



# 2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: March 23<sup>rd</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>

Sermon: March 22<sup>nd</sup>



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH  
building community ◊ equipping believers ◊ serving Jesus



March 23

### **1 Timothy 2:5**

We come to a bit of a turning point in the book of Exodus in the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter. Over the past three chapters (21-23), we have read about the terms of the covenant God was making with His people. Our current chapter describes how the covenant is ratified. I want to make sure you are clear on this point. God has been crystal clear in giving His expectations to His people for holy living. He, in no way, watered down His requirements for obedience nor His will to bless or to curse those who obeyed or failed to do so. He attempted to remind them of His great love for them and His power to save in delivering them from bondage in Egypt so as to fuel their willingness to be faithful.

By the way, in being not only their Creator but also their Deliverer and Savior, He had the right to tell them how to live in regard to the covenant. We should remember that as our Creator, He also has the right to tell us what is right and wrong and to bless or punish in accordance with His will and ways. He is the Potter and we are the clay and He alone determines how His creation should live and operate.

In order to make His message clear and to be certain it reached the people, God dealt with Moses the mediator. We find him once again going to the top of the mountain to meet with God (Ex. 24:1-2). As the mediator Moses made the trek up the mountain many times. In a very real sense, as the mediator, Moses walked between heaven and earth on behalf of a holy God and a sinful people. The day would come when Jesus, the One greater than Moses, would be the Mediator who would bridge the chasm once and for all between God and man.

Even though this time Moses had a little company for part of his journey, the men who accompanied him were still not allowed to go beyond a point set by God. Only Moses would make the journey all the way into the presence of God. Full access would not be granted until Christ tore the veil with His own death on the cross for the sins of God's people. The boundaries were meant to teach the people to honor the holiness of God. His perfection does not allow for sin to enter into His presence. This is why Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden in Genesis 3.

Even now, we can only approach God and enter into His presence by the way He has appointed. Back then, it was only through the priests that the people could approach God and make their offerings for forgiveness and various displays of worship. Today, we have the blessing of coming through Christ. Paul wrote to Timothy these precious words, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). We can meet with God in Christ and no longer need priests or men like Moses.

March 24

**Romans 5:1; Hebrews 7:25**

When you consider the role of a mediator, I assume you realize that person is necessary because a dispute exists between two parties. The mediator comes to stand between the people who are at odds and attempts to reconcile them to one another. From the Scriptures, we learn that human beings are described as being at enmity against God. For this reason, God's wrath is upon us. The need for reconciliation requires a mediator worthy and qualified for the task that no human being can accomplish.

The Bible says, "This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life" (Heb. 7:15-16). For this reason, we can rest knowing, "That He holds his priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:24-25). It is also written, "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come...He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:11-12). Oh how I cherish these amazing truths from God's Word. This is one of the many reasons that I do not worry about losing my salvation. He keeps me!

Brothers and sisters, it is for these reasons that we can rejoice in the words Paul wrote in Romans 5:1-2, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand." Jesus served as our Mediator according to the perfect plan of redemption designed within the Godhead from the beginning of time. Christ brought to us the divinity of God necessary for our salvation and redemption while at the same time putting on flesh to represent us as fully man.

It was by His perfect obedience that Christ satisfied the demands of God's law and merited eternal life for us. When He willingly submitted to death on the cross, he made atonement for our sins and satisfied the demands of the wrath of God against us because of our sin. Christ alone was able to satisfy the divine requirements for reconciliation and so served perfectly as our Mediator. Moses was that person for a season and did what God called him to but we thank God that one greater than Moses would come in the person of Jesus. The author of Hebrews wrote:

*"For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses...Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful of God's house as a son" (Heb. 3:3-6).*

March 25

### **Exodus 23:33**

As I read Exodus 23 in preparation for Pastor Aaron's sermon on that chapter, I observed, towards the end of the chapter, some reminders that much of what God does in our world follows the lines of common sense and practicality. What I mean is that the majority of God's actions are understandable and wise within the natural order of His creation. For example, He says in Exodus 23:29 that He is not going to drive the pagan inhabitants of the promised land out in one year. Why not?

Well, it appears that if He were to do it that way, the wildlife and vegetation would get out of hand as there would be no one in the area to maintain dominion over the land and the properties would potentially become uninhabitable. Moses recorded it this way, "...lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you" (v.29b). He writes further, "Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land" (v. 30). Do you see the practical nature in the process that God is going to operate? This makes sense folks. Now, this presents a real problem as well.

God also realizes that this method presents the Israelites with temptations that will test them and require faithfulness and commitment to the Lord on their part. Moses writes, "You shall make no covenant with them and their gods" (v.32). Previously he wrote, "You shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do..You shall serve the Lord your God" (vv. 24-25). Again, I mention this because as God is laying out the stipulations and expectations of the covenant He is establishing with them, He is honest and transparent as to the challenges before them.

The temptations will arise because the presence of the pagan nations will remain for a while. We can assume that their presence and thus their potential influences will lessen as the year passes and the people establish themselves in the land. God says to them, "They shall not dwell in your land lest they make you sin against Me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you" (v. 33). God is not going to drive them out all at once, but still the people are not to grow accustomed to their presence and simply begin to dwell together with them.

Dear ones, we live in a fallen and broken world for now. Jesus is making all things new (Rev. 21:5) but that does not remove the imminent threat of temptations and various sins that so easily entangle us (Heb. 12:1). As God told Cain back in Genesis 4:7, "Sin is crouching at the door and its desire it to have you." God is fully aware of the presence of sin and the desire of the evil one to kill, steal, and destroy the lives and witness of His children. He has provided ample warnings in His Word to encourage us to stay away from sin and to flee from it so that we will be able to stand firm in our faith. He has also given us the Holy Spirit to walk with us and to empower us to live overcoming lives as followers of Christ through enemy territory.

March 26

### **1 John 5:3**

When I consider the atmosphere of much of evangelicalism today, it saddens me to admit that much of what is passed off as commitment to Christ is nothing more than cheap grace or “easy believism.” Those two phrases mean that pastors and/or evangelists have convinced people that all they need to do is believe in Jesus and they will be saved. You and I both know that believing in Jesus is absolutely necessary to be saved and is therefore crucially important. Saying that one must believe in Jesus is not the problem. Saying that they need not bow to His Lordship is.

Being a disciple of Christ is far more demanding than a simple profession of faith. We often say it but it fits once again – Satan and the demons believe but they refuse to bow the knee to Jesus as Lord (James 2:19). We need to know what Jesus Christ wants or demands of us. Let me say up front that when a person follows Jesus, truly, he escapes from the hard yoke of self-righteousness and legalism that is meant to earn salvation. But this does not mean that we can ignore the seriousness of the command to take up our cross, deny self, and follow Him. His call upon our lives is to absolute discipleship but He demands nothing of us without giving us the strength and grace to perform that to which we are called.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer coined the phrase “cheap grace.” By it he meant more than I have space to write today. Simply put, it meant grace without a price because the belief is that since Jesus has paid our account in full, everything can be had for nothing. He said, “In such a church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required...Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner...the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance.” He also said that it is grace without discipleship, without the cross, and without Jesus Christ. Dear ones, what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. At the same time, we must never forget what John wrote in 1 John 5:3: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” Surrendering to the Lordship of Christ is a step to real freedom and joy.

Church family, can you imagine God sending His own Son and that Son willingly dying a gruesome and horrific death on a cross and the recipients of such love being callous and indifferent to that event? I am sure you can because it happens all the time. My desire is that it not happen in your life or mine. Easy believism and cheap grace are bitter foes to true discipleship and frankly to the Christian faith. We must not, nor allow others to rest securely in their ungodliness.

In Exodus 20-23, God makes it perfectly clear that much is required of His people if we are to be faithful to the calling of the elect. I see Matthew hearing the call of Jesus to follow Him and getting up from his table and walking away from His sin to follow His Lord (Mark 2:14). God is laying it all on the line for the Israelites in chapter 24 and it becomes time for them to agree to obey or not. They agree to obey all the Lord has required in verses 3 and 7. We will see how that worked out in the chapters to follow.

March 27

### **Ecclesiastes 5:4-6**

God makes clear the conditions connected to the covenant He is entering into with His people. As I mentioned earlier this week, on two occasions it is recorded in Exodus 24 that the people vow to be obedient to all the Lord had communicated to them through Moses (Ex. 24:3,7). Today I want to consider the seriousness of making vows according to God's Word. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 5:4-6, "When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin." It is better that you do not vow if you are not going to keep your vow, but it is best if you vow and follow through.

Moses recorded in Deuteronomy these words on the subject, "If you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the Lord your God will require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin...You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth" (Deut. 23:21-23). This is why Jesus would later say in the New Testament that we should count the cost of following Him before we commit ourselves to the task. He knew it would not be easy and that there would be plenty of times when the temptation to quit would arise. In those moments, the vow is what will keep us going. In other words, we gave Him our word and that should solidify the commitment.

Friends, this is why I have always been uneasy when it comes to altar calls that "push" people to decisions to follow Christ without giving them ample time to truly consider what they are signing up for. It is so easy to work people up into an emotional frenzy that calls for a decision too soon. I wonder how many people have "walked the aisle" because someone scared them with threats of hell without ever considering the cost of surrendering their will to the Lord Jesus. Far too many, from what our culture reveals to us today.

Obviously, we know that if we choose not to follow Christ as Lord, or in the case of Exodus 24, the people choose not to enter into covenant with God, the choice would be a poor one. This would lead to a life lived in our own strength without the grace of God necessary for victorious living and entrance into heaven at our death. No one would argue that to reject Christ is a good thing, so it must be that making a vow that we do not keep is even worse.

I assume that we can surmise from this teaching that even though the natural consequences of living in this fallen world in our sinful bodies are ultimately bad, to know some things about God and to refuse Him must make the journey even worse. I believe that an applicable verse here would be James 4:7 which says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." If the Israelites would have heard all that God was communicating to them and still chose to reject His covenant by choosing disobedience and faithlessness, surely it would have come from a place of pride and self-delusion. So, people in this world who don't know God have it bad, but those who know Him and reject Him have it worse.

March 28

**Galatians 3:23-24**

Today I want to be extra gracious to the Israelites of Exodus 24. Yesterday I wrote about the seriousness of making vows to God and the punishment for those who do and fail to keep those vows. I am going to use my imagination a little today, but I do think it is a sanctified imagination. By that I mean that the conclusion that I draw about their commitment is based on what the Bible teaches us about our human nature.

My “guess” is that they were sincere when they made the vows recorded in Exodus 24. I believe they had every intention of obeying all that the Lord commanded just as they promised. What they failed to factor in was their own sin nature. Think of how many times you have committed to a diet, an exercise program, a reading plan to read the Bible through, or any other area of discipline only to quit on your commitment somewhere down the line. It is hard dear brothers and sisters to keep these selfish, fleshly, sinful bodies in check for extended periods of time.

Now, as we move from a practical reality of our current bodily condition, let us move on to the spiritual and more theological realities that this passage reveals about our condition. We should know by now that one of the purposes of God’s Law was to show us that we cannot measure up to all that it demands. Paul said in Galatians 3:24, “The law was our guardian (schoolmaster) until Christ came.” The point is that when we sincerely consider the demands of the law, we should conclude that we cannot measure up. This is why Paul also said that we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming of faith would be revealed (v. 23).

For you and me today, I want us to realize that one of the lessons we can take away from the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Exodus is not that we should be reluctant or afraid to commit to follow Jesus, but that we should know we cannot do it in our own strength. This is why dear ones the Holy Spirit was given to all believers. God knows that we cannot keep all of the law or please Him in every way apart from Christ and the indwelling presence and power of the Spirit. I want you to walk away from this chapter thrilled by the invitation of our great God to come to Him and vow to a life of obedience. We can do so knowing that He will continue to reveal Himself and all His wonderful characteristics to us, desiring to fuel our love and commitment to Him.

Jesus said in John 16:1, “I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.” He desires that we know the truth about ourselves, the world we live in, and the God who oversees it all. He also knows that life in this fallen world and broken bodies is not easy. This is why we have been given the Holy Spirit as well. Jesus said it was to our advantage that He go so the Holy Spirit would come to us (John 16:7). We face hard things beloved, but we do not face them alone and we face them with confidence that the Lord loves us and will work in us for His glory and our sanctification. Take the step of faith and obedience and then lean into Him for the ability to do it.

March 29

### 1 Corinthians 2:9-10

I recently read the last several chapters of a book by C.S. Lewis entitled *The Last Battle*. It is the seventh and final book in the Chronicles of Narnia series written by Lewis. At the end of the book, the characters are invited into the gates of what is meant to be a picture of heaven. Several times in the process of making their way to the gate the phrase, "Farther up and Farther in" is used. They are invited to continue moving in the direction of the gate and eventually farther into the land on the other side of the gate. Lewis writes in such a way to help us see the glory of the King whose kingdom this is, and to take in the splendor and majesty of the land that was up ahead all along – the new Narnia.

In a very real sense, Moses was continually invited farther up and farther in throughout the exodus. Finally, in chapter 24 we find Him going to the top of the mountain where the cloud of God's glory covered it (v. 15). It was on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of being there that Moses was invited to take another step farther up and farther in (v.16-18). This time he stepped into the very glory of God. There he remained for the next forty days and forty nights in the very presence of God.

Dear ones, it is imperative that you understand the picture that God is painting for us in the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Exodus. Philip Ryken wrote in his commentary on Exodus that this is one of the most important chapters in all of the Bible because it provides for us a pattern of worship. It also establishes God's covenant with His people on the basis of shed blood.

Think about how Moses had been getting closer to God throughout the process of the exodus. Exodus is the story of God doing one glorious thing after another. As a matter of fact, He was saving His people for His glory. In Exodus, when the phrase "the glory of the Lord" is used, it means an outward and visible manifestation of God's inner divine beauty. He showed Himself to Moses in the burning bush, to the Israelites in a pillar of fire and cloud, and here again on this holy mountain (24:16). The whole chapter ends when Moses literally enters into the glory of the Lord. He was drawn closer and closer until he was swallowed inside of it.

In Lewis' book, *The Last Battle*, every new thing the citizens of the new Narnia experience is more amazing than the last. They are continually invited farther up and farther in as the chapter unfolds. The same could be said of Moses and for that matter, all of us who are following Christ. Exodus 24 reveals the story of our own salvation too dear family. First, like in Exodus 24, God calls us to worship Him (vv. 1-2). He spoke to the people by His word and today He does the same for us through His written Word. The problem that we all face is that we are separated from God by our own sin; thus, the shedding of the blood of a sacrificial substitute is necessary (vv. 5-8). Once our sins are covered by the blood, we can have fellowship with God, and we can even sit down and eat with Him (v. 11).

God has come to us in the person of Christ who came to be our Savior and King. He came down so we could be lifted farther up and in. We live in a world marred by sin but one day we will be brought into His presence and the brightness of His glory where all will be beyond our imagination (1 Cor. 2:9-10).