

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of September 7, 2025

Weekly Prayer

Loving God, open my eyes and my ears to what you would have me read and hear today. Through your Holy Word, convict me, challenge me, and comfort me. Open my mind to new insights and fresh perspectives. Open my heart to the moving of your Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, your son. Amen.

Monday, September 8

Scripture: Romans 12:1-2

So, brothers and sisters, because of God's mercies, I encourage you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God. This is your appropriate priestly service. Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.

Observation

The apostle Paul invited Roman Christians to a new identity, to be a "living sacrifice." In an animal sacrifice, the animal died. Paul said it serves God's purposes much better when we are "living sacrifices," an active, vibrant "body of Christ" living God's principles in the world.

Application

Which was worse in your family: to think too highly of yourself, or to underrate your true strengths? How does that early influence shape your ability to correctly assess what you have to offer God? As we let God transform us, we become agents of change in our workplaces, homes, schools or neighborhoods. What steps, large or small, have you taken to change attitudes or practices in your settings? Where do you have a chance today to transform things for the better?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, someone said you love me just as I am, but you love me too much to leave me just as I am. Teach me how to make my life a "living sacrifice" to your loving purposes. Amen.

Tuesday, September 9

Scripture: Ephesians 2:2-10

You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God's will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience. At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else. However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that he has for us. You are saved by God's grace! And God raised us up and seated us in the heavens with Christ Jesus. God did this to show future generations the greatness of his grace by the goodness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus. You are saved by God's grace because of your faith. This salvation is God's gift. It's not something you possessed. It's not something you did that you can be proud of. Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

Observation

“Why am I here?” Asking that, and wrestling with possible answers, is central to a fully human life. The apostle Paul wrote to Christians in Ephesus that God saved us FROM a broken, self-seeking life for a very specific purpose. God’s mission, “the kin(g)dom of God,” is to restore not just individuals, but this whole broken world to its divine purpose. God saved us FOR a new life joining in God’s work to reclaim our broken world. We are God’s accomplishment living out the quality of life God created us for.

Application

Ephesians 2:10 stated, in general terms (“to do good things”), every Christ-follower’s life purpose. Spend 5-10 minutes today to write down the specific ways in which you live out, or intend to live out, your life purpose rooted in Ephesians 2:10. Keep that list handy. If the answers are hard to think of, or more limited than you’d like, spend time in prayer and thought this week asking God to guide your thinking.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I want to be your accomplishment, to be an example of what your spiritual craftsmanship can do in a human being. Please keep shaping and guiding me in all I do today. Amen.

Wednesday, September 10

Scripture: Philippians 4:10-14

I was very glad in the Lord because now at last you have shown concern for me again. (Of course you were always concerned but had no way to show it.) I’m not saying this because I need anything, for I have learned how to be content in any circumstance. I know the experience of being in need and of having more than enough; I have learned the secret to being content in any and every circumstance, whether full or hungry or whether having plenty or being poor. I can endure all these things through the power of the one who gives me strength. Still, you have done well to share my distress.

Observation

The apostle Paul certainly learned that serving the God who loved and saved him could be hard. From a prison cell (Philippians 1:13), Paul expressed thanks for sustaining gifts from Christians in the city of Philippi. He showed how he distinguished “needs” and “wants,” in good times and bad. In Christ, he said, he had “learned the secret to being content in any and every circumstance.”

Application

Sometimes we only use the King James Version language of verse 13 (“I can do all things through Christ”) to give us confidence for tasks like getting the promotion, making the team, etc. But in prison, Paul was expressing his “secret” for dealing with being hungry or poor, not just happy times. How, if at all, have you learned to draw on God’s strength to face emotional or financial scarcity? On the other hand, do you struggle to find contentment when dealing with plenty, instead of just thirsting for “more”? How does God help “in any circumstance”?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, keep growing in me the awareness that you are the secret to a contented life in all circumstances. Guide me toward a life of gratitude rather than grasping for more. Amen.

Thursday, September 11

Scripture: Romans 7:7-10, 7:14-8:3

So what are we going to say? That the Law is sin? Absolutely not! But I wouldn't have known sin except through the Law. I wouldn't have known the desire for what others have if the Law had not said, *Don't desire to take what others have*. But sin seized the opportunity and used this commandment to produce all kinds of desires in me. Sin is dead without the Law. I used to be alive without the Law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life, and I died. So the commandment that was intended to give life brought death.

We know that the Law is spiritual, but I'm made of flesh and blood, and I'm sold as a slave to sin. I don't know what I'm doing, because I don't do what I want to do. Instead, I do the thing that I hate. But if I'm doing the thing that I don't want to do, I'm agreeing that the Law is right. But now I'm not the one doing it anymore. Instead, it's sin that lives in me. I know that good doesn't live in me—that is, in my body. The desire to do good is inside of me, but I can't do it. I don't do the good that I want to do, but I do the evil that I don't want to do. But if I do the very thing that I don't want to do, then I'm not the one doing it anymore. Instead, it is sin that lives in me that is doing it. So I find that, as a rule, when I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me. I gladly agree with the Law on the inside, but I see a different law at work in my body. It wages a war against the law of my mind and takes me prisoner with the law of sin that is in my body. I'm a miserable human being. Who will deliver me from this dead corpse? Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then I'm a slave to God's Law in my mind, but I'm a slave to sin's law in my body.

So now there isn't any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. God has done what was impossible for the Law, since it was weak because of selfishness. God condemned sin in the body by sending his own Son to deal with sin in the same body as humans, who are controlled by sin.

Observation

The apostle Paul wrote "I'm a miserable human being." Ever shared that feeling? As Paul clearly described his own struggle with inner good and evil, he said gritting his teeth and resolving to do better didn't fix the problem. Only in trusting Jesus' love and grace did he find God's power setting him free from evil's grip. As *The Message* translation of the Bible renders Romans 8:1, "Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud."

Application

In Romans 8:3, Paul wrote that God sent "his own Son to deal with sin." Moralistic religion often deepens guilt by saying it's your job to "deal with sin." How can trusting that Jesus has already dealt with your sin and rid you of condemnation free your energy to live out the positive principles (love, service and community) God calls you to? How can you keep your faith focused on Christ and the good he offers you, rather than obsessing about the bad you don't want to do?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, as a member of your family, I choose to focus on you and the power of your reconciling love, rather than on myself and my feelings of shame and despair. Thank you, Jesus, for making this new life possible. Amen.

Friday, September 12

Scripture: Galatians 5:25 – 6:4

If we live by the Spirit, let's follow the Spirit. Let's not become arrogant, make each other angry, or be jealous of each other.

Brothers and sisters, if a person is caught doing something wrong, you who are spiritual should restore someone like this with a spirit of gentleness. Watch out for yourselves so you won't be tempted too. Carry each other's burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are important when they aren't, they're fooling themselves. Each person should test their own work and be happy with doing a good job and not compare themselves with others.

Observation

The kind of spirit we need to truly be the kind of Christian community God calls us to be is found in Galatians 5:26, when Paul wrote, "Let's not become arrogant, make each other angry, or be jealous of each other." These three attitudes will tear any relationship or group apart. Instead, he said, "with a spirit of gentleness" help each other all along the way. Be the best spouse, parent, neighbor, friend you can possibly be—not just for other people, but for God.

Application

Paul stated the obvious about community at the start of today's passage: it won't hold together if members are arrogant, make each other angry, or are jealous of each other. Are there places where you need to release arrogance, anger or jealousy to more fully follow the Spirit? Have you built relationships with people who will carry you when you hurt, when your burdens become too much to bear alone? Whose stretcher would you help to carry?

Prayer

Lord God, I need the people around me, and I realize that they need me. I pray that each day you will more fully live out your loving, serving spirit through me. Amen.

Saturday, September 13**Scripture: Matthew 28:18-20; Revelation 21:3-6**

Jesus came near and spoke to them, "I've received all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age."

I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "Look! God's dwelling is here with humankind. He will dwell with them, and they will be his peoples. God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look! I'm making all things new." He also said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." Then he said to me, "All is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will freely give water from the life-giving spring."

Observation

In Matthew 28, we read that Jesus promised his followers he would be with them "every day until the end of this present age." And Revelation's sweeping vision carried the promise even farther—throughout eternity it said, "God's dwelling is here with humankind." At times we seem to try to "sell" people on heaven by listing "benefits"—golden streets, no death, even mansions. But the Bible's promises said the greatest reason to choose to spend eternity in God's kingdom is God's eternal presence with us, God's friendship. Truly, "our friendship will never die."

Application

Every day, natural disasters, illnesses, acts of violence, or our city, state, nation or world getting more chaotic and conflict-filled can make us feel the news is trying to snuff out all hope. But when we repeat, as we often do at Messiah Church, that “the worst thing is never the last thing,” that’s not some abstract, “churchy” idea. It is based squarely on promises like the ones we read today, on whether we find the idea of being forever with God credible and desirable. Do you trust that Jesus spoke the truth when he promised to prepare a place for us so that we can be with him forever (John 14:1-3)? How do you nurture a friendship that makes the promise of being forever with Jesus appealing to you? Can you live in hope that, in the end, God’s love will defeat all hatred and death?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for the offer and promise of a friendship that will truly last forever. I want to walk with you every day in this life, and dwell in your presence forever. Amen.