

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED UPON THE LETTER OF JAMES

NOW BUT NOT YET

James 1:21 “Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

James has proclaimed God as the giving God who gives perfect gifts from above. The most precious gift God gives is salvation. (v.17) His gift is intentional which He gives through the word of truth. (v.18) This gift is one God gives to you in the now but has not yet blessed by you with Jesus’ final work of giving you the crown of life at His return.

In this “now but not yet” life, you, as is true of all Christians, battle with the old sinful nature that is at war with your new life in Christ. When your old sinful nature raises its hoary head, you misuse your tongue, fail to listen first and speak later and act in anger. But being a Christian, Christ lives in you and His Spirit is ever active in your heart bringing to your remembrance God’s law that convicts you of your sin, leads you to sorrow over your sin and a desire for forgiveness. Then the Spirit applies the Good News, the Gospel to your aching, remorseful heart announcing to you God’s forgiveness of your sins for Jesus’ sake.

All of this is God’s work in you which He began at your baptism. (see Romans 6:1-13) The putting off of the old, sin soiled garments and putting on Christ’s robes of righteousness is the work of the Holy Spirit as daily you are washed through the water of Holy Baptism, cleansed of your sin and renewed in the faith you first received when your pastor poured water over your head and said, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

James concludes in this verse with the exhortation to “receive with humility the implanted Word, which is able to save your soul. The saving Gospel is the means the Holy Spirit uses to bring you forgiveness and save your soul. Daily, by God’s grace, through the rhythm of confession, repentance and absolution you receive what you already have, God’s Divine favor because He has adopted you as a member of His holy family. This is God’s precious gift to you!

Prayer: Renew me O eternal light. . .remove from me the power of sin cleansing me of all of my sins, creating in me a new heart. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Renew me, O eternal Light, And let my heart and soul be bright,
Illumined with the light of grace That issues from Your holy face.

Remove the pow'r of sin from me And cleanse all my impurity
That I may have the strength and will Temptations of the flesh to still.

Create in me a new heart, Lord, that gladly I obey Your Word.
Let What You will be my desire, And with new life my soul inspire.

Grant that I only You may love And seek those things which are above
Till I behold You face to face, O Light eternal, through Your grace.
(LSB 704)