

Devotional Guide for the week of April 28

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Opening Prayer: Almighty God, thank you for loving me enough to give hope to my life. Help me to abide in your hope this day and always I pray, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Daily Reading and Reflection Questions

Prayer: for the church, for others, and for myself

Hymn: "God, Who Touchest Earth with Beauty"

God, who touchest earth with beauty,
Make my heart anew;
With thy spirit recreate me,
Pure and strong and true.

Like thy springs and running waters
Make me crystal pure;
Like thy rocks of towering grandeur
Make me strong and sure.

Like thy dancing waves in sunlight
Make me glad and free;
Like the straightness of the pine trees
Let me upright be.

Like the arching of the heavens
Lift my thoughts above;
Turn my dreams to noble action,
Ministries of love.

God, who touchest earth with beauty,
Make my heart anew;
Keep me ever, by thy spirit,
Pure and strong and true. Amen.

Closing Prayer: May the *peace* of God fill my *heart, mind*, and *activity* all this day long. Amen.

Monday

Read: 2 Corinthians 11:16-33

Reflect: In this passage, Paul boasts about the hardships he has faced for the gospel. What benefit does he gain from these hardships? What do you think his attitude was while going through all of these trials?

Tuesday

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:1-11

Reflect: What comfort has Christ given to Paul regarding the thorn in his flesh? How might we respond to Christ's grace which was able to carry Paul through his troubles?

Wednesday

Read: Acts 26:1-23

Reflect: What changed in Paul's life from before his encounter with Jesus to the time after his encounter with Jesus? Why do you think Paul tells so much about his life prior to his encounter with Jesus?

Thursday

Read: Acts 26:24-32

Reflect: In light of Paul's interchange with Agrippa, is the joy Paul expresses in Philippians 1 regarding his imprisonment justified? Does Paul communicate the Gospel convincingly to Agrippa?

Friday

Read: From John Wesley's Sermon "The Nature of Enthusiasm" John Wesley used the word enthusiasm in the context of his day to mean an overly expressive form of religion; a contemporary parallel would be fanaticism.

All those in the world who do not know God say that those who follow St. Paul, as he followed Christ, are out of their minds. It is true that there is a type of religion (going by the name of Christianity) that can be practiced without any such reproach.

This brand of religion is commonly accepted as a religion of “common sense.” It is a religion of form, consisting of a series of outward duties performed in a proper, routine way. You can even add orthodoxy to this form of religion. It is a system of correct doctrines, and it has a level of morality that is also practiced by the heathen.

All the while, not many people will bring against those who practice this kind of Christianity the charge: “Much religion is driving you insane.” But if you strive for the religion of the heart and talk about “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,” it will not be long before others pass this judgment on you. They will say, “You are out of your mind...”

It is easy to see that the world regards as madness the Christians’ complete contempt for transient things, their steady pursuit of eternal things, their divine conviction of things not seen, and their rejoicing in God’s favor. The world accounts as foolish those who testify to a holy love for God, and claim the witness of the Holy Spirit to their spirits that they are children of God. In truth, the world disregards the entire spirit, life, and power of the religion of Jesus Christ.

The people of the world, however, will concede that in other respects, Christians are regarded as reasonable people. It is only in religious matters that the world regards Christians to be muddled in the head. The world, therefore, concludes that Christians suffer only from a particular kind of insanity. Consequently, people of the world agree that the lunacy under which Christians labor is of a specific nature. Accordingly, the world is in the habit of calling this alleged insanity by a special name – enthusiasm.

Reflect: This sermon was written over 200 years ago, but it carries a great deal of truth in our culture today. There are many in our world who believe that Christians are good, though misguided people. Should Christianity lead people to be judged as “out of their mind”? Does your relationship with Jesus distinguish you from the world in a tangible way? How should your walk with Christ effect your life?