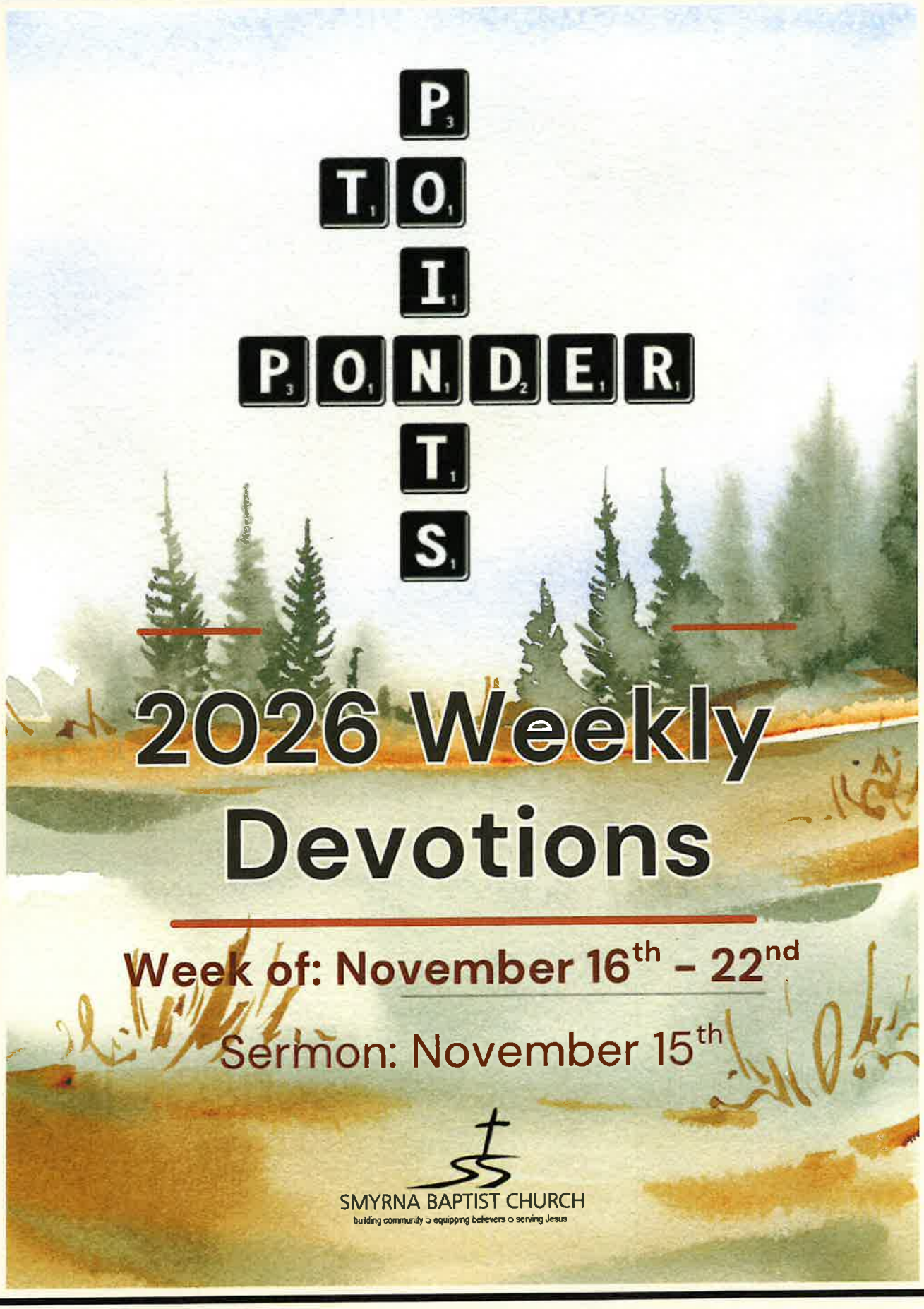


2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: November 16th – 22nd

Sermon: November 15th

SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH

building community ○ equipping believers ○ serving Jesus

November 16

Romans 5:9

Our text for Sunday was Titus 3:4-8. In verse 5 of that text, we are told that He (God our Savior) saved us. A good question to ask is, "From what did He save us?" I always ask that question to those who want to talk to me about being baptized and wanting to be "saved." From what I ask, they will typically respond with answers such as, "My sin, the devil, from my normal way of living", and so on. I do not judge them harshly for those answers of course, but they aren't really correct. I assume you would agree with me that it is important to know what you are being saved from.

The phrase itself implies that there is a real danger that is threatening you and left in that situation, it doesn't end well for you; thus, the request to be saved! Someone once said that getting people saved isn't the hard part, it's getting them lost. In other words, getting them to the point where they recognize they are lost and in real danger of eternal punishment. So, what is God our Savior actually saving us from?

When you consider the answer to that question, you must understand who we have offended with our sin, who created the Law under which we live until Christ, and who set the demands of the Law and the punishment for breaking it. I think if you think it through, you will see that the answer to all the above questions is God Himself. Our sins are not against Satan. Satan did not get to determine the punishment for sin, and we certainly don't need to be concerned with appeasing him or satisfying his demands. He is like a roaring lion seeking those whom he can devour, but he is on a leash that God controls completely. He is allowed to go as far as the Lord allows and no more. He is not the one whom you need to fear or satisfy.

Romans 5:9 says it as plainly as any place you will find in Scripture. It says, "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God." Dear ones, it is the wrath of God that you must be saved from. You must maintain a biblical view of God. If you do not, you will get unbalanced in your understanding and lean too far one way or the other leading to an incomplete and insufficient view of our good and kind heavenly Father. He is loving but He is also just. He is just in His wrathfulness aimed at humans who remain in their sin.

We can learn from Titus 3:4-8 that we are unclean people who need the "washing of regeneration" (v.5). We are guilty people who need to be justified (v.7a), and we are people condemned to eternal death who need eternal life (v.7b). All of this is true because of our sin and rebellion against our Creator. People are truly lost and need to be saved from the very hand of the One who has been sinned against and who is the only One who can actually forgive, redeem, and restore. I am so thankful that He is willing to save the very ones who are guilty by His own mercy, grace, goodness, and love for the world (John 3:16).

November 17

Ephesians 2:5-7

Yesterday I wrote about the reality that we must be saved from the wrath of God. I suppose one might surmise that He must be a mean and nasty deity if we must be saved from Him. What kind of a Father is He? I imagine that in most cases, to hear that one must be saved from the one who is supposed to love them so much sounds absurd and sadistic. Is He a hateful, dictatorial tyrant who must be appeased or otherwise will explode in anger and cause us tremendous pain simply because He can? I hope that you already know that is foolishness and not at all who our great God and Savior is. Today, let us take a look at just who He really is.

In Titus 3:4, we are reminded that in the fulness of time, God appeared to save us. We have already seen verbiage like that in Titus 2:11 where it is written, "The grace of God has appeared...". When this God, whom we have offended and from whom we need to be saved appeared, how is He described? Paul writes to Titus that when He appeared, it was "goodness" and "loving kindness" that appeared. That is the ESV translation which is certainly accurate, but I prefer the NASB in this case. It says, "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared...". God is described as kind and benevolent towards mankind. That means that He loves humanity and has our very best interest at heart.

Consider today dear ones that long before He, the Lord Jesus, ever arrived incarnationally in Bethlehem, God was already kind, good, and loving towards us. He is not malevolent, hateful, or sinister in any way. Yes, He is just but that has nothing to do with evil, unfair, cruel, or the like. Don't forget to go back to Titus 3:3 to keep in the forefront of your mind the real condition of our human hearts before conversion. This is the type of person that God is dealing with when we remain in our sin. Paul wrote in Romans 5:8, "but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." At no point did any of us deserve mercy and forgiveness. None of us were worth the price of the body and blood of Christ paid for our redemption. God came to save wretched people like us, and He came with kindness and love for us from the start. This is the God whom we are called to love and serve.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians these incredible words, "...so that in the coming age he might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7). This means it will take all of eternity, including our lifetime here on earth, to show the depth of His kindness toward us demonstrated in the grace bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus. It is the kindness of God and His love for humans from which flows His incredible plan of redemption by grace and not our works of righteousness. Please meditate on this today and stand amazed by the nature of the God who was, who is, and who will always be.

November 18

Romans 2:4-5

One of the reasons it can be hard to preach an entire sermon in a set window of time is because there is so much to say. I find that when I talk about one aspect of God, salvation, or other doctrinal issues, it creates the need for answering other questions and making sure there is balance in the conclusions we draw and the convictions we ultimately hold. For example, yesterday I wrote about the kindness of God which is absolutely amazing and completely true. The pastoral task that is often challenging is to make sure you don't focus solely on His kindness and fail to see other equally important and necessary attributes of His character too.

Paul wrote these words in the book of Romans, "Or do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed" (Rom. 2:4-5). Friend, it is extremely important that you don't misunderstand God's kindness and presume upon it. This means to intentionally make decisions that you know aren't pleasing to God or that are against His will with a confident expectation that He will automatically forgive you later, without true sorrow or repentance. Paul says we must not presume on the riches of His kindness.

So, you see dear friends, when Christ appeared He did so with kindness in His heart and love for humanity, but we must never take that for granted or act like His goodness towards us is automatic and requires nothing of us. When a person does indeed presume upon God's good characteristics, he is actually piling up God's wrath against himself. You see, the Bible tells us here that God's patience and kindness are intended to lead us to repentance not to apathy or laziness in our pursuit of holiness and need to walk in a manner worthy of our calling as children of the Most High God. Grace, mercy, kindness, and patience are not means by which we can get away with sinning. They are means by which God grants us time to realize the error of our ways, to confess, to repent of our sins, and to put on holiness as we present ourselves to Him as instruments of righteousness.

So, when we think of balance and maintaining a proper and more complete view of the whole nature of God, to the best of our finite abilities, we must understand that His kindness does not rule out His judgment. For example, in Ephesians 2:3 it says, "...we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." Paul is referring to our former lives as unregenerate sinners who were objects of God's wrath not His kindness. He definitely wants to be kind towards mankind and will be through Christ toward those who love, trust, and obey Him as God and Savior. So, yes God is love but He is just as well and He alone determines what and who warrants, by their own actions, one or the other.

November 19

1 Timothy 1:15

A couple of days ago we talked about *why* we needed to be saved and from what or whom we needed to be saved. Today I want to spend our time focused on *how* we got saved. It is good to know from what or whom we needed to be saved, but it is equally important to know how it happened. I think if we consider how we got saved, it should lead to greater worship of the One who saved us in the manner in which He did it. Join me as we ponder how He did it.

One of the most humbling realities about how God saved us is provided for us in Titus 3:5. It says there that it was not because of works done by us in righteousness. This is followed by the great declaration that it was done according to His own mercy. Paul writes further that it was accomplished by the "washing of regeneration" and "renewal of the Holy Spirit." We learn in our passage that He poured the Holy Spirit out on us through Jesus Christ who is our Savior. As a result of this He was able to declare us justified by His grace and brought into His family as heirs who are filled with the hope of eternal life. I must say that meditating on these truths adds a ton of weight and glory to the statement, "I got saved."

Brother or sister, it would make a world of difference in your devotion to the Lord if you would think deeply and often about what actually happened when His goodness and loving kindness appeared in Jesus Christ to save you. I hope you will determine that salvation was all of God and He alone deserves every bit of the credit and glory for our salvation. There is truly no room to boast in our being saved except in Christ and His cross (Galatians 6:14). We must see the negation of works and the exaltation of mercy in this incredible passage of God's Word. Unpack, dear ones, what it means to be saved.

Did you know that the Bible says Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15)? He came to accomplish the task of saving you and me and Paul describes how He did it in our passage from Sunday. God doesn't waste words so obviously He wants us to know these things and to marvel at them. Ponder today what the words mean that Paul used here. He used words like mercy, washing, and renewal. Let those words point you to the truth behind them.

I once heard John Piper talking about how words point us to truths like our fingers point at the Grand Canyon. If we only stare at the finger but fail to look at what it is pointing to, we will miss the beauty and wonder of what God has done or what He is saying. It is significant that the first thing he writes after saying that God saved us is, "**Not** according to or by works done by us." Even works of righteousness on our part did not get the job done. It was all mercy on His behalf that did. This must be huge in the eyes of God. It must matter greatly that we get this right. God's plan of redemption is meant to point us to Jesus not to self. This passage from Titus 3 does that as well. Read it, see it, and take it all in!

November 20

John 3:3-8; Ephesians 2:10

Today we will focus on regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Note that regeneration is a big word that simply means born again. You see the prefix re- and then the word generation and I think you will find it easy to see being born again is the focus here. A familiar verse to many of us is Ephesians 2:10 where we learn that we are God's own workmanship *created* for good works. This word here for created carries with it the same idea of being regenerated or born again. We have been re-created by Jesus Christ for the purpose of bringing glory to God through our good deeds. It was God who took the initiative to create us as new beings.

Of course, you can see the same emphasis in Galatians 4:29 where Paul is referring to Isaac having been born by the Spirit and not by human agency at all. He says at the end of that verse that we have been born again by the Spirit in like fashion. By that he means not by our own efforts like Ishmael was born but solely and completely by the mercy of God. Undoubtedly, the clearest teaching on this matter is from Jesus Christ Himself in John 3. There He says to Nicodemus one night these famous words, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Jesus goes on to say in verse 6 that it is the Spirit who accomplishes this miracle. We cannot cause it and we do not manage this gift that is from God.

Now this is very important to rightly understand our doctrinal conviction that baptism is not necessary for salvation. When we say we add nothing to the finished work of Christ on the cross, we mean nothing and that includes the ordinance of baptism. We believe that all believers should be baptized as a means to identify publicly with the body of Christ, the church, and as an expression of our faith, but it is not a means of salvation. Ezekiel 36:25 provides a clear example of one reason that I believe this to be biblically accurate.

It says, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you." Surely, we understand that you cannot wash idolatry off with water. This is a picture of what the Holy Spirit accomplishes when He comes upon one who is being saved by God. We all understand water to be a cleansing agent and is in the above-mentioned verse a metaphor that represents spiritual cleansing from all uncleanness. This verse is followed by the more well-known verse where God says He will give a person a new heart and a new spirit (v.26). You can see the connection with what Paul is writing in Titus 3. There is a new Spirit and a cleansing that takes place because of it.

In Titus 3 where he writes that we have been saved or born again by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, I want you to know this is Ezekiel 36 talk! You must not miss that the regeneration comes first and causes the washing in Titus 3:5. Paul says it is the washing ***of*** regeneration. It is a result of a new heart given to us by God and the renewal is ***of*** the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes before the renewal.

November 21

Acts 2:33; Hebrews 1:3

I am sure that when you stop and think about it, you will rejoice as I do that when the Bible talks about our being washed, that it is not talking about dirt being washed away but sin. I can jump in the shower and get dirt off. I need the Lord Jesus to remove and wash away my sin. I am guilty before God not because I got dirty working in the garden, but because I have broken His laws and sinned against Him. Look at Hebrews 1:3 and you will find that the work of Christ was to purify us from sin which is what Paul means when he uses the word "washing" in Titus 3:5. Our sin is being removed as a result of the regeneration that happens in our hearts when we are made new by the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Now, the reason I say *being* removed is because even though we know that the moment we are regenerated is a decisive and once for all reality, we also know that sanctification is an ongoing process. We are consistently being purified in our flesh as we walk with Christ. 1 Corinthians 5:7 reminds us that we must continue to work at removing sin from our lives because we truly are "unleavened" dough. It is a reality that is true in the heavenlies and being worked out in real space and time while we are here on earth. The penalty of sin is gone but the presence remains, and we must fight against it so that it doesn't cause unnecessary heartache and damage in our lives.

The renewal that takes place by the Holy Spirit is also an important and decisive work that is one and done. It is written in 2 Corinthians 5:17 these words, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." At the same time, we are admonished in Ephesians 4:22 to "to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires...". Once again, you see what we often refer to as the "already not yet" tension that is the reality of the Christian life. What Paul is doing in Ephesians 4 is to remind us that we are not the old person that we once were but that we must continue to be renewed in the spirit of our minds to take hold consistently of that which is true about us as new creations. The new self really does exist in us once we are renewed and regenerated (v.24).

I want you to see that Titus 3:4-8 says that the Holy Spirit has been poured out richly into our lives by Jesus Christ. This reminds me of what Luke wrote in Acts 2:33 where it says, "Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing." Jesus poured out the Spirit and the Spirit then renews us. I want you to see an amazing ministry of the Holy Spirit as He now pours into our lives too.

Romans 5:5 says that the Holy Spirit pours into our lives the love of God. It also states that He, the Holy Spirit, was given to us. Dear ones, I hope that you understand and are experiencing the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit as He causes us to experience the love of God and to rejoice in it. When this happens, the hold that sin has on your life is broken and it becomes easier to obey our Lord because we genuinely feel His love.

November 22

Galatians 4:4-7

Today as we end another week of "Points to Ponder," I want to focus on Titus 3:7. As I do, I want to take the opportunity once again to remind you that we have been justified, which means declared righteous by God, because of His grace. It is so often written in the Bible that we are not saved by our works because it seems to be an ongoing battle that we fight against the heresy that says we can work our way into a right standing with God. All the glory and the credit are His and His alone. We have no room to boast and no claim to stake that we merited His grace and deserved salvation in any way.

To make this perfectly clear, God provided through Paul this verse from Romans 3:24, "...and are justified by His grace **as a gift**." This was a result of the redemption provided for us in Christ Jesus (v.25). Note too that in Romans 4:5 we are told that it is not the one who works but the one who believes, or exercises faith, that will be justified. I wanted you also to see that it is the ungodly who are justified in this way. I simply want you to see that no one gets right prior to God, by grace, doing the necessary work to save them. It is once the regeneration and renewal take place that the born again person begins to live for God's glory and begins to "put off" and "put on" (Eph. 4:22-24) in accordance with God's will and ways.

What a wonderful reality as we continue reading in Titus 3:7 that because of our being justified by His grace, we are then able to become heirs or children of God. Galatians 4:5 says that redemption must take place before adoption can. Paul wrote it this way, "God sent forth His Son...to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." Redemption is what makes adoption possible and our adoption is what makes us heirs of God. Read Galatians 4:7. It says, "So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." This is incredible!

Verse 7 ends with this phrase, "according to the hope of eternal life." Many passages like Isaiah 11:7-9 and Revelation 21:1-4 exist that cause us to wonder about the beauty of heaven. It is described in terms that are other worldly and create in us a sense of awe, anticipation, and hope. Jesus said that eternal life is to "know" Him (John 17:3). He also said that it is the person who hears and believes His word that has eternal life. He said to Martha that the one who believes in Him, though his body die, that person shall live on. Eternal life is a promise from God and is a reason for us to have hope even in death. We can know and believe with great hope that God desires to make known to us the path of life and in His presence, we will find fullness of joy (Ps. 16:11). When it is all said and done, we can reflect today and marvel at the reality of our salvation. He did the work necessary to provide for us eternal life. In that, we should live our lives with great hope about the future He has secured and holds for us.