*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

September 10 - 15

*The Holy Spirit*

**Monday, September 10 John 3:1-8**

*“You must be born again”*

 Nicodemus’ response to Jesus’ statement that he must be born again makes earthly sense. How can anyone who is physically mature start over again within his mother’s womb? Surely one cannot undo forty or fifty years of physical growth. And if this is true physically, then how much more difficult is it to start over in the spiritual realm. Is not each one of us the sum total of all our experiences, good and bad, at any stage of life? Surely we cannot wipe that all out and say that now we will start over.

 Ah, but this new birth is not an intensified continuation of old ways, a more urgent effort to be a good person. No, this is a “new beginning,” a starting over again. This is new life given by God himself, a supernatural act bringing forth a new creation. Further, it is given by the Holy Spirit. God by whose creative breath every person become a living soul also shares his life-changing Spirit with all who will receive. The Spirit is the power from above that liberates and makes all things new.

*Heavenly Father, by your Spirit I have been given spiritual birth. Amen.*

**Tuesday, September 11 John 3:9-15**

*“The Son of Man must be lifted up”*

 To further clarify his own identity and the meaning of his coming down from heaven, Jesus refers to a peculiar incident in the life of Moses when the children of Israel expressed their unbelief. In response, God sent serpents among them that brought disease and death, and the people repented and cried out, “We have sinned.” The Lord then offered salvation. He commanded Moses to make a serpent of bronze and to hang it on a pole. The people who had been bitten could be healed only by lifting up their eyes and looking at the serpent. They would be saved by an act of faith.

 So Jesus, the Son of Man, has come to be lifted up on a pole. This Jesus, who is also the Son of God, has made his descent from heaven and is now human. He will, in obedience to his Father, die on a cross. This amazing and costly sacrifice calls forth the response of faith. Whoever will look to him on the cross with eyes of faith will be given everlasting life. This is God’s amazing provision for our salvation.

*You came from heaven to earth, Lord Jesus, to die for me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, September 12 John 3:16-17**

 *“For God so loved the world”*

 We can see in these verses that the lifting up of the Son of Man is an act of love. The act is not an afterthought or a last-minute emergency plan. Love is central to the very nature of God, reaching out to all who are unlovely and sick, like those dying Israelites, like Nicodemus, and like us sinners. God’s love is not selective or discriminating. It is universal, with no limitation. God comes to the whole world in love with a unique gift, indeed with a costly gift, which is his one and only Son.

 The invitation is to “whoever believes.” He will not change the terms, or he would not be true to himself. We can only accept the invitation by trust, by faith, by submission. It has been that way with God since the beginning. The gift is everlasting life, a life consistent with the age to come. This life is not an endless duration of being in time, but being of which time is not a measure. This is life with God that is limitless; it is quality, not quantity. Our created purpose is life with God, not death apart from him.

*Dear God, by faith I accept your gift. My life is now with you. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

September 10 - 15

*The Holy Spirit*

**Thursday, September 13 John 3:18-21**

*“Whoever does not believe”*

 Here is the two-edged meaning of Jesus’ coming. He came in love to save, to heal, and to offer spiritual birth. He did not come to condemn or judge. But his coming sharpens the issue. Now we must decide! There is both wondrous possibility and great peril in Nicodemus’ coming to Jesus. If he accepts Jesus as the one who has come down from heaven, he will be born again. But if he turns aside, leaves, works out his own salvation by his own efforts, however noble, he will remain in his present state and he will perish.

 This is the work of evil, that darkness which keeps each of us from accepting the great gift, that rebellious pride which will not allow us to receive the empowering of the Spirit. There is an egocentricity in each of us that constantly insists I can work out my own salvation. In our deeds, our rejection is revealed most clearly. When the light comes into the world, we love darkness rather than light because our deeds are evil. On the other hand, the one who accepts and believes reveals the fact by obeying. That person does the truth.

*Lord, I pray for those who do not believe that the Spirit will bring them into the light. Amen.*

**Friday, September 14 John 3:22-30**

*“He must become greater”*

 Following his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus and his followers move into the regions east of Jerusalem where he conducts a ministry much like that of John the Baptist, teaching about the Kingdom of God and baptizing people for the repentance of sin. Two things about this baptizing should be noted: first, this is not *Christian* baptism for the Holy Spirit has not yet been given. Second, it was Jesus’ disciples, not Jesus himself, who was baptizing (see John 4:2). Imagine the sort of elitism that could have developed in the ancient church between those baptized by Jesus and those baptized by someone else.

 John the Baptist had followers who knew about Jesus popularity and they were envious of Jesus’ fame, unhappy that Jesus was becoming a celebrated leader seemingly at the expense of their leader. John’s response shows there is no rivalry. God has provided the ministry enjoyed by Jesus, and any “success” he experiences is from God. Above all, John affirms that he is not the Christ but his forerunner. John must always play a secondary role.

*I rejoice, Lord, when people turn to you and praise your name. Amen.*

**Saturday, September 15 John 3:31-36**

 *“He speaks the words of God”*

 Just as Nicodemus must be born “from above” (John 3:3), so now John the Baptist becomes a witness to Jesus as one who is “from above.” Jesus has descended from heaven (John 3:12-13), bringing heavenly gifts of the Holy Spirit and spiritual rebirth; he is a messenger who reveals what he has seen and heard in heaven’s precincts. Just as Nicodemus represents Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, John the Baptist is a Jewish prophet. Both men are from “the earth” while Jesus is “from above.”

 The Father has provided the Son with the Holy Spirit, equipping him for his mission in the world. Jesus bears the divine nature and carries God’s authority in every aspect of his earthly ministry. The gift of life and Spirit that the Son will distribute comes from the gift of life and Spirit that the Son already enjoys. It is a gift that comes “from above” and which now resides in the Son’s life – a gift that will be distributed to all who believe once the Son of God is glorified in his resurrection (John 7:37-39).

*You are above all, Lord Jesus, for you have come from the Father. Amen.*