

Week 36 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

Psa. 119:32 I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.

Reflect

Very often relationship with God, or a life of obedience to Him is portrayed as a path in Scripture. Likewise a life lived in opposition to God is also described as a path. Sometimes in daily life these two paths seem to barely diverge from one another. However as time goes on we discover that the paths lead to destinations that are "miles" apart. It's also true that sometimes the good path doesn't feel good in the moment because it goes against what we often believe will make us happy. Confidence in God and in the authority of His Word to speak to every area of our lives is foundational to living a thriving life in Christ. The Psalmist didn't merely take steps down the good path, he ran that path. He knew that the path of God's commands is the path of real "heart and life" freedom.

Respond

It's unlikely, but of course possible, that you are directly and consciously walking away from the path of God in some area of your life. If you are this will only lead to heartache for you. Please repent and turn to God's ways. It is more likely that our rebellion is "smaller" and more subtle. It shows up in things like holding on to selfish thoughts or harboring unforgiveness or putting our own interests first. These things are "off" the path that leads to freedom. Repent of these things today, ask God to put you in your mind(thought life) on the path that leads to heart freedom.

Day 2

Read

Deut. 6:4-9 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Deut. 30:15-18 See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

Reflect

Deuteronomy is a series of sermons that Moses delivered to his people at the end of his life. He repeated much of the law given years earlier at Mt. Sinai. In chapter six, you find the famous passage that Jesus repeated in part in the gospels, "Love God with all your heart, soul, and strength". We don't have to wait for the New Testament to see that God's original intent for giving us his commands was that we would love him from our hearts. God's commands are given to us so that we will live a thriving life and so the generations that follow us will learn to thrive. What humanity has often turned into purely negative restrictions on freedom is a gift from God to live in the full freedom of God's design.

Respond

Engage your mind during this time. Reflect on the blessing of boundaries in the world God has made. Right now you thrive in the boundary of earth's atmosphere and gravity. You are safe to sit and read and think because of the boundaries of laws upheld by government. What are the other boundaries God has set in your life? Think about how they bless you and make your life rich. Train your thinking to treasure God's boundaries on your life. You do this by practicing good thinking. Loving God with our minds means choosing what we think about.

Day 3

Read

Rom. 14:1-8 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

Reflect

Paul frequently dealt with the question of what part of the Old Testament laws still applied to Christians. The Law consisted of things that were moral, ceremonial, and civil in nature. Israel was a nation with laws given directly by God to govern them. In addition there were ceremonial laws that set them apart from other nations and pointed forward to the gospel of Jesus. Then there were moral laws that are universal in scope and application like "do not kill or steal." The ceremonial laws were not intended to be ongoing means of "getting grace" from God. Unfortunately they often became the focal point of relationship with God rather than celebrating and pointing to more important matters such as Love for God and love for others. In Romans 14 Paul addresses two forms of the ceremonial law that caused people confusion...certain foods and special days. Paul makes it clear that Christians are free to eat all foods and that no one day is more special than another. He also makes it clear that there will be differences of conviction on these things and that in the midst of these differences Christians are to "accept one another" especially the one that is less mature in their faith and struggling to understand what God's freedom looks like for them.

Respond

Spend some time contemplating verse one, "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters." Think through some things that are disputable and others that are not open for dispute. Engage this important principal with all your mind.

Day 4

Read

Rom. 14:9-17 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written:

“ ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’ ”

So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

Reflect

Paul directs us to use our freedom to serve one another not to "destroy" others. The mature believer understood that Christians are free to eat any food and celebrate or not celebrate any day. The less mature believer struggled to understand the difference between the boundaries of God that leads to freedom and the freedom from certain boundaries that had taken people's freedom through legalism. As the less mature believer works through these issues the mature believer is to defer to them. The mature believer is "free" to not use their freedom because ultimately they are called to love others. Love for others is the ultimate expression of freedom.

Respond

Is there an area where you have turned a freedom into a burden? For instance the principle of "Sabbath" in Scripture is where we are to set aside time in our lives to rest, to recreate, and to worship. We are "free" to cease from our efforts and work and to learn to rest in Christ. This means different things for different people. For some rest means lots of physical activity, for others it means virtually no physical activity. All of God's limits are designed for our freedom. This includes giving, living in community, regular worship, moral purity, etc. Engage your mind and think deeply on an area of God's limits that you struggle to see as his invitation to freedom.

Day 5

Read

Rom. 14:19-23 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

Reflect

Verse 22 says "So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God." "These things" is specifically referring to your own personal conviction regarding debatable matters. Paul doesn't mean we shouldn't talk about our differences or try to understand one another. His intention is that we should not attempt to "press" others to see things as we do if they have a personal conviction for their lives. Ironically, the weaker brother or sister who has "more" convictions about disputable matters will see themselves as being more mature because they live with more rules. The more mature believer, who experiences more freedom, must not look down on others and certainly must not try to compel others to violate their own convictions.

Respond

Do you see yourself as being more "spiritual" because you have set more boundaries in your life? The mature believer will learn to love boundaries but will not take pride in their ability to keep God's law. The mature believer will not add more limitations to God's boundaries than God himself has intended. Do a quick check-up. Where are you in regards to making sure you live within God's boundaries but do not draw the circle larger or smaller than God intends?

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:

Colossians 3:12-14

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.