

DEVOTION FOR THE SEVENTH SATURDAY OF EASTER

PSALM 119:33-40

Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end.

Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.

Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.

Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared.

Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good.

Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen

Old Testament Reading: Numbers 21:1-35 *Israel is Opposed and grumbles*

New Testament Reading: Acts 1:1-26-53 *Waiting for power from on high*

“CASTING LOTS”

On the fortieth day of His resurrection, Jesus ascended to the glory He had with the Father from eternity. He told His disciples to wait to be clothed with power from on high. As they waited they worshipped, prayed, shared fellowship, studied the scriptures and sought the Spirit's guidance, as to who should replace Judas Iscariot as an apostle. They chose two and prayed, *“You, Lord, know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”* Then they cast lots. The lot fell to Matthias.

The casting of lots is an obscure practice that has never found a place in the church. It is mentioned only once in the New Testament, in regards to the selection of Matthias to succeed Judas. Perhaps this practice never caught on as a decision making device, because of its association with games of chance. Gambling is associated with greed and covetousness. Roman soldiers cast lots beneath the cross, to win the right to Jesus' garment. A most unsavoury association! Yet the church cast lots to choose the successor to Judas.

Casting lots was part of the practice of the Old Testament Church. Priests would on occasion seek the Lord's will in an important decision, by Urim and Thummim. These seem to have been stones, for they were to be embedded on the breastpiece of judgement, worn by the high priest. In 1 Samuel, Saul used them to determine who had violated his prohibition on eating food, before the end of a battle. The lot fell against his son Jonathon. They are mentioned again in Ezra 2:63, when a decision needed to wait, until there was a priest to consult Urim and Thummim. The casting of Urim and Thummim was uncommon. It was to be used only in an important matter, accompanied by prayer and under the authority of the high priest.

The church's use of a similar practice at the inauguration of the New Testament era, suggests a continuity with the church of the Old Testament. It signifies that what God began through the community of faith in the Old Testament, He is continuing and expanding in the New Testament. The practice was uncommon in the Old Testament, so its scarcity in the New Testament is not surprising. It is another reminder for believers, that the Spirit guides the church and leads it to fulfil its given purpose: To make disciples for Jesus from all nations.

“OH, THAT THE LORD WOULD GUIDE MY WAYS” (Public Domain)

**Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways, to keep His statutes still!
Oh, that my God would grant me grace, to know and do His will!**

**Order my footsteps by Thy Word, and make my heart sincere;
Let sin have no dominion, Lord, but keep my conscience clear.**

**Assist my soul, to apt to stray, a stricter watch to keep;
And should I ever forget Thy way, restore Thy wandering sheep.**

**Make me to walk in Thy commands, `tis a delightful road;
Nor let my head or heart or hands, offend against my God.**

PRAYER

Gracious God bless us with your Spirit that we may discern your will for our church and for our lives. Lead us to consult your Spirit through your word, by our prayers and through our conversations with fellow believers. In all decisions, in the church and in our lives, may you receive glory; may the name of Jesus be proclaimed and salvation offered to all through faith in Him. In Jesus' Name. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven.

Hallowed be Thy name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,

Forever and ever. Amen

THE CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

BENEDICTION

Philemon 1:25

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”