

Week 28 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

“Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, ‘Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.’

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.’

So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.” (Genesis 11:1-9)

Reflect

As a result of sin, generally, and Babel, specifically, nations are inevitable. God, in a sense, institutionalized nationhood in the world when He confused the languages of man and scattered them across the earth.

And we quickly discover, as we keep reading, that nations are also broken and temporary, just like the men and women who comprise them. Not even God’s chosen nation, Israel, could live up to His standards. Yet, God is sovereign even over the failure of nations and their leaders. Over and over in the Old Testament, God raises up leaders and then dethrones them according to His righteous judgments. From our perspective it can feel like chaos but, from God’s perspective, it is one step in a controlled, redemptive plan.

We sometimes allow ourselves to be worked up into distress as we think about our world, our nation, and the foreign and domestic leaders who make critical decisions each day that affect our lives here on earth. Sometimes, we forget that God is sovereign over all of it, that He has a plan, and that He is good and just. When we consider these truths, we are able to live faithful lives despite uncertainty.

Respond

How can you actively trust God with the uncertainty of our nation and world today as you live faithfully with the calling He’s given you? Take a moment to pray for our nation and other nations of the world that come to mind.

Day 2

Read

“For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter...Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also...” (Rom. 2:28-29, 3:29-30)

Reflect

In the Old Testament, God had chosen the Israelites to be His covenant partner on earth. He loved them like a faithful husband loves his wife. He was to be the source of their identity and hope. The land, the Law, the Temple, circumcision, and the blessings of the “good life” were merely symbols and by-products of the relationship. Those things, which came to distinctly characterize Jewish life, were never intended to carry weighty things like identity and hope. But Israel struggled to keep their sight on God and sometimes clung, instead, to the national symbols of Jewish life rather than God, Himself. The result of this failure was vain religion and, ultimately, judgment.

In Christ, the salvation of God visibly broke with any specific geopolitical identity; the criteria for determining “God’s people” moved away from Jewish nationality, ethnicity, and tradition and reordered around the heart and soul. Yet, we still have a tendency to mix external, nationalistic symbols and substance with our identity in Christ.

In what ways do you see nationalistic symbols and substance mixing with the identity of the American church? What are the real or potential consequences of this mixing, positive or negative?

What about your own heart? Are there any ways you’ve sought cultural or nationalistic symbols or substance to satisfy the longing of your heart in an unhealthy way?

Respond

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the cultural or nationalistic symbols to which you may be clinging for comfort. Ask Him to remind you now of the simple truths of the gospel. Ask Him to satisfy the longings of your heart.

Day 3

Read

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Reflect

As we read the teachings of Jesus and other New Testament authors we find that they didn’t discard the idea of nation or even the value of national identity. In fact, they re-framed it and built on it. Although the salvation of God had visibly broken away from the nation of Israel in Christ, God was establishing a new nation; He was doing a new thing.

Jesus ushered into earth a new Kingdom. In that sense, Jesus *was* a political figure setting up a nation, just not in the way most Jews expected and not in the way some Christians would try to argue. Jesus ushered in an invisible Kingdom. Nevertheless, it is a very real Kingdom; a Kingdom with a clear ethic, a clear agenda, and a clear King who has unimaginable power and expansive territory. The new King, Jesus, is also making for Himself a devoted people, the church. By grace and through faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit, people from every nation can become citizens of His kingdom.

This is the reality of which Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:9-10.

Respond

Respond today by trusting in God’s work to make you His own. Apart from anything you’ve ever done, good or bad, the God of the universe took on human form in Jesus Christ and died on a cross because He wanted *you*. Yes, *you*. In so doing, He invited you into a new thing, the church: “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.” Although you were once estranged and alone, you’ve been brought near into fellowship by the finished work of Christ. He bore your sin on the cross and then strong-armed it for a final victory at the empty tomb. “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” Praise God and rest now in the identity He has given you. Thank Him.

Day 4

Read

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Reflect

Yesterday, we focused on how this passage is loaded with identity. Here, God is clearly telling His people who they are in His sight. But in the midst of the identity – and flowing out from it – is a way of life. It’s natural for it to work that way; we all live out of who we believe ourselves to be.

Here, God tells us who we are, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own possession,” *and then* tells us how that should shape our way of life, “that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

As was the case with Israel, God has made us into a holy nation *so that* He might be glorified in the earth through us. We are His set apart people. We are the new priesthood, mediators between God and mankind. The point is this: our identity in Christ, as citizens of His Kingdom, should compel us out into God’s mission in the world

Respond

Meditate on the idea of being God’s holy nation, set apart for His purposes. Meditate on the imagery of the priesthood as mediators between God and mankind. What is a simple way you can engage with your God-given role as a priest, set apart for God’s purposes, today at your job or in your home?

Day 5

Read

“I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Rev. 7:9-10)

“The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. (Rev. 21:23-26)

Reflect

The narrative of Scripture informs us that nations are inevitable, broken, and temporary. Yet, the image of heaven that God gave to John clearly includes the glory and honor of the nations. We conclude, then, that although nations are inevitable, broken, and temporary, they are also redeemable. God can and will invite people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation who have trusted in Him into His eternal presence at the end of the age. *And* He will invite them to bring redeemed symbols and substance of their nation and culture into the New Earth.

Take a moment to reflect on these passages and allow them to inform your imagination of heaven.

Respond

If this vision of the New Earth is where we are headed, how might it shape the way we live and think about nations – our own and others – now? Take some time to pray for other nations of the earth and their people: maybe friends you’ve met, friends you’ve read about in email updates from those working overseas, or just choose a nation and pray for its people, specifically.

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:

Philippians 4:4-8

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things.