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# Daily Devotional - Tuesday, December 17, 2024 - Mourning Turned to Joy

DECEMBER 17TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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When a newly elected official gives an inaugural speech, they usually outline the values and goals that will mark their administration. When Jesus preached His own inaugural sermon, He chose portions of Isaiah 61 as His text. Jesus began by saying: “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).

The fact that Jesus did not read all the verses in Isaiah’s text may have been a signal that some aspects of this prophecy would not be fulfilled during His earthly ministry. Jesus had come to proclaim the good news of salvation, not to judge (see also Luke 12:14). The inauguration of Jesus’ earthly ministry was the beginning of the age of grace. Jesus came to offer forgiveness of sin and freedom from its bondage. But He also warned of a coming day of judgment when it would be more tolerable for the people of Sodom than for those who rejected His offer of mercy (Matt. 11:24). This other side of the gospel is reflected in Isaiah 61:2, which indicates that “the year of the Lord’s favor” will ultimately culminate in “the day of vengeance of our God.”

On the surface, this might seem like a contradiction, especially given the promises in verses 3–7. Here we read of a joy that will replace mourning and rebuilding what has been destroyed. These promises of hope, however, belong to those who are God’s

people. They are the people of the Messiah, both Jews and Gentiles, who are called “the Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16. The day of vengeance is when all God’s promises and warnings will be proven true. It will be the day when those who set themselves against God are punished. It is also the day when the faith of all who have trusted in Jesus as the Messiah will be vindicated. Which of these will be true of you?

Why do many people get confused about God’s grace and judgment? How do those two things go together?

Lord, thank You for Your encouragement in today’s reading. Thank You for Your promises of hope and everlasting joy for those who belong to You. Thank You that in the “day of vengeance” we, as Your people, will receive grace.

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# Daily Devotional - Thursday, December 5, 2024 - Leaning to Hope

DECEMBER 05TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Daily Devotional - Thursday, December 5, 2024 - Leaning to Hope

Emily Dickinson called hope “the thing with feathers.” Hope, said the poet, is like a tiny bird that sings despite the storm. In Romans 8, Paul described the groaning of creation. It is not a cry of despair but an expression of longing for transformation. This painful groaning is not just evidence that the world is broken, it is a promise of the liberation that is to come. Jesus told His disciples that while others faint with terror and grow apprehensive about “what is coming on the world,” their response should be different. In Christ, we have hope (Luke 21:26–28).

Troubles remind us to lean into the hope of Christ’s return. Like creation, we “groan,” eagerly awaiting the transformation He will bring (v. 23). The fact that the world seems to be falling apart does not erode our hope. Even when our circumstances appear dismal, we keep going because “hope that is seen is no hope at all” (v. 24). We should not expect life to be any different this side of the new creation. Likewise, we should not be surprised when we sometimes struggle with the collateral damage of sin in ourselves even after we have placed our faith in Christ. The final stage of our salvation experience will be “the redemption of our bodies” (v. 23).

Advent speaks of arrival, but until Christ comes again, we are in a season of waiting. This should not make us sad because waiting is a sign of hope. The apostle observes in verse 24: “Who hopes for what they already have?” Even though waiting is not comfortable, it is a manner of hope. Only those who hope to receive something are willing to wait. Hope warrants patience. The certainty of the Lord’s promise gives wings to our hope.

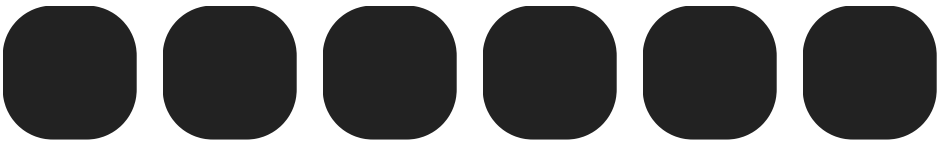
Is there something you can do to “lean into” hope today? Should you sing a song, talk to a friend, or read a verse of Scripture?

Father, give us better understanding of the connection between waiting and hope in today’s reading. Teach us to wait patiently for Christ’s return and to lean into this hope. May our hope truly have wings!

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# Daily Devotional - Monday. November 25, 2024 - A Righteous Response

NOVEMBER 25TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

We've all seen adventure films where the main character searches for a lost and valuable relic. In his pursuit, our hero must overcome perilous obstacles. He recovers the priceless object but only after breathtaking twists and turns. Chapter 22 almost reads like a movie script when the 18-year-old King Josiah, orders the renovation of the Temple only to discover the Book of the Law.

While Manasseh was wicked, his grandson, Josiah, had pursued righteousness from a young age (v. 2). As he matured, he set out to cleanse the Temple. While repairing the Temple, his workmen uncovered this book that had been "lost" (an incredible testament to the depth of wickedness that ruled during the reign of Manasseh). The king's response to the news of discovery presented a model for the nation and all who want to live righteous lives: "When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes" (v. 11).

Why did he respond this way? He now understood that his nation had violated the terms of the covenant they made with God at Mt. Sinai. In humility, Josiah acknowledged the reality of his situation, saying that "great is the LORD'S anger that burns against us because those who have gone before us have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us" (v. 13).

Recall that during the reign of Manasseh, God told Judah that exile was inevitable. Yet, the promise of great wrath provoked the king to greater acts of righteousness. He gathered the people, reaffirmed their commitment to the covenant, cleansed the land of idol worship, and celebrated Passover on a national scale! Josiah repented and led his nation to repentance just as God's judgment required.

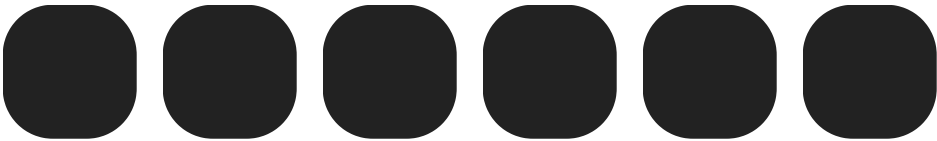
Are you sensing God's judgment in your life? Is there anything you need to repent of? Consider the example of Josiah and turn to the God who has committed Himself to you.

In response to today’s reminder about the importance of repentance, let’s confess to God the sins that we continue to struggle with. Thank You, Father, that in Christ Your grace is greater than our sin.

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## Daily Devotional - Tuesday, November 19, 2024 - Long-Term Consequences

NOVEMBER 19TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, November 19, 2024 - Long-Term Consequences

When a person commits a crime, the consequences can be enduring. Depending on the severity of the punishment, the consequences can even span generations. In the case of

Israel, their willful disobedience led to a severe judgment, exile. The consequences of this judgment extended for centuries.

When the Assyrians conquered Israel, they deported most of the population and replaced them with other people from Assyria (v. 24). It was likely an attempt to break Israel's connection to their former homeland. These new people were not worshipers of Yahweh but worshiped the gods of their former homelands. God had declared that this land was the place where He caused His name to dwell and demonstrated this by establishing His Temple there (Neh. 1:9). Therefore, when foreigners worshiped other gods there it offended God's holiness. As punishment, He sent lions to kill some of them (v. 24). This shocking predicament alarmed the people. Therefore, when the king of Assyria heard about it, he responded according to the theology of the day.

It was customary to believe that each nation had their own god who had to be worshiped according to the local customs. The Assyrians reasoned they had offended the local god by leaving him out of their worship, so they needed to learn to worship him (v. 27). An Israelite priest was sent to teach them, but the people simply added Yahweh as one of the deities. They continued to worship the gods of their nations alongside the God of Israel (v. 32). This situation persisted for generations (v. 41) as the newcomers intermingled with the Israelites who had been left behind. The disobedience of Israel resulted in generations distant from the God who delivered them from Egypt.

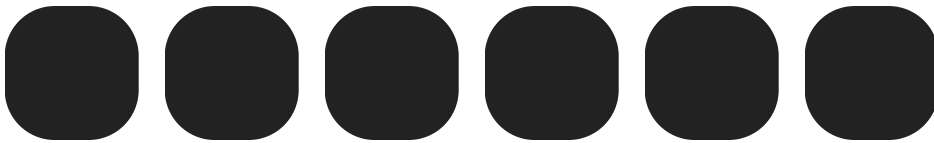
What are you worshiping alongside God? Have you considered that there could be long-term consequences for sharing the worship of the true God with something else?

Teach us, Lord, how to look only to You, worship only You, to seek only Your face, and listen only to Your voice. What a joy to know that our obedience influences future generations! May we treasure and protect our spiritual legacy.

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## Daily Devotional - Monday, November 18, 2024 - The End Matters

NOVEMBER 18TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, November 18, 2024 - The End Matters

The term one-hit wonder is often used to describe an artist who has a popular hit at the beginning of their career but fails to follow up with anything significant. In many



ways, Joash was a one hit wonder. He came to the throne and began his reign under the tutelage of Jehoiada, the righteous priest. He made a splash when he decided to restore the Temple and reform. But the rest of his career did not live up to the early hype.

Recall that Joash was saved from Athaliah's murderous purge by his aunt Jehosheba. Along with her husband Jehoiada, Jehosheba concealed Joash for seven years until the circumstances were right for him to be revealed as heir to the throne. Too young to rule, he spent his early years following Jehoiada's lead. Since Jehoiada was loyal to God, Joash was also loyal to Him. He even initiated a campaign to restore the Temple in Jerusalem (vv. 4–5).

The shame of his defection, however, is revealed when he decided to loot the Temple and royal treasury to pay off the foreign king Hazael to prevent him from invading (v. 18). By doing this he revealed that he preferred to trust his riches more than his God (see Deut. 17:14–21, 2 Chron. 24:17–19). His people were so disapproving that he was assassinated in a coup d'état! Why would a faithful king who seemed committed to the God of Israel suddenly doubt Him? A detail from 2 Chronicles 24 reveals that Joash's commitment to God lasted only as long his mentor was alive! As soon as Jehoiada died, Joash was persuaded by the princes of Judah to abandon the God of Israel and worship idols! Despite the potential seen in him at the beginning of his reign, he failed to commit to finishing well.

How about you? Have you thought carefully about how you'll remain faithful to God for your whole life? Have you started well? Fantastic! Consider how to finish well too!

Jesus, You opened a new world for us, where death is not the end, where we have a future with You. Echoing today's devotional, we ask the Holy Spirit for strength to run the race and to finish well.

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