



2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: May 4th - 10th

Sermon: May 3rd



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
building community ◊ equipping believers ◊ serving Jesus

May 4

Romans 10:17

I write this week's devotions with a unique sense of anticipation as we look forward to Sunday. Lord willing, our brother Glenn Chappell will have preached yesterday. Glenn's life and friendship have been a great encouragement to me personally and a profound blessing in our church. When we finalized a plan for my surgery, one of the first people to reach out to offer assistance was Glenn. I'm not sure that he had preaching in mind, but I am so grateful for his willingness to step in to assist Pastor Robert (who is bearing the brunt of my injury I'm afraid). Glenn's life and ministry have been both faithful and fruitful at Smyrna and I'm thankful that he had opportunity to minister to the entire congregation yesterday.

My goal in these devotions is to rehash some of the main truths that Glenn presented to you. I will be retracing his three main points (which coincided with the location of the blood on the priest's body for their consecration) beginning with the symbolic significance of the blood on the ear. If you recall, Glenn taught us that this was meant to illustrate the significance of hearing the Word of God.

Hearing God's Word is undeniably important. In fact, today's text reminds us that it is imperative for those who are saved. Paul shares with his readers that believers are saved through hearing the Word of Christ. Now, the Apostle is not claiming that the Bible is the "Savior", instead he is teaching us that we learn about the Savior's work in one exclusive place. There is one precious book that has recorded for us the works of God, in Christ, to save us and that is Scripture.

The Bible is the microphone through which God proclaims His message of salvation to a lost and dying world. Therefore, we should be obliged to listen intently to what God has revealed to us and proclaim faithfully the truth to those who need to know Jesus. The truth of salvation through hearing the Word makes plain one motivation and explanation for making preaching central to our gathering every Sunday. We believe that Christ saves as His Word is faithfully taught and subsequently heard.

Have you heard and received the good news of salvation today? If not, there is no reason to proceed further. No one comes to the Father except through Christ (John 14:6) and no one comes to Christ except through His Gospel (Romans 1:16) and no place accurately records His Gospel except His Word.

I pray that you listen intently when the Word is taught, that you praise the Lord daily that you were given the privilege to hear about Christ and that you take your commission to tell others about Him seriously leading you to study so that you can share the biblical truth accurately and freely with those around you.

May 5

Matthew 17:5

The Word of God is the means that God uses to bring people from darkness to light. God saves His children through the faithful proclamation of the Gospel of Christ as recorded in Scripture, but the significance of the Bible does not end with our salvation. Today's text shows us that God is intent on His disciples continuing to hear His Words and walk in accordance with the commands and admonitions that are given.

Our passage for today constitutes part of a well-known and miraculous biblical story. The transfiguration is one of the most awe-inspiring stories in all the Bible. You'll recall that a very select group (Peter, James and John) were invited by Christ to follow Him up a "high mountain" (v. 1) for communion. When they arrive, the Scripture says that Jesus was transfigured such that His glory was more fully revealed as His face shone "like the sun" (v. 2). After Jesus was glorified, God the Father speaks, telling the disciples to listen to His Word.

The term "listen" or "hear" (depending on your translation) is a very important, and indeed forceful, command. The tense of the original word is in the active imperative. All this means is that God intended for the disciples to actively heed the Words of God and that intention was not a suggestion, it was imperative!

God's Word should not be categorized as "wise advice". His instructions are not one potential source of wisdom, instead they are the authoritative and binding words of our Sovereign Lord. Therefore, the Father's command to listen to the Son are to be understood as non-negotiable. I realize this seems basic and, in theory, it is! Nevertheless, there are many who behave as if this is simply not the case.

Christian, are you faithfully and fully listening to Christ? Do you hear Him when He instructs you to do something you don't want to do? Are you listening to Him when His commands cost you or create challenges in your lives? It seems to me that many people who call themselves Christians are far better at listening to the world, their own premonitions or the advice of beloved confidants over and against the Words of Christ but this is a mistake!

Like the priests of Exodus 29, our job is to consecrate ourselves and that consecration includes a promise to hear God's Word entirely. There are going to be parts that don't make sense you in the moment. Sometimes God's instructions contradict our sensibilities but our sensibilities are not God because God is God! Folks, the Lord has spoken. He has given us truths to ingest and implement and now we must walk in those paths. It is imperative that we actively do so and this is exactly what the Father expressed to Peter, James and John centuries ago.

May 6

James 1:22-25

Hearing is a necessary step in our Christian walk. In fact, if we don't hear the Word of God we have no hope of progressing at all in our relationship with Him. It is a farce to think that we can live without reference to the Lord's revelation and cultivate any relationship with Him at the same time. Hearing is absolutely crucial to our spiritual health but it is not exclusive. In fact, James warns us that there is a category of man who is "deceived" precisely because he hears the truth but he does not walk in the truth. In other words, you can be a hearer of the Word of God all the while neglecting to be a "doer" of the Word.

The consequences of hearing but not doing are profoundly dangerous and tragic. James articulates the risk succinctly saying that those who hear and don't do are "deceived". The deception comes from the fact that those who hear the Word fool themselves into thinking that this is enough. Hearers of the Word can be dedicated to Bible study. They can listen to many sermons and read good books that teach the Word but these things alone prove nothing. If we hear the Word of God and it does not influence our lifestyle, then we have not been regenerated by its power and, therefore, we are deceived.

What does this look like in practice? Well, the most deceived people (in my estimation) are those who hear the truths of God, agree with them in principle and yet live as if they are not true. For instance, they hear that Christ is Lord of all, that He claims authority to direct them and yet they live with an entirely different set of priorities that they, themselves, have formulated. It looks like people who claim to believe that God is holy and righteous and yet live in ways that He describes as wicked. It looks like Christians who never share their faith and, therefore, ignore Christ's commands as given in the Great Commission.

There is a dangerous ground here whereby we can be Christians "in theory" but no in actuality and the more religiously saturated the culture, the more at risk we are! I remember reading an article written by a pastor in a Muslim country. He stated that their process for screening people who came forward for baptism was much less involved than the steps he instituted in a church he pastored in the states. Why? Because coming forward for baptism in that country meant risking your life which means that no one was motivated to be baptized for performative reasons alone! Conversely, when we live in a world where it is typical to "be a Christian" it can be very easy for us to assume that we are following the Lord because we are familiar with what He has said and surrounded by those who claim Him as well. This being the case, it is incumbent upon us that we honestly and fully evaluate our lives to see the fruit of our faith in obedient living. Dear folks, don't be deceived, the Christian life is one of constant obedience in deference to the instructions of God!

May 7

John 14:5

This won't surprise you but I believe everything that I wrote yesterday! James's warning is a warning and this means we would be wise to heed it as such. Accordingly, we should be warned that there are real consequences for those who are deceived. Nevertheless, this motivation should not be primary for the Christian. After all, a follower of Christ is someone who has been saved from their sins. Their hearts have been regenerated and this means that their loves have been transformed.

Whereas we used to be enemies of God, we are now His children, adopted in His family and, therefore, beloved by Him and this love has an effect on us! John tells us that we love because He first loved us. That is true and it is also the case that everyone who has experienced His love in salvation will love Him as well and that is the primary motivation behind our obedience.

Think about it this way, when you love someone, don't you desire to see their good? The things that I love are important to me, so much so that I will do whatever I can to serve them and honor them. In the same way, when we love Christ, we honor Christ. How do we honor Him? By keeping His commandments.

Notice that Jesus connects two things that we often attempt to separate. There is no gap between love and obedience. Stated differently, there is no conflict between the law of Christ and the Gospel. The law has a function in bringing us to salvation but it also has a function in guiding us after we are saved. The law is intended to guide us to holiness which renders blessing and intimacy with God. Accordingly, the law is good! Additionally, obedience to the law constitutes a great piece of evidence that we have in fact been saved.

Do you love Christ today? If so, what evidence is there? Many would point to their emotions or a one time confession. These things can be good! We should have emotion when we think about what Christ has done for us and we should confess Him as Lord. nevertheless, it is possible to confess Him while He doesn't know us (see Matthew 7) and it is possible to be upset without being changed. The real ground of our evidence for salvation lies in our walk with Jesus. Remember, Paul told us that we were saved for the purpose of carrying out good deeds (Ephesians 2:10), James reminds us that we must be "doers" of the Word and now, Jesus tells us that this is because those who are doers of the Word are the ones who truly love Him. Do you love Christ today? If so, your life will show it!

May 8

Psalm 119:56

I read an article years ago about the economics of owning a gym. An owner of a large chain of gyms (think Gold's or Planet Fitness) said that over half of their revenue comes in the first two months! Why is this? Because people make resolutions on January 1 but very few make their resolutions an abiding practice.

Today's verse reminds us that obedience to the Lord is like pursuing physical fitness at a gym. Unless our obedience is a practice, it will achieve very little. The term "practice" here means ongoing discipline. It denotes someone who regularly obeys the Lord. The Psalmist does not celebrate the man or woman who decides to honor the Lord once a quarter or when things get tough. Instead, the Psalmist calls attention to the fact that following the Lord is an ongoing, enduring quality.

Is obedience your practice? If someone were to observe your life, would they see a regular habit of following God's instructions? Is it your practice to honor God with your finances, words, time, and the like? Would an observer see in you someone who takes the truths of God and applies them to your life with regularity? Would they see a man or woman who makes a practice of reading the Word, praying, spending time meditating on Scripture and serving the Lord's people? Would they see a practice of patience and kindness and gentleness?

It strikes me that many people treat their relationship with the Lord like they treat their relationship to the gym. They want to lean in for a few days and see monstrous results! This isn't how it typically works dear friends. You don't achieve physical fitness with one workout and you don't see blessing (typically speaking) from one single day of obedience. Instead, the constant habit of working out your body leads to visible changes and the constant practice of heeding God's instructions leads to spiritual fruit.

Are you discouraged today? If so, I would remind you that it is your responsibility to make obedience to the Word your practice and it is God's decision how to bless you. It may be that He is not going to give you the desires of your heart but I can tell you that He will reward you in ways you can't even fathom. I have yet to meet a Christian who mourned over their obedience to the Word but I have met many who have seen the blessing and glory that results from a daily, habitual practice of faithfulness to Him.

May 9

1 Peter 2:9

I want to spend the final two devotions talking about the order of obedience and one of its intended effects. Today, let us consider the sequence of consecration. False religion teaches us that we earn salvation (in numerous ways based on the particular religion in view). This idea states that we become holy through our efforts. Biblical Christianity states that this is nonsense. We cannot make ourselves holy, instead the Lord makes us holy (in regeneration) and then we walk in the new life that He has given in a manner that is pleasing to Him and righteous in its essence.

The effect of our faithfulness is not self-serving, instead the intended impact is God's glory in our obedience. Peter reminds us that we have been called out of darkness for the purpose of proclaiming the "excellencies" of the One who has transferred us from darkness to light. In other words, God saves us first and then commissions us to live holy lives so that the world can see how glorious and powerful and gracious He is towards sinners.

We are not to earn our salvation! in fact, if you read the admonition of James (for instance) and walk away thinking "the Bible is telling me to try harder", you have missed the biblical teaching that you cannot try hard enough! James is not writing to lost men who are attempting to climb the proverbial ladder to heaven, he is writing to believers who have already been saved by grace alone through faith alone and this colors and informs his instructions. You will not understand James' writing at all if you think he is writing to the unredeemed, you will benefit greatly once you recognize that he is simply calling men and women to walk in their God-given identity which was graciously bestowed upon us all at conversion.

In this respect, holiness is the outward declaration of an inward reality. Peter's words make sense only in this light. He is reminding the reader that we are (note the present indicative, we exist in this way) a holy priesthood. He is not saying we "should be" a holy priesthood or that we "could be" a holy priesthood he is saying that our identity is one of holiness! Our job is simply to walk in the life that God has given us by utilizing the vigor that comes through His gift of life to obey Him.

If you are a believer today, you are holy (positionally before God) and this means that your job is to live in accordance with your condition. You have the ability to "put to death" what is evil (Colossians 3:5-10 & Romans 8:13) and to strengthen what is good and the result of such action is God's glory as the world observes in us the difference He makes.

May 10

Matthew 5:16

One of the reasons for our consecration is evangelism. This might sound odd at first blush, after all, why would our holiness bring others into the Kingdom? The answer is that our lives are the living testimony of the truth of God's Gospel. When the world sees the light that He shines through our obedience, they are given reason to glorify God in heaven.

Over my years of ministry, I've seen many "evangelistic" programs and strategies come and go. Our convention of churches is famous for its slogans and initiatives. While I do not wish to disparage anyone who has spent time developing these resources (I'm sure with good intention), I would like to call attention to the fact that there continues to be a "need" to develop more which more than suggests that the issue is not the tools we are using! The simple truth is that churches grow when their people obey the Lord.

This obedience includes simple evangelism. We are commanded by Christ to share our faith (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:8) and this command was given before "Each one Reach one" was on anyone's radar as a program. If you are a Christian today, your responsibility before God is to share the truth of the Gospel believing that faith comes by hearing His Word (recall our devotion from Monday?).

Evangelism is important but growth is the product of something else as well. In fact, I would argue that evangelism is either supplemented or destroyed by our level of holiness. Jesus' thoughts here seem to confirm my assumption as He reminds us that the world will glorify God in heaven when our lights shine.

What does it mean for our light to shine? I believe the answer is relatively simple, our lights shine when our lives reflect the refulgence of the glory of God. Stated differently, we shine our lights when we are holy. It is a holy life combined with a clear Gospel presentation that yields fruit precisely because a holy life is so inexplicable that the Gospel can be the only explanation! When people see a truly holy people, they realize that they are observing something supernatural. As much as the world talks about morals and standards of conduct, our society is proof that no one can naturally keep their own standards (much less the law of God!). When a people materialize that live honest, transparent and faithful lives, the result is majestic.

This means that consecration is about more than our personal standing before the Lord. Consecration is ultimately about the glory of God as we are set apart as a testimony of His power to change us. Are you changed today? If so, glorify God and look for ways to encourage others to glorify Him by virtue of His work in you as well.