

Program Transcripts

June 2021



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

June 2021

Topics subject to change without notice

JUNE 6 – PEACE WITH GOD

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). In this lesson, we’re exploring the blessing of having peace with God, peace with others, and peace within ourselves.

JUNE 13 – YOU CAN HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

Many worry they can never live the Christian life and have eternal life in heaven. They have allowed their sinful past to discourage them and think God would never want them, but God wishes everyone to be saved.

JUNE 20 – THE LOVE OF GOD

If we could but grasp how deeply God loves us, it would change our hearts and our lives. In fact, Scripture describes God’s love as so great it surpasses knowledge. No one loves you like the Lord Jesus.

JUNE 27 – THE GRACE OF GOD

Someone said grace is “God’s Redemption At Christ’s Expense.” The grace of God can do marvelous things in your life. It can give you hope and set you on a new path of life and serving the Lord with joy.

Peace with God

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.” Today, we’re looking at the value of peace with God. When people follow the will of God, they find their spiritual lives getting richer and fuller. When people ignore God or rebel against Him, they find what Solomon found in the book of Ecclesiastes: “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.” To have peace with God, peace within, and peace with others is essential to true joy in life. This explains our commitment to Christ and to His will.

On the evening of January 2, 2015, several in the family gathered around my mother’s room for the last time. She was suffering terribly from congestive heart failure and could not lie down. We tried to comfort her and prayed with her. After we expressed our love to her, she said she loved us. We asked her if there was anything she wanted or needed. Her last words were “peace, peace.” She passed away later that night and is with the Lord. At nearly 96 years of age, she had been a Christian for more than 80 years.

Few things in life are as precious as peace, the harmony of body, soul, and spirit, which is essential to a truly happy life. First Peter 3:10-12 quotes from Psalm 34:12-16: “The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and his ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” Do you seek peace and pursue it? We need peace with God, peace within, and peace with others.

Our reading today comes from Romans 5:1-5, and emphasizes the value of peace.

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 grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation bring about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Let’s pray together. “Father, we’re thankful that through the blood of Jesus we can have peace because of the forgiveness of our sins, and have confidence in Your promises that they are true. Father, we’re thankful that You help us through each day. Give us strength to be obedient to Your will always. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

You’ll never have true peace, until you have peace with God, the God of peace. The peace the Lord offers is a peace which brings us freedom from sin and guilt and provides that inner harmony that comes from knowing that we’re saved, redeemed, and reconciled to God. You can lie down at night and know that you’re living in the grace of God. David, inspired by the Holy Spirit and speaking from personal experience, wrote, “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit” (Psalm 32:1-2).

Isaiah 26:3 says about God, “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.” God keeps faithful Christians in perfect peace. Perfect peace doesn’t mean that you don’t have struggles or worries. You may have some trouble in your life; but when you pray, you can find the peace of God. Philippians 4:6-7 promises this, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

In Christ, thinking right and living right matters. Devoting yourself to the way of the Lord will bring you joy and peace. Philippians 4:8-9 says, “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there

is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things that you've learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." Oh, we want the God of peace to be with all of us.

Please take this teaching seriously. What you set your mind on today will determine what your whole disposition will be. If you dwell on the dishonorable, the wrong, the impure, the ugly, what is of disrepute, and that which has no virtue and nothing worthy of praise, then your day will be filled with complaints and criticism that will rob you of any joy or peace. If you miss a day without the joy we have in Christ, the grace and love He brings us, and the hope of heaven, you've missed what really matters spiritually. There's no substitute for a joyful and peaceful relationship with Jesus Christ.

Set your heart on serving the Lord. Learn the truth, focus on God's teaching, listen to the Lord, and stop thinking something is better out there than what you have in Christ. Nothing compares with the wisdom and the ways of the Lord. Look to His example and follow it, if you want the God of peace to be with you. The Jewish king Asa, rather than trusting in the Lord God, relied on the king of Aram to save him from Egypt. Hanani the seer reminded Asa, "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His" (2 Chronicles 16:9). Whatever your struggle in life, you have no better support than what God can give you. Listen to God and follow His way!

Jeremiah watched the Jewish people ignore the God of the Bible and compromise with the gods of other nations. They thought they could live as they pleased, worship other gods, and ignore the way of the Lord and then still enjoy the favor of God. Jeremiah described the people, "'Be appalled, O heavens, at this, And shudder, be very desolate,' declares the LORD. For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:12-13). You can't find a life better than the life devoted to the will of God. The way of God brings joy, peace, and prosperity to those who follow it.

Solomon admonished his son, "My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments; For length of days and years of life And peace they will add to you. Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute, In the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body, And refreshment to your bones" (Proverbs 3:1-8). We all would do well to trust in the Lord and not lean on our own understanding. God knows what we don't know, and He can bless us with wisdom that will bless our lives. We must listen to God.

God punished the Jews by allowing the Babylonians to conquer them. Sadly, the Jews thought God would never punish them for their sins. Jeremiah 6:13-14 explains, "For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is greedy for gain, And from the prophet even to the priest, Everyone deals falsely. They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace." Only the Lord can heal the brokenness of sin; false prophets, and false teaching can only give us false hope. They cannot bring us closer to God.

They, that is, those Jewish leaders were presumptuous then, and I tell you some are being presumptuous now, thinking they can live in sin and slander the ways of God. You can't mock God, mock His ways, or mock His morals and expect God to bless you. "'There is no peace for the wicked,' says the LORD" (Isaiah 48:22). When people choose to follow sin, their lives become much harder. Perhaps you remember the words of the apostle Paul, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Galatians 6:7-8). The devil loves to deceive us with sin, and in time we'll lie to ourselves that something God calls

sin isn't really a sin. People still reap what they sow; and if you make sin your way of life, you'll only reap corruption and miss out on eternal life.

Let's determine to be peacemakers, making peace with God by coming to Him for forgiveness, making peace within ourselves, and making peace with others. The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). When we learn the joy of peace in God's forgiveness, it helps us to forgive and to be at peace with ourselves. The Lord Jesus said, "Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another" (Mark 9:50).

Let's consider how we speak to each other and how we speak about each other. Ephesians 4:29 warns us, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear." I fear many never give a second thought about how crude and offensive their speech has become. Ephesians 5:4 says, "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving."

Some fail to speak kindly to others but must shout with anger. We mustn't let anger cause us to abuse others with our words or with our actions. Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person." Some folks speak their mind without any regard to how it may hurt or offend others.

Peacemakers know how to apologize when they offend. They also know how to repent of their wrong and not repeat it. Peacemakers also know how to forgive another, when they have been offended. When a person repents and is forgiven by God, God no longer holds that sin against him. When we forgive those who sin against us, we must let the offense go. Many are quick and willing to accuse and ruin another person, but hardly willing to forgive a penitent person. The Lord Jesus said, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

Peacemakers follow the words of the apostle Paul, "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3). If you worship God on the Lord's day and then act like the devil the rest of the week, you aren't walking in a manner worthy of your calling. In fact, your behavior brings you shame.

Instead let's act with all humility and gentleness. An arrogant person will have few friends. Let's treat others with gentleness and kindness. Philippians 4:5 says, "Let your gentle spirit be made known to all men. The Lord is near." Some people get upset over the smallest problem and take it out on others. Bear with one another in love, because the Lord is watching. We all face annoying situations that we can't change; let's endure them with loving patience, just as the Lord is patient and loving with us.

James 1:2-4 encourages us: "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." We can't change many things, but we can decide how we will react to various trials. We can let our troubles ruin our lives or we can grow spiritually by setting our minds on God's will and overcoming the spiritual challenge of that trial. Tough times produce patience, the ability to bear up under tough circumstances. We can endure, because the Lord helps us endure. Patience helps us become mature Christians, and we can count on His help to bring this perfect result. Faithful Christians never walk alone!

Some offensive people are hard to endure because of their evil ways. Romans 12:18-21 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved,

but leave room for the wrath of God, for it's written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. 'But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he's thirsty, give him drink; for in so doing you'll heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

When Paul faced hard times, he said, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" Romans 8:31-32). Peace comes from knowing God's love.

Let's pray together. "Heavenly father, we are so thankful that You have loved us every day of our lives and love us down to this time. Help us to be at peace with a grace and forgiveness that You offer, and help us to be kind to those who are around us. And Father, we're thankful for the love that You've given us to forgive our sins. Bless us and be with us. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Isaiah 9:6 calls Jesus the "Prince of Peace." That's why we go to the Lord for His wisdom. James 3:13-18 says, "Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

You can follow worldly ways with bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, or you can come to the Lord and find rest for your souls. You can live with disorder and every evil thing, or you can live full of mercy and in peace. Let's remember that we reap what we sow. A righteous life brings joy and peace, but a worldly life is filled with strife and misery.

Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." If you desire peace with God, you must realize that it comes only through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is salvation in no one else. So repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism is an immersion in water. When you're baptized, God washes away your sins, adds you to His church, and causes you to be born into His family. You'll never regret coming into the Lord and doing the right thing!

We do ask that you focus your heart on God today by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. There's probably a church of Christ in your area. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one.

You Can Have Eternal Life

Many worry they can never live the Christian life and have eternal life in heaven. Today, our message is this: you can come to Christ and have eternal life. The Lord's Way is not only the way to heaven, not only the right way, it's the best way to live. God will bless us with an abundant life when we follow Him. He's made His way available to every person through the scriptures. His grace is open to all.

Hope is to the soul what breath is to the body. You simply can't live without hope. Many years ago, while knocking doors seeking people to study the Bible with me, I met a woman who believed that God would not hear any of her prayers. "They don't go above the ceiling," she said. "God just doesn't care about me and isn't interested in me. Do you think there is any hope for me?" I told her there was hope for her then, and I'm saying to you there's hope for you now. You can find God and you can go to heaven! That's the greatest news you or I will ever hear. There is hope!

G. K. Chesterton said, "There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as the expectation of something better tomorrow." We all live in hope. Life here on this earth may be good, but it's not perfect. We wish for something better, something purer, kinder, stronger, and more lasting. Man is desperate for something better for many reasons. We live in an imperfect world and know one day we're going to die. This imperfect world is filled with sin, disease, ignorance, poverty, and prejudice. We all long for peace and love and security! We hope life will be better than what we have now. We want an abundant, eternal life with God!

Our reading today comes from Peter's first letter, chapter 1, verses 17 through 21.

If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

I'm thankful that we have the Lord Jesus who is our hope, and what we look forward to in eternity.

Let's pray together. "Father, we're thankful for the gift of Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was able to redeem us and give us reconciliation, so that we could live with You and with our Lord forever and ever. May Your name always be praised, and help us always to be obedient to Your will. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Job asked the question "If a man dies, will he live again?" (Job 14:14). Is there anything beyond this life? Is heaven real? Is there any hope that life beyond this life will be any better than what we already know? The answer is yes, a thousand times yes! God's plan for us all is to bless us richly. Jesus died on the cross so that you could go to heaven! He lived His life on this earth so that you might know how to live the very best kind of life, free from the destructive things that arise from sin. Everything about Jesus Christ breathes hope and life and good and love. The joy of Christianity is found in the hope that it brings.

The problem for many is not whether God is willing to forgive them but whether they can live the life of a Christian. More than a few times, I've met people who believed they could never live up to Christian standards. They believe their past is so evil that they have no hope of salvation. If that's not enough, some churches teach the false idea that God arbitrarily selects those He wants to save and He rejects all others. They actually teach that no one can change his eternal destiny; that God has already decided who is saved

and who is lost. If that's the case, why did Jesus come to this earth preaching repentance? Why did He preach to all?

Jesus Himself said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should 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" (John 3:16-17). This passage has a "whoever" in it. Whoever believes can have eternal life. Jesus came to save not to judge. The reason Jesus commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to all is because God wants all people to be saved. They can be saved if they're willing to come to Him penitently in faith and obey the gospel! There is hope for every person, everyone!

The Hebrew writer said, "But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death, and how He was crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9). Jesus died for every single individual, every man, every woman, every boy, and every girl. The idea that Jesus died for some but not for others denies what the Scriptures say and it mocks what Jesus did on the cross. The apostle John, in 1 John 2:1-2, agrees with the Hebrew writer. He states in very clear terms that Jesus died for every person in the world. "My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." The word "propitiation" refers to Jesus as our "atoning sacrifice." His death on the cross atoned for our sins. God punished Jesus for your sins. Jesus took the punishment that was due to you and me for the evil things that we've done. We didn't have to force an unwilling God to provide the way of salvation. God, in his grace and love, gives us freedom from sin through the blood of Jesus.

Jesus' death came at a very high price for the Father and for Jesus himself. One can only imagine the pain in the heart of the Father to watch his Son Jesus die cruelly upon the cross. The Father observed every evil thing done to His Son. He was there when Jesus was beaten and mocked. He heard the slander and the way they laughed at an innocent Jesus. He heard the crowds shout "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" He was there when Jesus was scourged. He saw the wagging heads and the nails pierce his hands and feet. He watched as they suspended Jesus between heaven and earth on the cross. He watched as they gambled over his clothes.

God heard Jesus' cry, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" The Father did not spare His Son but put the punishment upon this perfect sacrifice. Paul said, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus died so that you could become righteous. He was innocent, and we are sinners. But God put your sins and mine on that righteous One, so that we might leave our guilt and become righteous. Such love is far beyond what any of us deserve or even understand. God has given us a great gift—the most precious gift—His Son.

The gift that Jesus gave was a very personal one. He gave his brow to a crown of thorns, his back to the scarring whip, his hands and feet to the nails, and his side to a spear. He gave up his life at the young age of 33, so that you could live forever. Jesus was nailed to a cross to die. He would not be taken down alive. His last words were, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). God would never have sacrificed His Son Jesus if there were no hope for you. He sacrificed his Son Jesus to give the greatest hope that you could imagine, a hope for life, for righteousness, for forgiveness, and for heaven itself with eternal life.

At this point someone says, "Well Phil, you don't understand. I've been a very wicked person. I've done terrible things and don't deserve to go to heaven." Sin is a terrible thing, and none of us deserves to go to heaven for our goodness. But I would say to you, no matter what you've done, no matter how you've lived, and no matter how you feel about yourself, "God still loves you and sent His Son to die for your sins too. There is hope for every soul who will believe in the Lord Jesus and come to Him penitently and obediently. The blood of Jesus is greater than all our sin. You can go to heaven, whoever you are."

Paul writes to the church at Corinth a message that we all need to hear. This was a young church, when he wrote to them. Many of them came from a very sinful past. He wrote them, however, with hope. The sins they committed were terrible, but the grace of God gave them an opportunity to change, and gave them hope. Paul said, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, (none of these) will inherit the kingdom of God. (Then he looked at them and said) Such were some of you" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

If this passage had stopped here there would be little hope to tell you about, but the passage doesn't stop there. Even though some of these people had committed terrible sins, there's hope for them. At this point it says, "but," which means there is more truth to be told: "but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." God washed them, sanctified them (made them holy), and justified them (declared them righteous or judged them as innocent). He did this in the name of Jesus Christ, because of the power of the blood of Jesus to change lives and destinies.

If the Father could embrace the penitent prodigal son, if the God of heaven could hear wicked King Manasseh's prayer, if God could forgive penitent David's murder and adultery, if God could save the chief of sinners Saul of Tarsus, God can forgive and save you. You're not worse than they were. Jesus, the Lamb of God, came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Make no mistake, both the Father in heaven and the Lord Jesus knew how sinful this world was and is still. They're not naïve. While God hates sin, God loves you. While God hates evil, God loves the people that He created enough to send Jesus to die for those sins.

As we've mentioned, Paul says "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). The Father and the Lord Jesus wanted to demonstrate their love to us. Forgiveness is not just talk to them. They acted in love to forgive those who are helpless, ungodly and sinners. They wanted you to know their hearts. They love you even when you have not loved them. Jesus paid a price for his enemies.

God's love ought to wake us up. God wants to help all of us go to heaven. He's paid the price for our sins by crucifying His Son. He's given us the Bible to tell the story that Jesus has given His life, and has built His church, and given its members the responsibility of telling the gospel story again and again, to every person. But God's not going to twist our arms, making us respond to Him. He's going to open the door but not force us to go through. We must decide to respond to His love and grace by loving Him, by trusting in Him, by repenting of our sins, and by taking up our crosses to follow Jesus each day. God has made His commitment to you. Will you make a commitment to Him?

Put the Lord first in your life. If you want the hope of heaven, don't keep the Lord at arm's length. Many people become ashamed of themselves and rather than draw near to God in penitence and obedience act like Adam and Eve and hide themselves from God. Then they wonder why God seems so far away. God

has taken the first step in offering His Son on your behalf. He's holding out His hand for you to take it and come to Him in obedience to the gospel. Don't turn the Lord away. He is your hope. He is your salvation. He is your life. That's why getting close to Him is so very, very important.

The Lord Jesus said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus invites us to come to Him and promises us an easy yoke and a light burden. Christianity is not an impossible faith. One can live the Christian life, and in fact millions have followed Christ!

You can go to heaven. You can be the Christian that you want to be. You can live victoriously, faithfully, lovingly, and positively serving God and loving every minute of it! You were created to be a child of God who loves God! You were created in Christ Jesus for good works not evil. The Lord Jesus believed in you enough to die for your sins, so that you could become a servant of God. Don't sell yourself short. You can, you can, you can go to heaven!

Let's pray. "Father, we're thankful for the blood of Jesus our Lord that was shed on the cross so that we might have freedom from sin and might become Your children. Father, help us to love You, to serve You, and to be obedient to Your will always. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Don't let Satan discourage you by thinking, "I can't live the Christian life." Satan is not interested in your going to heaven. He wants to discourage you from following Christ. Of course, you can become a Christian! Don't let anyone tell you it's impossible. You can be God's child with God's help. You can go to heaven, and you can go for an eternity! You can find all the joy of living close to God, the hope of heaven, and the love of God in Christ Jesus, if you draw near to Him and obey Him as His child.

Drawing close to God begins with faith. Trust Him enough to do what He asks of you in the Word. Trust Him enough to let go of your sins—to give them up completely and begin living as Christ teaches us. You can't hang on to the world with one hand and try to please the Lord with the other. The message of Jesus to a lost and dying world is trust in Him and repent of your sins. You cannot have access to the blood of Christ that cleanses you until you're united with Him in baptism. Ananias told Saul, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." (Acts 22:16).

If you wish to have newness of life, be baptized into Christ. Paul said, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? And therefore we've been 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 have newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4). If you want the newness of life, trust the Lord, repent of your sins, and be baptized into Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God today by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. There's probably a church of Christ that's in your area. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one.

The Love of God

If we could but grasp how greatly God loves us, it would change our lives. No one loves you like the Lord Jesus. From start to finish the Bible is God's supreme story of love and redemption. The more we read the Bible, the more we can understand the heart of God, the God who created us and sustains our very existence. Though mankind can be hard to love, God has never faltered in wanting to bless those who seek His face and draw near. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

God hasn't hidden His love for us; God displayed it beyond dispute in the death of Jesus upon the cross. First John 4:8-10 says, "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Though we were lost and unable to save ourselves by ourselves, God acted! Christ willingly died for our sins and washed us clean in His blood. Such love is truly beyond comprehension.

Jesus bore the cross to atone for our sins and open the door to a loving relationship with our Father in Heaven. The Lord loved us when we were weak and couldn't save ourselves. He helped us when we were ungodly and had little thought of Him. He died for us while we were sinners, who had offended Him. Christ loved our souls when we didn't deserve it, understand it, or appreciate it. Such amazing love!

Our reading today comes from Ephesians 3:14-19, and contains one of the prayers of the apostle Paul.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Oh, what a wonderful prayer. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help us to know the love of Christ, and the love that You have shown to us each day of our lives. Give us strength and help us in every way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Old Testament uses a rich and amazing word to describe the love that God has for all of His people. The Bible says that God is abounding in this kind of love. Some versions call it "steadfast love," some "lovingkindness," and some simply "mercy."

Psalms 103:8-14 says, "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust."

"Steadfast" love is the deepest and best love; it's the kind of true love that doesn't let go and doesn't fail. It's loyal, faithful, kind, and good. It's compassionate and merciful. This type of love is built upon a voluntary covenant, an everlasting commitment to those who are in His favor. Psalm 86:15 says, "But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." Because the God of Heaven is kind and good, He's willing to pardon and forgive our sins, if we will remain faithful to Him.

When you consider all that Jesus gave up in bearing the cross to save us from sin, you can't doubt His love. If anything, the magnificent love of Jesus was stubborn, unyielding, and utterly unselfish. Jesus didn't merely give up something; He sacrificed Himself completely. On the cross the innocent Lord Jesus sacrificed everything. He kept silent and did nothing, while men slandered Him, falsely accused Him, condemned Him, scourged Him, mocked Him, and crucified Him. First Peter 2:22-24 says, "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he didn't revile in return; when he suffered, he didn't threaten, but He continued entrusting himself to him who judges righteously or justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."

Jesus bore the punishment and death for our sins, sins that we should've borne the punishment personally, we should have borne it in our own body, but He personally bore it in his body. The Lord laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). His suffering was not only physical, it was also spiritual. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God." Everything that Jesus did He did out of an undeniable and pure love for us. Can you imagine what it must have been like for Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane to know that he would suffer scourging and crucifixion? According to Matthew 26:38 Jesus was greatly troubled and sorrowful, even to the point of death. Luke 22:44 says, "And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

They didn't simply bind Jesus, they nailed His hands and feet to a rugged cross and suspended Him in the most agonizing position. They crucified Him. He prayed that the Father would forgive them. They mocked Him, insulted Him, and did their very worst to Him. Through all of this suffering, Jesus remained quiet; He uttered no threats. He didn't even revile them in return. He didn't call for the twelve legions of angels to wipe them out. No, the Lord's stubborn love lasted for six long hours on the cross. No matter how ugly men were to Jesus, Jesus' steadfast love held Him to the cross. He loved us to the very end.

First Timothy 2:3-4 says, "This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Again, Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." God doesn't want anyone to be lost, but our heavenly Father grants us the freedom to choose Him or to choose sin. You can't make someone love you by force. God wants us to know Him, to know the truth, and to love Him freely for Who He is. This means we must be free to choose Him or to reject Him. God loves everyone, but His blessing and grace are reserved for those who choose to love Him. We must freely and lovingly choose to believe in Him, to repent of our sins, and to follow Him.

Occasionally people speak of God's "unconditional love." Yes, I know that Jesus said that God "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). God is certainly good to all! Jesus didn't bear the cross just for us because we were so good and deserved it. No, Jesus died for us because we were sinful and needed saving. In that sense, He unconditionally took the initiative; but we cannot for that reason assume that to remain in God's love we can do whatever we wish. We can't assume that God's love for us will continue to bless us if we turn from Him.

The Lord's steadfast love, His covenant love of promise, has conditions. The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. And whoever doesn't love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me" (John 14:23-24). God promises His love and abiding presence to those who love Him and keep His words. A person who doesn't love God won't care about keeping God's words.

It's fantasy to think that we can sin all we wish and still count on the grace of God. It's fantasy to think we can rebel against God and still be right with Him. It's fantasy to think we can remake God in our own image and still please Him. It's fantasy to think we can rewrite His commandments, ignore His holiness, corrupt His character, and forget His justice, but still count on His love.

Hebrews 10:26-31 says, "For if we go on sinning deliberately (willingly, willfully) after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." We must never take the love and grace of God for granted. It's too valuable to squander.

You might be thinking at this point, "Well Phil, don't you remember what the Bible says? God is love." Yes, I know 1 John 4:8, but picking a passage out of the Bible and ignoring other verses that are just as inspired isn't accurately handling the word of truth. We shouldn't understand 1 John 4:8 without also consulting 1 John 1:5-7. These verses say: "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."

As J. I. Packer said in his book, *Knowing God*, "the God who is love is first and foremost light, and sentimental ideas of his love as an indulgent, benevolent softness, divorced from moral standards and concerns, must therefore be ruled out from the start. God's love is holy love. The God whom Jesus made known is not a God who is indifferent to moral distinctions, but a God who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, a God whose ideal for his children is that they should 'be perfect. . . as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5:48). He will not take into his company any person, however orthodox in mind, who will not follow after holiness of life."

Hebrews 12:14 says, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Some might wonder if God loves us, why would He insist on our living holy lives? Some think that if God loved us, He wouldn't demand that we live by all those rules, but let's stop here and think. Is God trivial? Are His laws petty? No. God insists that His people live holy lives so as to protect us and give us peace. We should consider the righteous way of life that Jesus Christ commands as a precious gift, not a burden or something petty or trivial. God isn't being mean when He asks us to treat others kindly or to refrain from evil. Everyone benefits when we live good lives. God's goodness is one of the ways that He shows His love.

When we Christians sin against Him by breaking His commandments, He disciplines us with love. Godly discipline is not abuse; it's training given for our good. Proverbs 3:11-12 says, "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." The book of Hebrews explains that God "disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:10-11). God disciplines our sins so that we may share His holiness and live with Him. He acts for the long-term, and the long term good, not simply for the moment.

Our society despises discipline, thinking love leaves people alone to do anything they want. They believe speaking against any behavior is mean-spirited and judgmental. But God speaks against sin out of love not

meanness. Remaining silent about sinful behaviors that ruin lives is far more cruel than simply warning someone. God speaks out against sin because He cares. He wants to bless us.

Why is this important? Because the Lord created you and me for more than what takes place in this life. God loves you and is interested in your life here on earth and in the hereafter. He wants you to live with Him forever in heaven. Along with Paul we pray "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."

Let's pray together. "O, Father, help us to trust in Your teaching, to follow Your ways, to love You with all our heart, and soul and mind and strength, and to do Your will. In Jesus' name, Amen."

The Lord Jesus touched lives throughout His ministry. He healed the sick, the lepers, the blind, and the deaf. He raised the dead, walked on water, stilled the storm, and fed the multitudes. When men did their worst to Him, He prayed for their forgiveness. Peter described Jesus in Acts 10:38 as One who "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." The Lord Jesus is still doing good in our lives and blessing us richly. He leads us out of bondage to sin so that we can become children of God and live in righteousness. He leads us out of distress into hope, out of doubt into faith, and out of apathy into love.

We need the love of God in our lives every day! The more we grasp how much He loves us, the more we'll determine to demonstrate that same kind of lasting, committed love. Knowing the love of God will make us better fathers and husbands, better mothers and wives, better citizens, better children, and better friends. God's love teaches us patience, kindness, compassion, forgiveness, forbearance, and loyalty. Love motivates us to be holy and faithful. It teaches us how to love the truth and live with integrity and virtue. We need God's love to become better people.

The love of God should make you want to become a Christian. You become a Christian by placing your trust in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, turning away from sin, confessing Christ before others, and by being baptized into Christ. When you're baptized, the Lord washes away your sins and adds you to His family the church. Nothing you will do today is more important than becoming a Christian. Won't you become one today?

Focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. There's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be glad to help you find one.

The Grace of God

Someone said grace is “God’s Redemption At Christ’s Expense.” I’m excited today to tell you what the grace of God can do in your life. I believe you’ll get excited too. We know the Lord’s Way is the right way, and we search the Scriptures, because we want the Bible to lead us to the truth.

When people say salvation is a gift, some think it’s too good to be true. They figure they must earn their way to heaven by doing some great thing. They can’t imagine God giving us His blessing, the forgiveness of our sins, and a home in heaven.

Someone has taken the word “GRACE” and made the acrostic “God’s Redemption At Christ’s Expense.” This is a fairly accurate description of grace. The word grace (in Greek, *charis*) means “favor.” One who has the love, blessing and favor of another may be said to be in the “good graces” of his benefactor. The distinguishing factors of God’s grace are twofold: first, God’s grace is a gift and is not earned; and second, God’s grace is undeserved and unmerited. Usually we think of having to earn a place of favor with others, but God gives us his favor as a gift.

God accepts, and loves and blesses the person who stands in His grace. In spite of one’s past, when a person is washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, he stands in a right relationship and the favor of God. Even though we deserve to be punished for our sins, God graciously forgives us and no longer holds our transgressions against us. In Christ we become new creatures, transformed into children of God, and transferred into the kingdom of God. In Christ God hears our prayers and gives us every spiritual blessing. Living in God’s favor is a precious gift that we must never cheapen or ignore.

Our reading today comes from Titus 3:3-7, where Paul describes the great salvation we have by the grace of God.

For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Oh what a wonderful gift.

Let’s pray together. “Father, we’re thankful for our salvation that comes by Your kindness, and by Your mercy and grace. Father help us to never take it for granted, but to love and to serve You always. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

You can’t earn God’s grace; it’s a gift. In Romans 4:4, Paul says “Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.” Grace is not a wage for our labors, a prize for winning a competition, or an award for meritorious service. Grace is a gift. When a man can earn no wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award, yet receives a wondrous gift, he has been given unmerited favor and undeserved kindness. This is what God in his love has done for us through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:1:10 helps us to understand how God has loved us and saved us. Paul first describes what it means to be lost: he said, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the

body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” Sin causes spiritual death and separation from God. Sin isn't merely inappropriate; sin kills one spiritually.

However, God has a solution to sin. Verse 4, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” The most wonderful sections of the Bible begin with the word “but.” We were spiritually dead, but that's not the end of the story. God, rich in mercy and love, saved us by his grace.

Verses 8-10 explain, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it's the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” We are saved by grace through faith. It takes both. We're not saved by grace alone or by faith alone, but by grace through faith. Grace reflects all that God does in our lives to bring us home to Him. Faith reflects our response of trust, love, and obedience to His grace.

God's grace works through faith. God desires that we appreciate his great gift by responding in faith. Paul said, “For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, and He did it by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:3-5). God chose to wash us and renew us as an act of loving kindness. How does He wash us?

This washing that regenerates and renews is when we are born again of water and the Spirit in baptism. By faith, when we repent and are baptized, God washes us clean from sin and causes us to be born again into His family. The faith that matters to God is a faith willing to trust God and accept His teaching. In baptism we accept His blessing by obediently responding to Him. Galatians 3:26-27 says, “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

The faith that saves is the one that responds to grace with an obedient faith. We're sons of God by faith, but this is a faith that will repent and be baptized. God causes us to be born again when we “put on Christ” in baptism. God grants all the blessings and favor that goes with being a Christian in baptism. What a great God we have! Baptism is not, as Paul said, some work we do to earn salvation. It's how we lovingly obey Him in faith.

Obedience is not the same thing as earning. Let's say I had a treasure worth \$100,000 hidden in my backyard, and I told you that I would give it to you, provided you go and dig it up. Do you think that a few minutes of digging earned \$100,000 for you? You met a condition for a gift by obeying my words. You didn't earn the gift, you merely received it by doing what I asked you to do. That's how it is in salvation. We don't earn salvation by repenting or being baptized; we merely comply with God's conditions for receiving the gift.

In Numbers 21, the children of Israel while wandering in the wilderness came to the land of Edom, where they grumbled and spoke against God, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food.” The Lord became angry and “sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. The people repented and confessed their sin. They asked Moses to intercede for them with God, and Moses asked God to remove the serpents.

And then the LORD said to Moses, "You make a fiery serpent, and you set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live." Moses made a bronze serpent, he set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived (Numbers 21:8-9). All they had to do was look by faith on the serpent. They didn't earn their healing, but they did have to comply with God's instructions. Obeying is not the same as earning. Obedience is an act of faith and trust that God will keep his promises.

In John 9, Jesus encountered a man who was born blind. Jesus wanted to heal this man and show the power of God, so He spat on the ground, He made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, "You go wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and he washed, and came back seeing" (John 9:6-7). Who would argue that washing in a pool is the same as earning our eyesight? The man earned nothing, but he believed strongly enough to do what Jesus told him to do. Faith is not merely accepting what God says, it's trusting enough to do exactly what the Lord asks us to do!

Let me make it very clear that the Bible does not teach that baptism is how we earn salvation. The Bible does teach baptism is necessary to salvation—just as looking on the brass serpent was necessary; just as washing in the pool of Siloam was necessary.

God tests us to see if we really love Him and believe in Him. These tests are God's conditions, not ours. He gave them to us. When we meet God's conditions, we say to Him, "We trust You enough to obey Your will. We know that You will keep Your promises." God's grace is so wonderful, and we must never cheapen it or presume upon it. People presume on God's grace by changing the conditions or by setting those conditions aside. They presume God will bless them even if they fail to respond rightly to Him.

Some people think the grace of God means I can respond to Him any way that I want. They think grace has no conditions. Do you think the blind man would have argued about doing things his own way, if he really wanted to see? Do you think the Israelites would have argued with Moses about looking at the serpent? Why then does anyone argue about repentance or baptism? Wouldn't it be better to trust God and obey?

The New Testament contains the new covenant of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This new covenant contains what God promises His people and what God expects of His people. In this covenant God is the benefactor who gives more to us than we can ever repay. If we count our blessings, they include salvation, forgiveness of sin, eternal life, the right to pray, and sonship. If we lived for thousands of years, we could never repay God for what He's done for us. God doesn't expect repayment. He expects love, loyalty, and faithful obedience from His children.

Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). In verse 23 Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." Faithful obedience is not legalism or works righteousness or anything else but love. Paul said, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). When we love the Lord and want to please Him, we're willing to do everything He asks and do it the way that He wants it done. We won't argue with Him about it.

So, when the Lord asks us to believe, we're willing to trust Him and His Word completely. When the Lord asks us to repent of our sins, love turns us away from sin that offends God. We couldn't imagine continuing to offend the God who has been so good to us and blessed us. When Jesus asks us to confess Him before others, we will gladly say to the world that Jesus is the Son of God. He is Lord and Christ!

When Jesus says to us in Mark 16:16, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved," we believe Him. We're baptized because we trust, we love, and we want to please God. The Bible says, "Therefore we have been 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" (Romans 6:4). If the baptism of the New Testament is immersion, and it is, then I will be immersed without question so as to please God.

Acts 2:38 commands us to "be baptized." That command is in the passive voice not the active. The active voice is used when the subject performs an action, but the passive voice is used when the subject is being acted upon by someone else. In baptism God is active in saving us; and we are passive, receiving God's grace and forgiveness. Let God's grace work on you in baptism. Let God cleanse your soul, bury you and raise you with Christ, give you newness of life, add you to His church. God does all this when we're baptized into Christ and His death.

Some say, "You don't have to be baptized to be saved!" But they miss the point. God works His grace on us through baptism into Christ. If you love Christ Jesus, and I know you do, let Him save you through the washing that regenerates. God gives you that washing in baptism.

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, help us always to be obedient to Your will, help us to trust in You and not argue, help us to love You with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and to give ourselves fully and freely to You. In Jesus' name, Amen."

God gives laws for our good, not to punish or enslave us. He doesn't dream up foolish laws just to prove that He's in charge. No! God gives us laws to protect us from troubles in life. Even God's laws are gracious to us. As a loving parent God cares and is concerned about our welfare. Psalm 103:13 says, "Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him." Everything God does He does to favor and bless us. When we understand that we'll see God more clearly.

Titus 2:11-14 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." God wants to bless you richly by guiding you with His Word! Let Him.

Where are you in your life? Do you have a close, loving, peaceful relationship with God? Are you at peace in your soul? God hasn't left you; it may be that you have left God. You can draw close to Him again by trusting in Him and obeying His Word. Believe in the Lord Jesus, repent of your sins, step out and confess Him before others, and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2: 38). It may be that as a Christian brother or sister you've wandered away from God and the church and need to come back home. Let God's grace back into your life.

We ask that you focus your heart on God today by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. There's probably a church of Christ that's near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be glad to help you find one.