

# St. Paul: Weekly Devotions

*Devotions on week's readings  
for 06.28.15 (Pentecost 5b)*

## **Day One: Lam. 3:22-33**

*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."*

A lot of people are concerned about "burnout." We get burnt out by heavy schedules, heavy responsibilities, challenges, threats, and debts. Jeremiah the prophet was nearly burnt out, and with good reason. He had more than just a full calendar.

God called him to announce the defeat of his own nation. He had to warn the people of his country that they were going to lose their war against Babylon, and most people hated him for it.

Can you imagine being the person who has to write letters to the editor, call in to radio shows, get interviewed on the evening news telling everyone that our enemy (ISIS or China or some other country) is going to defeat us and take us

into slavery? You wouldn't want to do it, but Jeremiah said that whenever he tried not to talk about it, the word that God put in him burned to get out. He could not stay silent.

Even worse, Jeremiah saw all his terrible predictions come true as the Babylonians surrounded the city and defeated it. I think we can understand why he felt burned out. His nation was burned to the ground.

Nevertheless, Jeremiah said, "we are not consumed." And the reason he was not consumed as a fire consumes a burning log was because of God's "great love." Every morning he was refreshed by God's compassion. God was faithful. He did not leave him to his task alone.

How does God's love refresh you and keep you from burning up? Where can you see his compassion in the morning?

**Prayer:** *Lord, some days I'm burning with desire. Some days I'm burning with anger. And some days I'm just burning up. Help me not to be consumed by these fires, but to be refreshed by your love. Your love is new again today; great is your faithfulness! Amen.*

**Day Two: 2 Co. 8:1-9, 13-15**

*And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.*

Do you know what your neighbor gives to charity? Their mailbox is right next to yours – have you ever thought about opening their tax returns and peeking to see how much they make, and how much they donate?

Of course not! You would never do such a thing! Besides, it's against the law.

But what if we told you that your neighbor makes less than you do, is suffering from many problems, and yet gives more than you do? You might well resent that, but that's what Paul did.

Paul told the Christians in Corinth what the people in Macedonia were giving. The believers in Corinth were pretty well off, and the believers in Macedonia were poor. More than that, they were persecuted, so some had lost their jobs or their customers. Some had been beaten or jailed. And yet, these poor people had given joyfully

and generously. Paul wanted the Christians in Corinth to know about that because he did not want them to miss the opportunity to experience the joy the Macedonians had.

Did you know that the poorest citizens of our country give the most (as a percentage of their income)? Why do you think that is?

Christians who are persecuted make great sacrifices in order to attend worship. Why do you suppose they are more faithful in their attendance, and joyfully spend hours in worship, while most of us do not?

It seems that giving does not come from wealth. It comes from faith. And faith may be strengthened by hardship. Who do you resemble more, the Corinthians or the believers from Macedonia? Would anyone point to you as an example of love?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, I sometimes bristle when others are held up as an example. But I have the best example of overwhelming love – your love for me, and your giving for me. Lord Jesus, help me to give myself freely, joyfully, to be a blessing to others. Amen.*

### **Day Three: Mark 5:21-43**

*While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?" Ignoring what they said, "Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."*

"It's too late." Has anyone ever told you that? It's too late for God to do what you need. We didn't discover it in time.

Usually, when we figure all hope is gone, that's when people say, "It's too late. All we can do now is pray." But in this case it was even too late for that. The little girl was dead. It's too late even for prayer. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"

The Bible is full of hopeless situations. This story includes two of them. While the desperate father was waiting for Jesus to come heal his daughter, a woman came along and touched Jesus in the crowd. She had been suffering for 12 years! Surely it was too late for her. But she reached out to Jesus. And while Jesus stopped to talk to her, the little girl's father was anxiously waiting for Jesus to follow

him. If he didn't hurry it would be too late!

We always seem to think that God can only work within our time frame. Once our deadline has passed, then all hope is gone. It's too late.

"Why bother the teacher anymore?" the men advised. But Jesus ignored that advice. It is always appropriate to "bother the teacher."

It is important to pay attention to things – but it can be just as important that we ignore certain things. Like Jesus ignored those who said it was too late, you should ignore people who doubt God's power to bless you. Ignore anyone who would discourage you from worship, or prayer, or Scripture. Ignore those who say it is too late for God to work.

Listen to those who listen to God's word – who point you not to themselves or anyone else, but who point you always toward Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Dearest Jesus, this poor father must have been desperate for your help, and then devastated at his loss. But he trusted in you. Help me to ignore the world, and listen to your word instead. Amen.*

## Day Four

Some years ago, I watched my son-in-law teaching our granddaughter how to cast with a tiny rod and reel. Only 3 years old, she didn't try to throw the line out at a target. She preferred just releasing the line and letting the plastic fish drop into the dog's water dish before she wound it back up. Whir, plunk, crank, crank, crank – whir, plunk, crank, crank, crank.

Later that day she asked if they could go fishing for real fish, so her father carefully prepared her line with a bobber and hook, and helped her cast it into the creek. After only a few minutes wait, they hauled in a big catfish! It was a surprising and scary success as the heavy fish thrashed about on the line. My granddaughter's response? "Daddy, can we catch some smaller fish next time?"

God has gifts to give us. But we sometimes ask for smaller things. Instead of the work of learning to cast out our line, we may be happier with pretend fishing.

The father of the little girl in our gospel lesson would have preferred an uneventful and pleasant childhood for his

daughter – healthy growing until she was mature – and then a happy marriage followed by grandchildren for him to visit.

But his daughter's sickness and Jesus' raising her from death became a more painful path to a more amazing gift. Their family had more than just a pleasant time – they learned of God's powerful love for them.

Your heavenly Father has blessings for you today – but maybe not through easy things. Take a second look at your troubles to see if they may be blessings in disguise.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, I have troubles today. Let them make me strong. I have sadness today. Let it teach me the meaning of joy. I have work today. Let me learn to be your partner as you create eternal blessings. Amen.*

<p>These devotions help us to think ahead about the Bible verses we will read in worship next week. They are written weekly by Pastor Don Neuendorf. You can learn more about our worship or our church at <a href="http://stpaulannarbor.org">stpaulannarbor.org</a></p>
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