

Devotions for September 6-11

Saturday—September 11, 2021 (Patriot Day)

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (July—September 2021)

Scripture: Philippians 3

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

Today's devotion based on Philippians 3:20 – “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” – spoke to our responsibilities as both citizens of the United States and heaven. We live in an earthly kingdom and we have responsibilities to be good citizens by exercising our vote, by honest and informed conversations on the issues of the day and holding our elected officials accountable as our representatives.

This is also the anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. That was a dark day that brought shock, fear and outrage to an overwhelming majority of Americans. And that is evidence of the brokenness that is this world. Sin is always at work to destroy – to cause divisions – to alienate – to draw lines in the sand. We've seen that in the past year in the midst of the pandemic.

This verse from Philippians is a word of hope and strength to enable us to continue to live in dark and anxious times. We are strangers here. This broken world is not our home. Even as this world at times spins out of control, even as the sparks of fear are fanned into flames, even as fingers are pointed and scapegoats identified, we can live with hope. Our future is secure. By Jesus work for us and in us, the kingdom is ours today and forever.

So as responsible citizens of heaven, we are to be living testimonies to the hope that is ours in Jesus and the resurrection that He shares with us. We are to listen to our neighbor's anxieties – to hear their cries – and then talk of the hope that is Jesus Christ. We are to share with them that Jesus is with us and comes to us through His Word and in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper to assure us that we are His. Through the forgiveness that He won for us by His blood and shares with us, there is a seat for us at His table and in His home.

-Pastor Harmon

Friday—September 10, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (July—September 2021)

Scripture: Philippians 2:12-30

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

I am reprinting today's devotion from Portals of Prayer for your reading and meditation.

The author talks about Christ shining His light into this dark world through us. We have

been raised from death in sin to life in Him and our vocation is now to shine with the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ and the resurrection that He shares with us.

“Summer is coming to an end, and with it, most opportunities to view fireworks at city displays, in parks, or in your own yard. It’s always a joyful moment when the first sparkling display appears in the darkness and speeds across the sky. One of the best ways to see fireworks is when they are shot off over a lake or river, where the water reflects and magnifies their beauty. Despite our sinful nature, we – in Christ – shine as lights in this sinful world. When we live in harmony and hold fast to God’s Word, we are like fireworks illuminating and reflecting God’s light to the world.

Paul offers encouragement to the Philippians, telling them that, as new creations in Christ, their lives shine like lights in the world. Like the Philippians, we need not be afraid to shine our light in the world, because God works through us to share salvation in Christ with others. We are able to magnify the love of Christ in today’s world. Like the Philippians, we live in a ‘crooked and twisted generation’ (2:15, but our works and lives are like fireworks illuminating the sky and reflecting the light of the Savior into a dark world.”

-Pastor Harmon

Thursday—September 9, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (July—September 2021)

Scripture: Philippians 1:21-2:11

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

Here in Philippians 2, Paul is talking about the result of Jesus’ perfect obedience.

Because Jesus was obedient to His Father in every way (including dying on the cross), God the Father raised Him from the dead and gave Him the name that is above every name “so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Philippians 2:10).

That name is Lord of heaven and earth. He is the King of kings. He is Savior of the world. And those who already believe bend their knee in submission to Him. They acknowledge Him to be their Lord and Savior. They bow before the One who rescued them from sin and death by His own sacrificial death and His victorious resurrection. There is also an end of days aspect to this. Jesus will return again as King. He will return as Lord of all (even those who do not believe). And when He comes, every knee will bow whether they want to or not. For those who rejected Jesus as Lord in His absence, the bending of the knee won’t be their choice. It will simply be a response to the reality that confronts them at Jesus’ return. They will bend the knee because it will no longer be possible for them to stand.

But until that day comes, there is still hope for those walking in the darkness of unbelief. Jesus continues to come through God’s Word – through the Word we share – so that

He might shine His light into their darkness and open their eyes to the salvation that He accomplished for them through His life, death and resurrection.

-Pastor Harmon

Wednesday—September 8, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (July—September 2021)

Scripture: Philippians 1:1-20

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

The Scripture passage for today's devotion (Philippians 1:11) is the close of Paul's prayer for the Christians in Philippi. "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).

That is not wishful thinking on Paul's part or an uncertain hope that God might do such things. It is certain and sure. The Son of God came in the person of Jesus of Nazareth to take our place under the Law. He became sin for us so that we could become the righteousness of God in Him.

He came to us in Baptism to unite us to Himself and in that union we receive all the benefits of His saving work. Our sin has been taken away. We have been washed clean. We have been clothed in Jesus' righteousness. That's why we will be able to stand blameless on the day of Christ.

And we have been filled with the fruit of His righteousness so that we may grow in love – in God's love – for our neighbor. We have been raised from death in sin to life in Christ so that we can be His hands and feet to our neighbors. He has made us new. He has filled us with His life so that we can share that life and hope with those who need that comfort that is certain and sure.

-Pastor Harmon

Tuesday—September 7, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (July—September 2021)

Scripture: Ephesians 6

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

The Scripture passage that is the basis of today's devotion is Ephesians 6:10 – "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." I think that most folks read that and immediately think we need to be strong. We need to stand on the Truth and choose to walk in God's ways. We are not to succumb to the devil's temptations.

And we, empowered by the Holy Spirit, can make those choices. The danger is that our sinful weakness will leave us defeated and in despair. Our sinful flesh is at war with the

Spirit who lives in us. And in our weakness, we, like Paul, end up doing the things we hate rather than the good that we should do.

The key that keeps us from falling into despair is the word “in.” “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” It’s not our work that keeps us steadfast in the Truth. It is God’s work. We have all been baptized into Christ. We have been joined together with Him in His death and life. United together with Jesus, we live. We live in Christ and the strength of His might keeps us in the Truth.

Living in Christ, we indeed work to do the good that we should do – the good that we want to do. And when we fail, when we give into the temptations and fall, we turn to Jesus. We confess our sin and He tells us that for sake we are forgiven. We come and trust ourselves to His faithfulness and to the strength of His might to remove the burden of our sin so that we can continue to walk with Him.

-Pastor Harmon

Monday—September 6, 2021 (Labor Day)

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (July—September 2021)

Scripture: Ephesians 5:15-33

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

The author of today’s devotion from Portals of Prayer has this to say about Labor Day. “Labor Day in the United States was declared a national holiday in 1894 with the call for an eight-hour workday for workers to be balanced with eight hours of sleep and eight hours of recreation a day. Scripture likewise provides guidance about how we are to live.”

She quotes Ephesians 5:17 – “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” – and uses that as a basis for talking about vocation. I would make the distinction between vocation and occupation. As children of God we all have different occupations. But we all have the same vocation.

Our vocation is to be living testimony to the life that God has given to us through the forgiveness of our sin. We have been raised from death in sin to life in Christ so that we can share that life and hope with our neighbors around us.

We meet those neighbors in our families, in our occupations, in times of recreation or even running errands. We will find ourselves in any number of different circumstances, but the vocation is the same. We are to be Jesus’ hands and feet as He continues to reach out through and the Word we share to bring comfort and hope to all of us as we live and walk in this dark world.

-Pastor Harmon