



2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: Apr 27th - May 3rd

Sermon: April 26th



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
building community ◊ equipping believers ◊ serving Jesus

April 27

Isaiah 6:1-5

My message yesterday included two more chapters of detailed instructions God gave His people; this time about the bronze altar, the courtyard of the Tabernacle, oil for the lamp, and the priests' garments. As I mentioned yesterday, the main point of the garments the high priest wore, in this case, Aaron, was a display of holiness. Holiness is one of God's attributes. It is also a part of His character. Let's turn to the pages of Scripture to see what God has said in His word about holiness.

Any discussion about holiness must begin with God. The simple reason for this is that God is the one who is holy, and humanity in its sinfulness is not. One of the most well-known passages about God's holiness comes from Isaiah 6. The setting of this passage is where Isaiah sees into the very throne room of God. As he describes the awesome picture before his eyes, the crucial detail he relays to us is what comes out of the mouths of the seraphim as they stand above the throne. "And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!'" Isaiah is filled with awe, wonder, fear and dread. It is an intense, incredible and overwhelming scene!

The passage from Isaiah tells us that the seraphim call out that God is holy, but what does this mean? Dr. R. C. Sproul helps us understand this concept with these words, "Primarily, God's holiness refers to His greatness and His transcendence, to the fact that He is above and beyond anything in the universe...He alone in His being transcends all created things". God is separate from us; He is unique from us. The Reformation Study Bible elaborates on holiness by saying that it is associated with wholeness and perfection. Born into Adam's race, humanity is stained with sin. God is not! The Scripture tells us, "This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

This grand theme of God's holiness is also found in Revelation 4:8. This passage conveys John's vision of worship in heaven. The four angelic creatures around the throne shout, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" From cover to cover, the consistent message of Scripture is that our God is holy. My purpose for today's devotion is for us to see that God alone is holy. The only way for sinful human beings to be accepted in His sight is for us to be holy as well. However, becoming holy is an impossible task for us. We must be made holy. Only our great, awesome and Holy God can do this work for us.

April 28

Zechariah 3:1-5

The prophet Zechariah spoke to the Jews who had been set free after the Babylonian captivity. In our passage today, Zechariah sees Joshua the high priest standing in the presence of God. We immediately encounter a problem with Joshua; he is wearing dirty clothes. He is defiled with utterly filthy garments. What's the big deal?

The problem is what his clothes represent. In order for the high priest to come into God's presence and perform his priestly duties, he must be clean; he must be holy. The clean clothes show that God has declared him to be holy. The fact that Joshua's clothes are dirty means he is standing in God's presence in sin and defilement. This is a dangerous situation for Joshua. This frightful scene leaves Zechariah wondering what will happen. Zechariah knows Joshua should die because he stands before God clothed in sin rather than in righteousness.

This entire vision shows us the perfection God requires and man's inability to attain that perfection because of sin. The scene shifts when we see God move with compassion. Listen to the words of verse four, "And the angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Remove the filthy garments from him.' And to him he said, 'Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.'" What a sight! What a relief! What a picture of grace!

By removing Joshua's defiled clothes and replacing them with pure, clean garments, God shows that He has taken away Joshua's sin. The picture is wonderful. The clean clothes represent righteousness, a righteousness that is given by God. Joshua had no ability to clean himself up, unless God mercifully moved to clean him up Joshua would be done for. This vision that Zechariah watches unfold before his eyes teaches him that it is only God's grace and work that makes sinners clean in His sight.

The vision finishes off with the clean turban being placed on Joshua's head. This is significant. Now that God has washed him, cleaned him up and placed pure garments on him, Joshua is ceremonially clean before God. Remember what the turban has on it. There is a gold plate that has the words, "Holy to the LORD" written on it (Exodus 28:36). Joshua can stand before God, as the priest who represents the people before God, and offer the sacrifice necessary to bring cleansing for the people's sin.

This cleansing is good and makes Joshua and the people he represents clean. The problem is that it is only temporary. The whole sacrificial and priestly system longs for a perfect sacrifice and a perfect priest. While that will only come in the future, at this point in redemptive history, we want to see God's grace towards the people of Israel. For now, He has provided a way for them to be temporarily clean. It is not perfect, but it is good. Even though countless animals would have to be sacrificed, Israel would have a way to cover their sins. God is the one who provides the way, and this shows us His grace towards His people.

April 29

Hebrews 7:23-28

Yesterday, we saw that God provided grace for His people by creating the sacrificial and priestly system. This allowed His people to offer sacrifices to temporarily cover their sins. It was to reiterate that even though this Old Covenant system could not perfect the people, it was still good for them to have it. The people of Israel would have viewed it as good, and we should too. It was imperfect, it longed for something better, but it was still good.

Today I want us to see the glorious work of Jesus as the better, perfect sacrifice and priest that the children of Israel longed for. Under the Old Covenant, every time a person sinned, a sacrifice would have to be brought to the bronze altar and be killed in place of the one who sinned. Before the priest could perform his duties of offering the sacrifices, he had to bring an animal and offer it for his own sins first. In this, we see that both the priest and the people cannot escape their sins. Everyone needed a sacrifice for their sins; no one was inherently righteous.

Hebrews 7 points to the one that the Old Testament longed for. Verses 26-28 show us the character of Jesus as the great high priest. He is the perfect priest. He did not have sin, which means he did not have the limitations the priests of old had. Where the high priest of the Old Covenant would have to clean himself and put on garments that declared he was holy, Jesus did not have to do this. Jesus is holy in and of Himself; it is His nature to be holy.

Because of His perfection, when Jesus offered His own life on the cross, He was making the one and only perfect sacrifice for all time, for all of those who believe in Him. He was the spotless lamb who freely laid down His life. His perfect sacrifice provides perfect, pure atonement for all time for believers. Stop and marvel at this great truth! What the Old Covenant sacrificial system could never do, Jesus did. Because of Jesus, there is no more need for the bronze altar, there is no more need for the high priest's garments, there is no more need for any other animal to be killed for sin; Jesus paid it all!

As the perfect high priest, Jesus represents us before the Father in a way that no Old Testament priest ever could. When we receive Jesus by faith, He washes us completely clean. We do not stand before God in our own righteousness; we have none. We stand before God in the righteousness of Jesus. We are covered with His perfection because of His perfect work. This is glorious grace given to us by Jesus, our great high priest.

April 30

2 Corinthians 5:21

Daniel's sermon included quite a bit of discussion about the topic of "righteousness". Righteousness is not a marginal or light concept in Scripture. In fact, we could argue, that the main tension in the entire biblical narrative revolves around the issue that God is righteous and we are not! We see this tension quite clearly, through the study of the layout of the Tabernacle.

You'll recall, there was a great divide within that temporary structure. On the one side was the holy place which welcomed the priests for their daily duties before the Lord. On the other side, there was the most holy place which was reserved for the high priest and only at a specific time. In reality, the fact that any mortal was given clearance to come into the holy of holies at any moment was grace. No man was worthy to be in that environment, and this presents a huge issue when we consider the thought of eternity. How could we ever expect to be in God's presence forever when man couldn't even enter into His presence for a moment?

The answer, of course, is Christ! Jesus is the means whereby we enter into the holy of holies but the salvation that we enjoy in Christ is not free! Instead, the way to God's good graces is through atonement. Jesus makes it possible for us to be righteous by taking our sin upon Himself. This means that the cross is about far more than His physical suffering (although it certainly included physical torment). The cross achieved our salvation by taking the wrath due our sin and attributing it to someone else. Jesus became our sin. As such, He was separated from the Father for a moment in order to empty the cup of wrath that was due us in our depravity.

The result of this is beautiful. Christ became sin so that we could become righteous. Our righteousness is not intrinsic to us, instead our righteousness is the gift of Another. In His mercy, the Lord has devised a plan whereby we are counted as righteous because of the good standing of another. This is what theologians have called "the great exchange" and indeed there has been no greater exchange in all of history!

Are you counted as righteous before the Lord today? If so, the only reason is that Christ died for your transgressions. This fact alone should inspire our praise and gratitude. What a friend we have in Jesus!

May 1

1 John 3:7

We are saved by faith alone! Salvation by faith alone is a precious truth but, like any doctrine in the hands of fallen men, it can be abused. One of the primary ways that faith alone is twisted is often referred to as “antinomianism”. That is a fancy way of saying “against the law”. Antinomianism is a view that essentially says that because we are saved by grace through faith alone, the quality and character of our lives doesn’t matter. While you may have never heard of the term, you have absolutely heard the sentiment of the antinomian. These are the people who justify their disobedience to the revealed will of God by saying, “once saved, always saved”!

The idea in a nutshell is that since we cannot earn our salvation and because we cannot lose our salvation by our works, we are free to practice whatever sin we desire. Essentially, the antinomian thinks that he is clear to live a life of debauchery and still enjoy the glories of heaven. He is guilty of trying to live in two worlds as he practices lawlessness while looking forward to an eternity where lawlessness does not exist.

Now, this might seem wrong to us, but we need to ask whether there is biblical warrant to reject such a doctrine. The answer, of course, is that there are numerous places in the Bible that reject this kind of thinking, including our passage for today. John shares with us that those who are “righteous” (meaning they have been justified by faith alone), practice righteousness. The point is straightforward: if Christ has saved you, He has transformed you and if He has transformed you, then you will walk in accordance with your new nature.

Stated differently, salvation is not earned, but it is demonstrated! Jesus did not die to save us from the consequences of our sin alone. Instead, He died to transform us more and more into His image and this means that our salvation is not simply about a change in our destination (from heaven to hell), our salvation is ultimately about a change in our very being. In Christ, we are “new creations” indeed, the “old has passed away and the new has come.”

So, dear friends, if you have been covered by the sacrifice of Jesus, you have been given new life and called to live in light of His Lordship and instruction. You have been bought with a price; therefore, glorify God with your bodies and, if you choose to ignore this command, then we have every reason to wonder whether you have been purchased at all.

May 2

Revelation 22:3-5

On this journey through Exodus, we have seen the lamb pictured prominently in God's work of redemption. While other animals were used in the sacrificial system (bulls, goats, doves), the lamb plays a prominent role. Various texts in the Bible tell us about sacrificial lambs.

In Exodus 12, while still in Egypt, the children of Israel were commanded to sacrifice a lamb to protect them from the plague of death. The blood of the lamb was to be put on the doorposts and the lintel of the house. It was a sign of covering that protected the ones who followed God's instructions for safety (Exodus 12:13).

Later in the Gospel of John, we see Jesus identified with the lamb. Listen to the words of John 1:29-30, "The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because He was before me.'" This is a clear statement by John the Baptist that Jesus is the one who will pay for the sins of His people. When we look at Revelation chapter 5, we see Jesus the Lamb being worshiped in heaven.

In Revelation chapter 22:3-5, we see an amazing picture of the saints worshipping Jesus. We are told that the saints will see His face. This shows us that sin in its entirety will be done away with for those who are in heaven. There is nothing that blocks the saints' view of Jesus. Nothing clouds or distorts their view. The saints are able to see Jesus perfectly, face to face! Do you long for that day? It is the future for those who are forgiven in Christ, forgiven by the Lamb of God.

Verse 4 also tells us, "His name will be on their foreheads". All of the saints are identified as in Christ. We are His possession. It reminds us that for all eternity we will be His. He has marked us as His own. Because of this, we have unhindered access to His perfect presence forever. There is no more sin, no more separation, no more distortion of our vision or understanding of Jesus. We will see Him in the fullness of His radiant, splendid glory. We will be able to worship in a way that we never could before.

This incredible glimpse of heaven awaits those who are redeemed. Do you long for this? Have you bowed the knee to Jesus in repentance and faith? That is the only way for you to be forgiven. That is the only way for you to enjoy His presence forever. Are you in the Lamb?

May 3

Philippians 3:9

This passage helps us to understand what it means to be justified in the sight of God. Man's greatest need is forgiveness of sins. Our sin is what separates us from our holy God. The only remedy for our sin is found in Jesus.

Paul is the author of the letter to the Philippians. When we understand his background, it will shine more light on the amazing salvation he is writing about. The verses that come before verse 9 give us an overview of Paul's life. They show us the life of a man who was intensely committed to keeping the law. He was a man striving for his own salvation.

The life that Paul lived was one that others who were striving under the law would have longed to emulate. From man's perspective, Paul looked like he had it all. He was zealous for God, even to the degree that he persecuted Christians. He was a Pharisee, an expert in the law. He had the right pedigree. He had passion and was intense on striving for his own righteousness. However, in all of this he was blinded as to who he really was before God. In all of his striving, he missed a very important point: the law cannot save anyone (Romans 3:20).

The first part of verse 9 is where Paul shows us that he has seen the truth. He writes that he does not have a righteousness that was his own. That means his righteousness is not righteousness that comes from trying to keep the law. When God revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus, it changed his life forever. When Paul met Jesus, he realized that no works that he did could ever be good enough. His education didn't matter, his background didn't matter, his status didn't matter. Nothing compared to Jesus and His perfect righteousness.

In the second half of verse 9, we see the answer to Paul's longing. It is the answer for anyone who desires to be made right in God's eyes. The answer is Jesus. Righteousness comes by faith in Jesus alone. None of us measure up. Paul tried and failed to measure up. What about you? Are you trying to be justified by your own strength? It can't be done this way.

The righteousness that God gives comes through faith in Jesus. Placing your faith in Jesus means you believe He is the perfect Son of God who took on flesh and dwelt among us. Because He is sinless, He lived perfectly on our behalf. He died as the perfect Lamb; He died as our substitute. He rose from the grave and ascended to the right hand of the Father. Trusting Jesus alone, because of who He is and what He has done, is the only way to be saved. It is all about Jesus. Is this what you are resting in today?