*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 30 – December 5

Peace

**Monday, November 30 Romans 12:14-21**

*“As much as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone”*

 Paul is both realistic and practical in his instructions to believers concerning conflict in human relations. Evil will persist and Christians will not be exempt from its painful encroachment. But while they are subject to the same attacks as the rest of society, they are not free to handle them in the manner common to that society. “Getting even” is a natural response but according to Paul – and, of course, his Master Jesus, as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount – there is a better response than “getting even.”

 Paul’s admonition is “live at peace with everyone.” No doubt, when the Roman believers read the Apostle’s words, they asked – “How can I be expected to live at peace with those who are intent on making war?” The answer is, “You are not expected to do the impossible. You are to do what is possible, ‘as much as it depends on you.’” In other words, we are all responsible for our own actions but cannot be held responsible for the actions of others. Therefore, do what you can, attempt what is possible, and leave the consequences of the other person’s reaction to God.

*Give me grace to seek peace, Lord, rather than revenge. Amen.*

**Tuesday, December 1 James 3:13-18**

*“The wisdom that is from above is peaceable”*

 “The greatest good is wisdom” according to St. Augustine. Those words would be a fitting summary for the teaching of James on the subject of wisdom from above. James contends that this wisdom is not merely something which is intellectually understandable; it must be demonstrated practically in Christian lifestyle. Earlier in his letter, James gives us guidance in how to ask for wisdom from God. He assures us that as we ask for wisdom, we shall receive wisdom (1:5). Now he helps us to understand what wisdom from above is and how it should be used.

 Wisdom from above is pure (holy, without sin), peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy, full of good deeds, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. In verse 18, James makes a concluding statement which can be summarized under the heading “true or godly justice.” The wisdom from above is concerned with justice and peace. As this wisdom is sown in peace by those who make peace, true justice is manifested.

*Make me wise, Lord, as I seek to promote peace. Amen.*

**Wednesday, December 2 Romans 14:13-19**

*“Let us make every effort to do what leads to peace”*

 When differences of opinion arise concerning deeply held traditions, reactions are usually quite extreme. Feelings of anger and resentment, frustration and bitterness spill over. Usually the people involved in acrimonious dispute becomes more entrenched in their position and increasingly isolated from those with whom they disagree. Before long it becomes necessary for those who hold strong positions not only to strengthen their own but also to weaken the other. Criticism becomes the order of the day.

 This Paul flatly condemns. His point is that every Christian is ultimately answerable to the Lord, and while we do have the responsibility to encourage, correct, and teach each other, we do not have the freedom to take over the work of evaluation. This only the One who will eventually sit on the Judgment Seat is qualified to do. Therefore, judgmental attitudes in matters where the Bible is not explicit are totally out of order, and those of us who are guilty of them will answer for them as surely as those with whom we disagree will be evaluated by their Lord.

*May I pursue peace, Lord, even when it means not getting my way. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 30 – December 5

Peace

**Thursday, December 3 Psalm 85:8-13**

*“God speaks peace to his people”*

 When we believe that God hears us, it is natural that we should be eager to hear him. Only from him can come the word which can speak true and lasting peace to our troubled spirits. So, we wait patiently for his response. For a while his voice may be stern with deserved rebuke for the sinful part we have played in the lack of peace we are experiencing, but he will not always scold. Our loving Father will eventually speak with gentleness and mercy, for he knows our hearts and responds to those who earnestly seek him.

 The unfailing love of God comes hand in hand with God’s truth; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The Father, having rightly disciplined his children, in love sends peace to bring healing to the wounds of our conflicts with others. Now it is incumbent upon us to continue to live in that peace, not taking his love for granted and returning to our foolish sinful ways, but understanding that to live in a right relationship with God means to honor him by being obedient to his standards for our life.

*I pray for peace in my life, Lord, and I seek to remain at peace. Amen.*

**Friday, December 4 Numbers 6:22-26**

*“May the Lord give you his peace”*

 Some have called this passage the Old Testament’s “Lord’s Prayer.” Like its New Testament counterpart spoken by Jesus to his disciples, we would do well to memorize and frequently pray this prayer invoking God’s blessing. The prayer is structured as three parallel sets. Each pair begins with God as the one being addressed and desires God to have a favorable mind-set: blessing us, smiling on us, and showing us his favor. The second part of each pair wishes for God to do something positive for his people: protect us, be gracious to us, and give us his peace.

 Jesus invited us to “Ask and it will given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7). So why don’t we ask more? If our prayers are real to God, are they real to us? Do we “mumble sleepy clichés in a vague mist of unreality, as unsure of the results as we are unclear about what we are doing”? Or do we have confidence that our prayers to God, feeble and unfocused as they are, have been successfully transmitted to him with the aid of his Holy Spirit, as Paul promised us in Romans 8:26?

*This is the prayer of my heart, Lord, that you give me your peace. Amen.*

**Saturday, December 5 Isaiah 9:6-7**

*“He will be called . . . prince of peace”*

 Choosing their own way rather than God’s way, trusting in human glory rather than in God, the nation of Israel has plunged itself into darkness. Instead of having a protective canopy over them and being guided by God, they are in confusion and darkness, the prey of the Assyrian nation. But that is not where God intends to leave them. In the very areas where the Assyrian conquest began, there God promises that the light will dawn. The people of Israel have done nothing to deserve the light; it is nothing but God’s grace.

 How will God accomplish this great feat? Through the birth of a child! But who is this child? The titles given argue strongly against its being any human, such as one of the kings of Israel. No Israelite king was ever identified as “Mighty God.” Clearly the person being referred to here is the promised Messiah, who will reign over God’s people with a kind of justice and righteousness that no mere human descendant of David ever achieved. Furthermore, the government and the social and personal harmony (“peace,” *shalom*) he will produce will be eternal.

*The prophet spoke of you, Jesus, and you bring me everlasting peace. Amen.*