

"The Call of the Cross"

The Lord didn't just die for us; He calls to us to come and follow Him. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." How is Jesus calling us today? He calls us through the gospel! Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We rejoice in God's message of forgiveness, love, and hope. There simply is no greater message than what is found in the New Testament. God calls us through the gospel message to love and serve Him. Loving and following Jesus Christ is the greatest privilege. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

In 1 Corinthians 15:1 to 5 Paul said, "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, (and) by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." 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 best news that you're ever going to hear. Perhaps you got some good news at some point recently. And you heard the word "yes" when you asked your wife to marry you; or you got accepted to college; or you were granted a loan for a new house; or you found out you were going to win an award; or perhaps you learned that you're going to be a parent or a grandparent. Well, all of these things are good news indeed; but the best news you'll ever hear is about your salvation in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Now we're offering this free booklet, "Kneel at the Cross," free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from John 3:14 to 17, and explore our need to answer the call of the cross.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to John chapter 3 verses 14 to 17. And here Jesus is telling about the great love of God for our salvation.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only (or only) begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

That reading from God's Holy Word is about God's love. And oh, how precious it is. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You've loved us so much that You gave Your Son Jesus to die for us so that we might have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Help us Father to love You and to serve always. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Paul preached 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 power of the message. He said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed 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.” The gospel message from God is so powerful that it can bring about our salvation.

Paul rejoiced that the Corinthians “received” the gospel. Now not everyone who hears receives or welcomes the good news of Christ. Some hear but ignore it; some hear and rejoice over it but quickly forget it; and some don’t want to hear it at all. Jesus said in John 1 verses 11 to 13 that Jesus “came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right 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.” The gospel is good news, but you must receive it into your heart and your life if it’s to do you any good. I hope that you’ll do that.

The Corinthians not only heard and received the gospel, they took a stand on it. They believed it so strongly that they committed their lives to the Lord Jesus. In becoming a Christian, they left their old lives of paganism and idolatry. They took up their crosses at a time when authorities punished people for being Christians. They put their trust in God to bless and take care of them. Because they took their stand on the gospel, the gospel saved them. Man cannot save himself by himself; he needs God’s mercy and wisdom. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 21, “For since in the wisdom of God the world 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.” The message of the gospel can make all the difference 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 saved if they held fast to it. The gospel is a foundation for a lifetime. And Jesus said about his teaching in Matthew 10:21 and 2, “Brother will betray 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 hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.” 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 like 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.

Now each of us must realize that we have three very real problems. First, we have a problem with sin. The Bible says in Romans 3:23, that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Now your sins separate you from God and will bring about a punishment upon you. Paul also said in Romans 6 and verse 23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” If you sin, the Bible says in Romans 8:13 that “you must die.” The death that you die will not be physical but spiritual, which is far worse. The person who dies spiritually without God will be lost eternally. Now he’ll not be able to go to heaven 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 delivered from such a place is genuinely good news. And God’s salvation is just such a gift; it’s life instead of death, joy instead of sorrow, comfort instead or torment, and hope instead of hopelessness.

Second, we must realize that we face what all men face. We will one day face death and the afterlife. The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 9 verse 27, that “it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.” Now no one likes to think of death, and obituaries remind us that our time will one day come. We all will face God and judgment. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 10, “For we must all appear 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.”

Now death is frightening because we’re leaving what we know to enter a realm that we know little or nothing about. And our destiny will be determined by the life that we have lived on earth. Jesus said

in John 5:28 to 29, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all 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." Physical death for evil people will lead to a place of punishment and sorrow. And in our hearts 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 temptation. The problem we all face is that we're all weak to sin. We wished we weren't; we wish we'd never sin again; but the truth is that no matter how hard we try, we find ourselves committing sins. When the apostle John wrote to younger Christians, he said in 1 John 1 and verse 8, that "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." I tell you even the best Christians find themselves doing the most regrettable things and in need of forgiveness and help. Paul described his life in Romans 7 verses 15 to 17, He says, "I do not understand my own actions. 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 sin that dwells within me." We all have to face the ugly desires that are inside of us throughout life. Is there are help for that?

Well the word gospel means "good news"; and the good news is that Christ helps us with all three of these problems. Let's look again at 1 Corinthians 15 verses 3 to 4. Where Paul said, "For I delivered to you as of first 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 story of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And each of these things were actual 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 mean to us that makes them all the more important! Nothing in your life is more important to your eternal 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 agony. But the point of his death, as a sacrifice for our sins is actually good news. He died for our sins, so that we could be forgiven and not have to pay the penalty of separation from God for all eternity. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21, "For our sake He (speaking of God the Father) made Him (speaking of Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him (that is in Christ) we might become the righteousness of God." Jesus bore the punishment that we should have borne. Because he died, we can live in righteousness, being washed in his blood. And His blood has the ability to cleanse us from every, every sin. My friend, that's good news!

Now the resurrection of Jesus was an amazing event. Because Jesus arose from the dead, we can know there is life after death. We can also find hope of life beyond the grave. 1 Thessalonians 4 verses 16 to 18 says, "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them (that is, those saints in the Lord) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words." And it is encouraging to know that there is a wonderful great eternity awaiting us in heaven!

The fact that Jesus has gone back to the Father and sits at His right hand in heaven is important for our third problem, our weakness to temptation. You see, Jesus is there at the right hand of God interceding for us (according to Hebrews 7 and verse 24). John wrote to Christians in 1 John 2:1 and 2,

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate 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.” Jesus is interceding with the Father as our advocate, He’s pleading our case for continued cleansing and forgiveness. John also wrote in 1 John 1 and verse 9, that “If we confess our sins, then He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Christians can have hope and they can find total forgiveness because of Jesus, even though they’re imperfect.

So... how do we benefit 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 united with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. Paul said in Romans 6 verses 3 to 7, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death (now there’s the death part)? And therefore we’ve been buried with Him (yes buried 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 walk 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 (and hear this part very carefully), that our old self was crucified with Him (now when did that take place, when we were baptized into His death, we were crucified with Him), (why did that take place) in order that our body of sin might be done away with (that is so the sin could be gotten rid of), so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for He who has died is freed from sin.” Now freedom from sin, eternal life beyond the grave, and that daily help to live the Christian life because Jesus is interceding for us, is great news. I tell you, God is so very good to us.

Freedom from sin opens up that door to reconciliation with God. We become His children and heirs of eternal life. Ephesians 2:4 to 7 explains, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you’ve been saved), and He also raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, now listen to this, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.” Oh praise God for all that He has done, is doing, and will do for us! Let’s pray. Father, help us every day of our lives to recognize all that you’ve done for us, to love You for it, to serve You, and to be close to You. And Father we pray that Your Will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Believers who repent and are baptized become united with Christ and washed 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 with him in baptism. What is hindering you from obeying the gospel? Don’t merely say you believe; respond! Medicine doesn’t work until you take it, and the gospel only works when you respond 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 receive and take your stand on it. And 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 grace? Don’t pass up the mercy of Jesus, because without Jesus, there is no hope. The blood of Christ can cleanse you, and Christ as your advocate can help 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 obey 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?

Now we're offering a free little booklet, "Kneel at the Cross," it has today's study about the sacrifice of Christ, and we hope that stirred you to consider the price paid for your soul. And you live in the United States, and you'd like this booklet "Kneel at the Cross," or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. You can also download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Please subscribe to our channel, that's "SearchTVMinistry" on YouTube. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. We'll send them to you and you can work them and send them back, we'll grade you and send you the next one. Now if you get a hold of us, don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

So please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.