

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, September 4, 2024

Today is Wednesday, September 4 and we are studying what the Bible says about doing good in the world.

OPENING PRAYER

As I approach these first fifteen minutes of the day devoted to the Lord, I pause and become still. I take slow, deep breaths and focus my entire being on the presence of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I eliminate surrounding distractions, quiet the noise of my mind, and listen for the voice of the Spirit speaking to my soul. Blessed Lord, I worship and praise You in the quiet stillness of the morning. Help me hear the message You have for me today. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

God will repay each person according to what they have done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism. Romans 2:6-11

REFLECTION

Paul's letter to the Romans is the longest, weightiest and most influential of all his correspondence. Major themes of Christian maturity are explored in depth in the book of Romans. In the second chapter, Paul lifts the theme of the righteous judgment of God and warns believers to not judge others, because when we do, we are passing judgment on ourselves. All people are subject to God's judgment and condemnation of sin. God will repay our earthly deeds whether they are good deeds or evil deeds. Everyone is under the same divine judgment, no favoritism is shown. All must answer to God.

The words from the book of Romans encourage me to do good and to not do evil. They remind me that someday everyone will ultimately be judged by God for their earthly actions. My sense of morality is not enough to spur me on to a lifetime of good deeds, my fallen human nature needs more. Fear of judgment is not enough to inspire my good deeds, my selfish disposition needs more. I need the goodness of Jesus Christ through the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to come into my heart and change me from the inside out. I need the redeeming, transforming power of Jesus. When I put Christ first in my life and invite Him to reign in my soul, my motivations change. Through sanctifying grace, I find that I grow in love, mercy and compassion and I am genuinely inspired to do good deeds. I also am spurred on by the Christian community. Fellowship with other believers encourages me to live a life of Godly activity.

I listen carefully for the Holy Spirit to reveal what God is saying to me through this passage. What words are most aligned with the current state of my soul - words like persist, do, seek, glory, honor, peace, and goodness? Or words like self-seeking, rejecting good, following evil, finding trouble or inviting distress? Have I invited the power of the Holy Spirit to live and work in me, enabling me to persist in doing good? Is God transforming the state of my soul, softening the hardness of my heart, and moving me to the activity of pursuing goodness in all things? I remember that I cannot do this in my own power, but must fully rely on the power of God.

Ask: Do I persist in doing good in the world? What is my ultimate motivation to do good - a guilty conscience, fear of divine judgment or a genuine response to the love of Jesus?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

God, You are mighty and holy. You are a God of mercy and also a God of judgment. You call me to pursue holiness of heart and life. I am aware that I continually fall short of goodness. Only through the sanctifying power of Your Holy Spirit am I able to make progress in the spiritual life. This transformation motivates me to lead a life that persists in doing good. I welcome You into my heart this day. Remove any wrong intentions, poor motivations or mistaken priorities. Give me a heart that longs to pursue goodness and righteousness and stir up my desire to pursue deeds of peace and goodwill. Amen.