

Weekly Devotions—by Deidre Franklin

February 19-25

A WORD IN SEASON

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” 1Peter 2:24

READ: Psalm 51

“From dust you came, and to dust you shall return.” These words will be spoken over those who receive the mark of ashes on Ash Wednesday. In the early history of this practice, the ashes were imposed only on notorious sinners whose moral failures were a matter of public awareness. Over time, people began to understand their own guilt. They identified themselves in Paul’s statement, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). In the light of falling short, the entire congregation eventually joined the line once a year to stand among the penitent. From ancient times, ashes have been used as an outer demonstration of an inner sense of remorse or deep sorrow. To this day, on Ash Wednesday, Christians around the world gather in churches to share the heavy burden of our collective sin. Together we stand, our heads marked with ashes, knowing that because of all that soot, Jesus, our precious Master, came among us to die a horrible death. So with the ashes, we begin a season of 40 days during which we dedicate ourselves to brutal honesty with regard to our falling short. We acknowledge that with his sacrifice, he bought us, and we are his. Sometimes we choose a source of comfort or joy, and we refrain from it for the duration of the Lenten Season, stretching from Ash Wednesday till Easter Sunday. In so doing, we experience some level of discomfort in order to identify with Christ’s discomfort with which he paid for our sins. We “re-up” our submission to the One who rightfully reigns over us. We recognize the purpose of his sacrifice, “so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24).

Respond: Spiritual Exercise for the Week of February 19, 2012

Observing Lent

Choose an exercise to practice from now until Easter Sunday that will provide a daily reminder of Jesus’ costly payment for your sin. For example, I might choose not to drink coffee for these 40 days. To refrain from coffee will provide a daily “stab of pain,” and serve as a reminder of the pain that Jesus endured on the cross. I will live with that discomfort in gratitude to Christ, and commit myself daily to his sovereign leadership over my life. If you’d like ideas for practicing Lent, peruse this list – [101 Ideas for Observing Lent](#).