*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 11 – July 16

*Walking with Abraham*

**Monday, July 11 Genesis 17:1-4**

*“I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’”*

There are many names for God used in Scripture, and each tells us something about who God is. *God Almighty* (*El-Shaddai*) is evoked throughout the Old Testament to denote God’s power and greatness. Often, we think of the almightiness of God in terms of his absolute power; in other words, God is almighty because he can do anything. We imagine a God hovering over the world exercising his power in random flashes of brilliance.

In verses 1-4, God reminds Abram that to know the almightiness of God is to know his love and compassion. God’s power is never abstract; God’s power is a concrete experience. God is almighty because he has established a covenant with Abram and his descendants. His power is the power to love and care for his people.

We ought to speak and reflect on the power of God in our daily lives and corporate worship. Doing so helps remind us that we serve a powerful God who loves and cares for us deeply. His is the power to love us, or as the song goes, “He is mighty to save!”

*Lord Almighty, I am grateful for your powerful love. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 12 Genesis 17:5-8**

*“I am changing your name”*

In ancient Semitic culture, a name was much more than a label by which to call someone or something. A person’s name was intimately connected to their very being. For example, we are told throughout Scripture that God’s people, “called upon the name of the Lord.” The people aren’t simply speaking the name of God; they’re calling upon God’s very presence in their midst.

In verse 5, the Lord gives Abram a new name: Abraham. Meaning “father of many,” Abraham’s new name is a witness to the promises God has made to him and his family. Abraham now embodies the promises made to him by God. His new name is a testament to the fact that God has chosen him, and he is a new person because of it.

We are told in Revelation 2:17 that those in Christ will be given a new name. In Christ, each of us receives a new identity. The old has passed; behold something new! While this name is unknown to us now, we are assured that what it represents is a present reality: we are created new in Christ! As we seek to serve the Lord in our lives, let us live into this new identity.

*Lord, in you I have a new name. I am a new person. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 13 Genesis 17:9-14**

*“Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant.”*

In Reformed theology, baptism has often been considered an equivalent to circumcision. In baptism, one receives an outward sign that points to an inward reality. In circumcision, the same is true. God commands Abraham and his household to be circumcised as a sign that God has chosen them as his covenant partners. Circumcision serves as a reminder that Abraham and his descendants are to keep God’s commandments and serve as witnesses to his work in the world.

As covenant partners in Christ, we also are called to be witnesses to God’s loving work in the world. Our responsibility is to point others to all that God has done, is doing, and will do. As noted above, our baptism is a reminder of this sacred calling. Like Abraham, we also are encouraged to pass this calling on from one generation to another.

As you think about your own life, what are the ways that you demonstrate to the world the inward reality of God’s call in your life? In the words of Reformed liturgy, how will you “remember your baptism” today?

*Lord, help me to point others to calling you have placed in my life. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 11 – July 16

*Walking with Abraham*

**Thursday, July 14 Genesis 17:15-22**

*“How could I become a father at the age of 100?”*

Like Abraham, Sarai receives a new name: Sarah. Her new name reflects her identity; she will be the mother of many nations. Hearing this promise, Abraham begins to doubt that it will come to pass. At the age of 100 years, he finds it difficult, if not impossible, to believe that he will have a son by Sarah. In verse 18, Abraham suggests a solution that will fulfill God’s promise and ease his doubt: “May Ishmael live under your special blessing!” In doing so, Abraham hopes to fulfill God’s promise for himself.

How often do we also seek to fulfill God’s promises? For example, God promises to care for our needs; yet we take it upon ourselves to accumulate wealth and comforts in order to not need his provision. God promises that by his grace we are saved; yet we work in all sorts of ways to gain his favor. If we are to truly trust in the Lord, we must not only trust in his promises but also in the timing and manner in which he fulfills those promises/

*I will trust in your promise and your way, Lord. Amen.*

**Friday, July 15 Genesis 17:23-27**

*“…just as God had told him”*

In Genesis 17:10, God tells Abraham that he has a responsibility in the covenant: circumcision of his household. As noted last week, this sign marks Abraham and his household as called by the Lord for his work in the world. In verses 23-27, Abraham upholds this agreement and has his son, Ishmael, circumcised.

As followers of Christ, we also have agreed to uphold our responsibility: witness. Grace and reconciliation are given to us by God so that we might go out and proclaim to the word all that the Lord has done for us. This is not always easy. There are many moments in our lives when we feel that we do not have the strength or the skills to do this task. Yet, God is asking nothing more than for us to celebrate his good gifts. Worship is gratitude, and gratitude is a response to God’s faithfulness. When Abraham circumcises Ishmael, he does so as an act of grateful obedience for all that the Lord has done for him.

*Lord, let me respond to your grace with grateful obedience. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 16 Romans 2:25-29**

*“…a change of heart produced by the Spirit”*

Any sign, such as circumcision or baptism, is only worth what it represents. In Romans 2:25-29, Paul makes it clear that to be a follower of God one must practice more than outward recognition of the Lord; the heart must be transformed. Any sign is useless unless it points to the reality of a life that has been given to God.

For many of us, we do a great job of displaying signs to others that would indicate that we are faithful followers of Christ. Our church attendance is impeccable. We say and do all the right things. Those around us are convinced that our faith belongs to another level of personal sanctity. On the surface, everything indicates that our walk with the Lord is solid. However, often the surface is a misrepresentation for the reality of our lives. The sign looks good, but it points to a reality that is lacking in authentic faith.

If we are going to answer the call God has placed in our lives, we must be willing to allow the Holy Spirit to transform us from the inside. Then, when people see the outward sign, what they see will correlate to our hearts.

*Lord, let my life reflect my heart for you. Amen.*