*DEVOTIONS*

January 9 - 14

*Blessed are those who realize their need for God*

**Monday, January 9 Psalm 25:4-10**

*“The Lord leads the humble”*

 The central theme of this passage is finding the “way” or “path” of God’s deliverance and divine grace. Contrary to what one might expect, a relationship with God is not based on absolute perfection of obedience, but is from the outset a relationship for sinners. In verse seven the psalmist acknowledges sinful acts of long-standing, trusting that God will no longer “remember” them. In verse eight he goes on to declare that one indication of God’s “good and upright” character is the fact he shows his path to *sinners!* God’s purpose is to bring sinners into relationship with himself, and to this end he provides the necessary guidance and teaching to make their participation possible.

 If we are not talking about sinless perfection, then what *are* the characteristics of those whom God pursues in these verses? According to verse nine, God “guides” and “teaches” the humble – those who acknowledge their need and reliance on him. The humble are those who admit their absolute dependence on God alone for salvation.

*I humbly praise you, God, for seeking and saving a sinner like me. Amen.*

**Tuesday, January 10 Isaiah 6:1-7**

*“I am a sinful man and a member of a sinful race”*

 Isaiah’s experience in the presence of God gives us a guide for our own relationship with God. The process of becoming a servant of God begins in our recognition of the hopelessness of our situation. It continues in the recognition of the character and nature of God. That will necessarily result in a shattering recognition of the impossible gulf between us and God – the gulf of our sinfulness. But that makes it possible to recognize and receive the incredible and undeserved grace of God that cleanses us.

 What this teaches us is that it is foolish for us to think that we can somehow serve God until we have come to the end of ourselves. As long as we think there is some hope of a human solution to our problems, there is little chance of our genuinely seeing God. Nor is there hope for any of us becoming servants of the living God without there first being an adequate understanding of who he is. As long as I think that I can solve my problems (with a little help from God, of course), then I am the sovereign and he is the servant.

*In spite of my sin, Lord, you forgive me and call me into your service. Amen.*

**Wednesday, January 11 Isaiah 57:15-21**

*“God lives with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit”*

 The One who is utterly separated from the inhabitants of earth in his holy place says that his dwelling is also with the lowly and the contrite. This is not to say that God will become less than holy; rather, he will transform humans to share his character. He has created humans, and he cannot bear to be in a position where he can do nothing but accuse them. Rather, his intention is not merely to punish but to go beyond that to giving his people a changed nature, where rebellion and pride will be replaced by praise and peace.

 God does not merely promise forgiveness for sin but a healing for those who mourn over the state of their sin, who mourn for the absence of righteousness in their lives. In this way, they are in sharp contrast with the wicked. Because the wicked refuse to recognize their sinfulness and turn from it, they cannot experience the peace that God promises. The promises of God are for those who recognize their need and humbly turn to God in remorseful repentance.

*I confess my sin, Lord, that you may dwell peacefully with me. Amen.*

*DEVOTIONS*

January 9 - 14

*Blessed are those who realize their need for God*

**Thursday, January 12 1 Corinthians 2:1-5**

*“I came to you in weakness”*

 Paul uses himself as an illustration of how God is able to use those who are weak in the world’s eyes to champion the gospel among those who see themselves as strong. The spirit of humility he asked of his readers he had exhibited himself both in his message and in the manner of his life. The correspondence between the minister and his gospel is what gives it power, because the messenger must match the message. This can be difficult for us to emulate, for our tendency is to try to overpower the world with our faith rather than humbly share it with those who are open to hearing our story.

 One of the particular reasons that Paul is writing in this way to the Christians in Corinth is that he is laying the groundwork for dealing with the divisions in the church. He is reminding them that neither the gospel he preached nor the manner in which he preached it had in any way contributed to the problems in the congregation. He had come to them as a proclaimer – not to argue, discuss, or persuade.

*May my life, Lord, humbly match the gospel I seek to share with others. Amen.*

**Friday, January 13 James 4:7-10**

*“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord”*

 Humility is essential to Christian discipleship. Here James tells us not only that we should be humble, but also how to do it. James gives us three “how to” steps which will enable us to walk humbly with God. First, resist the devil. We can never be truly humble if we are not willing to actively stand firm against the temptations he sends our way and speak a firm “no” to sin. Second, draw near to God. As we draw near to him by submitting to his will for our life, his character will increasingly supplant ours. We become more and more like Jesus – including becoming more and more humble. His humility becomes ours.

 The third step we are to take is to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord. The steps are clear. If we are to be humble, we must begin by emptying ourselves of self and sin by resisting the devil. Next, that emptiness must be filled by the Holy Spirit as we draw near to God and we allow him to draw near to us and to fill us with himself. Only then can we humble ourselves. We cannot do so in our own strength. We need the power of God himself.

*Sin brings me down, Father, but you lift me up. Amen.*

**Saturday, January 14 Matthew 5:1-10**

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit”*

There is a logical spiritual sequence to the Beatitudes – a definite order. The first Beatitude, to be “poor in spirit,” must first be lived before we will be able to live any of the others. To be “poor in spirit” means coming before God with nothing in ourselves that is worthy of salvation. It is an acknowledgment that we can’t do it. Salvation means to be totally dependent on Jesus Christ for righteousness – admitting that our sin makes us totally unworthy to come into God’s presence. If this is not our attitude, we cannot be saved. It is in this sense that “the poor in spirit” are those who realize their need for God.

 There are some who have interpreted this verse to mean that the economically poor are blessed by God simply because they are poor. But the Bible nowhere teaches that poverty as such is a good thing. The poor person is no nearer to the kingdom of heaven than the rich person – for neither poverty nor riches is any guarantee of spirituality. Poverty may be a good thing only if it produces an attitude of dependence – and only if that dependence is on God.

*Nothing in me is worthy of salvation, Lord, so I trust entirely in you. Amen.*