



2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: May 25th - 31st

Sermon: May 24th



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH

building community ◊ equipping believers ◊ serving Jesus

May 25

1 John 2:1-2

We would be hard pressed to find a more disappointing chapter in the Old Testament than Exodus 32. The people of Israel had witnessed amazing might and mercy from the hand of God during the Exodus. Moses had made several trips up Mt. Sinai to receive instructions from God for he and the people to date, and in this chapter, we find him there again. It is during this encounter with God that he is given further instructions concerning the temple as well as the Ten Commandments written by the very hand of God.

To understand the egregious nature of their latest act of rebellion against God, it helps to remember what they previously said in response to the reading of the covenant delivered to them from Moses in chapter 24:3, 7. It was at that moment the people vowed to obey all that God had spoken through Moses. Now on this latest journey to the top of Sinai into the presence of the Almighty, Moses had been gone for forty days and forty nights (Ex. 24:18).

While Moses was with God receiving instructions for life as the covenant people of God, the people grew restless and rebellious. They went so far this time as to completely turn away from God, to fail to even acknowledge Him, and to reject and revolt against Moses whom they disrespectfully referred to as “this Moses.” As they slipped further and further away from faithfulness and acknowledgment of God, they slipped into idol worship and other disgusting sins. How quickly the mind forgets, and lesser gods rule the heart. We will address this further as the week progresses, but I also wanted to highlight a couple of amazing and beautiful demonstrations of God’s mercy and grace extended to a people who most certainly did not deserve anything short of harsh judgment and wrath.

Exodus 32 details a horrible event in the life of Israel that cost the nation three thousand lives. Contained within this chapter that starts so tragically are two other realities that encourage and elevate my soul. In His anger against the people who have sinned, God threatens to destroy the entire nation and to start over with Moses (Ex. 32:10). Beginning in verse 11 we read of Moses, the mediator, standing in for the people. He is pleading with God to spare the nation and to relent from His wrath aimed at them. Moses “reminds” God, not as if He actually forgot, of His power in delivering them from Egypt and all the glory that He received in so doing. He also reminded Him of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This proves to have been enough to assuage His wrath.

It is important that you understand God was painting a canvas to demonstrate how One would come as our Mediator in the person of Jesus Christ in the future. Jesus, like Moses, would stand as our Advocate when we sin on our behalf and in so doing would gain for us mercy and grace rather than wrath and judgment (1 John 2:2). As the chapter concludes, the heart of God for His glory and for His people is revealed as He once again leads them forward with undeserved grace. I am glad He is kind and patient towards me too!

May 26

Jonah 3:4-10

Pastor Aaron and I work hard in attempts to help you learn and consistently interpret passages of Scripture in light of the entirety of the Bible. In other words, you must never draw a wrong conclusion based on one verse if you know that conclusion is contradictory to other known and revealed truths of the Bible. An easy example of this would be when Jesus says to His potential followers, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26), there must be more to it than what meets the eye.

Surely you and I know that it is not God’s will that any person should hate his parents. We can draw that conclusion because of the 5th commandment: “You shall honor your mother and father.” This means that you cannot read the verse from Luke’s gospel and draw the conclusion that Jesus literally means we must hate our parents. Our interpretation is then determined in light of both verses rather than only one of them. In our text from Sunday’s message, Moses records that God relented (changed His mind, NASB) from the disaster that He had spoken of bringing on His people” (Ex. 32:14). If you read that verse in isolation from the rest of the Bible, you might end up believing that God actually changes His mind or even repents of decisions He had formerly made.

This cannot be a correct understanding as we know that God is omniscient which means He is all knowing and cannot “learn” anything that he does not already know. God is not reacting to what is unfolding in future events as if He did not know what was coming. God already knew that Moses would intervene but the lesson for us to learn is that the universe is hard wired in such a way that God does forgive us of our sins and removes His wrath from any and all who will repent and turn to Him.

The Ninevites in the book of Jonah is a great example of this truth. God told Jonah that the nation would be overthrown forty days from the moment of his message to them (Jonah 3:4). As you know the story, the people repented of their sins when they heard the message. God’s response is recorded in verse 10: “God relented of the disaster that He had said He would do to them.” This does not mean that God did not know this would happen. He did not gain new information that He had to consider. He does interact with us in real time. He does not deal with us today on the basis of a sin we may commit one month from now. Likewise, if we are living in sin today, this does not mean that He will interact with us based on the repentance that may take place next year.

God does deal with us on the basis of real time and real actions. I believe this is for our benefit. He will and does change His actions towards us when we change our actions and behaviors as we are going. The main point is that God wants us to see that if we remain in rebellious sin, He will indeed deliver punishment. On the other hand, if we repent and change our ways, the bow and arrow once pointed at us is put down and forgiveness is applied.

May 27

Proverbs 29:18, Judges 21:25

In the book of Judges, on 2 occasions the author writes, “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Judges 17:6, 21:25). The moral and spiritual condition within the people of Israel were dismal and ungodly. The people had abandoned faith in God and were living in step with the pagan nations surrounding them. They were proving to be a disobedient, stiff-necked people who were prone to abandon God and to commit spiritual adultery with foreign gods and worldly lovers.

Exodus 32 is a sad picture of this reality long before they ever got to the period of the judges. In slightly more than a month, the people wandered off into sin as if God and all He did meant nothing to them. It saddens my heart deeply to know that we are capable of such behavior. As easy as it is for me to criticize them harshly, stand in judgment against them, and to act as if I am completely shocked at their terrible behavior, I cannot help but think of Peter when he told Jesus that he would never abandon or betray Him. I sincerely hope I will never act the way the Israelites did in Exodus 32, but I do like to remain humble and mindful of my complete and utter dependence on God to hold me and to keep me from falling (Jude 24).

Solomon wrote in the twenty-ninth proverb these words, “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint” (v.10). I believe this applies to the people who rebelled against God and Moses in Exodus 32. Moses, clearly in the center of God’s will, had been called back to meet with God on Mt. Sinai. The leader was doing exactly what he was supposed to be doing. His calling required so much of him and his time was surely spread thin. I must tell you that it is a hard pill to swallow sometimes when, as your pastors, we are busy as bees serving the Lord in duties necessary to our calling only to hear that someone is angry because we are not where they want us to be when they want us there. Okay, I got that out of my system.

Moses is on the mountain, and his brother Aaraon fails miserably at his assignment. He should have been leading the people with strength and clear instruction, but he did not. Instead, we can assume that he did not keep the teachings of the covenant in front of them. It is safe to conclude that there was no “prophetic vision and the people threw off the restraints of God’s laws.” Moses recorded the event in this way, “When *he* (Moses) saw that the people had broken loose (**for Aaron had let them break loose**) ...” (Ex. 32:25). You see friends, they had slowly begun to throw the restraints of God’s law off and “broke” loose which meant they ran headlong into awful sin.

God’s law is good and the so-called restraints are there for our own protection and joy. Jesus said that He came to make our joy full (John 15:11) and that is accomplished in part by walking and remaining in the good and wise principles, statutes, and rules of God’s perfect law. The Israelites show us how quickly we as human beings slip away from God and into sin. We must fight hard to not allow that to happen in us.

May 28

Selected verses from Ephesians 3

Today, I want to write about how we can fight to keep from falling away like the Israelites so quickly did. Keep in mind that when they were experiencing the presence of God and either seeing or being aware of His nearness, they were far more faithful and obedient. As they stood at the bottom of Mt. Sinai hearing the thunderous sound of God and seeing the smoke, they were in awe of His might – even to the point of reverential and good fear (Ex. 19:16-18). As I wrote earlier this week, it was in response to an encounter like this that they were willing to submit to all that God was requiring of them within the covenant. So, you might ask yourself, “What happened?”

The answer is clearly, the perceived silence of God and His apparent distance from them. Moses had been gone for nearly forty days, and they had obviously not “experienced” God in any way. As is so often the case with us, their hearts quickly grew cold and their minds rapidly forgetful. What do we do in our own lives to fight the tendency and to build a bulwark around our own hearts to prevent such a travesty from happening to us? I believe God gives us valuable insight into this matter through the apostle Paul.

I think we would all agree that we live in a world in which people quickly lose interest in things, and that which should catch our eye and take our breath away becomes mundane and ordinary far too fast. How could they forget all that God had done? Consider this fact: they woke up that morning and ate the manna, the bread provided by God from heaven for them, and used the energy and strength it gave them to indulge themselves in idol worship as they sought another god in His place. It hurts my heart to think of this offense against God. They literally lost interest in God. Could this happen to us? I sadly believe it could and it does.

Paul wrote these words to the Ephesians: “When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ...this grace was given to me, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ...so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth...that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:4-19). Dear ones, please go pick up your Bibles and read that entire section of Scripture. Before you do, ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and help you understand what you are reading.

My point to consider today is that the means that God has given us to keep us from falling into sin like the Israelites did in Exodus 32 is His Word. Remember that when they could see or feel His nearness, they did better. I think the same is true for us. When we are walking with God intimately through Bible reading and study, the Holy Spirit helps us to see His glory and to remain enamored with Him. He can remain our first love and the reason we live. Our relationship need not grow old or stale, which would make sinning so much easier. Pursue Him dear one through Bible reading and ask Him to help you keep a fresh vision of Him through the encounters you consistently have with Him on the pages of Scripture as you read and pray.

May 29

John 20:29-31

One of the great challenges to our walking faithfully with the Lord is that we don't "see" Him. I mean that in a literal sense. We don't have the privilege of walking the streets by His side and witnessing the miracles or hearing the captivating teaching from His very lips. Are we at a disadvantage and do we have a good excuse for half-hearted and inconsistent faithfulness to our Lord? You know I am going to say, "Absolutely NOT!"

The question that I pose today is simply this: How do we see the glory of God and believe in our day? First of all, I think it is important to remember what John wrote concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit to believers after the ascension of Christ back to heaven. Jesus told His disciples that the Spirit would, "...teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). He also said, "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak...He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13-14). This was to assist the disciples in their efforts to put into words all that they had seen and witnessed when they walked with Him.

The disciple's writing, and our reading what they wrote, is a major means by which God reveals Himself to us today. John also wrote these words, "Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen Me and yet have believed" (John 20:29). We can surmise from this statement that belief will come to us by hearing the Word, seeing His glory in it, and believing that it is true. Note that just 2 verses later in John 20 he wrote, "...but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). I hope by now you see the value and necessity of reading your Bible.

So, we can sum it up like this - Eternal life comes by believing in Jesus Christ. Believing comes by reading what has been written in the Scriptures because reading what the Holy Spirit has inspired the writers to write is a window for seeing the glory of the Lord Jesus. Again, remember what John wrote in 16:14 - "When the Spirit comes, He will glorify Me." John makes it even clearer in his first epistle. In 1 John 1 he writes, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands...we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us..." (1 John 1:1-4).

They were taking what they had seen, heard, touched, and personally experienced and turned it into the message to be proclaimed to the world. His point is that through their writings and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we today can come to see the glory of God. Now, why am I writing about this? Because my friend, in order for you and me not to fall into the sins of Exodus 32, we must keep our eyes on His glory as that aids us in treasuring Him beyond the things of this world.

May 30

Psalm 86:11, 119:36

I chose only one verse from the 119th Psalm today but honestly, it would do you well to read verses 33-40. This heartfelt Psalm is actually a prayer that God would shape and control his heart. He longs for God to teach him (v. 33), to give him understanding (v. 34), to lead him (v. 35), and to turn his eyes from worthless things (v. 37). All of this is to be accomplished in part by God turning or “inclining” the writer’s heart unto Himself. In the 36th verse he prays, “Incline my heart to Your testimonies (God’s Word), and not to selfish gain.” Dear one, the psalmist knows that it is God who turns a man’s heart and his plea is that He would cause him to love His Word more than the things of this world.

We can be encouraged today that God is willing to answer this prayer. In Ezekiel 36 it is written, “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you...And I will put My Spirit within you, and **cause** you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Ezek. 36:26-27). This is exactly what the psalmist was praying for. It was God’s plan all along to operate this way amongst His children. So, pray church family that God would incline your heart to Him and His ways. Do not make the mistake of thinking that you can handle this on your own or that you have the ability in your own strength to maintain a life of consistent and wholehearted devotion to the Lord.

In the 86th Psalm, David writes, “Teach me Your ways, O Lord, that I may walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name” (v. 11). David is asking God to cause his heart to be totally set on God. Friend, the temptations and challenges to your devotion and pursuits are intense in this world. In Exodus 32, the Israelites didn’t quit worshipping, they simply changed the object of their worship. I am afraid that for many in our society today, the allurements of this world are so subtle and normalized in our society that many don’t even realize their hearts are being united to passions and desires far from God. What have you united your heart to dear friend?

For those of you reading or listening to this “point to ponder” today, I want you to take a serious look at your day-to-day activities and determine what is controlling you and what seems to be your focus. If in your heart you know you are not where you should be with God, then pray the prayer of these psalms today. Friend, this is no simple thing and in many ways your life, your salvation, and the eternal well-being of your family are at stake. You don’t wake up one day and decide to drift away from God. It happens slowly over a period of time. What is your heart united to? Have you asked God to incline your heart to His Word? You can’t do it on your own so turn to Him for the help you so desperately want and need.

May 31

Jonah 3:1-3

It is likely that most of us are familiar with the story of Jonah. It is not often that you here of a man swallowed by a great big fish who lived to tell the story. I suppose the closest we can get is the fictional story of Pinocchio. The story of Jonah is not to be read as an allegory or fictional story in my opinion. I believe he was a real man who at first disobeyed God and experienced the miraculous attention getter or spending 3 days in the belly of the great fish. Today I want to focus on a part of the story that may be easily overlooked and relates well to a truth we find in Exodus 32 and the chapters that followed.

In the book of Jonah, we learn that after Jonah repented and the Lord caused the fish to vomit him up on the shore, the word of the Lord came to him a second time (Jonah 3:1). What I want you to ponder today is the fact that after all of the disobedience, punishment, confession, repentance, and restoration, God's word came to Jonah again. The message and assignment that God had for Jonah was exactly the same as before. You see, what God required of him was good, necessary, and God's will. There was nothing that God needed to or was willing to change in His perfect plan for Jonah and the Ninevites. Verse 2 and following repeat the same message as before with the only difference being this time Jonah obeyed.

I find the same truth in the events of the book of Exodus. The golden calf idolatry was committed and the people were punished; some even to death. There are events recorded in chapters 33-34 detailing all that transpired in response to their sin. When Moses had received the Ten Commandments from God the second time and His expectations repeated, Moses stood before the people again in chapter 35. There we find the same message communicated to the people. God does not change and His message and requirements don't either. We can either obey the first time or disobey, experience chastisement, and come back to where we should have obeyed the first time.

What I am attempting to communicate to you today is that when God mediates in our lives, it is to bring us back to where we were supposed to be. In other words, He doesn't wink at our sin or ignore it and allow us to simply pick back up and go forward as if nothing ever happened. No dear one! If we have sinned and strayed from obedience, His intervention or chastisement is to bring us back to the same path and point that we were meant to be according to His will.

Now, keep in mind that the path that God is "motivating" us to walk is a path of joy. It is a path of blessing and favor. It is a path on which we will experience His presence and see His glory on a regular basis. For God to allow us to walk any other path than what He knows is best would be the equivalent of God loving us less. Be glad that He loves us enough to discipline and to mediate for His own.