

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of September 23, 2018

**THEME: "New Contacts"
DIVINE DIRECTION**

SundayRead Acts 9:10-19

"The Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus." Jesus came to earth so sinners could be brought back into a reconciled relationship with their Creator. The law of God required death as the penalty for sin; that is eternal death because man, being made in the image of God, is eternal. By yielding to the devil, sinful man faced the same penalty as the devil: hell. But God so loved the world that He sent His Son! Why? To save man from the penalty of sin: eternal death. Without a Savior, all humanity is hopelessly lost, and the only way for sinful man to be brought back into fellowship with God would be for someone to pay the penalty for them. Jesus did that by the shedding of His blood to satisfy the holy law of God which required the blood sacrifice of a spotless Lamb! In Luke 19:10, Jesus said that He came *"to seek and to save that which was lost."* After Jesus returned to heaven after His death and resurrection, He turned this ministry of reconciliation over to His people. That is mentioned in II Corinthians 5:18, and He empowered us with the Holy Spirit to do it. Today's Bible reading gives an example of God seeking out a lost soul. God gave Ananias Divine direction to reach out to a lost soul, a most unlikely person to become a Christian because Saul was living to persecute Christians. God, however, intervened in Saul's personal circumstances to pay attention to His plan of salvation. It was after a traumatic experience that God gave Ananias instructions to go and finalize what God had already started in his heart. Saul left that conversation with Ananias with his sight: physically and spiritually.

COMPASSION

MondayRead Matthew 9:35-38

"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion because they were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." During our lives on earth, God through the Holy Spirit is trying to make all Christians more and more Christlike. We know that from what we read in Romans 8:28-29: *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son."* From the time each of us accepted Christ to be our personal Savior, the Holy Spirit will use all the circumstances of our lives to be more Christlike. That spiritual growth requires a study of the Bible, both private and under the teaching of others in Bible study groups, worship services, or appropriate teaching by means of technology. It is imperative for individuals who rely mostly on the teachings of others to engage in personal Bible study to, as we read in Acts 17:11, *"to see if what they heard was true."* Of particular importance is the study of the gospels in that they speak for the most part of the life and the teachings of Jesus Himself. In so doing, the Holy Spirit has a huge advantage in making us more and more like our Savior. One of the important attributes of our Lord, that all of His followers should emulate, is a heart of compassion for others. He mentioned that they were *"like sheep without a shepherd."* They are lost; lost in the spiritual darkness of this world. That means they will fall prey to the lies and deceptions of the devil that are being propagated by false teachings that are inconsistent and even contradictory to Biblical truth. And worse of all, people who are lost will end up in hell for all eternity if they never give their hearts to the Savior. Jesus wants us to reach out!

CONVERSATION

TuesdayRead John 4:4-14

"There came a woman from Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." Jesus gave us a good example of reaching out to the lost in this conversation with a needy woman. He was willing to associate with the woman even though His own people pretty much shunned her kind. Not Jesus, no prejudice! Furthermore, He made her feel important by asking her for help by asking her for a drink. That simple request opened the door for Him to explain deep spiritual truth. At first, she did not grasp the idea of the spiritual realm, thinking that drinking of water had to be from the well. Jesus, however, was speaking of the thirst of the soul: that inner thirst could only be

satisfied by faith in Christ, which is a spiritual birth resulting in eternal life. Jesus went on from their to clarify the difference between man's religion and true spiritual life. She turned her life over to Jesus!

INTERCESSION

Wednesday Read Colossians 4:2-6

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving: withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ..." The last thing Jesus said to His followers was to be His witnesses. That is what He said in Acts 1:8, which tells us that believers will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to do just that. Another apostle recorded this final command of our Savior this way in Mark 16:15. *"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* Reaching out to other people to share with them how they can have eternal life in heaven when their earthly life is over is a joint effort by the Christian and God the Holy Spirit. That is what we are told in I Corinthians 3:9: *"We are laborers together with God."* The Christian is led by the Spirit to make the contact so he or she can share the truth about Jesus dying for their sins and rising from the tomb to give us hope of life after death. That is the mystery of Christ, the fundamental message and the focal point of the entire Scriptures. The fact that this winning of souls to Jesus is our working together with God makes intercessory prayer vital. Praying keeps us in tune with God; without prayer, we are on our own and are likely to miss opportunities to share God's truth with hungry hearts. Failing to pray may put us into situations where we try to force the truth into hearts who are not prepared. Praying for opportunities for us and for others is vital in soulwinning, which is the most thrilling experience on earth! Pray for open doors: for yourself and for fellow believers!

HEAVENLY CONNECTION

Thursday Read Luke 15:1-7

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance." The Bible makes it very clear that heaven is witness to what is going on here on earth. Of special interest is when the Holy Spirit connects a believer with an unbeliever whose heart has been prepared to hear Biblical truth regarding the salvation of a soul. The way the Holy Spirit works to reach a lost soul is to utilize believers to be a light for the glory of God wherever they are and to plant seeds of verbal witness and Scriptural truth into the hearts and minds of others. When those seeds are ready to bear fruit, the Spirit seeks out a believer to clarify that by an individual confessing their need as a sinner and receiving the Lord Jesus as Savior, they are born into the family of God. When that conversation takes place, as with the woman at the well and the eunuch of the road between Jerusalem and Ethiopia, and the unbeliever responds favorably, those in heaven erupt with joy over that person's decision to receive Christ. We are connected to heaven!

INTERVENTION

Friday Read I Peter 3:12-15

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Those Christians whose lives are conducted in such a way that glorifies God in the world in which they are living will cause others to take notice, not because they seem odd necessarily, but because they do not indulge in worldly practices and still seem to be enjoying life in a truly wholesome manner. As a matter of fact, they seem happier and more fulfilled than those who go along with the crowd to be accepted. That will cause a curiosity that will be followed with questions by the curious. It is then that the believer has the opportunity to be a witness for Jesus, by far the most rewarding experience in life, seeing another person accept the gift of eternal life and a home reserved in heaven. God intends that His people are here to intervene in the lives of those around them by acts of kindness and sharing Biblical truth.

INVITATION

Saturday Read Luke 14:21-23

"The Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, so my house may be filled." By using this parable, Jesus was trying to convince His

followers of the urgency of people realizing that they are living in spiritual darkness and traveling on life's journey on a road that leads to hell. A deep desire of believers should be to have neighbors, friends, and colleagues come to church where they will have the opportunity to fellowship with the people of God and to hear the eternal truth of God. If a local church is teaching the infallible truth of Scriptures, Christians should be intent on inviting unbelievers to their meetings and activities where they will hear the gospel and have the opportunity to meet people who are in the family of God. Whereas many Christians may think they do not have the ability to communicate God's truth in a way to convince anybody, surely all people can grant an invitation to a meeting. We do it all the time; why not to church? Remember this desire of our Savior in today's Bible reading: Invite others to God's house.