

## **Week 14 Daily Devotional**

### **I. Prayer to enter the Lord's presence:**

Be still for a moment. "Lord, I give the day that is now past to you. It is yours. I give the day that is to come to you; help me to see where you are working and to join you there. Speak to me during these moments. I commit them and myself to you."

### **II. Prayer of Confession:**

"Lord, you are faithful to forgive me and cleanse me of my sin when I confess it to you. I confess my sin(s) of \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for forgiveness." (1 John 1:9)

### **III. Prayer of Thanksgiving:**

Choose to be thankful, speak out loud of what God has done.

"Thank you, Father, for \_\_\_\_\_. Fill my heart and my mouth with gratitude throughout this day."

### **IV. Scripture Reflection**

## **Day 1**

### **Read**

Gen. 3:8-17 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

James 1:13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

Rom. 6:1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

### **Reflect**

Suffering and evil are a multi-faceted problem and Scripture offers a multi-faceted solution. This week we will examine five of those answers. First, the original cause of suffering and evil: human sin. Human sin is possible because God designed us as choosing beings. We don't have a lot of data on the factors related to what is called "original sin" but we do know that Adam and Eve were able to choose the good but did not. We also know the consequences were devastating. Can you see the results of the "curse" in this passage? Look carefully, they are there.

### **Respond**

You do not have to continue to sin. All sin in your life is a choice that you make. Reflect on this. Because of the gospel you do not merely have a command to "not sin" you have a power to do what God wants you to and to be who he wants you to be. Do not let this make you feel guilty if you are failing...find hope in this possibility. You can, if you will, change more and more into Christ's likeness.

## **Day 2**

### **Read**

Ex. 20:5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me

Deut. 24:16 Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.

Prov. 19:3 A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the LORD.

### **Reflect**

Today we look at the reality that we live in a world of cause and effect. Scripture says that we "reap what we sow." This is true in regards to the physical world of crops and habits as well as the spiritual world. Moses wrote that God punishes children for the sins of their fathers then in another place he says this is not the case. The fact is children will suffer for the sins of their parents and others. But this is not direct punishment from God this is the fact of cause and effect. God allows the effects of sin to continue through generations but each generation has the opportunity and the responsibility to choose. We can make it harder or easier for our children by our choices, but all people make their own choices.

### **Respond**

Are there things in your life that you wonder why God doesn't "do more" to change and yet you are not doing all you can do yourself? This may not be the case for you, if not, then disregard this point. But if you have suffering or trouble in your life that is the result of your own poor choices or a lack of good choices then it is not appropriate to blame God. It is right to ask God to help you change and then pursue that change. Is there trouble in your life that you can affect through changed choices?

### **Day 3**

2Cor. 12:7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. <sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, "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. <sup>10</sup> That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

### **Reflect**

Today we look at "soul building through suffering." Paul experienced an undisclosed form of physical suffering. He asked God repeatedly to remove the suffering from his body and mind. I include "mind" because all chronic physical suffering leads to chronic "mental and emotional" suffering as well. God answered his request with..."No, that is not my plan for you." This had to be hard for a man who had seen God heal people through his ministry and now God did not intend to heal him. But hard though it was, Paul embraced the "soul building of suffering." God was going to reveal himself to and through Paul in this suffering.

### **Respond**

Rarely do we grow in the good times like we do in the hard times. Are you in a hard time? Are you maximizing the growth opportunity? Are you mostly praying for God to remove the trouble? That is legitimate but it is also good to ask God to build depth into you through the suffering as well. Paul would have chosen other than the suffering but in the end he wanted to be more like Christ. What if God does not intend to remove your affliction? Will you trust him anyway? Will you allow him to build depth into your soul?

## **Day 4**

### **Read**

John 9:1 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life <sup>4</sup> As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. <sup>7</sup> "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

Heb. 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

### **Reflect**

Today we look at how God reveals his glory in suffering by sometimes removing the suffering. The common perspective on suffering in Jesus time (and ours) is that when bad things happen you deserved it. Now we don't "deserve" good but it's also not true that every bad thing that happens to us is because we did something sinful. We can clearly see from this passage that the man's blindness was not the direct result of anyone's sin. Jesus said its "purpose" was that "God's glory would be revealed in his life." But remember, those eyes that Jesus healed for that man would eventually go dark again in death. This, like all physical healings, was temporary. The one permanent factor in this healing was the glory of revealed. God sometimes chooses to reveal his glory through healing, whether he does it directly or uses a doctor and medicine. Then there are other times when he reveals his glory through grace in suffering.

### **Respond**

You are free (and encouraged) to ask God for whatever you want. God, of course, is free to give you whatever he thinks you need. He may choose to remove trouble or suffering from your life, it is important that you continually ask him to do so. He may choose to not remove it, it is important that you trust him either way. Have you stopped praying for "rescue"? If so resume again right now. No telling what God might choose to do. Ask him for what you want, trust him for what he gives.

## **Day 5**

### **Read**

Luke 13:10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, <sup>11</sup> and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. <sup>12</sup> When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." <sup>13</sup> Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? <sup>16</sup> Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

2 Cor. 2:10-11 you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven — if there was anything to forgive — I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, <sup>11</sup> in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

### **Reflect**

Satan can directly cause suffering. Here he was causing this woman to be physically crippled. Now the fact that Satan was behind this suffering is really a side point of the passage. It is primarily about the stubborn refusal of the religious leaders to see the truth of the gospel. But nonetheless, somehow Satan was behind this suffering. In many other ways he is behind human suffering. We see this in the book of Job and in other places in Scripture. This is not some "catch all" answer to explain suffering but it is one of the answers given in Scripture.

### **Respond**

Satan has "schemes." They are his strategies and tactics. We must not live unaware of what they are. His primary strategy is to entice you to disobey God. To tempt you to find your good apart from God. To fall prey to his tactics can bring real suffering, physical, relational, mental, and spiritual. The solution is not fear but faith. You defeat Satan by turning to God heart, soul, mind, and strength. Do that right now...turn your whole self over to God anew.

**V. Prayer for others:**

*Pray specifically for the concerns of your life and the lives of others.*

**VI. Prayer of commitment:**

*“Lord God, I commit to love you with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength and with all my mind and to love my neighbor as myself. Empower me today to love you and others with everything that I am.” (Luke 10:27)*

**This Month's Scripture Memory:**

Galatians 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.