

Devotions for September 13-18, 2021

Saturday—September 18, 2021

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

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1

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

Here in the first chapter of 1 Timothy, Paul is talking about God's abundant and gracious work done for us and given to us in Jesus Christ. Paul says that "the grace of our Lord overflowed for [him] with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 1:14).

God's grace wasn't a conditional thing. He didn't give some and then waited to see if we merited any more. The truth is that we don't deserve anything from God other than death. That was the curse that God spoke to Adam in the Garden. Speaking of the forbidden fruit, God told Adam that in the day he ate, he would die.

But Adam didn't. The blood of the sacrifice was the price paid for Adam's sin. Covered in the skins of the animals sacrificed in their place, both Adam and Eve were forgiven. Their sin was covered. That promise pointed forward to Jesus who would give His life for the sin of the world.

In Baptism, we are joined together with Jesus in His death and life. We are covered with His righteous robes. Our sin has been forgiven. It is an overflowing gift in that it not only removes Adam's sin and makes us new creation, it also continues to remove our daily sins from us. By the power of God's forgiving Word, we live as His dearly loved children free from the chains of sin that would separate us from Him.

That is the overflowing nature of God's grace. His love covers a multitude of transgressions from the sin of condition that we inherited from Adam to the actual sins of each day (even those we are unaware of). By faith in Christ and His work, we cling to that gift and trust in His grace.

-Pastor Harmon

Friday—September 17, 2021

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

Scripture: Colossians 4

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

Today's devotion is based on Colossians 4:2-3 – "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. . . . Pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word." It is part of Paul's concluding remarks in this letter.

After all that he has shared with the Christians in Colossae, Paul exhorts them to continue in prayer and be watchful. They (and we) are to continue to speak with God in prayer. We are to continue in His Word. We are to be watchful and on guard against the

whispers of the devil. We are to stand steadfast against the sin at work in the world and in us.

And we are also to be watchful for the opportunities to share the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. Paul asks they remember him in their prayers so that he be watchful for those open doors that God will bring to share that hope. I ask for your prayers as well, so that I might take advantage of those opportunities that come to share the life and hope of Jesus' saving work that comes to us through the forgiveness of sin.

-Pastor Harmon

Thursday—September 16, 2021

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

Scripture: Colossians 3

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

Today's devotion is based on Colossians 3:2 – "Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." It is part of Paul's exhortation to put on the new self.

Paul is talking about sanctification – the process of being made holy. It is God's continued work to complete in our flesh what we have received by faith in Christ.

We, by God's work through Baptism, have already been joined together with Christ in His death and life. United with Christ in His death, we have died. Our sinful nature that we inherited from Adam was put to death. And a new man has been raised in its place. So we set our minds on things that are above. We set our minds on Christ and what He has given to us through the resurrection that He has shared with us. We set our minds on the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ. And we turn away from things in the world that don't endure – that the devil tempts us to chase after.

Paul is telling us that we have already been made new. We have been raised to life.

The new has already come. As a result, he exhorts us to live in the gift – to set our minds on what Christ has done for us and given to us. We have been brought into His marvelous light. Don't go back and live in the dark.

-Pastor Harmon

Wednesday—September 15, 2021

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

Scripture: Colossians 2:8-23

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

Today's devotion from Portals of Prayer is entitled "No Disqualifications." It's based on Colossians 2:12 – "Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the

dead.” She goes on to write that through faith in Jesus Christ alone we are saved and not by our observance of traditions or ceremonies.

“Traditions about faith can trip us up. We may think Baptism can take place only for infants wearing a long white gown, but Baptism may come at any time in life and in many forms. Paul’s letters, like the sermons we hear, shore us up and keep us firm in our belief in the wonderful gift of salvation that Christ won for us. We have been buried with Christ in the waters of our Baptism, and we will have eternal life with Him.

In our day, as in Paul’s, false beliefs abound. Paul reminds us of what faith is. If you have faith in Christ’s sacrifice for you, then don’t let anyone or anything ‘disqualify’ you from salvation because of traditions or rules about food or drink, expectations of asceticism (false humility or physical abasement), worshiping angels, or having visions, because these are not required for salvation. These things might look like wisdom or demonstrations of faith, but they are not requirements for faith in Christ or what He has done for us. It was true for the Colossians in AD 60, and it is true for us today. Our salvation lies in our belief that Christ died for us and rose in glory.”

-Pastor Harmon

Tuesday—September 14, 2021 (Holy Cross Day)

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

Scripture: Colossians 1:1-23

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

Today is Holy Cross Day and the focus of today’s devotion is on the cross upon which Jesus Christ was put to death. The Scripture passage is Colossians 2:6-7 – “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

We have received Christ by faith. The Holy Spirit has called us by the Gospel and enlightened us with His gifts so that we could believe in Him. In Baptism, we have been united together with Christ – rooted in Him – and have received the Holy Spirit who is at work to build us up in Christ – to bring us to maturity. This is all God’s gracious work of mercy.

And so we are to walk in His mercy. We have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus. It is God’s gift. And so we are to walk in this life in that gift. We walk in and because of God’s mercy. We give witness to that mercy received through the forgiveness of sin. We have been pulled out of the stormy waves into the boat of God’s salvation. And so we reach out to others still struggling in the waves and invite them to join us in the safety of the boat – into the salvation that God gives as gift to all who believe.

-Pastor Harmon

Monday—September 13, 2021

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

Scripture: Colossians 1:1-23

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

The author of today's devotion from Portals of Prayer uses Colossians 1:20 – “And through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross” – to talk about the paths we take in life. That God was and is still at work to reconcile all things to Himself through Jesus' blood, is a guide to us as we evaluate what paths we walk in this life each day.

She writes: “Have you ever followed the path laid out by a satellite navigation system and been led astray? You to the way you are directed, only to be told to make a U-turn. Sometimes the mapping algorithms just seem to fall apart. You lose the signal or road construction is not recognized. When we are familiar enough with a location that we suspect the directions are wrong, we must decide whether to go the way we believe is correct or follow the false directions and risk getting lost or experiencing traffic delays.

When we encounter false teachings about faith, we have the choice to follow a path that is wrong or go the way of belief in Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross.

Paul tells us that Christ reconciled everything on earth and in heaven, making peace by His sacrifice for us. It's important to believe in this truth in the face of false teachings and the doctrines of men, which would cause us to doubt what Christ has done for us. We must weigh and filter ideas that are presented to us to see if they reflect God's Word and the sacrifice of Christ. If a path does not lead to the cross, turn away.”

-Pastor Harmon