

## Day One

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

The author of today's devotion from Portals of Prayer does a nice job dealing with the idea of making restitution. Hebrews 6:10 (For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for His name in serving the satins, as you still do.) provides the context for his comments. I include them for your reading and meditation.

"An eye for an eye" was part of the Jewish law that limited what penalty or punishment could be meted out. If someone damages your car in an accident, you do not get a new house; the proper restoration is to bring things back to where they were.

Do you feel like you have been wronged? Have you experienced the loss of a tangible item? How does this sit with you? It is human to seek to inflict damage perhaps to an even greater degree than what was experienced. But not so in God's kingdom.

When we read the Beatitudes, we understand that we approach God as poor beggars, with nothing to commend ourselves. We cannot make restitution to God, who was offended by our sin, and who, by rights, could simply blot us out and take our name from the Book of Life. But He doesn't.

God's ways are far higher than ours. He did for us what we could not do for ourselves, sending *Y'shua* (Jesus) the Messiah while we were still sinners. Jesus took on our iniquities, just as Isaiah had prophesied that He would (see Isaiah 53:4-6). Therefore, we can be restored to God, hallelujah!"

## Day Two

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Today's devotion is entitled "Great Expectations." The author uses a negative example of the lack of expectations concerning eternal to talk about the great expectations that are ours in Jesus Christ. We have a sure and certain hope in Christ and His saving work done for us and given to us.

"Of the three major branches of Judaism, the largest is the Reform branch. It would be akin to the ELCA in Lutheran lingo. For them, the Scriptures are not considered God's Word but merely a moral guidebook to conduct life on earth and leave it better than when they arrived. Reform Judaism does not believe in a literal life after this life. This was how I grew up: there is here and now and then life is over. Many Gentiles today have no hope or expectation of eternal life either.

But thanks be to God that we, His followers, are not left without hope. Knowing Him and being led by His Holy Spirit, we live each day not only in the forgiveness of sin but also in the hope of a wonderful future in God's presence. We have great expectations – not that we deserve them or have earned them; they are God's gift to all who confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. Praise His wonderful name!"

## 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 is based on Hebrews 1:3. The writer is talking about the duties carried out by the priests in the context of the sacrificial system instituted by God in the days of Moses (laid out in the Book of Leviticus). The priests made purification for sins with the blood of the sacrifice. That blood was the price needed to forgive sin.

In Hebrews, God tells us that Jesus became our high priest who made purification for sin. The blood that He brought into the Holy Place was the payment price needed to forgive our sin – to set us free from the chains of sin that held us captive. And it was His own blood.

He took our place – in life and in death. The Son of God took on human flesh. He became a man so that He could take our place under the Law. In our place, He fulfilled the demands of the Law that were impossible for us to meet. He kept the Law perfectly.

He then took our place under the curse of the Law – under the curse that came through Adam’s sin. He died the death that both God’s Law and sin demand. He died the death that we deserve and was buried. But He rose again on the third. He rose in victory over sin and death. Their power was swallowed up in His life.

And He comes to us in His Word joined to the waters of Baptism to share with us the benefits of His saving work. He comes to us and joins us to Himself in His death and life. United together with Jesus, we have died to sin and its power. United with Jesus in His resurrection, we live today and forever.

## Day Five

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

Today’s devotion from Portals of Prayer is entitled “The Scapegoat.” The author does a good job of describing this physical means through which God works to show people all that He does to remove our sin as far from us as the east is from the west.

“After the high priest made atonement inside the Most Holy Place on Yom Kippur, he came outside the veil and placed his hands on the head of the scapegoat. There, he confessed before all Israel the sins the people had committed. It was understood that their sins were now carried by the scapegoat, who was led away to the wilderness. That was the last duty the high priest did on that most holy of days.

But what about today? There is no priesthood for Israel, no temple, no bulls for sacrifices, and no scapegoat. How can the sins of Israel be forgiven? Rabbis today teach that we make our own atonement by doing three things: prayer and fasting, repentance, and doing good deeds. Our actions make our own atonement. This is most certainly not true, since nothing we do can replace what God does for us.

Nowhere in the Bible does God authorize a man-made means of atonement. We rely on God’s grace and the Messiah, who literally took our sins away so that we could be set free. Hallelujah!”

Jesus Christ was both the blood sacrifice and the scapegoat. His blood was shed for us – for our atonement. By His blood, we are healed. We are forgiven. He is also the scapegoat. He takes our sin upon Himself and carries it out into the wilderness. He removes it from us so that we are free.

## Day Six

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

The author of today’s devotion entitled “The *Mishkan* (Tabernacle)” says this about the tabernacle. “The tabernacle was God’s dwelling place in the midst of Israel. His presence was obvious in the wilderness, as there was a cloud above the tabernacle by day and fire in it by night. The people could not claim, ‘There is no God!’ as millions do today.”

God, who created the heavens and the earth – who is present everywhere – chose to be present with His people Israel in a special way. He chose to dwell in their midst in the tabernacle – specifically in the Most Holy Place. He was hidden in the cloud by day and in the fire by night. As they wandered in the wilderness,

they found comfort in God's presence with them.

He too comes to be present with us in a special way. He is present with us in His Word – written, read and proclaimed. He is with us in His living Word joined to the waters of Baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Those two sacraments along with the Word of God are called the marks of the church.

Where God's Word is taught in its truth and purity and the sacraments are administered according to Christ's command the true church exists in that place. They are the means that the Holy Spirit works through to create and sustain the faith that clings to the promises of God made YES in Jesus Christ and His saving work. Through those means, God comes to us to assure us that we are His dearly loved children.