

Life Week 2022 Devotion – Day 5

God Chose YOU with Forgiveness

Romans 9:30-33: “What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’”

The new year has arrived! That’s wonderful, right? But didn’t you set some goals last year that never were reached? Weren’t there many things you had hoped to accomplish, places to go, and people to see that didn’t happen? We look back at last year and see all our failures, mistakes, and shortcomings--things we could have done better but didn’t. Then we cry out, “But I intended to do so much good last year,” and in the place of successful accomplishments, we find guilt and shame for the things left undone. Happy New Year? Nah.

It is a new year, and with it comes so much unknown. We ponder, “What will this year bring?” More responsibilities, sickness, loss, debt, or loneliness may be some of the concerns on your mind right now. The anxiety and stress of the unknown can drive us crazy. How much stress will this year bring? How much more of this can I take? Isn’t there some fear that comes with the new year? Yes!

To hide the fearfulness, we often try to carry everything on our own. We even fear that asking for help will be viewed as a sign of weakness. As such, we may feel like Atlas, condemned to hold up the heavens for eternity. Can you picture the sculpture of Atlas carrying the world on his shoulders? He is hunched over, slouching from the weight. Is that you? Are you trying to carry the weight of your worldly life on your shoulders? Are you pretending no one else can see the strain on your physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing?

Reread the above Bible passage and notice what Paul says about the Gentiles and the Jews. The Jews were trying to earn the righteousness of God by works of the Law--by their good intentions, following the Law, and trying to be good. There is nothing wrong with wanting to follow God’s Ten Commandments. The problem is that no one is good enough to keep the Law (aside from Jesus), not even once in their life. The Jews wanted to earn their salvation. They were trying to carry the world on their shoulders like Atlas. It can’t be done.

The Gentiles, on the other hand, were praised for the righteousness they possessed. From where did this righteousness come? Was it from deeds accomplished, good intentions, or obeying the Ten Commandments? No, they were declared righteous by faith. Faith in what? Faith in Jesus Christ, the Keeper of the Law and the only One who accomplishes all that is good. By faith, the Gentiles trusted Jesus to carry the weight of the world, which He did. Jesus carried all that needs to be carried upon His shoulders, especially when He hung upon the cross suffering for the sins of the world. Jesus endured the full weight of God’s wrath against sin for us. We receive this by faith and not by works. Jesus does what we cannot do. Jesus stands in the place of each and every person, carrying the weight of the world to forgive past sins and give us hope for the years to come. Trust in Him for your salvation.

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You can't change last year, but you can be at peace knowing you are forgiven in Christ for all that was done wrong or left undone. Now you can look forward to this year, not in angst, but with hope and thanksgiving in Christ Jesus. We are grateful that Jesus earned the forgiveness of sins on our behalf. We are grateful the Father shows His love for His fallen creation by saving us in His Son. We are grateful for His Spirit, who strengthens our faith in Jesus and our trust in God's complete control over all things, even when the world appears to be chaos through our eyes.

Now rejoice! Christ has always been with you, and He is with you now. He will be with you tomorrow and in the days to come. Jesus didn't carry the weight of sin and this fallen world upon His shoulders just to forget about you or me. No! He has a vested interest in each of us. He was born, lived, died, arose, and ascended for all. He has promised to return one day to bring us to Himself for eternity. Rejoice now and always! Christ is carrying you through it all!