

DEVOTION FOR THE FIFTH WEDNESDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PSALM 128

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways!

You shall eat of the fruit of the labour of your hands; you shall be blessed and it will be well with you.
Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.

The Lord bless you from Zion! May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life!

May you see your children's children! Peace be upon Israel!

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen*

Old Testament Reading: Deuteronomy 13:1-18 *Warning against false teachers*

New Testament Reading: Acts 25:1-27 *Paul's defense in Caesarea*

“HE WILL CARRY MY NAME BEFORE GENTILES, KINGS AND ISRAEL”

Saul was blinded by the Lord's glory while on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians in the synagogue. Following his encounter with the Lord, he spent three days blind, neither eating food nor drinking water. It was a time of spiritual reassessment, as he found it necessary to question everything he had previously believed about Jesus and the way in which he understood the nature of the Messiah, as described in scripture.

The Lord appeared to a disciple named Ananias and sent him to baptize Paul and commission him for ministry. Ananias was initially hesitant and despite the fact that it was the Lord who was speaking, he said, “*Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.*” Such was the fear Paul instilled in Christian hearts that Ananias questioned the word of the Lord. The Lord said, “*Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.*” Never doubt the Lord's power to change a person's life and give them faith!

As Jesus said, Saul carried His name before the children of Israel, as well before the Gentiles and their kings. What a change for Paul to go from a persecutor of the church, to the most persuasive spokesman of the faith. Paul testified of Jesus before the people of Israel and the Gentiles and such a controversy had arisen that he found himself in prison, awaiting an appearance before the governor. Paul appeared before two governors, a king and queen before being sent to Rome where he would eventually stand before Caesar.

Paul was brought before the governing authorities of Israel and Rome, because of the controversy he stirred up. He was accused of disturbing the peace, being a trouble maker and undermining the religion of the ancient world. Paul was tried on those charges, but Paul did not seek acquittal on those charges, as much as he sought the opportunity to tell people about Jesus and the salvation God gives through Him. He appealed to Caesar not to secure his freedom, but because this would be an opportunity to proclaim freedom in Christ to leadership of the Roman world. What a blessed and truly Christian way to look at life!

“A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD” (Public Domain)

A mighty fortress is our God, A sword and shield victorious; He breaks the cruel oppressor’s rod. And wins salvation glorious. The old satanic foe has sworn to work us woe. With craft and dreadful might, he arms himself to fight. On earth he has no equal.

No strength of ours can match his might. We would be lost, rejected. But now a champion comes to fight, Whom God himself elected. You ask who this may be? The Lord of hosts is he, Christ Jesus, mighty Lord, God’s only Son adored. He holds the field victorious.

Though hordes of devils fill the land, all threatening to devour us, we tremble not, unmoved we stand; they cannot overpower us. Let this world’s tyrant rage; in battle we’ll engage. His might is doomed to fail; God’s judgement must prevail! One little word subdues him.

God’s Word forever shall abide, No thanks to foes who fear it; For God himself fights on our side, with weapons of the Spirit. Were they to take our house, Goods, honour, child or spouse. Though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day. The kingdom’s ours forever!

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, even as you called Paul to speak your name before the Gentiles, their kings and before the children of Israel, you call us to share your name and love with others. Encourage us with your presence and empower us by your Spirit that we might tell others the good news of life and salvation through faith in you. Put your words on our lips and your Spirit in our hearts. In your Name we pray. Amen

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven.

Hallowed be Thy name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,

Forever and ever. Amen

THE CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

BENEDICTION

Revelation 1:17-18

“...But He laid His right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’”