PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK Psalm 28:8-9, 1-2, 7

The Lord / is their strength,*
   and He is the saving refuge of His anointed.
Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance:* shepherd them also, and bear them up forever.
To You I will cry, O Lord my Rock:* do not be slow to me, lest, if You are slow to me,*
   I become like those who go down to the pit.
Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You,* when I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.
The Lord is my strength and my shield:* my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped.

BLESS YOURSELF WITH THE HOLY CROSS AND SAY:
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

PRAY 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.

SAY THE APOSTLES’ 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.

PRAY THE MORNING OR EVENING PRAYER
Morning. I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger: and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Evening. I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.
THEME OF THE WEEK: The Righteousness Born of Baptismal Grace

The Commandments are the thread through this week’s readings. God’s Law shows what is good and right, what is perfect and godly; that is why it convicts sinners of falling short of its perfection. This too is for our good, however: it drives us to seek the mercy of God in Christ’s substitutionary death instead of our own pride. God’s work of redemption is called “salvation” because He rescues us from our condition. He reconciles us to the Father, takes away His wrath and the accusations against our sin by answering for them Himself. Thus, rescued, at last He enables us to make a beginning in holy and good works. Good works do not yield salvation: His salvation produces good works.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:20-26—Christ, Preacher of the Law

Christ is rightly known as the worker of the Gospel. He is, however, also the greatest and firmest preacher of the Law. Christ, unlike Moses, was never afraid to let the Law speak at its peak sternness. His sermons make one thing clear: the Law expects absolute perfection. Christ takes all veils away from the Law so that its brightness may strike us directly, exposing and convicting us rather than commending us. It does this to take away all misconceptions of self-righteousness. Thus, it drives us to Christ who alone can avail as our exceeding righteousness. Lord, reconcile me to Yourself not by my works, but by the terms of Christ’s blood. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 119:41-48—God’s Answer for Himself

The Word of God’s truth arms us with an answer for those who come against us, including God Himself. In His Word of absolutes, the verdict made possible by the blood of Christ, we have the judgment of acquittal as an answer against the Law’s just condemnation of our sins. This is what it means that we “hope in God’s judgments” — we hope in His judgment of salvation by Christ. Thus, we delight in His commandments, set at liberty from fear of condemnation and the need to answer for ourselves. Lord, take not Your Word from me. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 6:3-11—New and Eternal Life in Baptism

Baptism accomplishes something not because it is our work but because it is God’s promise. It joins us to the death and resurrection of Christ. It seals the benefits of His death and resurrection to us. The new and eternal life we will have at the last day has its beginning already now. To die with Christ is to die to sin. As He is raised from death’s power, so by Baptism is the power of sin (death’s sting) undone in us. We are enslaved to it no longer. Baptism indicates repentance and faith, which spell the end of sin and death forever. Lord, raise me daily to walk in newness of life. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 2:4-10—God’s Workmanship

St. Paul shows well the order of salvation, namely, that salvation comes first, and works follow. Our natural state, since the fall, is to be dead in trespasses and sins. The Law discloses this to us by the light of its goodness. The mercy of Christ alone makes sinners alive again. By His undeserved gift we have salvation. There is no room for any pride in this, since it is not our achievement, but His gracious gift. From such a gift, however—from such faith that receives it—flow many good works. It is not a matter of earned work, but of being His workmanship. Lord, work in me Your salvation and guide me in the works You have prepared for me. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 114—the Lord’s Presence

“The dwelling place of God is with man,” says Revelation. He dwells in the praises of His people. Judah was His sanctuary, Israel His dominion. Thus, when they passed through the Jordan, God passed through. Do we imagine that the world should tremble at us? Hardly. It will not move for our sake. But for God, its creator, everything will move at once. Wherever His Word is, we gather. And wherever His Word is among us, all things work together for our good because He is with us. Lord, sanctify me by Your Word of truth, and do not depart from me. Amen.

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