

Prayer

Psalm 37 says: 'commit your ways to the Lord: trust Him, and He will act.' Say a prayer which commits what you will be doing today to the Lord.

.....
Thank You, Heavenly Father, for the promise of Your love and Your protection. Give me Your peace as I go about my way this day. AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Personal Relationships

Pray for those special relationships you have within the Body of Christ; the people who are part of the fellowship of believers to which you belong. Within the church, we all have ups and downs, but it is our duty and privilege to maintain the fellowship of believers. Pray for the people you know in your church; pray for blessing and for peace in the love of Christ.

Meditation

Deep inside the human soul there is a place called 'need',
It drives a thousand feelings and emotions,
Every combination of word and deed and action
Conceivable to humanity. And more than that,
When one specific need is met, another rises
To make its presence felt, colouring all life,
And guiding every action with its insistence
That all else should take second place to its insatiable demands.

Deep inside the human soul there is a place called 'need';
Each spirit has a need to be connected to the Lord,
For the creature longs for its Creator, ultimately,
And nothing else in all the world will satisfy.
So when the human soul attempts to meet its need
With anything else it finds within Creation; it is never satisfied;
For the soul can only ever be fulfilled by the Spirit,
By the God through whom it was made.

Bible Study - 2 Peter 2:4-10

4 For if, when the angels sinned, God did not spare them but handed them over until the Judgment by throwing them into hell in chains of darkness; 5 and if He did not spare the ancient world by bringing a flood on the world of the ungodly, but saved Noah as one of eight, a preacher of righteousness; 6 and if He condemned to destruction the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by turning them to ashes, making them an example to the ungodly of what was coming; 7 and if He rescued Lot, a righteous man who was deeply troubled by the decadence of the lawless people 8 (for that righteous man lived among them day after day and his righteous soul was disturbed by the lawless deeds he saw and heard), 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue those who are godly from their trials, and to hold the unrighteous in their punishment until the day of judgment; 10 especially those who indulge their sinful nature in depraved lust, and who despise authority.

Bible Study

Up to this point, the letter of Peter has been a powerful work which has spoken strongly about maturity in Christian discipleship. Peter wrote without a specific church in mind, and the power of His words shines through to us without much difficulty. In our passage, Peter's words take a different direction from what has gone before, and although it is not so easy for us to follow them, they are no less powerful and direct. The whole passage is one long sentence about the work of God throughout history in judgement and salvation, giving a string of examples from the Old Testament. Three examples are given of God's judgement; the fallen angels (2:4), the Flood (2:5), and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6). Two examples are also given

of God's salvation; Noah (2:5) and Lot (2:7,8), and these two examples are interwoven logically into the whole sentence so that judgement and salvation are found side by side. If, says Peter, God is able to achieve both judgement and salvation in the known history of the world as given through these examples, then He knows how to rescue godly people today and deal with the unjust and ungodly now; even if their punishment is held over to the last 'day of judgement' (2:9). There is no question therefore that we can trust God and His justice, now.

This is an extraordinary and bold passage of Scripture. For ourselves, we may not be as familiar with the Old Testament examples used by Peter as the people of ancient times, but it is not hard to understand. The only part of the passage that may be a significant mystery to us is the part about the fallen angels (2:4). There is nowhere in the Old Testament that talks about fallen angels, indeed, all the angels we meet there are messengers of God whose duty is to convey His Word. The idea of 'fallen angels' is one that developed in Jewish writings between the Old and New Testaments (as used by Protestant churches), in books that are now called the 'Apocrypha'. They talk of a heavenly 'fall' which accompanied the earthly 'fall' recorded in Genesis 3, and the angels who fell at this time became the evil spirits mentioned in the New Testament who were responsible for troubling people. Jesus cast many of them out of people in order to cure sickness or restore people to health (Matt 8:28ff.).

Without going further into the details of these complicated matters, the point that Peter makes is that God is in ultimate control even of these fallen angels, whether evil spirits or demons. He will judge them at the end of time, together with all things; all evil and all responsible for wrongdoing will be condemned. Equally, salvation for the just and the righteous who are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ will be guaranteed. The details of Peter's comments about Noah as a preacher of righteousness are hazy (as it does not say this in the Old Testament – Gen 6:9f.); and the details about Lot are also strange (for Lot acted in opposition to God's will in the Genesis story of Sodom and Gomorrah – Gen 13:8f. and 19), but the overall point made by Peter is clear.

Yet why would Peter feel it necessary to emphasise the Gospel message in this way? It is probably because the power of the Gospel was being diluted by immaturity and pettiness within the Christian community as time passed since the death of Christ. This is why Peter spoke about Christian maturity in the first chapter of His letter, and why he emphasised the Gospel message of judgement and salvation now. If the church ever loses sight of the power of God's work, then it has lost its way. It was true then, and it is true now.

Space for notes

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Discuss what you know within your group about what we mean by 'fallen angels'. How important are they to our understanding of evil and sin?
2. Can you find other example of the power of God in judgement and salvation in the stories of the Old Testament which you know?
3. Why do you think it is so important to re-affirm the heart of the Gospel message?

Discipleship

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, does the prospect of judgement fill you with fear or with joy? It is supposed to fill you with joy! Yet it is surprising how many people are deeply concerned about their sins and despite being a Christian all their lives, they wonder whether they will be 'saved'. It is worth asking yourself from time to time whether you have the assurance of your salvation (to use the language of John Wesley!). Knowledge of salvation is one thing, but when faced with the reality of judgement, we need the assurance of salvation. This is something that we must sort out with our Maker by ourselves.

Prayer

All praise to You, Almighty Lord, for the freedom we enjoy. No-one can take away our liberty to have faith in You and to believe the Gospel of Salvation. Help us therefore to rejoice in our privilege and our heritage, and live hour by hour in the knowledge that You have saved us. All praise to You, Almighty Lord; AMEN