

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Monday, August 24

Listen

Romans 12:19-20

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God;^[E] for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰ No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.”

We know so much worldly wisdom that goes against these verses. “They’ll get what’s coming to them.” “What goes around, comes around.” “We’re going to make them pay.” We have so many ways of talking about revenge and making it sound like it’s a good thing to go after. In our Scripture reading, Paul encourages the Roman Christians to leave vengeance and punishment up to the Lord. We are like toddlers trying to dish out justice in the Supreme Court. God’s justice is his business! We don’t have the tools, knowledge, or the wisdom to step into his court room and make decisions. Take **two minutes** to focus on these verses from Romans 12. If it helps fill the time, think about these questions:

Have you ever misjudged someone? How did you find out you were wrong?

If we leave vengeance up to God, then what does Paul call us to do in verse 20?

(If you’d like to know more, read Deuteronomy 32. Paul is quoting from this chapter of the Old Testament.)

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Tuesday, August 25

Pray

Romans 12:14-15

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

It might be a little easier to hear God say, “vengeance is mine,” than to hear what Paul says in these verses. In our Scripture for yesterday we were reminded that God is going to bring justice to wrongdoing and those who take part in it. We get a sense of relief knowing those things will be taken care of—even if it’s not us who are doing the punishing. But here, in these verses, Paul is telling us to give out the opposite of justice! Bless those who persecute, love those who hate, pray to God on their behalf, wish the best on them and their children...if we ever catch ourselves doing these types of things, then we can know it is through the Holy Spirit and not of ourselves. With that in mind, take **2 minutes** praying in the Holy Spirit, asking for the help required to be involved in this kind of blessing. Consider what you have been learning in the Scripture:

Our God is concerned with justice and he will right all wrongs.

Our God is concerned with grace, mercy, and love and he has made us righteous through Jesus.

We were enemies of God before he adopted us as his children. Now our enemies might be a blessing away from becoming children of God.

Feel free to end your prayer in this way: *Heavenly Father, thank you for making us your children. You loved us into the kingdom of God, give us a small measure of that love so that we can have the power to bless those who persecute us. We pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen*

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Wednesday, August 26

Family Devo Day

Bible Journal entry for Wednesday, August 26th, 2020

Today's entry comes from the New Testament reading for this week.

Romans 12:21

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Activity: Write down what this verse means to you.

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Thursday, August 27

Study

Matthew 16:21

²¹ From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

Just over half-way through the Gospel of Matthew, there is a major shift. From the beginning we are introduced to this baby Jesus who will fulfill the promises of God recorded in the Old Testament. He will be *Immanuel*, “God-with-us.” His path for ministry is prepared by John the Baptist fulfilling Old Testament prophecy. He conquers the temptations of the devil and begins to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). We see glimpses of the kingdom in his teaching. He heals people from disease and demon oppression. He can control the weather. He performs miracles like feeding 5,000 with only a few fish and a few loaves of bread. He even brings a little girl back to life. Thank God! We read and we think, “Here’s Jesus! Here’s hope for the world—here is hope for my world! Maybe things will get better.”

We finally came to a highpoint in the gospel just last week when we heard Peter say, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). But, immediately following this grand proclamation, Jesus began to teach about his suffering and his death. This is the shift that happens just about halfway through Matthew’s gospel. It is a shift that sets our eyes on the cross ahead of Jesus. He doesn’t mention the cross and his death before this, but he will foretell of his death on a cross three times in the second half of Matthew’s Gospel (Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19). We begin to understand that this is what it means for Jesus to be “the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” It’s not just about dodging death for as long as we can by being taught good morals, being healed from ailments and disease, being supernaturally cared for by the God who controls all of creation. The kingdom of heaven is not about dodging death. It’s about dying and being raised from the dead, recreated in the likeness of Jesus. Jesus is our Messiah because he dies this terrible death on the cross. This is what we begin to understand as we continue to read the Gospel of Matthew.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son as the Messiah for your chosen people. Thank you for not only giving us hope for this life which is slowly passing away. You provide and eternal hope for the life to come and we are convinced that you will bring us back to life just like you did for Jesus 2000 years ago. Strengthen our faith in your promises, we pray, in Jesus’ name, Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Friday, August 28

Songs of Scripture

Devotion on Hymn of the Day: *Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer*

Holy Gospel: Matthew 16:21-28

Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer may be familiar to some as *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*, which was the original text of this song. This beloved hymn was written by William Williams (1717-1791) from Wales. Williams graduated from the university as a physician, intending to become a medical doctor. However, after hearing a sermon by Howell Harris, he was converted and soon after, he changed professions to become a physician of the soul - a preacher. Williams traveled over 95,000 miles during his ministry, drawing crowds of 10,000 or more. Throughout his pilgrimages, Williams survived the winter snows, the spring rains, and the hot summers. He was both beaten by mobs (once nearly dying) and cheered by crowds. Traces of the hardship Williams experienced as a traveling minister can be found throughout the lyrics of *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*. But in all his travels, he sought only to do the will of God until his death at age 74. This hymn has been used for worship in congregations around the world and in many denominations. In addition, it was used at the funeral of Princess Diana of Wales in 1997 and the royal wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton in 2011.

Verses 24 and 25 of this week's Gospel say: *Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."* God is asking us to follow Him in order to gain eternal life. This is exactly what Williams did throughout his life and expresses in the text of his hymn. We all encounter difficulties in our earthly pilgrimage. "*Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer*" affirms that if we follow God, He will provide for us not only on Earth but for eternity.

Guide me ever, great Redeemer,

Pilgrim through this barren land.

I am weak, but You art mighty;

Hold me with Your pow'rful hand.

Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,

Feed me now and evermore,

Feed me now and evermore.

*Open now the crystal fountain
Where the healing waters flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliv'rer, strong deliv'rer,
Shield me with Your mighty arm,
Shield me with Your mighty arm.*

*When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs and praises, songs and praises,
I will raise forevermore,
I will raise forevermore.*

Prayer: Our Great Redeemer... Thank You for Your abundant grace and for leading us throughout our pilgrimage here on Earth. Although there will be hardships and struggles, we know You provide for our every need on our journey. And when we take up our cross and follow You, Lord, we are secure in Your mighty arms, knowing You will protect us and raise us to eternal life with You. In Your heavenly name we pray. AMEN

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Saturday, August 29

Prepare for Worship

Jeremiah 15:18

**¹⁸ Why is my pain unceasing,
my wound incurable,
refusing to be healed?**

**Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook,
like waters that fail.**

Jeremiah is praying to the Lord. He is using strong language here to describe his feelings towards God and his current situation. He is crying out in pain wondering why God is acting the way he is acting in regards to his chosen people. Just before this God pronounced his judgement: "I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, declares the Lord: the sword to kill, the dogs to tear, and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy" (Jeremiah 15:3). He does this because Israel has rejected God and he is "weary of relenting" (Jeremiah 15:6). Jeremiah has been trying to warn the people, but they would not listen. Jeremiah did not give up even when he was mocked by the Israelite people. So, he cries out to God in anguish, "Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail." What happened to the blessings that comes along with following God? What happened to the peace that comes along with being obedient? What happened to the joy that comes along with having faith? Jeremiah is saying, "I come to you with a wound and you pour salt in it! What's going on!?" Sometimes this is the hand we are dealt. To prepare for worship in times of trouble just like Jeremiahs, we need to come to God with words of honesty and faith. Jeremiah isn't sugarcoating what's going on. But, at the same time, he has faith enough to know that God is the one to bring his complaint. God is the one who will answer.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we do not pray for times of trouble, but we know that they will come. Be with us in those times and strengthen our faith. This "life" we have here can feel so much more like death than anything else and we even begin to think that you are against us and out to get us. Be patient with us, Lord! Give us what we need to grow in wisdom and faith so that we can worship you with a genuine heart of reverence, in Jesus' name, Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Sunday, August 30

Praise

Jeremiah 15:20

**²⁰ And I will make you to this people
a fortified wall of bronze;
they will fight against you,
but they shall not prevail over you,
for I am with you
to save you and deliver you,
says the LORD.**

God does not let Jeremiah's words fall on deaf ears! Praise God! Our Jeremiah was hurting when we read his prayer just yesterday, and today we have one verse from God's response. God reassures Jeremiah that he will be with him. These Israelite people aren't going to get the best of him and God is going to keep him safe through the coming tragedy. Think of a child who refuses to get a tooth pulled that is rotten through and through. The parent doesn't say, "Alright, we'll just leave that rotten tooth in there." No! Mom promises the child that the pain isn't for nothing and that the child is going to make it out on the other side. God is dealing with the sin of the Israelite people. And the operation he is about to perform on the nation is going to be painful. But God knows that nothing good will come from calling off his judgement, instead he needs to promise for salvation and deliverance *through* the tragedy, not *from* it. This is what our God does. He promises that tragedy won't get the final word. Even in the worst of circumstances, nothing can take away the promise of the resurrection that we have in Jesus Christ. He might not save us *from* the tragedy, but we can trust that he will save us *through* it, safe and sound on the other side.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we come to you this morning remembering your promises. This life can cause us a whole lot of hurt, but we know that you are there watching over us. You are a God who saves! You are a God who answers prayers and hears us when we call to him! You respond and give us words of hope to help us press on day to day. We praise you in Jesus' name, Amen