Faith Matters

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, February 27, 2020 - Two Gates, Two Ways

FEBRUARY 27TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, February 27, 2020 - Two Gates, Two Ways

Matthew 7:13-14

The broad path is easy to find. In fact, unless you make a conscious choice to avoid it, that's where you'll find yourself walking. Most people like this wide road because it's comfortable, fairly easy, and culturally acceptable.

What those who travel the broad road fail to realize is that it doesn't lead to life. All the "promises" it gives of satisfaction and fulfillment end in disappointment because it's a path without God.

The narrow way, however, follows the direction and desires of the Father. In Matthew 7:14, when Jesus Christ talked about our options, He said, "The way is narrow that leads to life." And what's the narrow way? It's "the way and the truth and the life"—in other words, Jesus Himself (John 14:6). Those who enter by the narrow gate of faith in Christ find the peace and joy of a relationship with Him, which truly satisfies the heart.

Which path would you say you're traveling on today? The narrow way isn't always easy, but it's where we'll find fullness of joy, peace, and righteousness (Psalm 16:11; Eph. 2:14; 1 Corinthians 1:30). And if we choose Jesus, He promises to be with us throughout eternity.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, February 26, 2020 - A Life of Peace

FEBRUARY 26TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, February 26, 2020 - A Life of Peace

Isaiah 26:1-6

Let's suppose I've got a problem that has my stomach in knots with persistent worry. Friends and family try to be understanding, but after a time they grow weary of me taking my anguish out on them. I'm so focused on this issue that it feels as if I'm carrying a heavy load on my shoulders. The Lord offers a liberating alternative: "Cast your burden upon [Me] and [I] will sustain you" (Psalm 55:22). Though He doesn't erase the ills that invade this life, He instead shields us from the weight of worry by taking our situation into His own hands.

However, the call to a peaceful life is impossible without confidence in the Lord. That trust is built through a relationship with Him—praying through trials and triumphs, seeking His guidance, and testing His Word to see that it is true and practical for life.

When we've experienced God's faithfulness and believe He will continue to act on behalf of His followers (Isa. 64:4), that's when peace is possible. In fact, it is not only possible but promised to the believer who trusts in Him (Phil. 4:6-7). But unshakeable peace isn't instantaneous; it is cultivated through a consistent relationship with the Lord.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, February 25, 2020 - Unshakeable Peace

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Philippians 4:4-9

Have you ever thought that a vacation would relieve your anxiety or that you could work out your worries at the gym? I know I have. But the truth is, no one can achieve total freedom from heartache, burdens, or trouble.

However, we can have peace during anxious times. Serenity is a gift from our heavenly Father—it can't be manufactured. The Holy Spirit produces a sense of calm in believers who seek the Lord's protection against anxiety. In the often-quoted passage of Philippians 4:6-7, the Greek word translated as "guard" means "to keep with a garrison." God wraps our heart and mind in His peace, safeguarding both against all-consuming worry or fear. Notice that He doesn't make all of our problems go away. So while we may still be under pressure or prone to weep, we are cushioned against anxiety and surrounded by calm instead.

Jesus said to seek peace in Him because He has overcome this troublesome world (John 16:33). Let's shift our focus from our vexing problem to God and ask for His peace to surround us today. Remember, He's the only one with limitless resources and power, and He wants to meet our needs (Psalm 50:10; Rom. 8:11).

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Daily Devotional - Friday, February 21, 2020 - The Message in the Storm

FEBRUARY 20TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, February 21, 2020 - The Message in the Storm

Psalm 62:1-8

When we're in the midst of a difficult life event, our instinct is often to react quickly and change things. But God frequently asks us to wait.

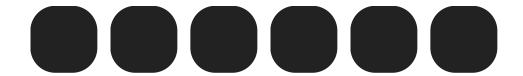
Take a look at today's passage. The word *wait* has a different sense here—it means "pause for further instructions." It's not passivity; rather, we must choose to stop our actions and listen for God's directive. Sometimes the Lord is silent for a season, but He has a purpose. He knows the perfect time for us to act, and until that moment, He wants us to wait. More strength and character are required to be still in the midst of a storm than to frantically seek our own solution.

I can tell you that I sometimes wait impatiently, too. There have been times I've become nervous and questioned God or complained. But that's not how Jesus wants us to react. The apostle Paul tells us plainly to "be anxious for nothing" and to pray to the Lord, who offers peace (Phil. 4:6-7). So we are to pause with patience, trusting in God's wisdom, love, power, and timing.

The key to finding peace in the storm is in waiting for God alone. He hears our every prayer, and we can't go wrong when we rely on Him. Pray for patience and listen for His reply.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, February 18, 2020 - The Danger of a Hardening Heart

FEBRUARY 18TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, February 18, 2020 - The Danger of a Hardening Heart

Hebrews 3:7-19

God speaks to all of us, but how we respond depends on the condition of our heart. Upon hearing the Lord's voice, some believers are motivated to pursue a deeper and more obedient relationship with their Father. Others, however, resist or refuse Him because their heart has become less responsive.

A change in receptiveness may be difficult to recognize because it happens slowly and is often rationalized or excused. How do you respond when the Holy Spirit speaks to you through Scripture or some other means? Carefully consider the following characteristics of a developing callousness:

- *Insensitivity to what God says*
- Resistance to His authority
- Disobedience to what the Lord is instructing you to do

- Justification of sinful conduct
- Rejection of reproof by others
- Preoccupation with worldly things
- Little interest in spiritual matters
- Absence of private devotion (Bible reading and prayer)
- Avoidance of gathering to worship with other believers

If you've discovered any of the above traits in your life, it's not too late. Ask the Lord to mold your heart (Isa. 64:8; Jer. 24:7). Remember, He specializes in making all things new (2 Corinthians 5:17) and delights in our turning to Him.

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