

April 9, 2020

FRIDAY AFTERNOON ONLINE PRAYER RCF

“Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning.

You have not originated them but they are talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you.

*Now this man’s treatment [in Psalm 42] was this: instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says, “Self, listen for moment, I will speak to you.” Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones’ *Spiritual Depression*:*

Come Holy Spirit, gather with us.

Come Holy Spirit, alter us.

Come Holy Spirit, form Christ in us.

We would be a gracious and welcoming community to you, Holy Spirit. Prevent us from resisting you, discouraging you, or brushing you aside. Instead, today, let us hold open the empty hands of faith, to receive from you who love to give.

(Pause for a moment to ask the Spirit to ready you to offer yourself to Christ in prayer AND to receive from him as well!)

***“Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God....***

***My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you” (Psalm 42)***

My Savior and My God, it's no mystery to you that I am a great mystery to myself. Sometimes I'm eager to welcome what lies ahead. And sometimes a cloud of dread makes everything seem bleak and wearisome.

Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul!

If I just listen to myself, I will stay stuck in the labyrinth of myself. I will be sunk in this quicksand of despair.

Let me not be victimized by my lethargic and wandering heart today.

Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul!

Let me not be consumed by my own hurt.

Let me not be “victim of myself, but steward of myself,” O Holy Spirit.

Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul!

(Take these words as your own....)

Trust Christ, O my soul. A bleak future is a lie. Too much to handle is not true. The rest of the day will not be a Christ-less day. Nor will tomorrow. Be sure of what you hope for. Be certain of what you do not see. Though your faith is tiny, your Savior is spectacular. Christ will finish what he has begun.

Lord, I trust you. I have confidence in you. I come to you. You can help. You *will* help. You have promised that you will never turn away the one who comes to you. And so I come.

Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul!

My emotions are tyrannizing me.

It's easy for me to imagine that following you doesn't matter a bit.

That praying to you won't effect a thing.

That it's silly for me to fiddle with this right now.

There are so many things I've prayed for in the past that haven't budged. I have so many real responsibilities...how is talking to You going to matter?

Draw near to me, My Strength!

But Lord, I want to fight to remember this afternoon, like the Psalmist, that you are the One who hears, sees, moves, and works for those who wait for him... "As a father pities his children," so you Father, "pity those who fear you." Abraham told Isaac that "the Lord himself will provide."

I remember these things, my providing and preserving Lord...tattoo them on my mind, inscribe them on my heart.

Comfort me with a sense of your preserving care!

I remember that when the Israelites groaned and wailed under Egyptian oppression, your gut-shaking compassion moved you to orchestrate their rescue through Moses.

Comfort me with a sense of your preserving care!

Your concern moves you to act.

I believe this today.

Help me to believe it more.

***Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
Relieve the troubles of my heart
and free me from my anguish. (Psalm 25)***

Father, do turn this day. Instead, graciously visit. You have assured us in your Scriptures that your presence is the best consolation we could meet, the best news we could find, the most prized gift of all...so let it be so in my life today. Let it be so in the lives of all those who are lonely and afflicted, who have exponentially multiplying anguish in their souls.

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” (Luke 22)

Lord, don't let evil overtake me.

Don't let apathy disengage me.

Don't let fear immobilize me.

Don't let the Accuser threaten and accuse me.

Don't let me live as a victim today when I am called to be a servant.

Increase my faith!

Lord Jesus, see to it that my faith does not fail. That I will be resourced to strengthen, encourage, empathize, and graciously regard everyone to whom you send me today.

Increase my love!

Father, I can easily presume that the disgust I feel for myself is identical with yours. That the disappointment of my, yet again, failure-to-be-better is a mirror-reflection of your disappointment.

Increase my confidence in your acceptance of me!

But Lord, your servant Paul, once said:

“...I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing

before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.” (I Cor 4)

Lord Jesus, if a clear conscience doesn't make me innocent, then a guilty, frowning conscience does not necessarily condemn...You are my Judge, not the rude and threatening internal voices I hear...and not me either!

And your Scripture tells me that you have been judged in my place, that “*the punishment that was upon you has brought me peace*”, and that by your physical sacrifice I now stand before you “*without blemish and free from accusation.*”

Paul imagines one day receiving praise from you. Praise from *YOU*, O Lord!

I realize, down deep, that is what I crave.

Every time I angle for the reassurance of another, spin things to make myself look better, omit what might make me look bad, or fret over what someone thinks about me...so much of that is misplaced craving.

I want YOUR praise. I long for YOUR smile. I desire YOUR pleasure, approval, and acceptance O Father.

I claim the promise today, as I walk out into the world, that I am one with Jesus Christ by faith. You said of my Savior, your Son, “*This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased.*”

Lord, let me and all your church at RCF go out into this weekend with the same hardy assurance reverberating in our lives--- that what's been said of our Savior, is being said of us. His work has won us your pleasure, which you wanted to be won.

Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him,

my Savior and my God. (Psalm 42)

My Savior and my God, let my life bring praise to you today. Amen.