

MEN'S RETREAT DEVOTIONAL

CALLED TO FREEDOM, EQUIPPED FOR GREATNESS

21 DAYS OF CHALLENGE AND CHANGE

SEPTEMBER 19-25: THE CALLING AND EQUIPPING OF DAVID

SEPTEMBER 26-OCTOBER 2: THE CALLING AND EQUIPPING OF JESUS

OCTOBER 3-9: YOUR CALLING AND EQUIPPING

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TODAY'S THEME: DAVID'S IDENTITY

Today's Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

Comments

"Disqualified." It's one of the most powerful words the Enemy has in his arsenal and one of the most frequent ones he launches at us. Could you imagine how the conversation in Jesse's house went down that morning? Samuel, God's keynote spokesman who even the elders of the town feared is coming over and he wants to see Jesse and his sons. Jesse, realizing how important this is, gets all his sons ready to meet Samuel except for David who he sends out to tend the sheep. What must have been running through Jesse's mind? "Surely not David, he's too young, he's too immature, he's too (fill in the blank)." Translation: David is disqualified. This is the message that The Enemy was trying to sow in Jesse, Samuel and I suspect even in David. However, this not the message God has for David. While Jesse and Samuel could only see the exterior, God could see the heart of David and stamps him with the word "qualified" by having him anointed to become king. This shows how God's calling on our lives is often so much greater than what we or the people around us can imagine we are capable of.

Reflections

Do you often feel disqualified for difficult tasks or things you think are beyond your capabilities? Whose voice are you listening to? God's or the Enemy's?

Do you know what God's callings are for your life?

Prayer

Ask God to show you what your calling is in life or what the next step is in fulfilling that calling.

Ask God for a fresh revelation of what He thinks about you and what He thinks you are capable of. This may even require for you to dispense of some of your own "evaluations" of yourself.

TODAY'S THEME: DAVID'S CENTERING

Today's Reading: 1 Samuel 18:5-15

Comments

Ever have a hard boss to work for? One that gives you difficult tasks and in general just makes life miserable? Well David had it far worse! Not only does his boss send him out to deal with the Philistine problem every time they rise up but he also tries to kill him (talk about a job hazard). However, what is amazing about this whole scenario is that in spite of the seemingly obvious risk to his life, David still submits to Saul's authority as king and runs campaigns for him. Somehow David is able to see past Saul's attempts to kill him and still respect Saul's God-appointed position and title even though the person in that position is no longer acting in a way worthy to retain it. This can be some of the hardest worship we ever have to do: respecting and honoring the title and office that God appoints even if the people in it are acting in a way unbecoming of that position. In fact, David's willingness to do this is also what shows him worthy of being in a position of leadership himself: in order to be able to lead one must know how to follow.

Reflections

How do you see the people in positions of authority in your life? Do you treat father, mother, pastors, bosses, and elected officials with the respect that their position is due as one appointed by God or merely with the respect you think they deserve based on their actions?

How does the way you follow others affect your ability to lead? In your family? At work? In the church?

Prayer

Ask God to show you how to be a better leader by being a better follower.

Ask God to change your perspective on how you see those in authority that are not behaving in ways befitting of their office.

TODAY'S THEME: DAVID'S COMMISSION

Today's Reading: 1 Samuel 22:1-23

Comments

God almost never does things my way! Just image the mighty David. Champion over Goliath, champion over his enemies, anointed king as a teenager now probably in one of his lowest states – hiding in a cave with a bunch of low-life men looking for a way to escape their problems. Is this really what God had in mind? I would have wanted the special forces of the Israelite army to leave Saul and fight with me; instead, God give me every deadbeat, every gambler, every emotionally unstable person in Israel as my army. This is what comes to God's anointed? No wonder he wanted to stay in a cave.

But he passes his test. God gave Saul every opportunity, every luxury, every privilege possible to be a successful king. However, here, David is given almost nothing that can make him successful. But there is a huge difference between the two: when the prophet delivers the word of the Lord, David obeys, leaves the cave, and returns to face his enemy. Obedience to God's word is something Saul never had, and so his life took a destructive turn that ultimately has him killing the priests of God. Meanwhile David, with none of the advantages of Saul, obeys and receives the commission and blessing of God.

Reflections

What limitations do you put on God's ability to use you for His purposes?

When God asks you to obey are you more like David or Saul?

What are some difficult things God would ask you to be obedient in?

Prayer

Spend some time asking God to search your heart for any excuses you've made to disobey Him.

Ask Him to prepare you for a new commissioning in Him.

TODAY'S THEME: DAVID'S SIN

Today's Reading: 2 Samuel 11:1-26

Comments

When I read this passage the major theme that leaps out of the page to me is that David is on a battlefield and he doesn't even know it. I think it's very interesting that the opening section juxtaposes David sending out his men to some distant land to do battle while he stays home where there is no battle, no conflict, where it's safe (supposedly). Then while engaged in the innocuous activity of walking on the roof of his palace, the Enemy springs his trap and suddenly the battle that seemed so far off is now brought to David's very doorstep. "Be self controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Alert. On guard. Aware. These terms all apply to how one behaves when in a state of war. The Enemy caught David off guard and scored in easy victory through David's ignorance of the Enemy's tactics. Let us not make the same mistake.

Reflections

What are spheres of your life where the Enemy has strategically attacked where you were unaware that there was a battle going on? Your marriage? Your relationship with your children? Parents? How about something as simple as reading your Bible? Do you ever have extreme difficulty focusing on that or get very sleepy when you try to read it?

What are ways you can be more alert and on guard?

Prayer

Ask God to reveal to you the strategies of the Enemy against you so that you can pray against them specifically.

Ask God to show you ways to move offensively against the Enemy to keep him at bay.

TODAY'S THEME: DAVID'S REBUKE

Today's Reading: 2 Samuel 12:1-13

Comments

"You are the man." With those four words all of the righteous anger David was feeling towards the injustice of this situation suddenly got redirected onto the person who truly deserved it: himself. It is no small thing to be confronted with one's own sin and suddenly come to the realization that one has done terrible things. Yet David's response to his own sin gives much insight into how to receive correction well, not primarily by what David does but rather by what he does not do. David does not blame shift: "If only Bathsheba hadn't been bathing on the roof this would never have happened"; he doesn't attack the messenger "Who are you Nathan to come telling me what I've done wrong? Aren't you sinful too? Why don't we talk about your sins?"; he doesn't use his power and position to justify his actions "I'm the king, I have every right to move Uriah anywhere I want within the army and if I want Bathsheba as my wife it's within my rights to take her"; nor does he downplay the severity of his sin "I didn't really murder Uriah, I just put him in a more dangerous place. Bathsheba hasn't been harmed all that much because she's also getting a better life in the palace as one of my wives." Rather, David simply accepts the honest truth of the situation and admits, "I have sinned against the LORD." What a great model for us to follow; acknowledge our sin as sin, acknowledge who we have sinned against, and take responsibility for our actions and the ensuing consequences. In my opinion, being able to do the three things just mentioned is one of the highest marks of what it means to be a man.

Reflections

Have you used any of the above strategies to avoid taking responsibility for your sins before?

If you find you have a lot of trouble admitting to your own sins, have you thought about why?

Prayer

Ask God to humble you and make you more willing to admit to your sins and faults.
Pray for The Holy Spirit to bring conviction on you in areas where you might have hardened yourself.

TODAY'S THEME: DAVID'S CONFESSION, REPENTANCE, & RESTORATION

Today's Reading: 2 Samuel 12:13-24

Comments

"If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Even though this verse hadn't even been written yet, apparently the power of the truth it echoes still holds true in Old Testament times. As soon as David confesses his sin, a transaction occurs and it is taken from him. Additionally, by having the sin removed from him, David gets what he does not deserve: life. The wages of sin is death and David even prescribes death for the man in the sheep analogy yet somehow David is spared from what he deserves (though there are consequences for his actions as evidenced by the death of the child). However, what I find additionally fascinating is that God decides to redeem the very thing taken from David that was just taken from. God does this by allowing Bathsheba to conceive of another child very closely after the death of the first except that this one clearly has the Lord's blessing. How amazingly gracious is God towards David! Even after such a terrible sin has been committed by David God does not just decide to throw David away and find someone else to be king. Rather, God decides to restore him. What a beautiful thing.

Reflections

Do you always believe that if we confess our sin to God he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from unrighteousness? Do you ever find yourself acting as if you don't believe that is true? If so why?

Do you ever find yourself dwelling on the consequences of your sin and unable to see the way God redeems and restores you?

Prayer

Pray that God would give you a fresh revelation of how he is faithful and just to forgive your sin and remove it as far as the east is from the west if you will confess it to Him.

Ask God to give help you see how he restores even the most broken situations after sin.

TODAY'S THEME: DAVID'S COURAGE (OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF MAN)

Today's Reading: 2 Samuel 22:17-20

Comments

At this point in his career David has about done it all. He killed the giant Goliath while only a mere boy. He's routed the Philistines so many times that the Israelites came up with a chant for him "Saul his slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands." He's battled and defeated the Jebusites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Canaanites just to name a few. However, here in this passage we really get an inside look at how David had the strength and courage to do what he did. The simple yet powerful truth is that David relied on God to overcome his enemies and trusted that God could do it. However it doesn't stop at that, David also completely drew his sense of value and self worth NOT from the other people in his life but solely from God. "He rescued me because he delighted in me." If you stop to think about it, isn't this what we all crave, to be delighted in? However, where do most of us take this desire? To our spouses, parents, friends, peers, and usually anyplace but God. However, if we seek to get our sense of being delighted in and valued from a person, what happens when that person fails to deliver (which inevitably he or she do since that person is only human)? *We will end up fearing his/her disapproval.* This is one of the mighty traps of the Enemy: to get us caught in the fear of man. However, David shows us the remedy this problem: find your strength in God, rely on God in all you do and against any obstacle, and most importantly draw your sense of value and worth from knowing that God delights in you.

Reflections

Is there a particular person's disapproval that you fear? If so do you see how it affects the other aspects of your life?

Do you have a sense of being delighted in by God? If not, why?

Prayer

Ask God to show you any areas where you are fearing the disapproval of man.

Ask God to reveal to your heart how he delights in you and enjoys you and how to feel satisfied in that.

TODAY'S THEME: JESUS' CALL

Today's Reading: John 3:16-21

Reflections

Just as David was called to lead God's people, so was Jesus. But David's calling was just a shadow of the amazing purpose Jesus came into the world to fulfill. His mission – his call – was, is, and always will be to save the world from sin.

How amazing it is that, in spite of our sin, “whoever believes in Him is not condemned!” Rather, if we trust that he came and fulfilled this calling, *we share in His calling to live holy lives dedicated to God, and to bring God's love and the freedom from sin to the world that is perishing.*

How does Jesus' calling influence your own?

What does it mean to you that Jesus died so that you would not be condemned for your sin?

How does that influence how you think about your life and your calling?

Prayer

Pray that God would give you a greater appreciation for the work Jesus did. Pray that he would reveal to you ever more clearly, the depths of your sin, and the heights to which he has set you free from condemnation.

Thank him for the gift he's given. If you have a little boy of your own, think about what it would be like for his calling to be a brutal death to save the lives of millions. Thank God for His sacrifice and His astonishing love and kindness.

TODAY'S THEME: JESUS' CENTERING

Today's Reading: Matthew 6:25-34

Reflections

Jesus sets a real challenge before us: "do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink ...!" How often do we let the worries of life creep in and push out the things of God? Jesus tells us here that we need to stay centered on God – "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" before focusing on the other "needs" like food, water, shelter, or clothing. The thing about it is that *God is good!* He already knows that we need those things; if we seek Him first, "*all those things will be given to you as well!*"

What would your life be like if you were to set aside all those concerns and simply focus on each day as it came, trying to do what was right, without regard for your own provision?

Prayer

Pray that God would give you deep understanding of this passage. Ask Him how you should apply this in your own life. Ask him for the courage to go against the "wisdom" of this world and to live according to His principles instead.

TODAY'S THEME: JESUS' COMMISSION

Today's Reading: Galatians 5:1

Reflections

This short verse carries enormous implications. It describes Jesus' commission in one simple phrase – that he “set us free!” Jesus was sent to the earth and became a man *for the specific purpose of setting us free*. But free from what?

Paul cautions the Galatians, “do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” The tendency of all men is to try to *earn* freedom – to attempt to *do enough good* to be free from the heavy weight of sin. But that's a fool's task! There is nothing we can do in the future that can undo our sins of the past; there's no amount of good that can change our past evils.

Because of that, there is no hope for anyone who trusts in being “a good person” to set them free from the burden of sin; rather, the only hope for any one lies in trusting in the freedom that God has provided for us ... freely!

Prayer

Ask God to show you any areas in which you are relying on your own works or actions to “justify” you before Him or people. Ask him to help you see any areas in which you are trying to be “good enough.”

Ask God you give you the faith to abandon your own efforts, and simply live and delight in the freedom he has already given you.

TODAY'S THEME: JESUS AND SIN

Today's Reading: Hebrews 4

Reflections

How great it is that we have a high priest in Jesus who is able to sympathize with our temptations! How much greater that, *though he suffered the same temptations, he never gave in to sin!* Because of his hard work – suffering through temptation, but persevering into righteousness (even through death!), we are able to approach the throne of God with confidence!

Prayer

Ask God to show you any spirit of timidity or shame that keeps you from approaching him with *confidence* that your sins are not held against you. Tell God about the temptations you face and the sin you struggle with. Ask him to purify your heart and mind, and to heal you of your sinful desires.

Trust that he will respond with love and gentleness, and without condemnation – because you trust Jesus to have taken your penalty for you!

TODAY'S THEME: THE COST OF SIN

Today's Reading: Matthew 27:46

Reflections

The cost of our sin was high – very high. When Jesus was tortured and beaten, nailed to a cross, and hung up to die, he was paying the price for our sin. But the physical pain wasn't the greatest burden he bore that day. Crying out in the depths of his pain, he voiced a greater concern: "Why have you forsaken me?"

That piteous cry is heart-wrenching. An innocent man had laid down his life to save the ones who were abusing him, and in the crushing intensity of death, his voice rang out with the grief of isolation and abandonment.

What a cost God paid for us. What a gift we were given. Consider the excellent song, "How Great the Father's Love For Us":

How vast beyond all measure
That He would give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure

How great the pain of searing
loss
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the
chosen One
Bring many sons to glory

Behold the Man upon a cross
My guilt upon His shoulders
Ashamed, I hear my mocking
voice
Call out among the scoffers

It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me
life

I know that it is finished

I will not boast in anything
No gifts, no powr's, no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection

Why should I gain from His
reward?
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my
ransom

Prayer

Ask God to give you an ever stronger sense of what Jesus endured on the cross – and the sacrifice the Father made of his son.

Thank God that He has seen fit to pay such a high price to set you free from the penalty for sin: your own death and abandonment.

You have been given "the right to become a child of God" (John 1:12). Ask God to help you to embrace that name, and to overcome sin.

TODAY'S THEME: JESUS' CONFESSION, REPENTANCE, & RESTORATION

Today's Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:21

Reflections

We all know that the key to this passage is that “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” – that Jesus suffered and died to save us from the consequences of our own sin. But what about the rest of this passage? What amazing news! When the price for our sin was paid – when Jesus was crucified – “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them!”

What does it mean for us to be able to say that if we are in Christ, we are “a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come”?

How can this change the way you think of your relationship to God?

Prayer

Pray for God to give you wisdom to understand what it really means to be “a new creation” in Christ.

Ask God to help you to understand and embrace what it means to be “Christ's Ambassador,” and to help you live that out in your daily life.

TODAY'S THEME: JESUS' COURAGE

Today's Reading: Mark 14:34-36

Reflections

What an amazing prayer Jesus prayed. Even though he was “very sorrowful,” – “even to death” – even though he prayed to God to take His burden away from Him, He trusted God enough to say, “not what I will, but what you will.”

Prayer

Ask God if there are any areas in your life that you haven't fully submitted to him. Is there anything in which you have not said, “not my will, but yours?”

Ask God to give you the courage and strength to submit everything to Him – he has promised that he will!

Listen for God to reveal to you an area in which he would like to grow you in increased courage and fearlessness to submit your own will to his. Wait patiently to hear his still, quiet voice, and when you hear it, *believe*.

TODAY'S THEME: YOUR CALL***Today's Reading:*** Romans 8

Sometimes, I have bad days at work. I'm easily frustrated at small setbacks, and things just don't seem to be going smoothly. I'm nearly paralyzed at small decisions. My goals seem to be drifting away from me. My prayers seem weak and watery, and I have no sense of God's nearness. In my darkness and feelings of disconnectedness, I sometimes indulge my flesh by seeking "comfort food" for my belly – or my eyes.

Thanks to our flesh, we all have this struggle, though it may take different forms for different people. Even the Apostle Paul had this struggle. In Romans 7, he agonizes over the fact that he continues to find himself doing the thing he hates. Just like Paul, we are at war against our flesh. And sometimes, it feels like we're losing.

But the Spirit, through Paul, also reminds us of our secret weapon in our war against the flesh--himself. The Spirit of life has set us free, through the blood of Christ Jesus (v. 2), and, therefore, we are no longer under any condemnation (v. 1). This, by the way, is the same Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead, so we know that he is more than capable of giving life to us.

This same Spirit actually "dwells" in us. Think about that. It dwells in us. It doesn't just visit us occasionally. No, it dwells. The veil separating men from God has been torn, and now the very Spirit of God calls our spirit "home."

And if we have this Spirit, then we have become sons of God (v14). The Spirit cries out within us, saying, "Father!" (v15) Our spirit joins in this cry: "Father!" (Note: verse 16 says "our spirit", not "our spirits". My friends, we truly are in this war together!)

This changes everything. Now, in those times when we feel weak, when the notion of waging war against the flesh or against the powers and principalities of this world makes us want to go back to bed, when frustration and indulgence lie in the dark corners of our minds, ready to pounce at the slightest opportunity – then, the Spirit helps us in our weakness (v26). When we're so out of the fight that we don't even know what to pray for, the Spirit himself intercedes for us, with groanings too deep for words. In fact, the Son is also interceding for us (v34). The whole Trinity is involved, aware of our feelings of darkness and loneliness and frustration, and the whole Trinity is ready to give us what we need. All we have to do is look to him. He already dwells in us; the feeling of separation is a lie. In fact, nothing will ever separate us from the love of God (v39).

Application

Read Romans 8. Let the Spirit highlight one or two verses to memorize for the day. "Eat" these verses as Jeremiah ate the word of God. Let them become part of you (as all food does), and let them also become a delight to your heart (Jeremiah 15:16). Today, subject your feelings to the truths in the verses you memorize.

TODAY'S THEME: YOUR CENTERING**Today's Reading:** 1 Samuel 18

We read in 1 Samuel 18 how Saul become jealous of David. The trigger was when David had success "striking down the Philistine," Goliath. The women sang together as they celebrated, giving David more honor than Saul. Saul became "very angry" and "eyed David from that day on."

Saul's jealousy is a result of him being centered on people rather than God. He relied on people to affirm his value as a person, and that became such an important idol in his life that when it was threatened, he reacted violently.

Another sign of people-worship, and one that hits a little closer to home for me, is doing good deeds with an eye towards the praise and thanks that you'll get afterwards. I tend to think, "Man, they're gonna think I'm awesome! They'll probably tell all their friends what a great guy I am!"

The problem with people-worship is that, like any other idol, it's likely to vanish in a puff of smoke. And we all know it, so we're very insecure when we believe our worth comes from such things.

But here's the good news. We are offered a much better source for self-worth: God. Our heavenly Father sent his Son to switch places with us. Jesus took our (richly deserved) punishment, and he gave us his (richly deserved) righteousness. Now, we have Christ's perfect righteousness, and the Father calls us sons, just like Jesus himself.

Let's explore the implications here for just a minute. We get to have a familial relationship with the Lord. Not just a servant-to-master relationship – that much would be gracious enough on his part--but a son-to-father relationship. Any good father loves his children and would do anything for them. Hasn't our heavenly Father already proved that he is a good father?

When we remember the Father's love, it is a total delight to center ourselves on the Father. He loves us, and we know it! Please let this truth seep into your soul: he doesn't patiently endure you until the day he makes you perfect, constantly sighing in near-exasperation at your failures; he delights in you now, as any good father delights in his son. His delight (or joy) in us gives us strength (Neh. 8:10).

So, let's center ourselves on the Father's love for us, rather than people's opinions. His love is not only deeper than people's opinions, it's also more constant. When you're centered on the Lord, and you find our identity primarily in him, we are secure, confident that the part of you that makes you "you" can never be stolen.

Application

Talk to the Father like he's your Father today. Remind yourself that he approves of you and delights in you. Let his smile towards you be your strength, even (and especially) when you're not getting much respect from others.

TODAY'S THEME: YOUR COMMISSION

Today's Reading: 1 Timothy 6:11-12

Reflections

Think about what Paul says we are to pursue: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. How do these qualities reflect God's heart and mind? Paul equates pursuing these with "taking hold of the eternal life to which we were called."

Which of these is the easiest for you to love to pursue in your own life? Which is the hardest?

Prayer

Pray to God to reveal an item from this list that he would have you focus on pursuing for the next season. Ask him to give you strength and grow you in it, and to give you wisdom about what it means to be a man of God who pursues that quality. Tell him any fears or concerns you have about doing so, and trust him to provide all the strength you need to make choices that honor him and bring life to you and those around you.

TODAY'S THEME: DEALING WITH YOUR SIN

Today's Reading: Romans 7:21 – 8:4

Comments

Everyone sins, even those who have been set free in Christ. The victory in Christ over sin is not that we sin no more in this present age, but that “through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life set us free from the law of sin and death.” When we sin, we know that the consequences for our sin – death itself – has already been paid in full by Jesus when he suffered and died on the cross.

Because of Jesus' brutally hard work, we are no longer damned to continue on in our sin, unable to turn to God – rather, He has made the way clear for us to break free from our sin and live lives of holiness according to God's will! That's great news! God is ready and willing to deliver us from evil and bring us into the rejoicing that comes from abundant life with Him.

Prayer

Ask God to show you areas of sin in your life from which he would like to help you be free. Take a few minutes to listen. When he brings something to mind, *believe* that it is Him, promising to set you free. Thank him for his generosity and gentleness, and pray for him to start you down the path of freedom from that area of sin. Trust that He has plans to make you holier, and that this is a part of that plan.

TODAY'S THEME: SHAME AND CONDEMNATION?

Today's Reading: Romans 7:21 – 8:4

Comments

This is the same passage as yesterday, but with a different emphasis. Notice in the emboldened sentence in the second paragraph; it has an amazing promise! *There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!* Even though we sin, we stand before God without condemnation, because all our sins are covered over when we trust in Jesus that he died on our behalf, to take them away.

It can be hard to believe, but it's true! Don't let the enemy come to you with temptation to feel shame or condemnation. Everyone has sinned, and your sin is not a surprise to God. Jesus took on *the full weight of your guilt*, and in so doing, *he has set you free*. Believe it, and believe Him.

Reflections

Do you struggle with feelings of shame or condemnation for past or present sin? If your sins are in the past, make the hard choice to *trust that Jesus has set you free*. He has separated you from your sin "farther than the east is from the west." Choose to live in the freedom that God has given you, and thank him for it with a glad heart.

If you continue to struggle with feelings of shame or condemnation, *do not struggle alone!* Find one of the men at Grace church, a friend, a pastor, or even a stranger, and ask them to talk about it. Go out on a limb and tell them that you are struggling with these feelings; we all love you and will encourage and exhort you to live in the freedom you *truly have*.

Prayer

Ask God to show you any areas in which the enemy is tempting you to feel shame.

Pray for deliverance from evil, and not to be led into that temptation.

Pray for Wisdom, to live freely and without a sense of guilt for anything in your past.

Pray for the power to stop sinning! Pray for an overwhelming love of holiness, and trust that God will give it to you!

TODAY'S THEME: YOUR CONFESSION, REPENTANCE, & RESTORATION

Today's Reading: 1 John 1:9

Reflections

How wonderfully simple and clear this verse is! If we confess our sins, he forgives and cleanses us! What a good and loving Father is our God!

Have you confessed your sin to God recently? Have you confessed your sin to a brother in Christ? Do you make a regular habit of confession? When we do sin, it's tempting to crush it down and push it as far away from our minds as possible, hoping that it will never be known, and will simply go away. Resist that desire and instead, open your sin to someone you trust. Show it plainly in the bright light of God's truth, and find a brother to pray with for forgiveness and for a clean heart – God will be faithful and just to do just that!

Prayer

If you struggle with anything – whether it's pornography, anger, lusts, lying, condemnation, homosexuality, stealing, pride, violence, or any other ungodliness – bring it before God! Better yet, find a brother in Christ, or two, with whom you can pray together. If you don't know of one, ask the pastors to help you find one!

Pray that you will trust God to be a good and loving father who will forgive you and cleanse your heart.

TODAY'S THEME: OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF MAN

Today's Reading: Proverbs 29:25

Comments

A "snare" is a trap generally used for catching animals. What a thought! The fear of man is a trap made to catch you – but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe!

Reflections

Do you care a lot about what other people think? Are your decisions to do what's right in God's eyes ever influenced by what others would think if were to what God says?

Do you ever keep your mouth shut instead of speaking up for God's truth, so you won't have an uncomfortable situation at work, or in your family?

The Bible clearly says these attitudes are a trap that will catch you and put you in danger! But that God promises to keep *safe* whoever trusts in Him.

Prayer

Ask God to show you any areas in which you suffer from "the fear of man." Take a few moments to listen to what he has to say.

Ask Him to take away your fear! Tell him that you're afraid of what others would think, say, or do, or what the consequences could be in your life. He's a good father, and he wants to hear everything in your heart. Speak plainly to him and tell him exactly where you are on this, and ask him to give you strength and courage.

Your heavenly father is *good* and if you ask him for bread, he won't give you a stone. Ask him to bring you courage, and trust him to give it to you *abundantly!* Pray for faith and joy in trusting God.