

Day One

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's devotion from Portals of Prayer is based on Hebrews 10:19-20 (We have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh.) The author focuses on *Yom Kippur* – the Day of Atonement and its significance for the people of Israel and for us in Jesus Christ.

“Today is the tenth of *Tishre* (the seventh month) in the Jewish calendar. It was the holiest day of the whole year for God's people before Jesus came. Atonement was made on behalf of all Israel through the blood of the bull and goat sprinkled on the Mercy Seat inside the Most Holy Place by the high priest. This was high drama, as the men of Israel gathered in Jerusalem to await the return of the priest from his sacred duties. If he did something wrong, he would be struck down by God and his body would have to be pulled out of the inner sanctum by a rope tied to his ankle.

When Jesus died, the curtain that separated the Most Holy Place from the rest of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. This signified that now it was not just the high priest who could approach the Lord. Now, all who worship Him have direct access to His throne of grace by the blood of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

Day Two

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The author of today's devotion from Portals of Prayer has a nice gospel presentation. It is based on Acts 15 and the issue that faced the early church concerning Gentiles (non-Jews) becoming followers of Christ. It still remains an issue that the church deals with today.

“The first followers of Jesus were Jewish. The writers of the Bible were Jewish. Yet, in Acts 15, this question was discussed in Jerusalem: ‘Could a Gentile (non-Jewish person) become a follower of Jesus without first becoming Jewish?’ Following much prayer and discussion, the people gathered there heard the Holy Spirit loud and clear: Gentiles DO NOT have to become Jewish to follow Jesus. And Jewish people DO NOT have to become Gentiles to follow Him.

The problem between all mankind and God has always been sin. We are all born separated from God because of sin. But for the grace of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we would all be facing eternal torment and damnation.

When I came to faith in Jesus in 1973, I received the greatest gift ever: forgiveness of my sin and the promise of being with God in heaven for eternity. I did not deserve this. I did not earn it. None of us did. But God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.

Imagine that! You and I and all people have been blessed far beyond what we deserve.”

Day Three

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Today's devotion is based on 1 Peter 2:9. Peter writes that we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people for God's own possession. He writes that we are chosen for a specific purpose. We are to declare the excellencies of God “who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

As descendants of Adam, we lived in darkness. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, the image of God was lost. One of the many characteristics of God is light. That light was lost – taken from us – and Adam and all of his descendants were now prisoners of that darkness.

That prison door was opened by the second Adam, Jesus Christ. God took on human flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth in order to restore His image in us. The Light came into the world and shattered the darkness. When Jesus died and rose again, He set us free from that darkness – free from the prison of sin – through the forgiveness that He won.

He then comes to us through His Word to create the faith that receives the benefits of His saving work. By the power of God's Word joined to the waters of Baptism, He takes us out of the kingdom of darkness and

brings us into His kingdom of Light. He has done that so we can shine with His light drawing others who still walk in darkness to that light – to the life and salvation that is God’s gift to all who believe.

Day Four

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Today’s devotion from Portals of Prayer talks about seeing – seeing God at work in our lives – and how difficult that can be at times. The context of the text is the war that the king of Aram was waging against the king of Israel. The immediate context is what occurs when the king of Aram sends troops to capture Elisha so he can no longer warn the king of Israel of Aram’s troop movements. Elisha is asking that God would open the eyes of his personal servant so that he can know that God fights for them.

“Have you ever searched for a missing item and eventually found it right before your eyes? Even though you had checked the spot where it was numerous times, you had somehow overlooked it. Or perhaps your eyes were the ones that saw clearly when a child came and asked if you had seen a missing item.

Often, when faced with life’s problems, we can be spiritually blind to all that God is doing in our lives. When our focus is on our problems, we see only the worldly things that are stacked against us. When we are reminded that we have a God who loves us so much that He would allow His own Son to die for our sins and rise victoriously for our salvation, we cannot doubt that He is at work in the midst of our problems.

Like Elisha, we know that we can go to God in prayer to help us see His plan more clearly. Sometimes, it’s for ourselves. Sometimes, it’s to help others see the blessings in their lives.”

Day Five

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In today’s devotion from Portals of Prayer, the author uses Hebrews 11:1 as the basis for her meditations. But she also references Abraham being called to sacrifice his son Isaac to the Lord (Genesis 22:1-18). In that event we get a wonderful picture of what God did for us when He sent His Son into the world to save us from sin and death.

“I can’t imagine the motivation it must have taken for Abraham just to get out of bed the day God asked him to sacrifice his son. The text says, ‘Abraham rose early in the morning.’ Was Abraham excited to see what God was going to do? Or did he rise early because he couldn’t sleep at all that night and wanted to get this over with as soon as possible? Either way, Abraham obeyed.

Step by step, Abraham walked to the place where God had told him to go. On the third day, ‘Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar’ – that dreaded place – but he kept going. He followed through, to the point of reaching for the knife. But God stopped him, and Abraham lifted up his eyes a second time.. This time, God’s plan was clear. God would provide the sacrifice.

After three intense hours on the cross, Jesus lifted His eyes to heaven and ‘yielded up His spirit’ (Matthew 27:50). He obeyed, even when it was hard. Three days later, God’s plan was revealed as His followers lifted up their eyes and saw the empty tomb. God provided His own sacrifice for the sins of the world.”

Day Six

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Today’s devotion is entitled “Lord, Do You Not Care?” As a context, the author talks about Martha’s response to her sister Mary’s choice to sit and listen to Jesus rather than to help Martha be a good host. Martha goes to Jesus and asks Him why He doesn’t tell Mary to help her in the preparations – why He doesn’t seem to care that Mary has left her to shoulder those responsibilities herself.

“Lord, don’t you care” is a lament that many of us utter from time to time – more often when things seem out of control. The author gives this list when God’s care seems far away: “Lord, do You not care that I can’t find the right person to marry – that I don’t have a good job – that I am unable to have children – that my spouse treats me poorly – that I have this terrible disease – that my loved one has died?”

In the midst of those struggles, the devil is at work to cause us to doubt God’s care – to leave us despairing

and feeling lonely. But God is at work in those times to point us back to the cross where He suffered and died to secure for us a future without end. He points us back to the cross to assure us that the struggles of this life will come to an end. He points us back to the cross to assure us of His love and care. We have been united with Jesus in His resurrection. Our future is secure.