



2025 Weekly Devotions

Week of: July 28th - Aug 3rd

Sermon: July 27th



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
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July 28

Galatians 6:1

This week's devotions are going to be dedicated to a topic that I am pretty sure we did not cover yesterday. That might sound like an odd thing to say but, in light of the necessary process around these parts, I am still discerning and praying about what focus to take during the message. Devotions have to be written before the sermon is preached which means there is always a bit of mystery regarding how things went prior to your reading these entries!

What I desire to do this week is to fixate on the warning that is uttered at the end of verse 1 in which Paul warns the believers to "keep watch on yourselves, lest you too be tempted." As I have considered and meditated upon this portion of the passage this week, these words continue to strike me as both incredibly important and sobering.

As is always the case, context is king in biblical interpretation and the context in which this warning is given adds some punch to the exhortation. Remember, Paul's warning is given to a defined audience here as he writes these instructions, in particular, to those who are "spiritual". The term "spiritual" is used in a variety of ways in our world today but in Galatians 6 there is no doubt what the Apostle intends to communicate.

Remember, chapter 5 ends with a pronounced section discussing what it means to be "spiritual". Paul is referring to those who are walking "by the Spirit" and walking "in step with the Spirit" and this means that his concern is not specifically for those who are operating in rebellion against God but for those who were otherwise walking in an intimate way with the Lord.

There is a sense in which this constitutes a grave warning for the church, even those who are in step with the Spirit can be tempted! Whereas those who are not walking by the Spirit have no business even considering trying to restore a brother (they need restoration themselves!), those who are in step with the Lord still have reason to be wary.

The application for today's devotion is fairly straightforward... you are never past the point of temptation to sin (in this life) and, therefore, no believer has any business putting his or her guard down this side of heaven. One of the most perilous predicaments we can experience occurs when we think that our spirituality guarantees invincibility. None but Christ is perfect, therefore we should always take heed, lest we fall.

July 29

Psalm 119:10

Having established the danger, I do believe it would be wise for us to consider how we should guard ourselves from temptation and that will be the focus of the next several devotions. Frankly, there are many pursuits that are wise to consider as we contemplate resisting temptation, but none of those strategies will make a difference if our hearts are not humble before God. The motivation to passionately pursue purity is at least partially established and fueled by a recognition of how badly we need grace.

Growing up, my church family had some favorite hymns. Looking back now, I am so grateful for the great, biblical theology that was taught to me through the influence and composition of great hymn writers from yesteryear. While I enjoyed many of the songs, one constantly bugged me, even as a small child. The problematic song was “Come Thou Fount”. Within that beautiful piece, there is this phrase, “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.” I remember wondering why in the world we would be singing a song written by a guy who is predisposed to leave the Lord!

The reality is that I have come to see the wisdom in these words in light of the biblical testimony on the topic. The composer of “Come Thou Fount” (Robert Robinson) is not giving us a juicy detail about his personal life as much as he is echoing the biblical teaching that all of us are prone to leave the path of the Lord.

We see this idea clearly in Psalm 119. The 119th chapter of this long but beautiful book is largely dedicated to the topic of the Scriptures. Its verses are dripping with adoration of the Lord and a stated love of the Word of God and yet in the very beginning stanzas of this great song of praise, the author begs the Lord saying, “let me not wander from your commandments”. What a declaration!

At first glance this might seem rather schizophrenic. After all, the entire chapter is talking about the Psalmist’s love for the Bible, how could a man who is so passionate about the truth also cry out for help in not abandoning the truth? The answer is that even those who are spiritual can be tempted.

Dear church family, the height of spiritual maturity is not realized in an arrogant, haughty attitude that thinks we are past the point of failure. The pinnacle of Godly wisdom and growth is only realized when we come to the conclusion that we are all still able to stray. This means that the first step in avoiding temptation is undertaken when we accept our insufficiency and beg for assistance and grace that can only come from the Lord Himself.

July 30

Psalm 119:9

As is always the case regarding sanctification and our walking with the Lord, there are aspects of faithfulness that the Lord alone can do and there are pursuits and responsibilities that we must undertake, albeit with His power and guidance through the Spirit. For the rest of the week, we are going to be talking about some of the proactive steps we need to be taking to protect ourselves from the power of temptation.

Today's verse occurs just before the text for yesterday's devotion, and I do believe their proximity is instructive. While it is true that we must pray for God's assistance in staying on the straight and narrow, it is equally true that we must be proactive in pursuing truth to instruct and guide our path.

You will notice that today's verse deals, specifically, with the topic of avoiding the polluting presence of sin as it begins with a question, "how can a young man keep his way pure"? Admittedly, this does seem to be exclusive, after all many of us aren't young men (some aren't men at all and others are more... seasoned), but the specificity of the audience should not preclude all readers from leaning in as the temptation that young men experience might be incidentally different, but the presence of temptation is a universal problem.

The answer that is given to the question of how to keep in a state of purity is interesting, we walk in purity by "guarding it according to your word." The point is crystal clear, one of our most important weapons in the fight to be sanctified is the Bible. This means that those who use the weapon of the sword (see Ephesians 6) are the only ones who have any hope of fending off the enemy, it also means that those who do not have any knowledge or concern for the Word of God are doomed to a lifetime of failure and depravity.

I realize that a universal statement might seem like an exaggeration but, frankly, it would be hard to argue with the conclusion! Folks, so many Christians struggle with temptation and sin because they are totally unable or unwilling to guard the purity of their walk by the Word of God. The Word certainly informs us of truth, but it also centers us on truth when temptation arises. Those who truly walk in the light will be able to recognize and avoid darkness and we see a great example of how to go about this discipline in the life of our Savior.

July 31

Luke 4:1-13

Today's text demonstrates for us the way in which the Lord intends for us to utilize His Word to keep our way pure. There is so much rich, biblical symmetry in the story of the temptation of Christ. Jesus was sent to this world in order to do what man proved incapable of undertaking. The story of his encounter with Satan in the wilderness is one of the many pieces of evidence that our Savior is supreme. Indeed, the second, better, Adam (see 1 Corinthians 15:45-58) was victorious where the first Adam failed, and this is no more evident than in this account.

Recall if you will, that Adam fell to the temptation of the evil one in paradise. With a full belly and perfect surroundings, the first Adam proved unable and unwilling to endure the temptation of the serpent. In stark contrast, the second Adam was led by the Spirit into the wilderness (hardly a dreamy paradise) and subject to 40 days of want prior to His encounter with the devil. Nevertheless, whereas Adam gave into the temptation to be like God and to fill his belly with forbidden fruit, Jesus stood strong knowing that He was God, and therefore Satan could not offer Him anything He didn't already possess, and that the provision provided for Him in the Word of God was enough.

Nevertheless, the point for the devotion today is not so much that Jesus avoided temptation, instead I desire for us to consider HOW He went about guarding Himself from the advances of the evil one. Commentators have pointed out that Christ could have simply spoken truth to the devil and this would have been sufficient. After all, He is God and this means that all He says is the Word of God, but Christ didn't rely on newly minted words in this moment, instead, our Lord refers to what was "written" (denoting that which was recorded in the Scriptures generations prior) in order to rebuff the devil's attacks.

Time and again, the Lord was confronted with temptation and each time He responded with the truth of the Word. Notice here that each reference illuminated the foolishness of the temptation and it also served as the ground of Christ's decisions. Stated differently, if Christ did not know the Bible (which is unthinkable), then He likely would have thought that Satan's temptation sounded great and even acceptable. Furthermore, He would have been left in a position whereby His physical passions and desires would have motivated His thinking. Instead of considering the eternal ramifications and clear expectations of the Lord, His momentary hunger, for instance, may have won out. Nevertheless, our Lord shows us that the right way to combat temptation is to know and walk in the truth that God has revealed.

August 1

Luke 22:40

Knowledge of the Word of God is imperative if we are going to endure and avoid temptation, but it is not enough. While the truth is perfect and sufficient to equip us for every good work, our ability to be faithful is still predicated upon the grace and power of God alone. This means that we must seek His help if we are going to stand.

Today's text is a reminder that our prayers should be directed to the Lord for His guidance and protection from temptation. The context of the verse today is instructive as Jesus is talking to His disciples just prior to His betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. In these moments, the Lord has asked His disciples to pray for Him but also for themselves. Why are they to intercede personally, because they are going to be tempted to sin!

In this instance, we know the temptation was multi-faceted. First, there was the temptation to fall asleep in an hour that required prayer. Second, at least in Peter's case, there was the temptation to betray Christ that was fast approaching. What is interesting is that these men fell victim to the first temptation and, Peter, also fell to the second.

Jesus' point here is incredibly instructive in light of the outcome. Sometimes, we know the right thing to do but we are simply unable to faithfully fulfill it and this means that we must be constantly beseeching the Lord for His assistance. The disciples did not encounter a problem of information in the Garden (they clearly heard the admonition from Christ to pray), they encountered a problem of application (they simply were unable to do what was commanded).

In the same way, you and I will be in positions, quite often, in which the instruction is clear but the ability lacks. Our flesh may be willing, but our spirits are weak, and this means that we desperately require God's help. God's design is for us to ask Him for what we need, and this means that a key component of avoiding temptation is grounded in our prayer lives.

When was the last time you asked God to help you avoid temptation? When was the last time you put down the parenting book, with all of its techniques (many of which are biblical and helpful in their own way) and instead simply begged God to guard and guide your children? As the old Puritan once said, "prayerlessness is a declaration of our sense of independence". We don't pray because we don't think we need help but stories like that of the disciples in the garden show us that we need far more assistance in avoiding temptation than we would like to admit!

August 2

1 Corinthians 10:13

Human history is full of war stories. Some of them recall moments in which brave men decided to go down in proverbial flames (think Davy Crockett and the Alamo) but others describe moments in which wise generals decided to retreat in order to regroup. While retreating is not remembered with the same level of reverence, sometimes the wisest move a combatant can make is to pull back or escape!

In our text for today, the Apostle Paul reminds us that it is ok to look for a way out when temptation comes knocking at our door. The admonition is to consider the reality that leaving the circumstance is often the best strategy. While it is true that temptation must be overcome, sometimes the way to faithfulness is avoiding the places where temptation even arises and, when it does rear its ugly head, an escape hatch is a welcome sight.

It strikes me that so much of the struggle is waged on a battlefield that we don't always have to inhabit. Wisdom would dictate that spiritual people avoid places where they know they will be tempted. Years ago, I had a young man come to see me when I was a campus minister. This individual was a relatively new Christian who had been saved out of a life of alcoholism. Not only was he a recovering alcoholic, his dad and grandfather struggled with the same malady.

As he sat in my office, he began to tell me that he had a heart for those who struggled like he did (this makes sense) and that he felt the best way to assist these people was to go to the bars where they congregate and talk to them about Jesus. While this might have sounded like a good idea to the young man at the time, the truth is that he had no business in this circumstance precisely because the bar is a place where his temptation lurked. Wisdom would dictate that he should not have fought a battle that was not necessary. The way of escape had been given, now he needed to walk through the door that God provides.

Folks, you don't have to stand up to temptation when you are weak, leaving its presence doesn't mean defeat, it simply means that Christ has accomplished what you cannot. Jesus is our means of victory, Jesus is the One who overcomes Satan and sin, and this means that His victory is enough for you and me. Instead of attempting to stand on our own two feet, there is great wisdom in knowing that He stands when we cannot and, therefore, we can get out of dodge while trusting Him to prevail.

August 3

1 Corinthians 7:1-5

Today's text is illustrative of a larger truth. While the specific topic is one of sexual relations, the generic statement in verse 5 is helpful for all individuals, regardless of their marital status. Paul's point here is quite simple, those who are married should pursue regular, physical intimacy in order to guard themselves against the temptation to pursue sexual immorality. In this way, the husband and wife are intended to offer themselves to the other partner so that the impulses that might be a driver to sin are satisfied and each individual is guarded from temptation.

While this is a specific text, dedicated to a definite topic, the larger truth should not be missed. God has given us faithful and righteous ways to fulfill many desires and longings that otherwise might lead us to sin. We all have a desire to feel worthy, that desire can lead us to meditations upon the truth of the cross and the declaration of our acquired sonship, or that temptation can lead us to pride and self-exaltation.

We all have a natural desire for relationship; this impulse can drive us to seek unhealthy associations with those who may lead us to sin OR it can be a motivating factor behind our efforts to build godly relationships amongst the brothers. Regardless, the point is that we have been given certain relationships and pursuits that are intended to help us walk in holiness which means that the questions before us when we are tempted should include whether or not we have taken advantage of what God has provided in order to alleviate our temptation.

God is the giver of good gifts, are you utilizing them? Brother or sister, are there urges in your life that are going unmet? If so, perhaps you should seek the Lord's mind as to whether or not those things are either objectively evil OR simply the overflow of neglect. When we attempt to suppress temptations that can be alleviated, we are only adding to the pressure that will eventually explode into a sinful mess.

Sometimes people are tempted to say no to what God provides in an effort to be more spiritually mature. Monks and priest, for instance, neglect passages like this one that say that marriage is good and strategic for our holiness. In those instances, the mistake is grounded in telling God that what He has provided is not necessary for our holiness. This is a grave mistake, and it often leads to severe consequences.