

Day One

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here in John 16, Jesus talks about sending the Holy Spirit who would guide His disciples into the Truth. That's an intriguing statement. Truth could mean knowing what's right. It could also mean knowing what is true. Because John makes contrasts between light and dark, life and death, true and false, I'm more inclined to focus on the latter.

We, as children of God who have received the Holy Spirit, are being guided into the Truth. That includes knowing what is right and what is wrong. It includes knowing what is false and what is true. But it begins with knowing THE Truth who is Jesus Christ. It begins with being united with Him who is THE Truth.

In Baptism, we were joined together with Jesus in His death and life. We were united with THE Truth. As new creations, we are now growing up into THE Truth. We are being brought to maturity in Christ. As John says in one of his letters, we are children of God right now. But we don't yet know what that means in all of its fullness. We don't know what we will look like when the Holy Spirit is done with His work, but we know that we will be just like Jesus because we will see Him face to face.

Day Two

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Paul is talking about the same thing here in Galatians 2:20 that he talks about in Romans 6. There he talks about our being buried with Christ in Baptism. We die. The old sinful man dies and a new life is created. If we are united with Christ in His death, we are also united with Him in new life.

Here Paul says that we have been crucified with Christ. We have died with Him. We have suffered with Him the torments of hell. We have experienced that physically. It is a vicarious experience. Christ suffers the physical anguish and torment of hell in our place.

We have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless we live. That's true not because we deserve it, but because God gives life to us as a gift. He died so that we could live. And we do. But the life that we now live, we live by faith in the Son of God who loves me and gave Himself to me.

We live by the power of God at work in us. We live because we have been joined to Christ who is risen from the dead. We live because Jesus lives in us and is at work to complete in us all that He began when He called us to faith.

Day Three

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The devotion for today focuses on repentance as a gift. It's hard to see that as a gift because we are taught that it is something we do. It is a turning away from sin and turning toward life in Christ. And some might wonder what's the big deal whether it's a work we do or a gift we receive.

2 Corinthians 7:10 makes a comparison between godly grief and worldly grief. The former produces a repentance that leads to salvation. The latter produces death.

That should raise the question: What is godly grief? It is a grief that comes when our eyes are opened to see our sin – our whole condition and not just what we do. It's a grief that comes when, confronted by God's Word, we see our need and despair of being able to do anything to save ourselves. We can't change our nature.

That despair produces repentance. It works like it did in the Garden when Adam sinned. Adam tried to hide his sin – his broken nature – with fig leaves. God came looking for him and He found him hiding in the Garden. God came and covered Adam's nakedness – his sinful condition – with the skins of animals sacrificed in his place. That Adam received those skins is evidence of repentance – of being found by God. Adam didn't do anything. The grief that Adam felt was a result of being confronted by the mercy of God – of the sacrifices made to save Adam from the death he deserved because he ate the forbidden fruit.

Day Four

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Speaking on Galatians 4:21-31, the writer of today's devotion talks about the weight of the Law. What is that weight? It's not a physical weight, but it weighs on us like no physical weight can. It is the demand that we be perfect in order to please God. It is a burden that we can't lift from ourselves.

The more we try to be perfect, the heavier the weight becomes. We can never satisfy that demand. No matter how hard we work, there will always be more to do. That burden leads us to despair.

That despair can show itself in at least two different ways. It can cause us to try to lift that burden by focusing on the sins of others. I may not be perfect, but I'm better than most (which really doesn't relieve the burden – it's just a passing peace). Or I can decide to quit trying. I can live just as I please. But that doesn't remove the weight. It still presses down.

The only way to be free from that weight is live by faith in Jesus and His saving work. He took that burden of the Law on Himself. He lived under the Law perfectly. He was tempted in every way, but He did not sin. He then died the death sin demands and our sin deserves.

By His perfect life and His sacrificial death, the weight of the Law – the demand that we prove ourselves worthy of God's love – has been lifted from us. We are not worthy of God's love and we can never make ourselves worthy of His love. But we are not worthless. The cross and empty tomb tells us that we are dearly loved.

Day Five

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In today's devotion based on 1 John 2:10, the writer uses an illustration of traveling to a very familiar place for the first time in the dark. He knew the way, but the darkness hid familiar things. It was different. And that is our life as children of God.

We know the way to the Father. It has been opened to us by Jesus' saving work and the forgiveness that we've received. But the sin in the world and at work in us is always trying to shroud the familiar in darkness – to make it less recognizable.

That's when we go back to God's Word. That's when we remember His promises to us attached to the waters of Baptism. That's when we fix our eyes again on Jesus who is the author and perfecter of our faith. He lifts the darkness and makes the way clear. And we walk unhindered and with confidence in the Light of Christ.