*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 22 – August 27

*Walking with Abraham*

**Monday, August 22 Galatians 3:1-5**

*“Oh, foolish Galatians!”*

 In Galatians chapter 3, Paul explores a theme that is central to his experience of the Lord: grace. If it were not for God’s grace, his own life would be meaningless- a life initially focused on chasing after the law. Having encountered the risen Lord on the road to Damascus, Paul now knows that a right relationship with God is experienced as a result of God’s grace. It can’t be earned. Unfortunately, the Galatians believe it can, and Paul calls them fools for it.

 We ought to count ourselves among the Galatians. How often do we try to prove ourselves worthy of God’s love? We say, “Lord, look at me! Look at all that I’ve accomplished.” These accomplishments do not impress the Lord. Without his grace, we remain what we’ve always been: sinners in a broken world. We are in desperate need of his grace, and grace is always a gift from him.

 As we have walked with Abraham through Genesis this summer, we have seen again and again God’s grace and mercy showered upon his family. Abraham did not earn it, and neither can we. Let us put our foolish ways behind us and seek only to be grateful for God’s grace in our lives.

*Lord, I cannot earn your mercy, I can only be grateful for your grace. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 23 Galatians 3:6-9**

*“The real children of Abraham are those who put their faith in God”*

 “Father Abraham had many sons, and many sons had father Abraham!” I can remember singing this song in Sunday school as a child in my hometown church. A simple song, it highlights one of the important themes of Abraham’s story: his descendants are many. For thousands of years, his descendants were identified with a particular people: the Israelites. But with the grace offered to us in Jesus Christ, all of that changed. Now, to be a descendant of Abraham means to share in his faith- a faith in God’s loving mercy and provision.

 As descendants of Abraham, we share in the promises made to him and his family. We are promised a land to call home: the Kingdom of God. We are promised descendants: the body of Christ, his Church. Faith in God means that we are adopted into this family and share in its blessings.

 How often do you reflect on your inclusion in this family? As Americans, we tend to practice a unique individualism that often robs us of the blessing that comes from the interconnection we share together. Yet, in Christ, we share a bond that is greater than any other: faith that saves.

*Lord, I am grateful to be a descendent of Abraham. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 24 Galatians 3:10-14**

*“… he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing” Christ takes the curse*

 According to the Innocence Project, 18 people have spent a combined 202 years on death row before being found innocent and released from prison. Many of these individuals were days from their appointed execution when DNA evidence exonerated them of their accused crimes. In one moment, they went from death to new life.

 Like these falsely accused individuals, we also stand at death’s door. Our guilt deserving, we have no means of appeal; our sentence sure and rightly charged. Yet, on the cross, Jesus takes our sentence- the curse of our wrongdoing- upon himself and stands in our place. He carries the curse, and we are declared innocent. Such is the gift of a God who stands with and for us. Our death becomes his so that his life may become ours.

*Lord, thank you for taking my curse upon yourself so that I may live. Amen.*

 *DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 22 – August 27

*Walking with Abraham*

**Thursday, August 25 Galatians 3:15-18**

*“But God graciously gave it to Abraham as a promise”*

 As we have been traveling through Genesis, the concept of covenant has played an important role in the story of Abraham. God’s promise to Abraham is an extension of his love and mercy. In the covenant, God promises to continue to care for Abraham and his family. God has bound himself to these promises.

 God has also made a covenant with us. In Jesus Christ, the Lord promises to be with and for us. His presence is not hypothetical; God is really among us as a human being: Jesus of Nazareth. In the incarnation- God in the flesh- the Lord has irrevocably determined to be our God. In Jesus Christ, God has determined to be our brother and redeemer. The human experience now belongs to the very being of God.

 These truths bring us to a couple of conclusions: 1) We need not live our lives bogged down by uncertainty and anxiety. If God is for us, who can be against us? The answer, of course, is nothing. 2) If God has tethered himself to our experience, we need not be concerned that one day he will decide to abandon us. His love and mercy are eternal. His eternal covenant is rooted in his self-revelation in Jesus Christ. We are his people, and nothing can tear us from his hands.

*Lord, you have made your eternal covenant with me. I praise you! Amen.*

**Friday, August 26 Galatians 3:19-24**

*“… so we receive God’s promise of freedom only by believing in Jesus Christ.” Feedom*

 Are you fee? So many of us live our lives captive to the fears, failures, and uncertainties that plague our lives. We look at ourselves in the mirror and ask, “What is wrong with me? Why can’t I escape the consequences of my sin?” The truth is that *we can’t*. Our sin is like gravity: we can’t escape it, and it is more powerful than almost any other force in the world. *Almost*. There is a force greater than our sin: God’s promise of freedom through faith in Christ.

 Abraham was a man constantly threatened by the chains of his sin. Yet, the Lord constantly freed him of it, demonstrating his abundant faithfulness to his people. He has done the same for us. In Jesus Christ, God has freed us from a broken world. He has welcomed us to a banquet in where we find that we are the guests of honor. We are undeserving of this gift, but God gives it freely.

 Are you free? The answer is an unequivocal, “Yes!” We are free because we are loved by Christ.

*Lord, thank you for setting me free in your love and mercy. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 27 Galatians 3:25-29**

*“For you are all one in Christ Jesus”*

 Paul says in Galatians 3:28, “There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female.” From an outsider’s perspective, this statement sounds ridiculous. *How can there no longer be male or female?* The answer lies in this foundational truth: *For you are all one in Christ Jesus*. In Jesus Christ, our identity is defined by our relationship with him. We are no longer known by worldly markers: gender, wealth, successes and mistakes, accomplishments and failures. We are brothers and sisters of Christ, and this is all that matters in the eyes of the Lord.

 So why do we commit so much energy and time to chasing identities that have no foundation in Jesus? With so many distractions, it is easy to become confused and distracted by the voices of so many sirens. Let us focus on the One who gives to us our hope and future- the One who forges our identity in his grace and mercy.

*Lord, our identity is rooted in your love. In you, we are one. Amen.*