

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Monday, October 19

Listen

Leviticus 19:1-2

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

² Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

Moses lays before the people of Israel all the Ten Commandments. He begins by saying, ***“Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.” (Leviticus 19:2)*** It may scare us that the LORD calls us to be holy, but it shouldn't. Moses continued his address to the Israelites, listing the Commandments as well as other ways to be holy before the LORD. The Law of Holiness is not just for select individuals, but for all people. The purpose of the Torah (law) is, “to create a holy people which displays its consecration to God's service in normal day-to-day relations of farming, commerce, family living, and community affairs.” (Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut, My Jewish Learning, Leviticus 19) The culmination of Leviticus 19 is verse 18, “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18) All that we do in this world should center on loving our neighbor as ourself. That is what it means to be in a right relationship with God and each other.

Jesus was asked a lawyer (an expert in the Old Testament Law), ***“Teacher, which Commandment in the law is the greatest? He (Jesus) said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment.³⁹And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:36-40)*** This is a summary of the Old Testament Law from Deuteronomy 6:5-9 also called the Shema prayer. In this prayer from Deuteronomy we are called to be in a right relationship with God. Jesus takes it further to loving your neighbor as yourself, so we will be in a right relationship with all people.

To be holy means to be in a right relationship with God and with all people. It touches every aspect of our lives and teaches us to listen to the needs of others and respond in love toward them. To do otherwise is not to center one's life on God/Christ, but to be self-centered.

Lord, open my heart that I would love you with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and that I would love my neighbor as myself. Help me to see when my desires center on my own wants and desires and when they are centered on You. Use my life today to draw others to You and away from myself. Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Tuesday, October 20

Pray

1 Thessalonians 2:7b-8

But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. ⁸ So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

“A positive and continuous relationship to one's father has been found to be associated with a good self-concept, higher self-esteem, higher self-confidence in personal and social interaction, higher moral maturity, reduced rates of unwed teen pregnancy, greater internal control and higher career aspirations. Fathers who are affectionate, nurturing and actively involved in child-rearing are more likely to have well-adjusted children.” (Dr. George Rekers, *Homemade*, vol. 11, no. 1)

When the Apostle Paul speaks to the people of Thessaloniki he refers to their relationship with them in love. Although there were times when he had to make demands of them “as apostles of Christ, the apostles loved them as **“a nurse tenderly caring for her own children” (1 Thessalonians 2:7)** and **they “delt with each one of you like a father with his children.” (1 Thessalonians 2:11)** When we follow Christ we think of others before we think of ourselves, as a parent their child. We know that we are sometimes let down by even our own family, but our Heavenly Father is perfect. He is always there in a positive continuous relationship. He is there to build us up and encourage us in our lives.

You may have been disappointed by your father, but our Heavenly father never disappoints us. He is affectionate, nurturing, actively involved in our lives, so that we might develop into the son or daughter he desires us to be.

When I think of all that our Heavenly Father has done for us I am amazed and humbled. I am infinitesimally less a father, than our Heavenly Father is. Yet in our weakness and shortcomings we are to intercede (pray) for our children. One day they will understand the depth of our love for them, even when we fail. The beauty is that our Heavenly Father never fails.

Take some time today and tomorrow to pray for your child(ren). Pray that they would know the peace that comes from Christ, that God would direct their paths and that that would have a peace that passes understanding as they walk with Him.

Almighty God, I know that I am flawed as a parent. Teach me to love as You love us and to encourage not only my children, but others in their faith, as if they were my own child. Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Wednesday, October 21

The Lord gives wisdom.

Proverbs 2:6

Today's entry into our Bible journal is a cryptogram. Each picture represents a letter. Use the key to fill in the blanks below to find out today's Bible verse. You can either print this and tape it into your journal or just write the answer in your journal and reflect on the verse.

Check back later in the week for the answer to the puzzle.

⌘

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

(Hint: Proverbs 2:6)

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Thursday, October 22

Study

Matthew 22:40

⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Why is it that we often qualify everything so that we know the limits of what we have to or don't have to do? What is it within our very being as people that if we know our responsibilities, then we don't have to worry about the rest? I think we want to know what we have to do, so that we can decide if whatever we want is really worth it.

A blind and deaf woman was told that she could never escape from her prison of pain and weakness. "Oh, well," she replied quickly, "there's a lot of living to be found within your limitations, if you don't wear yourself out fighting them." "Young lady," the doctor replied, "I wish I could have you preach to about a hundred of my patients a year." The woman was Helen Keller who said, "Face your limitations and acknowledge them, but do not let them master you."

Jesus is asked a question by a lawyer of the Old Testament Law what is the greatest of all the commandments. Jesus responds, ***"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."*** ³⁸***This is the greatest and first commandment.*** ³⁹***And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*** ⁴⁰***On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."*** (Matthew 22:37-40) These two Commandments sum-up all of the Ten Commandments. The first is; ***"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."*** (Matthew 22:37) We have to ask ourselves if we keep this Commandment. Then we start to qualify to slice and dice it so that it's manageable. How we give attention to God, how we give to Him, how we honor Him in our lives, how we spend our time reading the Scriptures, and praying to Him. Even I would have to say that I fail.

Have you ever failed to keep the first three Commandments, called the first table of the Law? 1) "You shall have no other gods before me." Have we ever put something or someone before God in the level of importance we place on it, or them? 2) "You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain." Have you ever used God's name to curse someone or something? 3) "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy." Have you ever hated the preaching of God's Word, instead of hearing it with gladness and learning from it? If you've done any of these you've failed.

The second part of the Ten Commandments is called the second table of the Law. That's summarized in the statement, ***"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*** (Matthew 22: 39) This summarizes the fourth through the tenth Commandments. 4) "Honor your father and your mother." Have you ever despised your parents or superiors, made them angry, rather than honoring, serving obeying and loving them? 5) "You shall not kill." Have you ever wished bodily harm on anyone instead of wanting to help, befriend, and serve them? 6) "You shall not commit adultery." Have you always been faithful and decent in what you say and do and think with respect to sex? 7) "You shall not steal." Have you looked for ways to deceive others, so that you might receive more than what is fair? 8) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Have you ever lied, slandered called someone names or made fun of them, rather than speaking well of them and always putting the best construction on what they have said or done? 9) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house." Have you ever sought to get more than what is right in business or from a land or home deal? 10) "You shall not

covet your neighbor's wife, manservant, maidservant, nor anything else that is your neighbors." Have you ever tried to force, coax away from your neighbor his wife, or workers, rather than encourage them to stay with your neighbor? Jesus summarizes this with ***"Love your neighbor as yourself."*** (***Matthew 22: 39***) If you have done any of these things, then you've failed. I didn't come up with the questions myself, all of the questions are based on Luther's explanation of the Ten Commandments.

When we face our limitations and acknowledge them, then they will not be our master and we their servant. Instead, in realizing that we have sinned and only Christ is perfect we are free to serve Christ as our Master. We can rely wholly rely on what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross, dying for our sins, that we might be forgiven through faith in Him. It enables us to come to Jesus in humility and ask for forgiveness, that we might be freed from our fears and limitations. It's at the foot of the cross that we find peace.

Lord, teach us to come to You daily and ask for forgiveness that we may open our hearts to serve You alone in all that we do to Your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Friday, October 23

Devotion on Reformation Hymn - *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* - by Martin Luther

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. [Psalm 46:1]

History: Not only was Martin Luther a great reformer, Bible translator, political leader, fiery preacher, and theologian, but he was also a musician. As a young boy, he sang in a boys' choir and became proficient on the flute. In his music, his strong emotions and convictions were often apparent.

During the Protestant Reformation, Luther worked to bring singing to the congregation within the German Church. He worked to create new music that would be sung in the vernacular language and wrote a number of hymns to help revive congregational singing. These hymns often were written to secular melodies, sometimes tunes associated with bar and tavern songs. However, the melody of *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* is said to be an original melody he composed and not one he borrowed.

Luther's most famous hymn, "*Ein' feste Burg is unser Gott*," - "*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*", is based on Psalm 46. In this song, Martin Luther proclaims his confidence in God and rallies all Christians to war against evil. Luther understood evil and experienced much persecution during the Reformation. After he posted his ninety-five theses on the door of Wittenberg's Castle in 1517, he faced years of trials and persecution, he was excommunicated from the Roman church, and he continually faced threats against his life and his freedom. But Luther also knew the power of the message in Psalm 46:1 "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in danger" and so he wrote "*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*". This song reflects Luther's awareness of our intense struggle with Satan and proclaims his confidence in God, rallying all Christians to war against evil and let God's truth triumph through us.

Since he wrote it in 1529, Luther's hymn has been translated into nearly every language. At least 80 English translations are available, but the most widely used version most in the United States is the translation by Frederic Henry Hedge in 1852. Our Lutheran Book of Worship uses its own updated translation when the hymnal was published in 1978.

This song continues to be a powerful anthem and The first line of "*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*" is inscribed on the tomb of Martin Luther at Wittenberg. The hymn was sung at the funeral of President Dwight D. Eisenhower at the National Cathedral in Washington DC, March 1969. And it was also included in the National Service of Prayer and Remembrance, held shortly after the September 11, 2001 attacks against America.

Reflect: God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). With a beautiful reminder of that truth, "*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*" gives us hope amidst the struggles of life. The words, written nearly five hundred years ago, still ring true today as we face life storms such as the pandemic and any

other personal struggles. It gives us comfort to know we can find refuge in the mighty fortress of our God. We are also reminded that our “ancient foe” (the devil) still tries to attack and bring us down. Often this happens when we are in our weakest and most vulnerable times. But, when we turn to God, we win these battles...“He holds the field victorious” and will be by our side through all our trials. We simply need to look to Him for our strength and guidance and He will provide.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father. You are truly our stronghold and our fortress. We thank You for being our strength when evil surrounds us and when we face battles in life. We know that we are not strong enough alone to face these trials alone, but You shield and protect us if we look to you as our fortress. Help us to turn to You in all things in life and keep our hearts and minds in You, Lord, for You are truly our sure defense and protector. Amen.

Sources: <https://songsandhymns.org>

“Then Sing My Soul” by Robert J. Morgan © 2003 Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Saturday October 24

Prepare for Worship

Psalm 1:1-2

¹ Happy are those
who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;
² but their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law they meditate day and night.

This is a good reminder. No one wants to be unhappy in life. But often we get mixed up thinking certain things, activities, or free time will make us content. Even worse, we can get caught up in following bad advice, leading us down a path to sin against God. We sin because we think it will make us happy. But, Psalm 1 reminds us of a different way. Notice, this isn't the difference between doing good and doing bad. The two ways that this Psalm lays out is 1) following wicked advice, walking in sin, and an attitude of resolved mocking versus 2) loving and thinking about God's Word. So, how does this Psalm help us prepare for worship? It reminds us of the way of life that God has invited us into. It reminds us why we read from God's Word not only on Sunday, but also throughout the week. It reminds us that if we find ourselves caught in wicked advice, sin, or a constant mocking attitude, then we are just one Word away from listening again to God's Word. Praise and thanksgiving will be our response wherever we find ourselves. If we are in need of forgiveness, we will find it in God's Word. If we have been delivered from sin, then it has happened on account of God's Word. Either way, we will be prepared to praise him.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we are so thankful that you give us wise words to follow. You don't leave us guessing what life is all about. You tell us what will truly make us happy. Help us to follow you and listen to you as we gather together for worship in Jesus' name, Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Sunday, October 25

Praise

Psalm 1:5-6

**⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
⁶ for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.**

There was a dad who was helping his son buy his first car. They did a lot of searching and it came down to two options. An old muscle car with over 200,000 miles on it or an old hatchback with only 100,000 miles on it. Both were the same price. The son wanted the muscle car, but the dad said, "You want something that's gonna last. The hatchback isn't as alluring, but it's going to get you where you're going." Sometimes sin looks enticing. Sometimes another way other than God's way looks pretty good. But, buying into the way of the wicked isn't a good spiritual investment. It's not going to last. We have an amazing testimony before us when we gather to worship our God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We find ourselves in the midst of the congregation. A congregation of people that God has brought together. A congregation of people who are being cared for by God. A congregation of people who are learning more and more "the way of the righteous." Because of what God has done, it is a congregation of people who have eternal life. It's not just the difference between 100,000 miles. It is the difference between a single lifetime and eternity. We worship the God who has shown us what it means to have righteousness in Jesus Christ. We worship the God who saves congregations of people that they might be safe throughout all eternity.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we praise you for what you have done! We are in awe of you as we look to members in our congregation knowing that you are at work in their lives as well. You teach, lead, guide, and protect us so that we make it safely to you to live with you in eternity. We praise you in Jesus' name, Amen!

(Take a moment to look through your directory and pray this prayer of blessing over one or two people: "You are an eternal member of God's people because of Jesus, Amen.")