

Devotions: 8/10 to 8/15

Monday: Condemnation

This morning's scripture is Romans 8:1-2 – “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you^[a] free from the law of sin and death.”

Christ assures us there is no condemnation for those who belong to Him. We believe He has freed us through His death on the cross for our sins, yet we continue to struggle with feelings of condemnation. We long to experience the full liberation He has made possible, and His Spirit can assist us with this.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to find freedom from feelings of accusation. Acknowledge that those feelings have no basis in reality. The look to Him through eyes of faith. Delight yourself in his heavenly smile of approval. The more we connect with Him by focusing on His Presence, the more we can receive His loving affirmation. The best antidote to feelings of condemnation is experiencing His Love for us.

We can also fight condemning feelings by pondering the truths of the gospel. The devil is the father of lies, and he specializes in deception. Confront his hellish lies with biblical truth.

Finally, remember Christ's spirit is the Spirit of Life. Feelings of condemnation drain us of energy, leaving us vulnerable. As His Spirit fills us with Life, we are empowered to live abundantly; to the full.

Stay safe, stay healthy, take care and God Bless! Pastor Mary Lou

Tuesday: Depending On Him

This morning's scripture is Hebrews 1:3 – “The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”

Beware of dividing up our lives into things we can do by ourselves and things that require Christ's help. The truth is, everything we do, even taking a breath, involves His assistance. He sustains all things by His powerful Word. So recognize our utter dependence on Him builds a strong foundation on which we can do our work heartily, from the soul.

When we do routine tasks for Him, they gain meaning and even some sparkle. Our efforts become a way of expressing our love for Him. The more we love Him, the more we can enjoy doing tasks devoted to Him. Christ is less concerned about the outcomes of our work than the attitude of our hearts. When our deepest motive is to please Him, He deems our work good.

Your best efforts are those that emanate from our souls, where He lives in intimate union with us. When we not only dedicate our efforts to Him but also keep looking to Him for help, our souls are fully engaged. We experience the thrill of seeing His work through us. This collaborative way of doing things is effective and exciting; it is also deeply satisfying, to us and to Him.

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Wednesday: Heaven

This morning's scripture is Hebrews 12:28-29 – "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

God's kingdom cannot be shaken! This present world seems to be shaking more and more, leaving us off balance much of the time. As we worship Him, however, our perspective changes and we regain our balance. To worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, thankfulness is essential. He designed us to be thankful on a daily, moment-by-moment basis. We need to resist the temptation to grumble when things don't go as we would like. Remember that our God is a consuming fire. If we saw Him in all of His Glory, we would be much too awestruck to venture even the tiniest complaint.

His unshakeable kingdom is for all people who love Christ, who know Him as Savior. This everlasting kingdom consists of things that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived. He has prepared infinite, wondrous delights for those who love Him. Moreover, at the end of the age He will come back and take us to be with Him so that we may be where He is. Let these precious promises ignite our thankfulness, till we are aglow with His living Presence, shining brightly in this dark world.

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Thursday: Trials

This morning's scripture is James 1:2-3 – "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."

Consider it all joy when we encounter various trials. We can consider something a joyful opportunity even when we are feeling quite joyless. Some definitions of "consider" are: "to think about seriously; to regard as; to believe after deliberation."

We may need to ponder our circumstances at length before we can view them in a positive light. We need to give ourselves time for our feelings to settle down. It is hard to think clearly with high levels of emotions surging through our brains. Once we have calmed down, we will be able to think seriously about our situation. Invite Christ into the process of deliberation, and His Presence will improve our perspective: helping us to see our trials in the Light of eternity.

As we look at our circumstances from His perspective, we come to understand that these multiple problems are testing our faith. This is both an opportunity (to strengthen our faith) and a temptation (to let our feelings "trump" our faith).

One of the hardest things about trials is the uncertainty about how long they will last. Usually, we can't predict or control the unpleasant circumstances. We just have to live with them indefinitely. At times we may feel as if we can endure no more, but we can always reach out to Christ for help. As we cling to Him moment

by moment, He enables us to persevere. This produces in us not only endurance but a harvest of righteousness and peace.

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Friday: Worry

This morning's scripture is 1 Peter 5:7-8 – “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

Cast all your anxiety on Jesus. Unless we deal with it properly, anxiety can be toxic, both to you and to others. Simply releasing it is not sufficient. We need to project it vigorously away from ourselves, toward Him. Consider the following illustration: If we accidentally pulled the pin out of a hand grenade, we would not hold onto the grenade or drop it near our feet. Nor would we pitch it to another person. We would throw it as far away as possible from us and others. When we cast our anxiety on Christ, He removes it so far away that it cannot harm anyone. In fact, He delights in doing this very thing, because He cares for us so compassionately.

Ever since the Fall, human emotions have been out of kilter. People often “act out” painful feelings without even realizing what is bothering them. Or they may bottle up their emotions and pretend everything is all right. Christ urges us to be self-controlled and alert so we can identify hurtful feelings and confess them to Him. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us with this. As we yield to His work within us, our anxious feelings will subside. His Spirit can accomplish holy changes in us; producing Love, Joy, Peace and self-control.

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Saturday: Transformation

This morning's scripture is 2 Corinthians 5:17 AMP – “Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], *he is* a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous

moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life].”

Come to Christ just as you are. He will give you a new heart and put a new spirit with in you. He is aware of the many little stones that mar the beauty of your heart. Trust Him to do what you are unable to do: remove the stony bits one by one. Do not expect this work in you to be painless. Heart surgery is serious, and it always involves pain. Many of the hard things you have experienced were, unknown to you. This act of faith does not instantly stop your suffering, but it does lend meaning to your pain.

Marvel at the wonder of being a new creation graphed into Him, the Messiah. You are forever set free from the condemning law of sin and death. You can rejoice in this glorious truth even while you are in the throes of suffering. Since He is the Creator of all that is, and you are made in His image, you have a wealth of creative powers within you. Strive to look at collaborate with Him as He creates newness within you and through you. Though He is Lord of the universe, He desires to work in partnership with you. As you say yes to this sacred adventure, you become more fully the one He designed you to be.

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