

THE FIRST 15

Thursday, August 29, 2024

Today is Thursday, August 29 and we are learning what the Bible says about the House of the Lord.

OPENING PRAYER

Oh, Lord, my Shepherd, how I look forward to these quiet minutes of the early morning alone with You. Thank You for Your faithfulness and steadfast love. I relinquish my worries, set down my burdens and rest in the stillness of Your presence. Whatever the upcoming day holds for me, I know You will be by my side, leading my heart and guiding my steps. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:14-18

REFLECTION

Paul wrote his second letter to the church in Corinth during a time when the congregation was facing significant suffering and internal divisions. Paul encouraged them to take heart and perceive different possibilities. He helped them view their present circumstances through a new lens, a bigger lens, a God-sized perspective. Paul's words encourage me to look at my circumstances through a new lens also.

Similar to the people of Corinth, I face challenges and encounter divisions in my life. I find these challenges and divisions in my home, my family, my workplace, my community and my world. I can sometimes succumb to a negative outlook and become discouraged. Paul says that outwardly they are wasting away, but inwardly they are being renewed day by day. I consider the places in my life where I might be "wasting" away. Perhaps I am wasting my time, wasting my effort, wasting my energy, wasting my money. Maybe I am wasting my chances or missing opportunities to show love, serve, or give to others. Perhaps my body is wasting away from age, illness, work or disease. Maybe I am wasting my mind consuming the negative spirit and harmful attitudes of a world full of conflict and division. Outwardly there are many ways I may be wasting away. Yet, God does not want me to "lose heart." The Lord who loves me wants to restore my hope. God wants to renew my spirit. I find restoration when I fix my eyes on what really matters in life. I pray and ask God to restore me to right-thinking and see circumstances in a new light.

I relish the idea of hope being restored in me. Inward renewal has the capacity to alter my perspective about everything in life. There are places in my life where I am worried and

concerned. There are places in my life where I feel pessimistic and anticipate an unfavorable outcome. There are places where I hold a critical spirit, negative thinking, impatience or intolerance. There are places in my life where I have given in to doubt, envy, jealousy or fear. I am wasting away my time with all of these petty emotions. I acknowledge these places and name them before God. I want to see these circumstances from a new perspective. God's perspective.

Ask: Where do I find myself holding on to a negative attitude or gloomy perspective? How can I allow the Holy Spirit to turn my heart and mind from negativity to positivity?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy and loving God, I confess that sometimes I feel discouraged and frustrated with my surrounding circumstances. I long for you to restore hope and positivity in my life. Help me fix my eyes on Jesus and see things from a new perspective. You are already aware of every situation and relationship in my life. You know my worries, sorrows and concerns. I invite you into my life and ask you to provide a new perspective. Renew my spirit, strengthen my heart and restore my hope. Amen.