

Saturday—April 24, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (April—June 2021)

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14

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

“... if My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” This got a lot of play a few years back. It was seen as a means to make America great again – to call it back to its roots as a nation founded on Biblical principles.

That America in general continues to ignore those roots is an indication that it didn’t work. And we could point our fingers at the Church. We weren’t humble enough, didn’t pray fervently, didn’t seek God’s face or turn from our wicked ways.

And, while that’s all true even on a good day, it’s just not that simple. While America was indeed founded on Biblical principles, it is not a theocracy. It’s not the Church and Christ is not its head. What God promises to His Church doesn’t apply to the nation. As God’s people are faithful, as they continue to seek God’s face and turn back to Him there will be benefits that come to the nation.

They will come not because America enjoys a favored status above all other nations with God, but because God’s people (the Church) are faithful. So continue to humble yourselves before God. Seek His face. Continue to confess your sin trusting in God’s promise and His faithfulness to forgive your sin for Jesus’ sake. Continue to love as you have been loved.

We can’t change a nation, but God, working through the Word we share concerning the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ and the resurrection that He has shared with us, can bring change to the people we touch.

-Pastor Harmon

Friday—April 23, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (April—June 2021)

Scripture: Psalm 20:1, 7

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

Today’s Scripture from Psalm 20 have the appearance of a request – a request being made on our behalf. As one who knows God, he is speaking this blessing that God would do for us what He has done for him. And that is what we have been called to do as blood-bought children of God. We have been called to share with others the mercy that we have received from God through the forgiveness of sin.

And when we share that, it is more than a wish. It is a sure and certain hope.

Because Jesus, by His perfect life, sacrificial death and victorious resurrection, has become the YES to every promise of God, this is a promise that will come to fulfillment in our lives. What is ours now by faith in Jesus, will become a full reality when Jesus returns.

Until then, we live in His grace. We live, marked with His name. And even as we grow old, even as death comes to take us, we will not be consumed. We have been joined together with Jesus in His death and life. We have been united together with Him who conquered death. Death doesn't get the last word. The grave will not be our home.

The Lord is our Shepherd and He leads us in His paths of righteousness. He leads us toward the full reality of the resurrection that He has shared with us. He is bringing us home where we will dwell forever.

-Pastor Harmon

Thursday—April 22, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (April—June 2021)

Scripture: Proverbs 31:31

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Proverbs 31:10-31 paints the picture of the wife of noble character. The prevailing attitude that has developed over the last 50+ years, talks of the archaic attitudes toward women depicted in the Scripture. Women couldn't own property. A young woman was under the care of her father until she got married and then she was dependent upon him to take care of her. Without a father or husband, she would be on what we would call today the welfare rolls. Naomi is a prime example of the plight of a woman with no husband or male heirs. The empowered women of today would rant about the existence of such conditions. But Proverbs paints a different picture beginning with the description that a noble wife is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her because she "brings him good, not harm all the days of her life." She provides for the family. "She considers a field and buys it (in her husband's name); out of her earnings she plants a vineyard." Her work is profitable and the bills are paid (31:18).

The rest of the chapter gives more details of the quality of her life and the lives that are impacted by her vocation. Her children and husband praise her and call her blessed. She is a gift to them. She is an integral part of the family's livelihood. Without her efforts, the family would fall apart.

The chapter concludes with these words: "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate."

-Pastor Harmon

Wednesday—April 21, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (April—June 2021)

Scripture: Proverbs 30:32

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

The Scripture passage for this morning's devotion is an interesting one. Proverbs 30:32 says, "If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your hand to your mouth." If you have been foolish in these ways, you don't have to continue to do so. Put your hand to your mouth and stop. That's easier said than done. As sinful human beings we tend to do and say those things that are foolish – that exalt us over others and over God. To elevate our reason above the authority of God's Word is indeed folly. And it is evidence of a need to justify ourselves – to convince ourselves that we are okay. Arrogance is not a position of strength. It is a position of weakness and a response to my lack of confidence. In my self-exaltation, I'm looking for a foundation on which to stand. And because I'm looking to find that foundation in me, I will always be standing on sinking sand.

By putting my hand to my mouth, I'm also putting myself in a position to listen – to listen especially to God's Word – to the Word who tells me all that He has done to rescue me from sin and despair and set my feet on the firm foundation of that Word – on Jesus Christ who is the Word made flesh. Anchored to Him through Baptism, I have a confidence that my own weaknesses can't shake.

In response to those weakness, I don't blow my horn louder. I don't resort to self-exaltation. I look to Christ and exalt Him and all that He has done to raise me from death in sin to life in Him. I exalt Him who continues to tell me that I am dearly loved and that my future is secure in Him.

-Pastor Harmon

Tuesday—April 20, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (April—June 2021)

Scripture: Proverbs 3:18

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

The Scripture for today comes from Proverbs 3:18 – "She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed." She is wisdom. From the context of chapter 3, this wisdom comes from God.

That wisdom includes acknowledging God as Creator of all things, as the One who is the giver of all good gifts and the One who disciplines the ones He loves. It is a wisdom that reveals the path of life – that shows us both our need and the path to salvation.

All of that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ – the Son of God in the flesh. He came to be the fulfillment of all the promises of God spoken through His prophets that promised rescue from sin and death – that promised everlasting life to all who hear and trust in those promises.

Because Jesus, by His perfect life, sacrificial death and victorious resurrection, has fulfilled all of those promises, Paul writes in Ephesians 2 that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. It is God's work and His gift to us so that we might live.

By the power of His Word at work in the waters of Baptism, God has united us with Christ in His death and life – in the wisdom that brings salvation. United with Him in His saving work, we are cleansed of our sin and raised to new life. That is true wisdom.

-Pastor Harmon

Monday—April 19, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (April—June 2021)

Scripture: Proverbs 29:26

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

Today's devotion is based on Proverbs 29:26 – "Many seek the face of a ruler, but it is from the Lord that a man gets justice." In the past year, there have been many crying for justice for the poor, the oppressed and so on. Those cries go out to those in authority – to those from whom justice is expected. And too often, we are disappointed. We don't get what we expect or think that we and others deserve.

Solomon tells us that it is from God that man gets justice. And in a perfect world, we would see evidence of that justice being carried out every day. But we don't live in a perfect world. And, as sinful human beings, no one is good and able to carry out justice perfectly. All fall short. So disappointment should come as no surprise.

If we look at what we deserve, if we were to live under God's justice, then we would struggle with more than disappointment. We would all be under the sentence of death. That's the penalty for sin – for the sin that we inherited from Adam. As such, we live under the curse of Adam. We live under the condemnation that our sin deserves.

But God is not only just and holy. He is also a merciful God. Those two seemingly contradicting character traits are reconciled at the cross. The justice of God is carried out. The wrath of the holy God is poured out against sin in all its fury when Jesus is condemned in our place. He dies the death that God's justice demands.

But God's mercy is evident in the fact that it isn't us who receive that stroke of

justice. God Himself takes our place. Jesus receives in His body all that we deserve because of the curse of Adam that hangs over our heads. He dies so that we can live – so that we can live as dearly loved children of God – as new creations who have been raised from death in sin to life in Christ.

In Christ and by His work done for us, we are justified before God. Adam's sin – his curse – has been taken from us. Through Jesus death and resurrection, we have been forgiven and gathered into the family of God.

-Pastor Harmon