



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

*Program
Study Guides*

**For
April 2016**

April 3, 2016

Born in Sin Titus 2:11-14

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

When God made man, did He _____ him good or evil? Some say people are born entirely in sin, but we want to _____ from the Lord. The Lord's way is the way to abundant life on earth and eternal life in _____. Nothing is more important! Riches lose their luster, and health and youth fade, but God's _____ grow sweeter and better day after day.

Years ago, I heard a preacher teach that every person from birth has a _____ that is totally corrupt, perverse, and sinful. Because of this inborn corruption, he said the natural man is totally _____ to do anything spiritually good. The sinner is so spiritually bankrupt that he can do _____ pertaining to his salvation. He cannot believe on his own or _____ of his sin. This natural man is enslaved to _____ he said; he's a child of Satan, rebellious toward God, blind to truth, corrupt, and unable to save himself or prepare himself for salvation.

He said that when Adam chose evil in the garden, he plunged himself and the _____ human race into such spiritual ruin that mankind cannot choose spiritual good over evil. He no longer has _____ will. He said men inherited this _____ depravity. The only answer to these problems is a miraculous _____ from God; and once man is saved, he can _____ be lost. This doctrine also suggested that God arbitrarily chose from heaven who would be saved and who would be lost; that man has no _____ in the matter.

Over the next few weeks we will examine the Scriptures to see whether this doctrine is true or false. We want to know what God's Word says because God's Word is utterly reliable.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to Titus 2:11-14.

We're asking today what the Bible says about the _____ condition of the soul when a baby is born. **Read Romans 7:7-11.** Romans 7 teaches that people _____ from the commandments what is right and wrong. When we allow evil desires to cause us to break the commandment, we _____ against God and spiritually _____. **Read James 1:13-15 that describes more specifically when spiritual death takes place.** Sin is an _____, not an inheritable trait. You can't _____ the act of stealing, or the act of gossip, or fornication. People choose to act. Sin is accomplished after a _____, not inherited.

God's Word everywhere holds each person responsible for his or her _____ sins. **Read the entire chapter of Ezekiel 18 for yourself.** God clearly doesn't hold children _____ for the sins of their parents or parents guilty for the sins of their children.

Some people think that children inherit the guilt of their _____. Some say we, as children of Adam and Eve, have inherited their wicked _____ and are guilty of their sin. Some say an infant who dies is lost eternally; others say they go to limbo. You cannot find the

concept of limbo in Scripture; that's made up; it's of human origin. Little children who die aren't lost; they haven't inherited Adam's guilt. Why? Ezekiel 18:20 says, "The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself." Babies don't know right from wrong and they _____ sin. One can only be lost for his _____ sins.

Romans 14:12 says, "So then _____ of us will give an account of himself to God." You may be kin to the most godly person in the world, but that will not _____ you on Judgment Day. You can't _____ someone else's righteousness. Your father may be a preacher or an elder, and your mother may be a saint, but you cannot inherit salvation from your _____. You must choose to _____ the Lord yourself. You may be _____ to the most sinful person in the world, but God will not hold you responsible for what he or she has done. God will hold you responsible for your _____ actions. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must _____ appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has _____ in the body, whether good or evil."

We all tend to _____ to blame others for our sins or to look down on others for their wickedness. I received a touching card from a viewer who said, "As much as I would be astonished at the sins of others, with an _____ appraisal I am much more astonished and offended at my own." If I'm lost on judgment day, I'll have _____ to blame for my sinful life but me. I may have _____ to sin from other people, but it was my _____ to do it myself.

Spiritual death means a person is _____ from the grace of God. **Read what Isaiah 59:1-2 says.** When people allow sin and iniquity in their lives, that's when they _____ themselves from God. Sin means God turns His back on us and will not hear our _____.

Sin _____ animosity between God and man. Sin takes place when man selfishly says to God, I won't live by Your _____; I will do what I want to do. Sin utterly _____ God and alienates us from God. James 4:4 says "whoever wishes to be a _____ of the world makes himself an _____ of God." When you choose to embrace a sinful world and _____ God, you make an enemy of God. You didn't start out an enemy, but you _____ one through your sin.

Paul preached to some pagan philosophers in Athens who didn't _____ God at all. In spite of this, he said to them in Acts 17:29 that we are _____ "offspring of God." Hebrews 12:9 reveals that God is "the Father of _____." Whether you know God or not, the spirit that is inside you _____ from God. You are His offspring, created in His _____. God didn't _____ you evil. You chose to do evil. Psalm 58:3 says, "Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies." These are not newborn babies; these are people that have gotten a little older and they go astray; they're not _____ astray.

The Scriptures do not describe us as totally depraved; rather they describe us as _____. Saying humans have a weakness to sin is not the same thing as saying they're totally _____ to do any good. The Lord Jesus told the apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is _____, but the flesh is _____" (Matthew 26:41). We want to do good, but we often find ourselves doing wrong.

God told Adam and Eve not to eat fruit from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." This is not the tree of the knowledge of evil and evil; it's the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve received _____ of good as well as evil. They were not totally _____ in knowledge. Though they sinned, they had a knowledge of _____.

The Lord God said, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's _____ is evil from his youth (not from the birth, but from youth)" (Genesis 8:21). All of us have these same selfish, evil desires inside of us. Yes, they _____ us to sin against God. We have to _____ them all of our days, but that doesn't mean that we cannot also do good.

In the parable of the sower, there are different _____ of soils or hearts. The Bible says, "But the seed on the good soil stand for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the _____, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop" (Luke 8:15). This good and honest heart belongs to a person who's not yet a Christian, not yet _____. Remember Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. The Bible says that Cornelius, though not saved was nevertheless "devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly" (Acts 10:2).

The apostle Paul spoke of this spiritual _____ going on inside of him, that goes on inside of all of us. **Read what he said in Romans 7:21-23.** We all, everyone of us, face this battle of _____ to do right and often finding ourselves doing the evil things that we _____. But this doesn't mean that we are totally _____ and incapable of believing.

Let me ask some questions for those who believe we are totally depraved and incapable of good. Hebrews 11:6 says, "without _____ it is impossible to please God." Why would God demand faith from all men when He knows that men are _____ of believing what is written in His Word? The Lord Jesus said, "unless you _____, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5). Why would Jesus Christ condemn people for failure to repent if they're incapable of repenting or doing any good thing toward their _____?

Read Luke 18:15-17. How can this be if infants are _____ wholly corrupt and unable to do good? Why would the Lord speak so glowingly of babies if they were so bound up in _____?

At this point, someone is probably asking, "Phil, don't you know about Psalm 51:5?" Here the NIV reads "Surely I have been a _____ from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Doesn't this _____ that we are born in sin? The NIV translates poorly here. Literally, David's words would be translated: "Behold in iniquity I was born and in sin my mother conceived me." David is saying he was born in an evil and sinful _____. Let's remember that sin is an _____; it's a transgression of God's law. Sin is not an inherited trait; it's _____ and acted out.

I am speaking English because I was _____ in an environment that speaks the English language and I learned it. In Acts 2, the apostles spoke with the miraculous gift of tongues to people from _____ nations. When they heard the apostles, they marveled and said, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were _____?” (Acts 2:7-8). People are born in a language. One learns a language by being born into an environment that _____ it. In the same way, one _____ sin by being born into a world that practices it.

To make this passage say that David was born depraved and sinful as a baby would make it contradict what David said in Psalm 22:9-10. “Yet You (God) are He who brought me forth from the womb; You (God) made me _____ when upon my mother’s breasts. Upon You I was cast from birth; You have been my God from my mother’s womb.” From the time he was little, David _____ both good and bad, both trust in God and later on, sin.

God didn’t _____ us totally evil and incapable of believing or incapable of repenting. We’re all weak, but we can _____. Thank God for that!

Second Corinthians 5:19-20 says, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not _____ their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

Why do Christians _____ others to be reconciled to God? The word “reconcile” means “to bring back into _____.” A reconciled husband and wife were once in harmony, then they separated, and later _____ to harmony. If an infant is born utterly in sin, he cannot be reconciled because he was _____ in harmony with the Lord in the first place. God’s answer to man’s sin came in the form of _____ the cross of Christ, telling people what God did for them so that they might believe, repent, and obey. We’re not totally depraved. Infants are born spiritually _____; they separated from God when they _____ and now need to be reconciled to God by responding to the _____.

The Lord God gave up His Son Jesus to _____ for our sins, and offered the gift of salvation to those who _____ in faith, love, and obedience. Even in our sins we can respond to the gospel. Because of God’s _____, we can change.

Believe Jesus is the Christ! Turn your heart from sin to the Lord. Confess Jesus the Christ as the Son of God. And be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the _____ of your sins. “Be saved from this _____ generation.” God made you _____ of faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. You don’t have to _____ in sin. In Acts 2:41, those who gladly received the _____ were baptized. All through the book of Acts, lost people _____ to preaching; they believed it and they _____. And my friend, you can, too!

April 10, 2016

Faith Alone? James 1:22-25

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

God's grace saves us through faith, but does He save us through faith _____? The Lord's _____ is right and true. It never fails. The Lord's wisdom is far _____ our own. **Read Proverbs 3:5-7.** Because we _____ God, we turn to His Holy Word. We strive to _____ Him in all that we do, and His Word reveals the way that is good and acceptable and perfect.

Today, we're continuing to look at how man _____ to God. Last week we learned from God's Word that man is not _____ totally corrupt but is capable of responding to the will of God. The Scriptures teach that people grow up in a sinful environment and are _____, but God made us capable of believing.

Faith comes not through some miracle, but through _____ the Word of God according to Romans 10:17. **Read John 20:30-31.**

That faith is _____ for us to be saved is indisputable, but some say that we are saved by faith alone. Does God require _____ than faith for a person to respond to God's will? The answer lies in the Scriptures, so let's go to the Word of God.

Our reading today comes from the letter of James 1:22-25.

There's no _____ that faith is necessary for forgiveness. **Read what the Lord Jesus said in John 3:16-18.**

The Lord Jesus said, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be _____; but he who has disbelieved shall be _____" (Mark 16:16). In John 8:24, the Lord said, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you _____ that I am He, you will die in your sins." Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to _____ Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." So, there can be no doubt that unless we believe in God, our Father, and Jesus as His Son, we will _____ in our sins.

The apostle Peter told Cornelius about Jesus Christ, "Of Him (that is, of Jesus) all the prophets bear _____ that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43). The Bible says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this _____ in which we stand; and we exult in _____ of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

The Scripture clearly _____ that faith is absolutely necessary for us to be saved from sin. But, the necessity of faith doesn't mean that other things are not _____ necessary. If I say I need oxygen to survive, that doesn't _____ I don't need water, food, and shelter. No one would say that they live by oxygen alone. In the same way, the Scriptures teach that faith is necessary but don't rule out the _____ for other things to have life in Christ.

I've talked with people who _____ that they're saved by faith alone. This doctrine makes Christianity convenient for a lot of people because they _____ on the passages about faith, but often to the exclusion of other passages. Here's what I mean. People who hold to "faith alone" will start saying you don't have to do anything but believe, but the Scriptures do not _____ what God requires of us to have faith alone. It's true that we're saved by faith, but it is not the _____ truth. The Scriptures, in fact, tell us that we're saved by _____ things.

When I've discussed this doctrine with others who are adamant about being saved by faith alone, I often find that they back off of their _____ when other matters come into the conversation. For instance, when I bring up being saved by _____ through faith, according to Ephesians 2:8, they gladly admit this is _____. If we're saved by grace through faith, we're not saved by faith alone. Salvation also demands the _____ of God, doesn't it?

I've asked people, "Do you have to _____ God in order to be saved?" There are several passages that teach the necessity of love to be _____ with God. The Bible says, "If anyone has no _____ for the Lord (speaking of Jesus), let him be accursed" (1 Corinthians 16:22). The word accursed here means someone is _____ and condemned eternally. The Bible clearly teaches the necessity of love for the Lord.

The Lord Jesus said, "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). The Lord doesn't merely ask to be loved, but to be loved _____ than family, more than anything.

Read what Mark 12:28-30 says. God requires our wholehearted love and will settle for nothing _____.

So, if I ask a person who says he believes in faith alone whether love is necessary to be saved and please God, he must take it back. Faith without love won't please God.

When I've talked with people who believe in faith alone, I've asked the question, "Do you believe it's necessary for a person to _____?" The Lord Jesus said in Luke 13:3, "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise _____." **Read why the Lord was so serious about repentance in what He said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:29-30.**

When the apostle Paul preached to Stoics and Athenians on Mars Hill, he concluded his sermon with these words, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

Having studied what God said about repentance, the people who say they believe in faith alone have to _____ that we must repent to be right with God. If repentance is also necessary to be saved, then we aren't saved by faith alone, are we?

I've asked some if it's necessary to _____ God to be saved. The Bible clearly says in Hebrews 5:8-9, "Although He (that is, Jesus) was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who _____ Him the source of eternal salvation."

John the Baptist said, “He who believes in the Son has _____ life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the _____ of God abides on him” (John 3:36). I realize the King James Version translates this verse, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.” But the words “believe” and “believeth not” are _____ in the original language. The first “believeth” is the _____ word for believing, but the second word for “believeth not” describes a person who will _____ be persuaded and so is disobedient. It is usually translated as _____ or to be disobedient.

The contrast here is not between whether one believes or not, but whether one believes _____ to be obedient. If he won't obey, he really doesn't believe. If he doesn't obey, he won't see eternal life; but the wrath of God will abide on him. The Bible never treats obedience as if it were _____. To say that we're saved by faith alone and have no need to obey clearly contradicts the _____ of Scripture.

When I've brought up the need for denying oneself and taking up the cross, the people who hold to “faith only” must admit the Lord _____ that as well. The Lord Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must _____ himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My _____, he is the one who will save it” (Luke 9:23-24). Denying self and taking up a cross is not optional.

When I've brought up the need for obedience to the person who believes in faith alone, he begins to talk about a _____ salvation. He begins to argue that we're saved by faith and not by _____. I know Ephesians 2:8-10 says, “For by grace you've been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the _____ of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for _____ works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

We're not here suggesting that a person can _____ his way to heaven by works. You can't earn salvation, no! Salvation is the _____ of God's grace or favor. But let's not suppose that this gift is unconditional. God has every _____ to place conditions on His gift of grace. God distinguishes those who will receive His grace from those who will not by placing conditions.

Suppose I were to bury a priceless treasure in my backyard and _____ to give it to you. You're interested in getting this great gift, so you ask what you need to _____ to get it. I have the _____ to make conditions to my gift. I tell you that you must go to the exact location and that you've got to _____ it up. Do you honestly believe that the small _____ you put into digging up the treasure earned that treasure for you or made it any less a gift?

Salvation is the same way. What God asks of us to _____ His great mercy and grace are not meritorious works to earn salvation. Meeting God's conditions doesn't mean salvation is not a gift. Faith is certainly a condition for receiving that gift. What we need to understand is that loving God, repenting of sin, and obeying the Lord are _____ of faith that meet God's conditions. They don't obligate God to save you; they don't save you _____ the grace of God. They are merely conditions that God has _____ for you to receive His marvelous gift.

Hugo McCord, a Bible scholar and one of my teachers at Oklahoma Christian, described faith as a “_____” word. He said believing _____ far more than agreeing that something is true. The word “faith” describes _____ that man does in response to God’s grace. Faith is more than a _____ act. Here’s an example. Galatians 3:26-27 says, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” The concept of faith included being _____ and clothing ourselves with Christ. The Bible never, never, contemplates the idea of a believing Christian who is not baptized.

Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who _____ the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter” (Matthew 7:21). Having a relationship with the Lord takes more than just mere faith; the person who _____ faith but fails to _____ out his faith with love is actually fooling himself. The Bible says, “Whoever says ‘I know him’ (that is, I have a relationship with God) but does not keep his _____, that person is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever _____ his word (that is, obeys the commandments), in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him (that is, we have a relationship with Him and we abide in Him): whoever says he abides in him ought to _____ in the same way in which he walked” (1 John 2:4-6). The doctrine of salvation by faith alone, although it is _____, does not come from God, but from men. God wants _____ than faith; He wants everything that’s in your heart and in your life.

The Bible says, “Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for _____ that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God” (John 12:42-43). This is a _____ faith that fails to confess Christ and fails to show love for God. Does this kind of faith please God? We must honestly answer no. We’ve all met people who say they believe but they don’t _____ their faith. If they believe that their faith alone will save them, they’re deceiving themselves.

James 2:18-20 says, “But someone may well say, ‘You have faith and I have works; show me your faith _____ the works, and I will show you my faith _____ my works.’ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is _____?”

My friend, put your faith into _____ by confessing Jesus as the Christ, turning away from every sin, and by being baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. When you are baptized, the Lord _____ away your sins (Acts 22:16). Take up your cross daily and follow the Lord. Love the Lord and love others. Believing in the Lord Jesus also means being involved at _____. When you place your faith in Christ and are baptized, the Lord _____ you to His church and He expects you to get involved as one of His people in the church. The Father _____ you in Christ for good works, and as one of His people. Don’t just talk your faith, live it! Serve the Lord with all your heart. We hope that today’s study about a living faith has challenged you to put your faith in action.

April 17, 2016

Free Will Isaiah 1:18-20

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Does man have free will, or has God already made every _____ affecting his salvation? Today, we're asking if man is free to _____ God. The Lord's way is wise and good. It leads us in the _____ of righteousness and away from sin. The Lord's way leads us to love and blessing. No other path is so important to your _____. Some people hold the view that God has _____ predetermined everything that we think or do. They think God has _____ us the way we are, predetermined our motives and attitudes, and even predetermines the _____ that we will make. According to them, we may think we are free to choose right or wrong, but God has already _____ whether we will follow Him or follow the world to destruction.

While we recognize that God is sovereign and has a _____ for this world, we also understand that God has made each of us a _____ moral agent. If God predetermined every motive and intention on our part, how could we ever freely love and choose Him from our _____? If man has no free will, then he is but a _____ on a string. We maintain that our choice to take up our cross and follow Christ is not _____ upon us. We do so out of committed _____ and _____, not out of compulsion.

The Bible says, "This is good, and it's pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be _____ and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). God wants you to come to _____ Him, to _____ Him, and to _____ Him. So, we study and we try to learn the _____ so that we may know how to _____ Him and to be saved from sin. This allows us to live with Him _____.

Our reading from God's Inspired Word comes from the prophet Isaiah 1:18-20.

The word "if" has but two letters, but it's one of the most _____ words of the Bible. In the passage in Isaiah, God wanted to _____ with Israel so they would take a different path than the one they had taken earlier. In that first chapter, the people had abandoned and despised the _____. They were spiritually _____; their worship was offensive to God because of their _____. God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, "Wash yourselves; make yourselves _____; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; _____ to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause" (Isaiah 1:16-17). They were sinners, but they didn't have to _____ in sin. They could _____. They could cease their _____ and they could learn to do _____. God believed they could change and _____ them to do so. Life is filled with so many choices, and we must _____ to choose wisely. Since we have to

live with the consequence of our choices, we must be _____ to choose what is right. The Bible teaches that we have that ability. Many passages teach that man is _____ to choose between good and evil, and between God and Satan, and that man can change his choice.

Read what the Bible says God will do in Romans 2:6-11.

God hasn't arbitrarily _____ some people for salvation and other people for condemnation. He permits each person to make a _____ either to do good or to do evil. People can follow the commandments of God or they can refuse to _____ the truth. We're all choosing what we follow. If we choose to follow God, we'll find _____ and blessing; but if we choose to follow sin, we'll only find _____. We each are choosing what we will follow and serve in this life, and it will _____ the next life.

Read what God's Word says in Romans 6:16-18. You make the choice of your _____. You'll present yourselves to someone as an obedient _____. Notice that the people who were at one time slaves of sin made the decision to _____ that life. They were enslaved to sin but they were still _____ to make a choice. They could leave their _____ master and come to a _____ master. They could be freed from that sin, the sin that was destroying them, and serve a master who would give them _____ life. They did this by _____ from the heart. They weren't _____! They _____ to make a change!

Remember the prodigal son, he thought he was serving himself, but actually he was really serving sin and _____. He thought he was _____, but his sins were destroying him. Sin will _____ you where you have nothing left, just like he had nothing left. When this boy finally came to his senses, he _____ the pig farm, confessing his sins and repenting. He decided to go _____. He changed his ways. He didn't have to _____ in sin.

The people that Peter preached to on the Day of Pentecost were _____ of crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ. When they sought for an _____ to their guilt, they asked Peter "what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the _____ of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). They were not told they could do _____ about their sins. They were not told that God would have to work a _____ in their lives. They were told to _____ and to be _____ for the forgiveness of their sins.

Peter then said, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40). What does that mean, "Save yourselves"? Are we suggesting that a person can _____ his way to heaven? No, by no means! We're saying a person can and must repent and be baptized, for the forgiveness of sins in order to _____ in faith to God. No one earns salvation, but we are given salvation when we respond to the _____; you "save yourselves" by responding to the grace and the forgiveness that God _____ to you. God's not going to save you against your _____.

If you're drowning and I throw you a rope and a life preserver, don't you have to _____ hold? God graciously provides our salvation through the _____ of Jesus, but we have to

respond by faith and obedience to that grace. We can't save ourselves by our own _____, but we can respond to the gracious gift of salvation, and we have to. Wouldn't it be foolish to have God's rope of grace extended to us and then we just throw up our hands and say, "oh, we can't do _____." Of course, we can do something. We can grab hold of the _____ that Christ purchased for us at such a great _____.

Read what the same inspired apostle Peter wrote on another occasion about how people are saved in 1 Peter 1:22-23. People purify their souls when they _____ and _____ the gospel truth. They are born again not through some miraculous movement of God, but by obedience to the _____ of the Word of God. It is the _____ that saves (Romans 1:16). **Read 1 Corinthians 1:21.** This was God's _____ of how to save people, giving them a gospel and saving them through their response to that message.

That man has free will to _____ the gospel message or to _____ it is also very clear in the Scriptures. Throughout history, people have made _____ as to whether they will obey God or not. Joshua, late in his life, addressed the people of Israel. **Read what he said in Joshua 24:14-15.** Joshua knew people could _____ which god they served, whether the God of Heaven or some other false god. They had freewill.

The prophet Elijah faced off against 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah on Mount Carmel. The prophets of Baal were completely overcome by the God of Heaven when the _____ came down and consumed Elijah's _____. Elijah challenged the people, saying, "How long will you _____ between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). Of course, Baal was just an _____ and was never anything but a figment of the people's imagination. The God of Heaven, however, was _____ and sent fire down from heaven, which convinced the people to kill the prophets of Baal. When the people saw the _____, they chose God and rejected Baal. They had _____ will, and, my friend, so do you. Revelation 22:17 says, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who _____ say, 'Come.' And let the one who is _____ come." God _____ us to believe and obey! The gospel _____ blessings and He gives them to "whosoever will." Whosoever means anybody; anyone and everyone who _____ to come to the Lord may come to the Lord!

The Bible says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). God doesn't _____ anybody to be lost, but He will not make you repent. You have to _____ that for yourself. God allows you to make that decision; He won't make it for you.

The belief that God has predestined us for heaven or hell and we have no choice in the matter goes against the grain of _____. If we cannot change, why does the Bible urge us to _____? Why does it urge us to _____ God? Why does it tell us to _____? Why does the Bible warn us about _____? Such language becomes absurd if you have no free will.

The very word temptation refers to a moral _____, whether we will choose to do right or give in to the wrong. The Bible says, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). If people cannot make a choice to do right or wrong, they cannot be tempted; but _____ faces temptation regularly.

You’re not a _____ or a _____. You’re a person made in God’s _____ and accountable for your choices. If a person were arbitrarily predestined to heaven or hell, no matter what choices he made, how could God be _____? How can man be held accountable to God for his actions in _____ without free will? Only people with _____ can be held responsible for their choices. Wouldn’t God be unjust to _____ someone arbitrarily and eternally when that person could not choose? The God of all _____ is not so monstrous.

God does not show partiality. **Read what Peter told the first Gentile convert Cornelius in Acts 10:34-35.** God wonderfully, marvelously, graciously offers to us the _____ of Jesus to cleanse us from sin. We can choose to be _____ with Christ and we can enjoy God’s grace and forgiveness; or we can _____ against God and live our lives as we wish. Oh, friend, what will you choose, what will you do?

Sin, all sin, is a serious issue. When we choose to sin we must _____ the consequences. We can’t _____ our sins and hope they’ll go away. We can’t _____ our sins away. We can’t _____ anyone else. We can’t _____ our sins from God. Sin is that huge issue coming _____ God and us. Sin offends God and it _____ us from Him. God will not simply _____ what we did. Sin has to be _____ with.

Sin that’s left unresolved will cost us our _____. That’s why we _____ the blood of Jesus to be saved. How do we come into _____ with that blood? By believing in Christ, repenting of our sins, confessing Jesus as the Christ, and by being baptized. When we, from the heart, _____ the gospel, we’re baptized into the _____ of Christ, and that’s where the blood was _____. It’s in baptism that the blood of Jesus is _____ to our souls and _____ them clean. That’s the time our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16). My friend, do you want to be saved today?

You have to make a choice. You can _____ against God and stay in your sins or you can _____ to Christ. You can live your life on your own terms or you can _____ to the Lord. Today, is the very best day you’ll ever have to change your life, to leave the old man of sin behind, and to follow the Lord. Oh, I hope you’ll be like the prodigal son and come to your senses. Isn’t it time to come back home to God and to the abundant life in Christ. God has given you free will. Use it! God is offering you eternal life in Christ. Why not grab hold of life and never, never, let it go?

Can Christians Be Lost?**2 Peter 2:20-22**

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Some say that once you become a Christian you can never _____ your salvation. Is this true? God is the author of Scripture, and we can _____ the Bible because God was behind the writing of every verse, every chapter, and every book. We can trust it to give us the _____ that God wanted us to know, truth that is sufficient to _____ us to eternal life. We need that truth, so we go to the Bible.

The doctrine of “once saved, always saved” suggests that the Christian, once truly saved, can never do anything to lose his salvation and finally be _____ in hell. This belief says Christians have an unconditional _____ in Christ. They suggest that any person who _____ to be a Christian and falls away was never truly converted in the first place. They say that Christians do sin; but when they sin, they are punished in this life and forfeit privileges in heaven, but not entrance into heaven.

But is heaven conditional? What is a condition? A conditional statement is usually introduced by _____ such as “if” or “unless.” When Jesus said in Luke 13:3 that unless you _____, you will perish; we understand that repentance is a condition to keep from being lost. **Read what the Bible says in 1 John 1:6-7.** There are _____.

Our reading today from God’s inspired and all-sufficient Word comes from 2 Peter 2:20-22.

The doctrine of “once-saved, always saved” is built upon the belief that God’s _____ is unconditional. Some say once grace is given, a Christian cannot _____ it. But the doctrine of unconditional security _____ the conditional, qualifying statements in Scripture about whom the grace of God saves. Several passages show our _____ is conditional. We must remain _____ to God.

For instance, the Lord Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone _____ My word he will never see death” (John 8:51). But what will happen if a person _____ keeping God’s Word? The Lord said, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me (now notice that the branch is already in them) that doesn’t bear fruit, He _____; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:2). When a branch in Christ no longer bears _____, it’s taken away. John 15:6 says, “If anyone does not _____ in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.” This is the _____ of a Christian who will not bear fruit.

Moreover, your _____ life matters. A Christian who turns to fleshly _____ can lose his soul, but one who puts away sin can _____ with God. **Read Romans 8:12-13.**

Morality is a condition of salvation.

The Lord expects His people to hold _____ to their faith. Our salvation depends on it. First Corinthians 15:1-2 says, “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word that I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.” If they don’t hold firmly to their faith, they will have believed in vain and could lose their salvation.

Read Colossians 1:21-23. Holding firmly to the _____ is a condition of our salvation.

Remaining active in _____ attendance and in our efforts for the gospel is a condition of our salvation. In Hebrews 10:25 the inspired writer noted that some Christians had _____ assembling with the church. In response to this he said, “For if we go on sinning _____ after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries” (verses 26-27). Yes, a Christian who quits on God can lose the _____ of eternal life. God expects us to _____ involved in church as long as we are able.

The second epistle of Peter was written to Christians _____ them to remain faithful and not to fall away to immorality or false teaching. **Read 2 Peter 2:20-21.** This clear Scripture shows that if a Christian gets overcome by sin he can find himself _____ off than before he became a Christian. It would have been _____ if he had never known the way of the Lord.

In 1 John 1:6-7 the Bible says, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet we walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” This was written to Christians. Our freedom from sin is conditional on whether we follow the _____ or follow the _____. I’ve presented several _____ that God has placed on our salvation, and there are many more. But if there were just one, just one Scriptural condition on this list, that would be enough to show that our salvation is conditional.

In addition, the Scriptures often warn Christians to _____ faithful and committed to the Lord. **Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.** Paul knew that he could lose his crown of life if he didn’t _____ himself and stay free from sin.

Read Galatians 5:19-21 where Paul warned the Galatian Christians about the deeds of the flesh. Why would Paul forewarn Christians about these sins keeping them out of _____ if Christians couldn’t lose their salvation?

Our faith and commitment to Christ is a lifetime _____. The Lord Jesus said, “whoever _____ my word and _____ him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24). This passage says the believer possesses eternal life but doesn’t say _____ about the person who stops

believing or stops hearing the word. John 8:51 says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that if anyone keeps my word, he shall never see _____.” But what about the person who _____ keeping the Word? John 3:36 says, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not _____ the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” One has _____ life as long as he believes and obeys. But if he stops believing or he stops obeying, he can _____ that life.

Can a person stop believing? Some think not, but we have an _____ in Scripture of Israel coming out of Egypt. Study Psalm 106, and study it closely. Psalm 106:12 says, “Then they believed His words; They sang His praise.” But verse 13 says, “they quickly _____ His works.” In verse 21 the Bible says, “they forgot God their Savior.” And then Psalm 106:24 to 25 says, “Then they despised the pleasant land; They did not _____ in His word, but grumbled in their tents; They did not _____ to the voice of the LORD.” Can people _____ believing and hearing God? The Israelites did. And, my friend, you can, too. Beware!

In the parable of the sower, Jesus described different kinds of soil: there’s the soil that’s beside the _____, then there is the _____ soil, the _____ soil, and the _____ soil. These types of soil actually describe people’s _____. Jesus tells how the Word of God or the seed is _____ in the rocky soil and what happened. The Lord said, “Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, they receive the word with joy; and these have no firm _____; they believe for a while, and in time of _____ fall away” (Luke 8:13). They stopped believing. Sadly, we’ve all known people like this who believed at one point in their life and quit believing in another.

Paul predicted, “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will _____ from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1). When you stop _____ to the Lord and His Word, and you begin to pay attention to others, you can stop believing. To believe in the Lord Jesus means that you believe what He _____. How can you say you believe the Lord if you will not _____ the things that He teaches.

Read Hebrews 3:12-14 that is written to brothers in Christ. To fall away is to abandon the Lord willfully. These brothers had been deceived and hardened by _____ and they lost their faith. We are partakers of Christ only if we hold firm our faith to the _____.

At this point someone says, “Well, Phil, don’t you know no one can _____ us out of the Lord’s hand? Don’t you know that we can never be separated from God’s _____?” Yes, I well know the two precious _____ first found in John 10:27-29 and second in Romans 8:35-39; I know them quite well. They say that no one and nothing can _____ us from God. These verses, however, don’t take into account what happens to a person who _____ to separate himself from God. Jude 21 advises us to “keep yourselves in the love of God”; and John 15:9-10 teaches us that we must _____ in God’s love. Oh, no one else

can separate us from God, but we can decide to _____ the Lord. Christians can _____ to fall away! They can choose to leave God; and, sadly, sadly, many have.

Another person objects, “Well, if a Christian falls away, he was never _____ converted in the first place.” Are you sure? Have you never _____ your mind? **Read what the Bible says in Hebrews 6:4-6.** It’s clear that these people were _____ Christians. They were enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, partakers of the Holy Spirit, and they’ve tasted or experienced the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come. You couldn’t have these spiritual blessings _____ of Christ. You can’t fall away from something unless you were first _____ of it. These Christians fell away by _____ rejecting Jesus Christ. Others could not get them to repent because they didn’t _____ to repent. To fall away is a willful _____ to abandon the faith.

In a different situation, Galatians speaks of Christians who followed a _____ gospel than Paul preached by _____ circumcision and the Law on Gentile Christians. Paul said, “You’ve been _____ from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have _____ from grace” (Galatians 5:4). Here are people under the grace of God, but they fell away from it; they severed themselves from Christ. To be severed implies that they _____ belonged to Him. My friend, a Christian can fall from grace. I pray that you never do.

Thank God for a second law of _____ for Christians who have sinned. Even when a Christian strays from the truth, God has a way for him to _____ to salvation. Like the prodigal son, he can come _____ to God.

When Simon the Sorcerer, in Acts 8, offered money to buy the apostles’ gift, Peter _____ him for his sin. Peter said, “You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:21-24”. God expects Christians to _____ of their sins and _____ for forgiveness if they wish to be pardoned.

The Bible says, “If we _____ our sins, He is faithful and righteous to _____ us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God is faithful to His people. He will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, if...if...we confess our sins, repent of them, and ask for his forgiveness. God offers _____, but there are conditions to our forgiveness.

The same thing is true for the person who wants to become a Christian. The Lord Jesus offers salvation as a gift to those who will believe, who will repent of their sins, who will confess His name before others, and who will be baptized. Baptism is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Meeting conditions won’t earn you salvation; but if you fail to meet them, you cannot enjoy the grace and blessing of God.