



# 2025 Weekly Devotions

**Week of: November 24<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup>**

**Sermon: November 23<sup>rd</sup>**



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH  
building community ◦ equipping believers ◦ serving Jesus



November 24

**Hebrews 3:15**

Today's devotion is admittedly simple, but I pray that it constitutes a reminder about the danger of a hardened heart. Exodus 10 begins by reiterating the fact that Pharaoh's heart was hardened. The result of his stubbornness is clear to those who are around him including his servants who, in their exasperated state, ask "Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?"

It is interesting to speculate as to whether this was intended to be a rhetorical question. Clearly, Egypt was ruined at this point. The livestock were gone, the fields were empty, and the people were hurting. It was impossible to miss the devastation that had come as a product of Pharaoh's unwilling heart and yet the foolish ruler was still unwilling to relent!

I would surmise that it is easy for the reader to connect these dots. Clearly, Pharaoh's sinfulness had an impact on both his own family as well as numerous others who had no say in his decisions. Stated differently, Pharaoh's hard heart yielded heartache for many around him.

This truth is not isolated, instead it is a principle. The sin that a man commits because of a cold or hardened heart has implications for many others around us. Adam's sin didn't just impact his own life or the lives of his immediate family; his rebellion has caused every grief. Achan's sin yielded death for himself and his family. Lot's decision to move his family into the sinful culture of Sodom and Gomorrah resulted in the harm of his entire family and the same phenomenon is true today.

Your "hidden" transgressions or "personal" sins are not going to remain isolated in their effects! The decision to ignore God's counsel and dabble with substances or unbiblical relationships or besetting sins will always have a greater impact than you know. When Pharaoh decided not to let the people go, the families of Egypt suffered financial ruin, health concerns, terror and even the death of their children!

Folks, sin has grave consequences, and this fact provides yet another reason to repent! If you are struggling today to be faithful, think about those you love. Do you really desire for your beloved spouse or your children or grandchildren or friends to suffer the consequences of your action? Do you want to bring calamity upon those you love? If your hard heart won't be softened by self-preservation, perhaps you should consider the predictable harm that will befall those around you!

As you ponder the words of Hebrews 3:15 today, be reminded that one reason why you should not harden your heart is the wellbeing of those around you. Dear brother or sister, your life will have great impact on those around you, will it be for the good or will your hard heart provide grief for yourself and your loved ones? If this resonates with you today, let me repeat the admonition of Hebrews, "don't harden your hearts" like Pharaoh did.

November 25

### Exodus 9:16

Why did God treat Pharaoh so harshly? Have you asked this question before? I would surmise that most of us are a bit uncomfortable when we read verses like Exodus 10:1 which says, "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Go in to Pharaoh for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants...'" This doesn't sound very fair! Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart?

The answer is that there is a greater good and purpose behind God's actions than pure vengeance. While I do not think it wise to neglect the fact that the Bible also tells us that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 7:13; 8:15), we also must reckon with the fact that God was active in the process of raising up Pharaoh for destruction (Romans 9:22).

What is God's angle here? The answer is His glory. This is what Exodus 9:16 tells us. God did this so that He would be seen as great in all the world! Now, this might sound a bit selfish and repugnant. Did God really raise up Pharaoh just so people would think more highly of Him? Yes, but that is a simplistic, and undeveloped, view of what is really at play here.

The problem with this kind of thinking is that it only views the circumstance from a limited perspective. The idea that God's glory is ONLY for His own renown is to miss some other realities that come from His being glorified. Here's what I mean... God's glory in the obvious manifestation of His power over Pharaoh results in the good of His chosen people. How? When God is seen as supernaturally powerful and, therefore, unconquerable, His exaltation leads to the joy and peace of His people.

When God is magnified as victorious over a rebellious Pharaoh, His people are able to see Him in His Sovereignty more clearly and, therefore, revel in the joy of knowing that He is for them. Think of it this way, when a child sees his father overcome the resistance of another force, his dad gets the glory, but his child also feels secure! We are led to a deep and abiding peace when we can see that the one we have trusted (whether it be an earthly father or, more meaningfully, our Heavenly Father) is able to prevail against life's greatest foes.

The point then is that God is glorified for multiple reasons. He exalts Himself so that He receives praise but also so that people will run to Him in faith and assurance that He is able, and this explains part of the motivation behind God's actions. If Pharaoh was not raised up, God's people would be robbed of some of the strongest evidence of His might and trustworthiness. However, because they saw the glory of God in overwhelming Pharaoh, they were given further reason to trust and obey God in faith that He is able to do all that He promises.

I suppose the point I am attempting to make today is simple... the more glory God gains through His victory over those who oppose Him, the more reason we have to rest in Him! Is your God big today? If you haven't seen Him as truly in control and victorious, then your rest is not as deep as it can be!

November 26

## **2 Corinthians 3:18**

Yesterday we began to try to connect the truth that God prevailed over Pharaoh for His own glory with the good of His people. At first blush, it may seem as if the raising up of Pharaoh for the purpose of overwhelming him for the sole goal of glory has no implications for God's people. Some might read the sentiment and think that God was just showing off, with no view towards His people or their good.

To be clear, God does declare His glory, and He has every right to seek His fame in the world that He created. Nonetheless, there is a sense in which God's gaining glory in defeating and humbling Pharaoh has major implications of blessing upon His people. Yesterday we saw the first blessing, namely that His overcoming Pharaoh led to the joy and peace of the people who could see His power and faithfulness in overwhelming a formidable opponent.

Today, I want us to see that God's action of bringing glory to Himself also results in the sanctification of His people. This is the point that Paul is making in 2 Corinthians 3. When believers are enabled to see the glory of God, the result is their growth in holiness. Why is this? There are at least two reasons. First, when we see Christ, we are reminded of His holiness and authority which results in our obedience. Admittedly, I do not think this is the main thrust of Paul's writing here, but it bears mentioning that when the glory of God is manifest in the biblical narrative, repentance and holiness result! Isaiah saw the glory of God and confessed his sins and the sins of Israel only to be cleansed by God. Seeing God for who He is produces in us a more intimate knowledge of our own sin and a desire to turn from the ugliness that His glory unveils.

Second, and more to Paul's point here, when we see the glory of God in Christ, we are allowed to see One that is beautiful and majestic, changing our affections. Whereas unbelievers love all kinds of worthless and fleeting things, those who see the glory of God are exposed to treasures and beauties that the world knows not. The result is that as we see more of Him, we want more of Him and as we want more of Him, we follow Him and as we follow Him, we are more and more changed to be like Him.

This means that when God raised up Pharaoh for His glory, He was showing the Israelites that He was a god unlike anything else they had seen. He was showing them both that He was to be feared but also that His presence and favor and relationship was to be coveted and the result was the holiness of His people. God's glory, therefore, results in the people's good because the very act of bringing Himself glory leads to their growth in holiness and forsaking of sin. Obviously, this growth was not linear, but the people of Moses' day were left with far more reason to obey and adore God after He overwhelmed Pharaoh than they had prior!

November 27

**1 Chronicles 16:24**

Today I want to try to add another layer to the ramifications of God gaining glory over a defeated Pharaoh. Yesterday, we discussed the sanctifying effect of seeing God's glory. Today, I want us to consider the evangelistic result of God gaining glory.

The Israelites were given a clear commission in numerous places in the Old Testament, perhaps the most succinct is found in our passage for the day. Their responsibility was to proclaim the glory of the Lord amongst the nations.

Now, what you might immediately recognize in our verse today is that works and glory are connected. In fact, glory comes first in the verse for the day! I would argue that the reason why this order exists is that God's glory is seen in His works. When God defeated Pharaoh and subsequently parted the Red Sea, His glorious identity was more clearly seen by His people.

That being the case, the impact of His glorious triumph was intended for more than a momentary triumph. Instead, the Israelites were to see the victory and the might of our great God and share it with the world and, by God's grace, the Lord has designed us to speak about glory we have seen.

Think about this, we are wired to talk about what amazes us. I still remember the first time we took Analeigh to the zoo. She rode in her stroller in amazement as she looked at some of the majestic animals that were nearby. I recall her absolute shock when we walked across the bridge in the Richmond Zoo that borders the giraffe habitat so closely that the heads of those tall animals were close enough to feed!

The entire ride back to the house was filled with her joyfully and enthusiastically sharing her thoughts about the things she had seen. She was overwhelmed by the incredible sights of majestic animals, and she couldn't stop speaking about it to those who would listen. In the same way, when God reveals Himself, those who see and embrace Him as Lord are given reason to speak.

This means that when Pharaoh was defeated and God was glorified, the Lord was also enabling His people to be more exuberant and committed to their task of making Him known. He was reminding His people that He was unparalleled in His greatness. He was showing His people that they were right to adore Him and He was providing more material for their proclamation to a world that needed to hear about Him. In this way, His triumph over Pharaoh was a further grace to His beloved.

November 28

## **2 Chronicles 20:29**

I have attempted to provide some compelling reasons to believe that God's design to triumph over Pharaoh for His own glory was not for the sole reason of self-exaltation. While it is certainly true that God exists for His glory, that He deserves to be glorified and that we are created for this purpose, it is just as true to say that His being glorified results in the good of those who love Him. Today, I want us to see another reason that His glory leads to the good of His people.

To be clear, 2 Chronicles does not just allude to the triumph of God over Pharaoh. Instead, there were other examples in the history of Israel whereby God intervened to overwhelm an opponent. Nevertheless, Pharaoh's example still reigns as a primary instance of God defeating an insolent opponent in loyalty to His covenant people.

What we should notice is that these moments of victory were helpful to the people long-term. By the time we get to 2 Chronicles, there were numerous stories of God's amazing power to protect Israel, and the result was that the pagans who would otherwise oppose Israel were filled with the fear of their God.

Folks, the Lord's exaltation of Himself should never be underestimated! When God shows up to glorify Himself by succeeding where a circumstance was doomed to fail, the world takes notice, and this helps those who profess Him and follow. Fear fell upon the Philippian jailer when the earthquake rattled the prisoners free, the Philistines' collective hearts melted when David prevailed over Goliath, and even the Gibeonites desired a treaty with Israel because of all they had heard about God's power to defeat any and every one of His enemies. In all these instances, we see that God's glory clearly and directly translates into the people's protection.

Many of you are facing difficult circumstances and real opposition today. Your prayer should be that God would make Himself known to those who oppose you. Why? Well, all Christians should want to see God gain the glory He deserves but there is also the additional benefit of discouraging those who might otherwise oppose you. When the Lord steps into our mess and shows Himself strong, the world has to take notice (even if they can't totally understand who He is) and this means that we enjoy an added measure of protection and blessing. Dear friend, when God shows His glorious power, you and I benefit in numerous ways!

November 29

**Exodus 10:1-2**

I grew up in a story telling family. Our gatherings were almost always consumed with hearing tales of the past. I loved to learn from my grandparents about their life's experiences like memories from World War II or stories from years of ministry or crazy encounters in downtown Atlanta! As a kid, I was always enraptured by testimonies that could take me to places I had never been in order to learn lessons I would have otherwise not have learned.

I believe that part of the reason why so many people love stories is that we have been designed by God to be enriched and learn by them. God has given us a story (really a HIStory) of all that He has done, and this was intended not to be hidden in some dusty library but to be told to the generations that would follow those who lived through His working.

Today's text constitutes the very beginning of our passage from Sunday and, consequently, it teaches us quite a bit about why God would raise Pharaoh up for judgment. Interestingly enough, God's design included His receiving glory in triumphing over Pharaoh AND His desire that those who came after Him would learn from such an important moment in their history. God did what He did so that His people would talk about Him and He gave them a concrete example of who He was so that they would not have to speculate!

The admonition to share stories of our faith in God is not isolated to Exodus. In fact, this theme of passing along truth to the next generation permeates the Bible. There are many places where similar admonitions are given, and this shows us that God is intent on us learning not only from what He does in our own lives but also what He has done in the past.

How well are we doing at heeding this command? Have our children and grandchildren been enraptured by the most amazing stories the world has ever encountered? Do we tell the story of how God parted the Sea or made the walls come down or caused a prophet to be swallowed by a fish and then vomited back onto the shore so that he would be faithful? More to the point, do our kids know the story of how God took on flesh, dwelt among us in order to defeat death by laying down His life for us and then getting up from the grave?

Brother and sister, Christ came to triumph for His glory, but that glory is meant to be proclaimed! He came to give us a story to share. He came so that generations to come would be amazed that our God has accomplished such a feat! He came to provide us with reason for hope and joy in all circumstances. He came to share the gift of a future. In all these things, He came so that He would be talked about forever.

November 30

**Psalm 113:4-6**

As we close this week's devotions, let us take a moment to worship on this great Lord's Day. Ultimately, the story of Pharaoh is another entry in a great work detailing for us the glory of God. Pharaoh was a mighty opponent. He was feared in all the world, but he was no match for the One True God, and he was not alone.

Nothing has ever prevailed against the Lord. Pharaoh couldn't stand against Him, the Pharisees couldn't outsmart Him, the Babylonians couldn't enslave Him and the Romans couldn't kill Him! In all these battles, the Lord emerged as more than a conqueror and this should give us ample reason to sing!

Psalm 113 contains a rhetorical question, "Who is like the Lord our God?" The question is broad but even when we expand our scope to the entire universe (a universe that He created by the way), we will find that no one and nothing could compare. The Psalmist tells us that our God is so great that He must stoop down to look at the heavens and the earth. Whereas men have tried to build towers to see the glories that the heavens contain, God must lower Himself in order to visit the highest of high places. He stoops to see the greatest accomplishments of men, but He also rises up to show His transcendent and unparalleled nature.

Our God is powerful, but He is also gracious. Verse 7 reminds us that this massive God is concerned with the poor (both physically and in spirit). Indeed, our great God gives grace to the humble even as He opposed the proud! What God desires from you today is not bravado and arrogance, it is humility and worship, and the result of this faithfulness will be God's favor.

Some of us have lived our whole lives longing for the approval of man but, glory upon glory, in Christ we can have the approval of God! The same God who upholds the universe and prevails over the wicked and defeated the grave is willing to adopt you into His family!

The unbelievable truth about the Christian faith is that God is both glorious and kind. He is both Sovereign and merciful. He is triumphant in judgment and benevolent in bestowing grace. The God that judged Pharaoh has taken your place to be judged Himself and the result is that those who believe upon Him will not be judged as guilty, instead we can be justified as adopted sons and daughters of His! May this dual truth (that God is glorious and kind) be a motivation for our worship today. He is worthy of our praise, and He is ready to receive it on this Lord's Day!