



2021 LENT

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION **17-20 FEB**



FORGIVENESS

READ

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt.

Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just. For I was born a sinner— yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there. Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. (Psalm 51:1-7, NLT)

REFLECT

Confession is when we invite God right into the messiest places of our lives and ask Him to cleanse and heal. It requires a truthfulness with ourselves and with Him. We abandon our attempts at self-salvation, admit our failures at self-righteousness, and simply turn to Jesus for forgiveness.

REACT

Set aside some time today to think back through the past few days or even weeks. Ask God to help you be honest about your thoughts, actions and attitudes during that time. If there is something there that you regret or feel guilty about, use this psalm as a guide for a confessional prayer.



ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER

READ

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." (Romans 1:8-17)

REFLECT

Everyone needs to be blessed and encouraged on a regular basis. Think about the people who bless you the most. They are the ones you can't wait to see because you know you will feel better just from being with them. Their faith encourages yours. Paul wanted to visit the Romans because he knew they would be mutually encouraging to each other and everyone's faith would grow as a result. That's the pattern for the church today as well.

REACT

"I thank God for you because ..." Who comes to your mind when you read those words? It's great to pray for them, but why not follow Paul's example and write a note, send a text, or make a phone call today to tell them why you're so thankful for them. They'll be blessed and encouraged, and so will you.



THE GREATEST IN GOD'S KINGDOM

READ

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! (Matthew 18:1-7)

REFLECT

Although we tend to romanticize this scene – Jesus holding a cherubic little child on His lap, smiles all around – it's helpful to remember that children are actually the most vulnerable members of any society. They are dependent on others for just about everything. They are not influential. They are not leaders. They can be – and too often are – exploited.

When the disciples asked who was the most important in the kingdom of heaven, no one would have expected Him to choose a child. If there were any smiles to begin with, they quickly faded from the shock of Jesus telling them that greatness in His kingdom would only belong to those who would change and become like children.

REACT

Do something childlike today. Play a little. Laugh a little. Let yourself experience a little bit of wonder. Simply believe. Simply obey. Simply trust Jesus.



BE GLAD AND REJOICE

READ

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit here is no deceit.

While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.

For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. (Selah) Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin. (Selah)

Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. (Selah) I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you. Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart. (Psalm 32, NRS)

REFLECT

Psalm 32 celebrates the joy of forgiveness. The writer is not deluded about the need for forgiveness. The reality and result of sin is described in dramatic terms – transgression, iniquity, deceit, groaning, dried-up strength, and torments are there. But freedom, forgiveness and the steadfast love of the Lord are also there as sure and certain realities for those who will acknowledge their sin and receive the forgiveness and instruction of the Lord.

REACT

If you are forgiven, be glad in the Lord and rejoice! If you aren't, today is the perfect day to confess and begin to experience the joy of the Lord for yourself.