

Berean Baptist Church
Devotions for the Week of April 25th

Berean Baptist Church
Devotions, Prayers, Sermon Notes
For April 25, 2010

Daily Devotions



Thought: As the power of God's promised future, **the Spirit awakens hope**, yearning and restlessness for the completion of God's redemptive work and the establishment of justice and peace throughout the creation.

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Opening Prayer for the Week:

Be present, Spirit of God, within me, your dwelling place and home, that this house may be one where all darkness is penetrated by your light, all troubles calmed by your peace, all evil redeemed by your love, all pain transformed in your suffering, and all dying glorified in your risen life.

Monday *Jn 14:16-19*

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

In today's reading, the disciples are beginning to understand that Jesus will be crucified, that he will no longer be with them. Sometimes we do feel abandoned. Sometimes discouraged and sometimes defeated. So we know how the disciples felt as the reality of Jesus' ultimate mission, death on a cross, finally struck them. But Jesus makes a promise. He promises that the disciples will not be left alone, abandoned and defeated. Through his death and resurrection a 'Counselor,' sometimes translated 'Comforter' will be given to them. Jesus is promising that the presence of God that they have come to know through him, will now be with them always. The Holy Spirit is the promise of God's presence. And as Jesus says, that presence will bring life to us in any and every situation. The Holy Spirit is a promise that we will never be alone and the gift of God's peace in every circumstance. The challenge for the disciple is to remain aware of and open to this presence. There are many things that can make us aware and open; prayer, devotion, quiet time, walks, music, sometimes even a nap. Make time for prayer and a walk, or prayer and silence, and promise yourself a few moments to be aware of the Spirit each day.

Tuesday*Jn 20:21-22*

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

As we learned in the sermon on Sunday, Paul's understanding of the Holy Spirit was at least in part influenced by his experience of suffering. The Gospel of John makes a similar connection. The Holy Spirit comes after Jesus is crucified. The Good News about this connection is that we are promised comfort by the Holy Spirit in the midst of trauma. The Bad News for us may be that Jesus gives the Holy Spirit after he himself practices complete and utter faithfulness to God's will, even to the point of death. My point is that the Spirit is not simply a gift so that we will find solace in the midst of our pain, but more specifically, the Holy Spirit is a gift meant to equip us to proclaim the good news even when that proclamation is difficult, challenging, even hurtful and damaging. The Holy Spirit is empowering, but that empowerment is so that we will take up the challenge of the cross. The Holy Spirit enables us to see the cruelty, suffering and injustice in the world around us (the sin) and then to bring light to that darkness, work for justice, speak for the silenced, and to love those whom others hate regardless of the personal cost we may incur. What stand may the Holy Spirit be leading you to take for the suffering, and the Kingdom God created for those who suffer?

Wednesday*Ro 8:23*

23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

So, we are promised comfort and we are also challenged to take up a cross, but what exactly is the hope that enables us to carry this cross. Paul is talking about a new creation. The fancy theological word for what Paul is talking about is eschatology. Eschatology refers to the end times, the final events. We are most familiar with the book of Revelation and its description of war and suffering when it comes to eschatology. But that is not all that

Eschatology means. It also means, and should mean for us, when creation reaches its purpose, or, when God accomplishes what God intended for all creation, including ourselves to be.

What Paul is saying here is that the Spirit gives us a glimpse of what God's goal is... a preview of what we will become when we are fully reborn as God intended. So the Holy Spirit gives us a glimpse of the future and it is not a frightening future as so many present it. The future isn't destruction, but re-creation. So we find hope and courage in the midst of suffering because we are not only looking at the imperfection and brokenness of the world, we are looking ahead to the repair, the new, the perfection that God intended. We can engage in the struggle because we see the goal, which is that God will make all things new. So the Holy Spirit helps us to focus not only on what is now... but what will be, and to then participate in the becoming. The Holy Spirit gives us God's eyes to see the potential in ourselves, others and all creation.

Thursday*Eze 36:25-26*

I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you;

Ro 7:6

6 But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit,

This is the personal challenge of the work of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is the down-payment or the preview of what we are called and enabled to become through Christ, then we are challenged to grow and change through the leading of the Spirit. You might say that in showing us what we are to become, the Holy Spirit is also showing us our short-comings, failures and sins. But for Paul this is not an oppressive or guilt-inducing thought. The Holy Spirit reveals our faults AND guides us toward a new, justified, forgiven way of life. So we aren't simply judged and left to ponder and wallow in weakness, but given strength to grow in Christ.

I think this has profound implications for our life as church. We are all then, found wanting through the Holy Spirit, which encourages us to be patient and kind with one another's failings. All of us are on a journey, guided by the Spirit from what we are to what we are meant to be. It also implies that when we are baptized and receive this Spirit we are meant to begin practices through which the Spirit can work in and through us, such as prayer, bible study and service. The promise of the Holy Spirit will not allow our faith to simply be an idea that we affirm, but makes faith a journey that we are always on and a process that we are in.

Friday *Ro 6:22-23*

22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Next week (If I am here and not at home with a new baby) we will be talking about another of the works of the Holy Spirit... freedom. Sin is not a popular topic in church, often because we have had experiences where we left church feeling rotten about ourselves. While there is no doubt in my mind that the gospel does and should shock and sometimes even offend us into confronting our sins, this should not be done in a damaging or destructive way. In the scripture for today and for next week's sermon, Paul talks about sin, but also about life. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to confront the worst in ourselves so that we might experience the best in us that God created. The Holy Spirit enables us to seek, find and develop the image of God we were created in. The Holy Spirit also allows us to forgive ourselves, for often this is the most difficult forgiveness of all.

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