

Friday- March 7

“...blindness that is [deep-seated] within them, because of the hardness and insensitivity of their heart.”

Still not a judgement on these folks, because God's Word is as much talking to us as it is to anyone else. We ALL fall into blindness and ignorance occasionally. The disciples continually fell into apathy, frustration and confusion of WHY Jesus cared SO much for others. It was so much easier to exclude the Gentiles (non-Jewish folks)... and the Geresenes... and the Syro-Phonicians... OH!- and those awful ROMANS! Jesus says that we need to care for everyone (just like He does). We ALL have our programmed insensitivities, 'dislikes' and bias in our hearts. We ALL have had our hearts 'hardened' by different things in this world. Each one of us has things that we DON'T want to care about and we just want to shut off from our 'caring'. Things, people, political parties, ideologies, loud-neighbors, annoying family members, irritating people, MEAN people, IGNORANT PEOPLE... "I DON'T CARE!" It's easy. You just choose to STOP caring. Jesus calls us to care SO much that we ache to help them... and that is difficult for us to (even) want to do.

Prayer- Mighty God, help me to care more deeply.

Saturday- March 8

But you did not learn Christ in this way!

Rolling back to the beginning of this devotional, we 'learned Christ' through our openness and access of our own hearts to the Holy Spirit. We readily opened ourselves to Jesus, and we found His willingness to develop our ignorant hearts. Jesus could have so easily found darkness so abundant in any of our hearts, and EASILY could have rejected us. In fact- Jesus could STILL easily reject any of us, for the darkness we haven't offered to Christ. We are STILL ignorant and blind in SO MANY things, because we choose to be. We marvel at the light that Christ has brought into our hearts, chasing away the darkness there, while we smugly ignore the ignorance and blindness we've chosen to hang onto, because we LIKE the darkness there! We all have our portions of selfish, prideful APATHY-choosing to remain ignorant and uncaring about those things we ENJOY disliking. Paul reminds us here, that this kind of wishy-washy attitude is simply not going to hold water in God's Kingdom. Further, when we show off our bad attitudes... our bias... showing off our ignorance and blindness... ESPECIALLY when we show off these worst parts of ourselves to the un-churched world(!)- we are dishonoring Christ. Jesus didn't teach us this way of ignorance and blindness. Christ gives us freedom. Choose the life and freedom that He has made for you!

Prayer- Mighty God, help me to care more deeply.



Ephesians 4 : 17-20

Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹⁷ So this I say, and solemnly affirm together with the Lord [as in His presence], that you must no longer live as the unbelieving live, in the futility of their minds [and in the foolishness and emptiness of their souls], ¹⁸ for their [moral] understanding is darkened *and* their reasoning is clouded; [they are] alienated *and* self-banished from the life of God [with no share in it; this is] because of the [willful] ignorance *and* spiritual blindness that is [deep-seated] within them, because of the hardness *and* insensitivity of their heart. ¹⁹ And they, [the ungodly in their ***spiritual apathy***], having become callous *and* unfeeling, have given themselves over [as prey] to unbridled sensuality, eagerly craving the practice of every kind of impurity [that their desires may demand]. ²⁰ But you did not learn Christ in this way!

Monday- Mar 3

A side note on the Amplified Bible

I try to use different bible translations for these devotionals to offer some diversity in the different versions. The Amplified Bible (1965) is an excellent translation, taking the great work of the ASV (American Standard Version of 1901, Rudolph Kittel's Biblia Hebraica, the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, and the 23rd edition of the Nestle Greek New Testament as well as the best Hebrew and Greek lexicons- making it a *fantastic 'word-for-word' translation of both the OT and NT. The AMP version recognizes that while a literal 'word-for-word' translation from Hebrew or Greek to English is important, a lot can also get lost in additional meanings or concepts attached to a specific Hebrew or Greek word. These 'amplifications' are provided in [brackets] to aid in some understanding, but the literal text is also there if you want to skip the Biblical Language Scholar additions to help. The work is assembled by The Lockman Foundation, a diversity of Christian scholars, who worked tirelessly to agree on this unanimous translation.*

Prayer- Mighty God, help me to care more deeply.



Tuesday- Mar 4

"you must no longer live as the unbelieving live, in the futility of their minds [and in the foolishness and emptiness of their souls..."

This has (unfortunately) been used as a segregationist prayer, to create 'us' and 'them' categories of the 'churched' and 'unchurched'. That isn't what Paul is writing about here, as Paul's mission and passion was reaching out to the 'unchurched'. What Paul is saying is that the believers (once they become believers) need to change how they live, no longer living the ways they used to live. Paul is saying that once we are in Christ (IF we are truly in Christ) it should show in the way we live our lives. If we continue to live in the same sins and problems that we had BEFORE we were believers, then something probably isn't working correctly, and that disfunction isn't Jesus. Paul points out that unbelievers have a 'foolishness and emptiness of their souls'. This isn't a judgement, but simply an observation, and for Paul- a confession, as he also used to be 'foolish and empty' (which he routinely confesses).

Without this faith and this relationship with Christ, we stand in the dark, forever seeking something to fulfill our emptiness.

Prayer- Mighty God, help me to care more deeply.

Wednesday- March 5

"...for their [moral] understanding is darkened and their reasoning is clouded..."

Still not a judgement (as so many Christian's mistakenly read into this passage), Paul is trying to explain what it is like without the Holy Spirit amplifying our consciousness with Divine Wisdom and influence. We have been offered a readily accessible 'Christ Consciousness' in the Holy Spirit. On our own, our ways of seeing life around us is SO limited and our human reasoning is SO faulty. Through the Holy Spirit, we have access to such a more refined and perfect vision of love, compassion and empathy! We have access to a means of seeing the world that is simply impossible on our own. Paul is discussing the extraordinary power that comes with accepting Christ and utilizing our prayers and focus in doing God's work. Through Christ, we can abandon ignorance and find a powerful, productive path for EVERYONE to find peace! For those on the outside of that Grace, these tools are simply silent.

Prayer- Mighty God, help me to care more deeply.



Thursday- March 6

"...[they are] alienated [and self-banished] from the life of God [with no share in it] because of the [willful] ignorance and spiritual blindness..."

I love this translation for passages like this. It's SO accurate to the original Greek. I've heard pastor's preach on this passage to say that God's Word is 'kicking-out' and banishing the non-believers and God is ONLY embracing the true-believers. Nonsense! The Greek is pretty obvious to point out these 'willfully ignorant' persons are those that are stuck in this cycle of being 'spiritually blind'. Paul is saying we shouldn't work to be LIKE these folks, but is reminding us that we used to BE these folks (just like he was)! Our job is to NOT be 'spiritually blind' or 'willfully ignorant'. The sin of apathy or sloth is a terribly difficult sin to shake off. The world has taught us so VERY well to simply NOT care about... well.. To not care about ANYTHING. Rolling over and going back to sleep is so very easy. This stark warning from Scripture is something I think EVERYONE in our American culture needs to hear. We see countless people in media, in society, in our government and in our leadership that are professing to be Christian, but also seem to DELIGHT in expressing their absolute LACK of empathy, caring, compassion or mercy to others. Jesus says that if someone is different from yourself, you SHOULD care about them. Our modern Christian society seems to be teaching that if someone is different- you don't have to care!

Prayer- Mighty God, help me to care more deeply.