

The Call of the Cross Titus 3:3-7

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

The Lord didn't just die for us; He calls to us to come and _____ Him. How is Jesus calling us today? He calls us through the _____.! We rejoice in God's _____ of forgiveness, love, and hope. There simply is no _____ message than what is found in the New Testament. God calls us through the gospel message to _____ and _____ Him. Loving and following Jesus Christ is the greatest privilege.

Read what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. The story of the death, burial, and resurrection, as we will see, truly is good news. The word "gospel," as Paul uses it in 1 Corinthians 15, means "good news." The gospel is not merely, simply, good news; it's the _____ news that you're ever going to hear. Perhaps you got some good news at some point recently. You heard the word "yes" when you asked your wife to _____ you; or you got accepted to _____; or you were granted a _____ for a new house; or you found out you were going to win an _____; or perhaps you learned that you're going to be a parent or a grandparent. All of these things are good news indeed; but the best news you'll ever hear is about your _____ in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According to John 3:14-17. Here Jesus is telling about the great love of God for our salvation.

Paul _____ a story of good news about events that happened many years before. Paul didn't just announce it; he preached it because he knew the _____ of the message. He said, "For I am not _____ of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). The gospel message from God is so powerful that it can bring about our salvation.

Paul rejoiced that the Corinthians "_____ " the gospel. Not everyone who _____ receives or welcomes the good news of Christ. Some hear but _____ it; some hear and rejoice over it but quickly _____ it; and some don't want to hear it at all. John said that Jesus "came to His own, and those who were His own did not _____ Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the _____ to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-13). The gospel is good news, but you must receive it into your heart and your life if it's to do you any _____. I hope that you'll do that.

The Corinthians not only heard and received the gospel; they took a _____ on it. They believed it so strongly that they committed their _____ to the Lord Jesus. In becoming a Christian, they left their _____ lives of paganism and idolatry. They took up their crosses at a

time when authorities _____ people for being Christians. They put their _____ in God to bless and take care of them. Because they took their stand on the gospel, the gospel _____ them. Man cannot save himself by himself; he _____ God's mercy and wisdom. Paul said, "For since in the wisdom of God the _____ through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). The message of the gospel can make all the _____ in your world, if you will believe and take your stand upon it.

The Corinthians took a stand on the gospel, because they knew that they would be _____ if they held fast to it. The gospel is a foundation for a lifetime. Jesus said about his teaching, "Brother will _____ brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. You will be _____ by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved" (Matthew 10:21-22). There simply is no retirement plan in this life for the Christian. One who becomes a Christian does so, even if his whole family doesn't _____ it. One who becomes a real Christian will do so no matter what others think, or say, or do. They're going to put Jesus first no matter what.

Each of us must realize that we have three very real problems. First, we have a problem with _____. The Bible says, "all have sinned and fall short of the _____ of God" (Romans 3:23). Your sins _____ you from God and will bring about a punishment upon you. Paul also said, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free _____ of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). If you sin, the Bible says, "you must _____" (Romans 8:13). The death that you die will not be physical but spiritual, which is far _____. The person who dies spiritually without God will be _____ eternally. He'll not be able to go to _____ but in the end will be punished by being cast into the outer darkness, a place of fire, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. To be _____ from such a place is genuinely good news. God's salvation is just such a _____; it's life instead of death, joy instead of sorrow, comfort instead or torment, and hope instead of hopelessness.

Second, we must _____ that we face what all men face. We will one day face _____ and the afterlife. The Hebrew writer said, "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes _____" (Hebrews 9:27). No one likes to think of death, and obituaries _____ us that our time will one day come. We all will face God and judgment. Paul said, "For we must all _____ before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Death is frightening because we're _____ what we know to enter a realm that we know little or nothing about. Our destiny will be determined by the _____ that we have lived on earth. Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when _____ who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29). Physical death for evil people will lead to a place of punishment and sorrow. In our _____, we all know

that we have sinned and need forgiveness and grace. Death without God is certainly bad news.

Third, we have a problem with life and _____. The problem we all face is that we're all _____ to sin. We wished we weren't; we wish we'd never sin again; but the truth is that no matter how hard we _____, we find ourselves committing sins. When the apostle John wrote to younger Christians, he said, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the _____ is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Even the best Christians find themselves doing the most regrettable things and in _____ of forgiveness and help. Paul described his life, "I do not understand my own _____. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but _____ that dwells within me" (Romans 7:15-17). We all have to face the ugly _____ that are inside of us throughout life. Is there any _____ for that?

The word gospel means "good news"; and the good news is that Christ _____ us with all three of these problems. Let's look again at 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, where Paul said, "For I delivered to you as of _____ importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, secondly that he was buried, third that he was raised on the third day in accordance to the Scriptures." The gospel is foremost the _____ of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each of these things were _____ events. Jesus really did die, really was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and really did rise from the dead. But it is what they _____ to us that makes them all the more important! Nothing in your life is more important to your _____ destiny than the story of the gospel.

The cross of Jesus as an event is very sad—it's sad news because a righteous man who was innocent was unjustly crucified and suffered great _____. But the point of his death, as a _____ for our sins, is actually good news. He died for our sins, so that we could be _____ and not have to pay the penalty of separation from God for all eternity. Paul said, "For our sake He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him (Christ) we might _____ the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus bore the _____ we should have borne. Because he died, we can live in righteousness, being _____ in his blood. His blood has the ability to _____ us from every, every sin. My friend, that's good news!

The resurrection of Jesus was an _____ event. Because Jesus arose from the dead, we can _____ there is life after death. We can also find _____ of life beyond the grave.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. It is encouraging to know that there is a wonderful great eternity awaiting us in _____!

The fact that Jesus has gone _____ to the Father and sits at His right hand in heaven is important for our third problem, our weakness to temptation. Jesus is there at the right hand of God _____ for us (according to Hebrews 7:24). John wrote to Christians, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an _____ with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our

sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2). Jesus is interceding with the Father as our advocate; He’s pleading our _____ for continued cleansing and forgiveness. John also wrote, “If we _____ our sins, then He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Christians can have hope and they can find total forgiveness because of Jesus, even though they’re imperfect.

So... how do we _____ from the death, burial and resurrection of Christ? The good news is that when we believe in Jesus, repent of our sins, confess our faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and are baptized, we become _____ with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. Paul said, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death? Therefore we’ve been _____ with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might _____ in newness of life. For if we’ve become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our _____ self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for He who has died is freed from sin” (Romans 6:3-7). Freedom from sin, eternal life beyond the grave, and daily _____ to live the Christian life because Jesus is interceding for us, is great news. God is so very good to us.

Freedom from sin opens up that _____ to reconciliation with God. We become His children and heirs of eternal life. **Read Ephesians 2:4-7.**

Believers who repent and are baptized become united with Christ and _____ in His blood. What’s hindering you from being baptized? Jesus had new life when he was raised, and you have newness of life when you’re raised up _____ him in baptism. What is hindering you from obeying the gospel? Don’t merely _____ you believe; respond! Medicine doesn’t work until you take it, and the gospel only works when you _____ to it. God’s grace and love are available. Eternal life is the gift of God through Christ Jesus, but you cannot have it until you _____ and take your stand on it. When you do, God will bless you.

God sent His Son to die for your sins. Won’t you love and trust Jesus enough to respond to His marvelous _____? Don’t pass up the _____ of Jesus, because without Jesus, there is no _____. The blood of Christ can cleanse you and Christ, as your advocate, can _____ you live the Christian life. You can live an abundant life on earth and enjoy heaven forever. Seek out one of the churches of Christ, tell them that you want to _____ the gospel. Tell them that you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, and that you want to leave the old life of sin and to become a new person? Won’t you be baptized into Christ, united with Him in his death and resurrection, so that your sins can be removed and you can be born again? Your friends at the church of Christ would love to help you in this matter, and they want to be your church family as you hold fast to the Lord and His gospel. A great new life awaits you, take hold of it my friend. Won’t you do that today?