*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 11 - 16

*Goodness*

**Monday, November 11 Ephesians 2:8-10**

*“So that we can do the good work he planned for us long ago”*

 Paul views salvation as God’s new creation. People do not contribute to their spiritual rebirth any more than they did to their natural birth. The emphasis is on the activity of God, and we are the result of his activity. Salvation and new life are God’s work, and human beings are recipients, not causative agents. This new creation takes place “in Christ Jesus,” for it is based on Christ’s death and resurrection.

 The purpose of God’s creative activity is not merely to have a people, as if he were constructing a static work of art. Rather, this new creation is to be active and productive like the one who created them. Christians are “to do good works.” Salvation is not from works, but it certainly is to result in works, that is, living obediently and productively as God directs. God planned, chose and acted in order to save us through Christ. God also planned, chose and acted in order to mark out for us how we can live a life of good works directed by and dedicated to the God who saved us.

*Show me the good works, Lord, which you have planned for me to do. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 12 Romans 7:18-25**

*“The law is good”*

 It is not unusual for Christians to be uncertain about their relationship to the law. On the one hand, they have learned that they are not under law but under grace. On the other hand, they are told that obedience to the law is critical, for the law is “holy, just, and good.” The dilemma finds its resolution when we remember that God’s good law reflects the goodness of his character and outlines the standards of behavior that he expects of his children. The problem is that the law itself cannot bring about that good behavior.

 For example, the vast majority of Christians believe that “thou shalt not commit adultery” is “holy, just, and good” but many still struggle with adulterous thoughts. So, we believe the law is good but find it impossible to keep the law. This is where Jesus comes in. His death on the cross means that forgiveness is ours when we break God’s good law. Not only is there forgiveness, but the power of the Holy Spirit living in us helps us to be strong and to resist more effectively the temptation to sin.

*Strengthen me day by day, Lord God, so I will obey your good law. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 13 Psalm 31:19-24**

*“How much good you have done for those who rely on you”*

 These verses tell us that there is much to be gained – “abundant goodness” – from being open to God’s teaching and taking refuge in God. The teaching of God is his instruction about what it means to be good in his sight, and taking refuge in him is necessary for in this world we will be opposed for living according to God’s standard of goodness. The “gain” that we receive is not the guarantee of material prosperity or an easy life, but the conviction that one’s life and future really are in God’s hands.

 Knowing that our lives are held safely by God, we praise God for his fundamental goodness as seen in his steadfast love toward his saints, that is, toward his faithful ones. Meanwhile, of course, all is not as God intends in the world, which means that we experience God’s goodness both in the present and as something to be awaited, hoped for, when God finally puts on end to sin and evil. Examples of his present goodness include God’s protection in the face of enemies and his provision in times of need.

*I put my trust in your goodness, Lord, for you will do what is good for me. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 11 - 16

*Goodness*

**Thursday, November 14 Matthew 12:33-37**

*“A good person produces good works from a good heart”*

 The Pharisees have been accusing Jesus of blasphemy, which is deliberate, defiant sin against God and his commandments. Now Jesus shows that they are actually the ones blaspheming for saying that the work of Jesus is actually the work of Satan. By attributing Jesus’ teachings, miracles, and power to Satan rather than to the Spirit of God, the Pharisees are displaying the highest dishonor of God. As long as they continue to reject Jesus as the Son of God, they cannot enter the kingdom of God and receive forgiveness.

 Jesus points out that the charges of the Pharisees against him come from their own evil nature by telling them to examine the fruit of their own lives – good trees bear good fruit and bad trees bear bad fruit. Thus, Jesus directly connects what a person does outwardly to the heart of that person. In order to do good works, we must have a good heart, that is, a heart that is committed to taking on the good character of God. This is only possible if we allow the Holy Spirit to transform our heart and make it good.

*Change my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may do good in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

**Friday, November 15 2 Peter 1:3-11**

*“Add to your faith goodness”*

 Spiritual maturity begins with God’s provision (verses 3-4). It is “his divine power” that has given to us Christians all that we need for salvation and for living a “godly life,” a term Peter uses to summarize the behavior expected of Christians who have come to know the God of the Bible. Having told us what God’s power can do for us, Peter makes the point that Christians need to determine to live godly lives. He emphasizes just how strenuously we need to pursue this goal by telling us to “make every effort.”

 Spiritual growth is not a matter that Christians can treat lightly; it is a goal to which we need to give ourselves body and soul, every day of our lives. Peter describes the process of becoming spiritually mature as a series of ascending steps, listing eight Christian virtues that must be added, one to the other. He begins with faith and ends with love. By faith we respond to God’s call and come to know him, resulting in the next step which is goodness. The result, indeed the evidence, of faith is seen in our good work.

*Thank you, Father, for giving me faith which leads me to do good. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 16 John 10:11-15**

*“I am the good shepherd”*

 Jesus identifies himself as “the good shepherd.” In so doing he connects his life and ministry to the rich biblical tradition of God as Israel’s shepherd, their ruler, protector, leader, and caring companion. Jesus has shown his warm, pastoral concern in healing the blind, caring for the poor, and reaching out to those on the fringes of society. Those who have heard his voice and come to him have discovered that he is “good,” the winsome, attractive shepherd. His goodness, however, is ultimately because of his willingness to lay down his life for the sheep.

 He cares for the sheep daily, watching, feeding, and protecting them. But in the end he must finally deal with their greatest danger and face the strongest thief, the evil one, who spreads darkness and destruction through his own servants, the false shepherds. So the good shepherd will give his life at the cross in this last struggle with the enemy and defeat him. Those who accept his death on the cross become his sheep and they will know him, for there is a loving intimacy between shepherd and sheep.

*You are my shepherd, Lord, and your goodness leads and provides for me daily. Amen.*