study, is not enough. We need to pledge our allegiance to the King and His kingdom, and then we need to become productive citizens in order to maintain and build up our domain - the kingdom. Otherwise, it might feel like we’re just enjoying the benefits without truly investing ourselves or committing beyond simply showing up.

We are saved - set apart - for a purpose. (**Ephesians 2:8-10**) Each one of us has been fearfully and wonderfully made, equipped for *every* good work He created for us, whether grand and glorious or seemingly small but never insignificant. When we value our gift of citizenship, we seek to respect the responsibilities that come with it.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, that we are no longer strangers and aliens, but we are fellow citizens of Your kingdom. Help us to demonstrate in tangible ways our dual citizenship that more may come to know You and to seek to also become citizens of Your kingdom

The Truth About Truth

“Live your truth!” It has become the battle cry of our times. Essentially, this means I can do what I want, be who I think I am, and live how I want. And I don’t have to feel any guilt or shame because it’s my truth.

This way of thinking accepts that we all live by a different truth, marching to the beat of our own drum, so to speak. But what if my truth contradicts your truth? Then whose truth is really the truth?

Living “our truth” based on emotions and feelings is not what the Bible teaches us. Rather than being subjected to each person’s definition of their own truth, we must all align our truth with the true Source of Truth, Jesus Christ.

In John’s gospel, he reveals that the Word that’s been here since the beginning IS God. He also tells us that the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among them – that’s Jesus.

Jesus told His disciples, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” He didn’t say I am your truth or I am their truth. He said I am THE truth. Jesus also referred to the Holy Spirit as THE Spirit of Truth, and He lives inside each of us who belong to Christ.

Believers of Jesus Christ must stand firm in God’s truth. How does He reveal His truth to us? In His Word. Truth is rooted in the eternal, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent God. His promises cannot fail: “Every word of God proves true.”

John 1:1 & 1:14; 14:6 & 14:17; 15:26, 16:13; Proverbs 30:5

Prayer Points:

- Seek God’s truth at all times.
- Ask Him to reveal His truth through His Word.
- Thank Him for His truth that continually sustains us.

Steadfast Love

“Let Your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in You.” (Psalm 33:22)

The Lord is always there for you, and He is holding out His hand to you. His love is constant, never failing, never changing. His love is steadfast. “Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness to the clouds.” (Psalm 36:5) Can you count all the ways you have been touched by God’s steadfast love? Solomon beautifully expressed his praise to God after the temple was built, when He declared, “Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever.” (1Chronicles 16:34) God’s love is not based on emotions. So, God never changes. “For I the Lord do not change.” (Malachi 3:6) Be comforted in knowing God’s steadfast love includes you and you are covered by His love for you. Have you been changed by His steadfast love? Have you seen miracles in your life because of His steadfast love? You are loved with an everlasting, steadfast love. “How precious is Your steadfast love, O God. The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. (Psalm 36:5-7.)

Deuteronomy 31:8

Prayer: Father, thank You for Your steadfast love. I know You are always there for me in everything I do. Amen

Sweet Silence

Prayer should be an essential part of our lives. We pray when we're anxious, in need of healing or answers, and hopefully we offer up prayers of thanksgiving for His blessings. But for many, the most difficult practice in our prayer life is listening. The easy part is presenting God with our deep and desperate needs; the hard part is waiting quietly and patiently for His answer.

We tend to want immediate answers, and we sometimes expect those answers to be obvious or maybe in line with what we already want to hear. But that doesn't train us in the art of hearing Him or really even trusting Him. Once we honestly pose the question and ask Him to clarify the answer, we need to be ready to wait on Him and to be attuned to any way He may choose to speak to us.

The answer may come in a Scripture jumping off the page, a message we hear, a word someone speaks, a song we hear at "just the right moment", or something that keeps cropping up in our minds as we lean in to listen in our quiet time. It takes time and commitment. It also takes expectation and an open mind to what He may say, but He promises to be faithful and generous if we will just truly ask and trust. He invites us to call on Him, but His desire is for a two-way conversation. **Jeremiah 33:3**

Prayer: Lord, teach us the beautiful practice of resting in Your presence as we call out to You. And then, in the words of James, may our souls wait in silence for You alone, for our hope is from You. (**James 1:5-6**)

Jesus Christ Unveiled

We don't need to shy away from reading Revelation because of fear-based misinterpretations and speculations about it. Revelation is a powerful and dynamic book that allows us the opportunity to encounter Christ and His glory in our current circumstances. In fact, Revelation's main theme is the unveiling of Jesus Christ!

His identity is revealed to show us that through the victory of His death and resurrection. Christ holds all authority. Revelation reveals Him in His present glory. He only speaks His Father's words. He intercedes for us and releases mighty power to us. And He is the Ruler of the Kings of our earth.

Scary images and allegories aside, when we allow the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts and minds to receive God's truth, the Revelation of Jesus Christ is unveiled IN us, not just TO us. And when we acknowledge that Christ dwells in us, we have hope of His glory no matter what happens in the physical realm.

It is up to us to seek His truth. God conceals the revelation of His Word in the hiding place of His glory. He delights when we seek Him with all our hearts. His Word is full of the Spirit and life.

God is our refuge and strength. He tells us not to fear though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea. The LORD Almighty is with us.

Revelation; John 6:63; Psalm 46:1-2, 7

Prayer Points:

- Ask God to unveil the rich mysteries of Revelation as you learn more about Jesus.
- Thank God for His hope, His promises, His refuge and His strength.
- May your desire be to seek His truth with all your heart.

How Sweet

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:8)

Have you ever thought about something you see on a regular basis and thinking that it would always be there and then one day it's gone. Recently, I saw a bank demolished to ashes and now an oil change will take the place of the bank. Just a reminder that the things of this world are temporal “...but the word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:8) We can depend upon God's word. How important is God's word? Here is how the Bible would answer that question. “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Words will by no means pass away.” (Matthew 24:35) God's word is a rich treasure to be “mined”. Psalm 119:99 tells us we have “...more understanding than all my teachers. For your testimonies are my meditation.” That is astonishing! And God's word is sweet. “How sweet are Your Words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103) God's word is nourishing to the soul. His sweet words can be your guide. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:105) Find the joy of spending time in God's word and let him speak to you in His word. “For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.” (Hebrews 4:12)

Prayer: Father, I thank You for Your word. I know it is true. Let Your word speak to my heart in a fresh way and guide me each day as I take the time to taste Your sweet words. Amen