*DEVOTIONS*

February 13 - 18

*Blessed are the pure in heart*

**Monday, February 13 Romans 7:15-25**

*“When I want to do good, evil is right there with me”*

In this passage, Paul is speaking of the struggle of the Christian to fulfill the law of God or, as Jesus states it in the beatitudes, to be “pure in heart.” Paul knows that God has forgiven his sin and given him eternal life through Jesus Christ. Still, temptation continues to be real because there is something within him, which he calls his “sinful nature,” that is attracted to temptation and which he sometimes finds himself choosing to follow. Thus, though he wants to obey God’s law perfectly, he finds that his obedience is less than perfect.

But he joyfully looks forward to the day when God will transform him and the struggle will be over, for then his “sinful nature” will be no more (verses 24-25). In the meantime, he continues to find himself torn between obedience to the law of God and following sinful urges that he experiences within himself. While living in the Kingdom of Heaven and desiring to become like Christ, the “old kingdom” of his sinful habits continue to cause him problems. Struggle with sin will be an inevitable aspect of our life in this world.

*I confess the struggle within me, Lord, and pray for your strength. Amen.*

**Tuesday, February 14 Psalm 51:6-10**

*“Create in me a pure heart, O God”*

In these verses David prays for forgiveness and the spiritual re-creation of his heart. In order for that to happen, sin that is within him needs to be cleansed – he needs to be washed clean. There were certain Jewish purifying rituals that involved hyssop (cf. Leviticus 14:49, 52), and David figuratively alludes to these practices as an illustration of what only God can do for him: forgive his sin and make him clean.

David clearly has faith in God’s transforming power. When he says, “Create in me . . . ,” he uses the verb that in the Old Testament is applied only to God’s activity. For example, it is the same verb that is used in Genesis to describe God’s creation of the world. While human beings can make things, only God can create – whether it is the universe or a pure heart. What we see in this passage is God’s fundamental desire to restore, rehabilitate, and re-create sinners, thereby generating a new heart, a pure heart, that is attracted to the will of God. The result is the blessing of “joy and gladness” (verse 8).

*Forgive my sin, Lord, and re-create my heart to be more like Christ’s heart. Amen.*

**Wednesday, February 15 Matthew 22:36-40**

*“Love the Lord you God with all your heart”*

When asked which is the greatest commandment in the Law (the Law here being used as a short-hand expression for the entire Old Testament), Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5: “Love the Lord your God with all you heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” Love for God is not simply an emotional attachment. Rather, it means giving oneself to him with one’s entire person. Heart, soul, and mind are not rigidly separated compartments of the human existence but reflect that the entire person is given to God.

The nineteenth-century Christian author George MacDonald, explaining God’s love in a letter to his sixteen-year-old daughter in which he sought to share with her how God’s love shaped his own love for God wrote: “God is so beautiful, and so patient, and so loving, and so generous that he is the heart and soul and rock of every love and every kindness and every gladness in the world.” Because of God’s complete all-encompassing love for us, the desire of our heart must be to love him in the same way.

*I desire to love you, Lord, with all that I am, for that is how you love me. Amen.*

*DEVOTIONS*

February 13 - 18

*Blessed are the pure in heart*

**Thursday, February 16 1 Peter 1:6-9**

*“Your faith, purified as with fire”*

Peter knows what it means to face temptations and trials. He remembers well the pain of falling to temptation when he denied his Lord three times on the night of Christ’s arrest. Undoubtedly Peter continued to face trials in the succeeding days, and he discovered that in addition to the grief that trials bring, there are also benefits which God brings to pass. One of those benefits is the purification of our faith.

The key word here is “faith.” Trials can and often do destroy the lives of those who have no faith in Christ. But for those who are trusting in Christ with vital faith, the trials of life will actually strengthen them. Peter uses the analogy of gold which is purified with fire. That process removes the impurities and makes the gold purer and more precious. That is how God uses trials in our lives. He allows the trials to come so that the impurities of sin may be removed from us and that our faith may become more precious. We grow to be more and more dependent upon our Lord, and less dependent upon ourselves. We become more and more like Jesus Christ.

*When trials come my way, Lord, use them to purify my heart. Amen.*

**Friday, February 17 1 John 3:2-3**

*“We will see him as he really is”*

Again and again in his letter, John has repeated the statement that we are God’s children. Now, in these verses, he reflects on how this fact will have consequences in the future. If now we have a glimpse of what it means to have the presence of the Father within us, when Christ comes there will be yet more overwhelming experiences for us. He will appear; we will appear just like him; and then we will see him exactly as he is. In that day there will be an immediate and unmistakable unity between us and the Father. In his letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul expresses the same thought this way: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Fully knowing the Father’s love, witnessing God at work in us as he transforms us more and more into the image of his Son, and sharing a confidence and joy at the prospect of Jesus’ return – these things produce renewed power to pursue godly purity so that when he appears, our purity will resonate with his.

*To become you like you, Lord, means to pursue the purity that is in you. Amen.*

**Saturday, February 18 Matthew 5:1-10**

*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God”*

In the sixth beatitude Jesus goes to the core of human life, the heart. Purity or cleanliness was an important religious theme in Jesus’ day. The problem was that mere external observation of the law could easily bypass the more important purity of the heart. Jesus declares that a pure heart is what produces external purity, not vice versa. In this beatitude Jesus emphasizes the biblical theme that a pure heart describes a person whose single-minded loyalty to God affects every area of life.

The undivided devotion of the pure in heart will be rewarded by their greatest hope: “They will see God.” While no human can look fully at the glorious face of God, the hope that is ours is that one day we “will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads” (Revelation 22:4). But Jesus’ pronouncement of this beatitude to those of his day also has an immediate fulfillment of their hopes. Jesus is “God with us.” Those who have set their heart on God are invited into a fellowship with him in which they will experience the unthinkable; they will see God in Jesus.

*Purify my heart, Lord, so that I may see the Father in you. Amen.*