

Program Transcripts

March 2025



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY [®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

March 2025

Topics subject to change without notice

MARCH 2 – FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Have you considered what it means to have all your sins forgiven? There is no greater blessing than knowing nothing stands in the way of your relationship with God and having the hope of eternal life in heaven.

MARCH 9 – TRUE KNOWLEDGE

There are many things people can know in this world. Sadly many believe are deceived and believe a lie. If what we believe is not true, we could face God with a false hope. The Scriptures bless us with a true knowledge of God and His will.

MARCH 16 – GOD’S ALL SUFFICIENT WORD

The Bible provides all we need to know to have life and godliness. It provides the spiritual food we need and the instruction for how to live and how to please God. God’s word is inspired, inerrant, and all-sufficient.

MARCH 23 – IS GOD DEAD?

In the 1880s the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche posed the idea that God is dead. He was not denying God’s existence but claiming God had died in the hearts of those who once believed in and followed Him.

MARCH 30 – SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Just as God never intended for people to remain as children physically, so He never intended for Christians to remain as children spiritually. God wants His people to mature and grow in their faith and love.

The Forgiveness of Sins

Everyone who reaches the age where they understand right from wrong and then breaks the commandments of God has committed sin. Romans 3 and verse 10 says, "There is none righteous, not even one." Verse 23 says that, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Paul said in Romans 7 and verse 9, "I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came (that is when he understood the truth), sin became alive and I died." When one comes to know the teaching of God and sins, one dies spiritually. He separates himself from the grace of God. Romans 6 and verse 23 says "the wages of sin is death"; and that hasn't changed. It's still true.

You know at some point each person realizes the awful evil of his own sin. It's easy to see the wickedness of others. We see their guilt and shame; but it's difficult to admit the same evil in our own lives. We must admit, "I have sinned against God, and I am no longer innocent." Much of life is spent ignoring the reality of our sins. We deny that we've sinned or we imagine sin is no big deal. We blame others or we blame God. God didn't make us sinners, we choose to sin. And we're all accountable to God and responsible for our sins.

Our reading comes from Isaiah chapter 53 verses 4 to 6 and talks about all the things that our Lord Jesus did so that we might be forgiven.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed
Him stricken, Smitten of God,
and afflicted. But He was pierced through
for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being
fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity
of us all To fall on Him.

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray. Father we're thankful that Your Son Jesus paid the ultimate price so that we might have the forgiveness of our sins. We're thankful that He bore our guilt and we are thankful for His love. Help us Heavenly Father to act in obedience and out of love and appreciation for Your Son has done for us. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Mankind often takes God's grace for granted. Some imagine God is a kindly old gentleman who approves whatever we do and never gets angry. Such a God has never existed. God has always known us. Proverbs 15 and verse 3 says that, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good." The prophet Hosea spoke of the evil deeds of Samaria in Hosea 7 and verse 2. And he said, "And they do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds are all around them; They are before My face." God always knows the good and the evil that people do.

It's the tendency of humans to downplay their sins, to think God isn't serious about punishing sin. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:13 to 14, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." Yes the Lord Jesus is the judge of all mankind, and He says that many will be lost but only a few will be saved.

2 Thessalonians 1:6 to 9 was written to Christians who were being afflicted by unbelievers. It says, "For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you (that is you Christians), and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." Sin, ignoring God, and disobeying the gospel will cause people to be lost.

You might say, "My sins aren't that bad"; but you're speaking as a guilty sinner and not as the One sinned against. You may downplay your sins, but your conscience still convicts you. It's not just your conscience; every sin is offensive to God. Have you considered how many times in your life that you have sinned against God? Psalm 130 verses 3 and 4 says and asks, "If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared." David prayed, in Psalm 143 and verse 2, "And do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no man living is righteous." We need the Lord's forgiveness! Without the blood of Jesus, we have no hope of eternal life.

Jesus is the righteous judge (2 Timothy 4 and verse 8). He will judge the sinner and justify the righteous believer. Habakkuk 1:13 says of God, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor." Again Psalm 5 and verse 4 says, "For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You." Hebrews 13 and verse 14 reminds us, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." We become holy when we are washed in the blood of Jesus and cleansed from sin. We can't stand before God as blameless without the blood of Jesus.

Isaiah 59:1 and 2 says that, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." Separation from God not only affects our salvation but also the entirety of our relationship. God doesn't hear the prayer of a person who loves sin. Psalm 66 and verse 18 says that, "If I regard (or I cherish) wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear." Proverbs 15:8 says that, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight."

God doesn't want anyone to be lost; He wants everyone to be saved. And to be saved you have to decide to come to the Lord Jesus and follow Him. Some will consent to do what is right, while others rebel. Their choices matter to God. Isaiah 1:18 to 20 says, "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken. We could wonder why anyone would rebel against the Lord, knowing that only punishment awaits him.

How much better it is for people to follow the Lord, to forsake their sins and to turn to righteousness. Isaiah 55 verses 6 to 7 urges us, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon." When people turn from their wicked ways back to the Lord, the Lord will abundantly pardon. That means He will forgive even a lifetime of sinning and the worst of sins. God's grace is greater than our sins, because the blood of Jesus can wash away all sin.

Colossians 2 verses 12 to 13 reminds us, "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Then he says) When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions." Now if God could raise up Jesus, He can forgive you of all your sins by making you alive with Christ. When we're baptized, we die to that old man of sin and we rise up to walk in newness of life. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." All one's old sins are gone. God no longer holds our sins against us when we are baptized into Christ. In Christ we are new creatures, new people, children of God, saints.

There can't be a greater difference between the difference Christ makes in our lives. Before we become a Christians, we are dead in our sins and transgressions; but after we become a Christians, we are washed clean by the blood of Christ, free from sin, and new creatures filled with hope.

The happiest day of our lives and the best news we'll ever hear is the news that we're forgiven of our sins. David wrote in Psalm 103 verses 8 to 12, "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us." David realized the Lord was merciful and completely removed our sins from Him. And from us when we are forgiven. When God forgives, He does so intentionally and He does it out of love. God's mercy means He has decided not to hold our sins, or transgressions, against us.

The prophet Micah could say in Micah 7 verses 18 to 19, "Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast (that is You God will cast) all their sins Into the depths of the sea." Forgiveness means God no longer holds our sins against us; they're no longer on His mind when He thinks of us. The Lord said in Isaiah 44:22, "I have wiped out your wrongdoings like a thick cloud And your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."

The purpose of forgiveness is to bring about reconciliation. God forgives us so that He can renew a relationship with us. When we sinned we broke a loving relationship with God. When the Lord forgives us in response to our faith, and love, and obedience to His will, He renews that loving relationship with us. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 19 says that, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation." Christ died for our sins and bore the punishment for our guilty souls, so that His sacrificed blood could atone for our sins and reconcile us. His death allowed us to be friends with God again.

I want to be righteous. I want to be right with God and have no stain of sin on my soul. I want to be able to call God my "Father," knowing the blood of Jesus has pardoned my transgressions and opened the door for me to be reconciled, that is right with God, once again. I know I can't change the past. History is history, and it can't be undone. But my past is no longer an obstacle separating my God from my soul. In forgiveness my sin is gone, my guilt is gone, and my shame is gone. I can pray, and God will hear.

Pardon with forgiveness doesn't extinguish a person's past; that can't be done. You can't undo history. The record of what has been done by us of good or evil remains. God doesn't extinguish the deeds of the past. But God did send Jesus to suffer the punishment for our sins on the cross. And so Isaiah 53:5 says, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed." 1 Peter 2 and verse 24 explains that, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." Yes we're healed of the separation from God that our sins caused. His death sets us on a new track of righteous living. We die to sin and live to righteousness.

Forgiveness changes our relationship with the Father, so that the sins are no longer an obstacle to prayer. Instead we are His children and we work for the accomplishment of His purposes. His love and favor now shine on us, and we love Him. We want Him to shine in our lives. We want His will to be done on earth. And humbly we hunger and we thirst for righteousness as we turn from the old life of sin

to a new life of godliness and we enjoy the peace and hope of a right relationship with God. We have life, newness of life, an abundant life, and eternal life with God. And nothing else is so wonderful or grand.

Are you able to say, "My sins, for which I am ashamed, are all forgiven and washed away by the blood of Jesus. My sins are now fully forgiven. The rebellious sinner I once was is now dead to sin, and the person I have become belongs to the Lord Jesus. Can you say that? Can you say I now have my conscience cleared and my guilt removed. I am now at peace with God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ"? Are you living with guilt and shame in your soul or are you free from sin? Can you look in the mirror and smile at the new person you have become.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that Jesus died for our transgressions and sin so that we might be free from them and live a new and glorious and abundant life with You. And Father help us always to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

From the day of Pentecost, the answer to sin, guilt, and shame has been set forth through the first gospel sermon on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and raised by God from the dead. Eyewitnesses knew God raised Jesus and made Him both Lord and Christ. Peter in Acts 2:36 pointed to those who crucified Him. They felt the full weight of sin and guilt. They wondered what they needed to do, because they had sinned against God.

Acts 2:38 to 41 says: Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, (even) as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

Do you need the forgiveness of sins? People aren't forgiven by faith alone but by repenting and being baptized. Baptism isn't a sprinkling; it's an immersion. Baptism isn't for little children; it's for those responsible enough to believe and repent. Now if you were taught salvation comes from some other way than what the apostles taught at Pentecost, then remember God alone is the One who forgives. We must listen to Him. Human councils and traditions aren't God and they can't change God's plan. Get right with God, God's way. You never regret doing the right thing.

True Knowledge

The Bereans were not content to hear the preaching of the apostle Paul. They checked out what they heard by going to the Word of God. Acts 17:11 says, "Now these were more noble-minded than those (of) in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." Many of the Bereans believed in Jesus Christ, but others rejected Paul and the gospel truth. They stirred up the crowds against Paul. I hope and pray you're willing to hear what the Scripture says. I want everyone to know the love of God.

Paul prayed in Ephesians 3:17 to 19 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." When people know the love of God and the truth of God's word, they find true a blessing. And I don't anyone to lose the opportunity of living close to God in this life or in the life to come.

We'll now worship in song, we'll read from Colossians 2:1 to 4, and examine the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that can be found in knowing Christ Jesus.

Our reading today is from Colossians chapter 2 verses 1 through 4. And here the apostle Paul is showing his great love for this young church. Who could be influenced by a lot of things that could hurt them. So he says to them.

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.

Of course that's what we want too is a true knowledge of Jesus Christ. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that we can turn to Your word so that we might know what is true and separate it from the things that are of speculations and falsehood. And Father we pray that we may do Your will always and love You. In Jesus name, Amen.

People of this world have looked at life quite differently than what the true knowledge in Christ teaches us. In many cases people's perspectives and attitudes have followed the wide and easy road that leads to destruction. They feel satisfied with their present life but have lost sight of God and the hereafter. They feel content to take God and salvation for granted. Many are so focused on their own pleasure, they've lost sight of the accountability they have to God. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 11 and verse 9, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment."

Today we're looking at several common ideas that people hold about life and comparing them to the true knowledge revealed in the Word of God. First, some people have chosen to hold only to the "truth that works for me." They are practical, pragmatic. As long as they are happy and avoid trouble, they're content with what they believe. A Christian, on the other hand, seeks to please God. He wants to be a true disciple of Christ and find the truth that sets him free from the curse of sin and lies. Falsehoods lead to false hope. It would be tragic to face God on the last day unprepared and unsaved, realizing that you had enjoyed this life but will be rejected in the life to come. Earthly ways may work for the present, but only following Christ can work for eternity.

Second, some think that we can't know the truth and that there are no absolutes. They think that because we can't know everything, that we can't know anything. Well if we had to know everything, no one could function at all in this world. I don't have to know everything to drive a car, to graduate from college, or to do my job. I do have to know what matters. The Lord Jesus said in John 8:31 to 32 that, "If you abide in my word, (then) you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

The word of God gives us what we need to know to function as Christians. God has revealed what matters and what's profitable. 2 Timothy 3 verses 16 to 17 says that, "All Scripture is inspired (that is God breathed) by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." The inspired word of God teaches us what we need to know, what we must not do, what we need to correct, and how to be people trained in righteousness. God's word is given to bring us to maturity in righteousness and as good servants. We can be functionally everything that God desires through study and implementing the word of God. The Lord hasn't neglected to teach us the words of eternal life. They've always been available in God's word.

Third, some believe in being tolerant and letting others do as they please. Well now this sounds civil and kind, but it ignores the difference between what matters and what doesn't. Many things don't matter, and we shouldn't spend our lives criticizing and judging others over things that don't matter. What God calls sin, however, is different; it matters! God's moral laws aren't meaningless. People often lose sight of the harm of immoral behavior. Sin offends God, it harms others, and condemns the soul. Sin is our enemy. The evil in this world must be opposed, and that's why we have the police, the courts, and the military. Without them, our lives would be filled with chaos and misery.

Now God doesn't give us moral laws for no reason. God's laws are "for our good always" (Deuteronomy 6 and verse 24). You see God is wiser than we are. He knows what harms happen when people break His commandments. People commit sin for pleasure, but they rarely consider the heartbreak it causes others. Lying, cheating, stealing, drunkenness, lust, sexual sins, selfish-ambition, haughty pride, and such things have caused untold pain and misery. When people are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, they turn their hearts from God. 1 Kings 11 and verse 4 says, "For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods (away from God); and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been."

Sin enslaves. And the Lord said in John 8 and verse 34, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." Now slaves of sin will do anything to retain the pleasure of sin. Drug addicts will shame themselves and rob others just to get more drugs. Sadly, some Christians who were once faithful to the Lord choose the pleasures of sin over the Lord. Peter describes this in 2 Peter 2:20 to 22, "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'a dog returns to its own vomit,' and, 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.'" Sin makes us ugly and ashamed; and it separates us from God.

For this reason, because we love the souls of everyone, we cannot remain quiet about sin. God told the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 3:17 to 19, "Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me. When I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand."

Don't despise the person who calls you to repent. He's being faithful to God and loving toward your soul.

Repentance works with the grace of God to bring healing to a lost sinner. The prodigal son only brought harm and shame to himself while he lived in sin. And when he came to his senses, he repented and returned to a life of righteousness. God's grace can forgive our sins, but it doesn't work if we won't repent. Repentance is how we correct our lives and become the people of God, the people God intended for us to be. 2 Peter 3 and verse 9 says that, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

Fourth, some see no place for "institutional religion"; they want spirituality but without being part of a church. While most people believe there is a supernatural power, many have rejected being part of a faith community. A recent Barna survey says that only 20 percent of Americans are "self-identified as Christians who value their faith and attend church at least monthly." While problems with religion is the focus of many, the Scriptures provide a very different view of the church. The church as God intended it to be is quite different from religion in our culture.

The Lord Jesus never recommended the church start a war or kill heretics; those came from men and these men had selfish ambition. Romans 12:17 to 21 teaches: Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 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 is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The Lord never recommended that the church have rich hierarchies of power within these places; He taught that leaders should be servants. The Lord Jesus called His apostles to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20 verses 25 to 28).

The Lord Jesus never sought to use ministry as a means to make millionaires. New Testament Christianity involves an abundant life of spiritual devotion to God; it isn't a health and wealth gospel. The apostles Peter and John could tell the lame man that they healed at the temple in Acts 3 and verse 6, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!" You see true Christians seek to lay up their treasures in heaven.

When Simon the Sorcerer wanted to buy the ability to give miraculous gifts to others, Peter responded in Acts 8:20 to 23, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." Church is not a business to make money; it's a ministry to bless others.

The Lord never sought to turn worship also into entertainment; you see He wants worship to be in spirit and in truth. The Lord Jesus said in John 4:23 to 24, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." You see in true worship, God is glorified and praised. Pleasing people with entertaining to get them in the door to watch the show has never been God's intention.

What is the church? Well the Lord Jesus built His church, and it belongs to Him (Matthew 16 verse 18). It's a family, the family of God (1 Timothy 3 and verse 15). God is our Father and the Lord Jesus is a brother to all of us in the church (Hebrews 2 and verse 11). The church is the kingdom. The blood-purchased church of Acts 20 and verse 28 is the blood purchased kingdom of Revelation 5:9 and 10. It is the body of Christ, and Christ is it's head (Ephesians 5 verses 21 and 22 also in Ephesians 1: 21, 22 and 3). Yes the church is also the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22 to 31).

The church consists of local congregations; but its headquarters is in heaven with the Lord, its one and only head. He is King of kings and Lord of lords; He has all authority in heaven and on earth now. And when local congregations were established in the New Testament, they appointed elders or shepherds and deacons (Philippians 1 and verse 1). There were no archbishops over many congregations. On the first day of the week, what we call Sunday, they gathered to sing, to pray, to study God's word, to take the Lord's Supper, and then to support good works financially. The purpose of the church is to save the lost and to keep saved those who are saved. You cannot have Christ without the church.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that in Your love and in Your grace and in Your wisdom You created a church so that we could be a part of it. A part of Your family a member of Your body. And Father we pray that we will love You that we will serve You always. In Jesus name, Amen.

If you found the truth and realized what you had been taught was not true, what would you do? Would you ignore or doubt it? Or would you accept it? When the prodigal son came to his senses, he repented and came home. When the Jews who crucified Jesus realized that He really was Lord and Christ, they gladly received Peter's message, repented, and were baptized; and they became Christians. When Paul realized Jesus was risen from the dead and Lord, he stopped persecuting the church and followed Christ.

It's difficult to accept what we've heard repeatedly isn't really true. Changing our beliefs can radically change our lives. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Are you willing to follow Jesus?

To become a Christian you must listen to what the Lord says and follow Him in faith and trust. You must turn from sin and hunger for righteousness. If you don't repent, you really don't believe. Peter told the people on the day of Pentecost in the first gospel sermon in Acts 2 and verse 38, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Now people didn't argue with what Peter said or try to change what he said. They gladly heard the message, repented and were baptized (verse 41).

They didn't ask Jesus to come into their hearts or say a sinner's prayer. No, they repented and were baptized. Their forgiveness followed repentance and baptism. They weren't saved and then baptized but were baptized and then saved. God acts in baptism to make us alive with Christ and forgive our sins (Colossians 2 verses 12, 13). Let's follow God's plan.

God's All-Sufficient Word

Deuteronomy 8 and verse 3 says that, "Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD." Moses wrote that more than a thousand years before the Lord Jesus quoted it in His answer to the devil's temptation in Matthew 4. God's word remains true, and time doesn't change that fact. When tempted, Jesus didn't turn to human creeds and traditions, He turned to the written word of God! The Scripture was sufficient to give Him what He needed to face the challenges of this world.

In Acts 17:11, the Bereans believed the Scriptures were the standard of truth by which they could remain right with the Lord, so when Paul preached they checked him out by going to the Scriptures. And Paul said this was noble. They didn't check him out by human traditions or by what the culture of the times dictated. They went to the Scriptures, they found the truth! Psalm 119 and verse 2 says, "How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart." God knows what we need for life and godliness and He provides it in His all-sufficient Scriptures. Yes we need God's Word!

Our reading today comes from 2 Peter chapter 1 verses 2 to 4. And describes how we have all that pertain to life and godliness through the things that God has revealed.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

That's a great and wonderful promise we have from God. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You have revealed in Your word all the things that we need that pertain to life and godliness. And Father help us always to trust that Your word has given us all we need to know. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus whom we love, Amen.

The Bible says it records the complete revelation of God's will pertaining to man's salvation and life. Jesus promised the apostles that they would be guided into "all the truth." (John 16 verses 12 to 13).

John 14 verses 25 to 26 says, Jesus is speaking, He said, "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." Now that was said to the apostles.

Paul further claimed in Acts 20 and verse 27, "for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." Paul wrote in Colossians 4 and verse 12 about a man named Epaphras, "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God." Yes one can be fully assured in all the will of God. Jude wrote to the church in Jude 3 saying, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Jesus intended for His words to be written down not simply spoken. Written words could last for all time. And He said to the Pharisees in Matthew 23 verse 34, "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes." The primary purpose of the scribes of Jesus was to make copies of what Jesus taught. Luke reveals that he and others were scribes of Jesus. Luke 1 verses 1 to 4 says: Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to

write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things (that) you have been taught.”

Now what they wrote as eyewitnesses came from God and it was true. Peter said in 2 Peter 1:16 to 21: “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’— and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” Peter wrote what God moved him to write.

Peter recognized even Paul’s writings as Scripture in 2 Pet. 3:15 to 16. He said, “regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

Now the teaching of the apostles and Paul is to be passed on but never changed. Paul wrote in 2 Tim. 2 verse 1 to 2, “You then, my child, (he was speaking to Timothy) be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” Sadly, the apostle faced people who contradicted the gospel. And Paul wrote in Gal. 1:8 to 9, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”

You see the inspired, inerrant, all-sufficient Scripture must not be changed. Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 12 and verse 32, “Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.” God said to Joshua in Joshua 1 and verse 7, “Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.” Again Proverbs 30 verses 5 to 6 says, “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.” The prophet wrote in Isaiah 8 and verse 20, “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn (that is there’s no future for them).” Here we learn the absolute importance of basing every doctrine, every belief, on the written word of God. No error is greater than depending upon some human source of authority, whether extra-Biblical writings, or an organization that claims that it’s the source of God’s truth. Sometimes people think they’re smarter than God. The only source and the final source of authority is the written word of God.

Sadly many listen to men just as they did in the days of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 23 verses 26 to 27, there Jeremiah writes, “Is there anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, even these prophets of the deception of their own heart, who intend to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal?” Jeremiah writes in verse 32 about these false prophets, “I did not send them or command them (God is saying), nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit,” declares the LORD.

The Lord said to the Pharisees, that is the Lord Jesus, in Mark 7 verse 9 that, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.” They were binding the traditions

of men while they were transgressing the written commandment of God. They were annulling Scripture! The Lord later said that, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit." Traditions that come hundreds of years after Jesus Christ are just like the traditions of the Pharisees. They're not plants of God and you know what, they'll be uprooted! God's standard is the written word not human traditions.

Revelation 22:18 to 19 says, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." Now what is true of this book is true of all the teaching of God. We have no right to add to it or take away from it.

The Lord said in Matthew 24 and verse 35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." You see His words will last, and they will judge us. The Lord will judge us by the words written in the books (Revelation 20 and verse 12), not by human traditions, not by modern-day prophecies, and not by cultural ideology.

The Lord Jesus wanted the apostles to teach everyone for all time everything that He commanded them (Matthew 28 and verse 20). Now we know this, because we can read it in Scripture. John wrote in John 20 verses 30 to 31, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." The purpose of the Scriptures is to promote faith in Jesus and His teaching.

Paul said in 2 Timothy 3 verses 16 to 17, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." 2 Peter 1 and verse 3 says that God granted to us "all things that pertain to life and godliness." We lack nothing. And since they contain all things that are in the will of God, then there's no need for human councils, or creeds that are human formed, or modern-day revelations that miss lead us.

The Scriptures not only instruct us in God's will, they also meet our most pressing needs for encouragement, assurance, and hope. Romans 15 and verse 4 says, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." God's word meets our needs! The psalmist says in Psalm 119 and verse 11, "Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You." We know what love is by looking to the cross and how the Father gave His Son for our sins. John 15:13 reminds us, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

The Lord Jesus explains what God is like in John 1 and verse 18. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." We know the Way, the truth, and life today, because Scripture reveals Jesus to us. We wouldn't know God if He were not recorded in Scripture.

If we want to know how to be saved, go to the Scriptures! If we want to know what is right and wrong, how to change our lives, how to become faithful servants of God, let's go to the Scriptures! If we want to know how to treat other people, how to worship, how to behave in the church, how to live morally, how to mature spiritually, and many other such things, let's go to the Scriptures!

In our postmodern society, the idea of heresy or false teaching becomes absurd to the people who have that notion. Some believe that every idea is okay and acceptable to God, but this itself disagrees

with Scripture. 2 Peter 2 and verse 1 says, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves." I tell you the New Testament mentions heretics like Hymenaeus, Alexander, Philetus, the anti-Christ (and by the way that word is plural), the Nicolaitans, and Jezebel.

We need an inspired, infallible, inerrant, and all-sufficient standard of truth; and we can find that in the Scriptures. While men and councils sin and are imperfect; the Bible is God-breathed and perfect. While human ways change, the Scriptures remain timeless. What was true in the first century remains true in the 21st century. If a religious group turns away from the gospel, the eternal covenant given to us by Jesus, then that group risks the wrath of God. Just as the Lord Jesus called for churches to repent in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3, He calls churches that stray from the truth to repent. And those who refuse to repent must realize the patience of God does have an end. 2 Peter 3 verse 9 says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." God wants us to correct our errors.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help us to be faithful to Your word and to correct the things that may come from men and return to the things that You have taught us in the bible. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Paul said in Colossians 1:9 to 10, "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." And that's my prayer for every one of you. I want you to know God and His will so that you may fully please Him and enjoy eternal life in heaven.

The Lord Jesus has given us the "words of eternal life", John 6 and verse 68, and it's done in the all-sufficient Scriptures. I tell you the gospel matters. Paul 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." Oh we desperately need the gospel so that we might be saved from sin. "God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1 and verse 21). Now when you have the true message, you can be assured of your salvation. The all-sufficient, inerrant, inspired word gives us assurance.

Believe with all your heart, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. From Scripture we know that baptism is an immersion in water (Acts 8 and verse 38 and 9). We know that people repented before they were baptized (Acts 2 verse 38). We know that God washes away our sins (Acts 22 and verse 16). And we know that we're baptized into the death of Christ (Romans 6 and verse 3). From Scripture we learn we are buried and raised with Christ when we're baptized and that's when we receive newness of life (Romans 6 and verse 4). Oh we need to follow the all-sufficient, inspired Scriptures!

Is God Dead?

In 1882 a German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said, "Where has God gone? I mean to tell you! We have killed him, you and I! We are all his murderers!" Well Nietzsche believed that God is dead in the hearts of people who once believed in Him. When we examine how many Christians have ceased to practice their faith and worship at church, we can't help but admit God isn't living in their hearts. Sin, materialism, and other things have crowded God out many lives, and they don't realize what they've lost. God isn't dead; He's not even sick. But people who have forsaken Him are spiritually sick and dying.

Paul described the Gentiles of Ephesus before they became Christians in Ephesians 2 and verse 12, he said, "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." And that's the state of people who don't know God. And it's also the state of people who push God out of their lives. They have no promise, no God, and no hope. And I hope that's not you.

Our reading today comes from 1 Timothy chapter 6 verses 17 to 19.

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

A good reading from the word of God. Let's pray together. Father we're so thankful that You teach us so many good things in Your word. And we know that we need You and need the life that You can give to us. Father we're thankful that You are able to live within our hearts. And help us to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

Despite the decline in faith in Jesus Christ and despite the decline in religious affiliation, there remains a deep need for spiritual fulfillment and a righteous community. Many people live unfulfilled and miserable lives by looking to this world for answers. They see only the bad and disorder rather than looking for God. They notice the wars, the needless suffering, the hypocrisy and abuse of religious groups, and the many lies of Satan and miss the beauty, grandeur, and harmony in what God has done in this world. It's evident from Scripture and from the order in this world that God exists and cares for us.

It is possible to find some disorder and to magnify disorders so as to overlook the beautiful order and harmony that we see so much in life and that makes life possible. You'll find what you're looking for. Yes you can find dirt and garbage or you can find beauty and flowers. You can find foolishness and immorality or you find grace and godliness. God told the Jews who had forsaken Him for worldly ways in Jeremiah 29:11 to 13, "For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." God wants you to believe and to serve Him, and He gives us reasons to do so.

Well how do we restore faith in God? Well first we can look at how He has spoken and acted. God has not been silent. There is a God. If there were no God, we would have to ask the question where did life come from? How did life come from something that's not living? How can life be sustained without other things for food? How did one-cell animals become multiple-celled animals? How did animals with no spine develop into animals with a spine? How did cold-blooded animals become warm-blooded animals? How did animals who get their oxygen from water become animals that could breathe air? Where did eyes and ears come from? How did feathers develop so that birds could fly? Such changes as

these are not small or trivial. They demand an intelligent and magnificent Creator, because evolution could never explain them.

The theory of evolution came about when people didn't fully understand how complicated the structure of animal bodies and the human body truly are. The discovery of the incredibly complicated DNA molecule in every cell of a living being must not be taken for granted. Time cannot last long enough to account for all the changes that must take place for one kind of animal to transform into another. Genesis 1:25 says that, "God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good." Now while species, of a certain animal, can vary, kinds of animals don't vary. Dogs don't make cats, fish don't make alligators, bears don't make apes, and apes don't make humans. Animals stay within their genus, and mutations don't make new kinds of animals.

We also ask, "How did the environment that supports life come into existence?" There were many things that had to take place all at the same time. The earth that we live on had to have the right amount of heat, not too much or too little. It requires light and water. It had to have oxygen for animal life and carbon dioxide for plant life to exist. How do we have so many kinds of animals and plant life to use for food and medicine? How do we have so many things that provide shelter and clothing? An intelligent Creator explains all this.

How can human life reproduce without a male and female living at the same time? God declares that males and females were made "in His image." Genesis 1:27 to 28 says that, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" This, my friend, is reality! You see it takes both males and females to reproduce. If males and females had not reproduced through the centuries, we wouldn't exist today. Where did males and females get the intelligence to know how to care for infants and small children, so that they could grow up, find a mate, and reproduce? How did the first parents know?

If there is no God, where did our intelligence come from? You have to be intelligent to recognize intelligence. We're living in an intelligent world. We can communicate to one another by mouth, by written words, by telephone, by the internet, by radio, and by television. And all this requires intelligence and education, by which intelligence can grow. And we have to grow. Surely we cannot believe that all this intelligence came from lifeless matter. How did matter become intelligent enough to deny that the universe is governed by intelligence? Many free thinkers haven't thought about how they developed consciousness or the ability to reason. Scientists can't tell us how we became conscious beings.

If there is no God, where did our sense of right and wrong come from? Who gave us this conscience that approves or judges our actions? How did we become so self-aware within? It would be absurd to think some rock or mineral is the source of our ability to feel guilt! We could have no guilt if there were no such thing as right and wrong; and there would be no right and wrong, if God didn't exist and give us His moral laws and His word. Oh we can act like there's no God, but the moral pain we feel from doing something sinful cannot be silenced. No. We can ignore our consciences till we become callous, and many have done so; but we can't rid ourselves of the knowledge of what we have done.

Sin is still our enemy that plagues our hearts and souls. Romans 2 and verse 15 reminds us that even people who don't know God "show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them." Now no matter who you are, you reason about the morality of your behavior. Even when you do well your conscience applauds, you take note of your moral monitor, it's there. A moral God gave us a moral heart and spirit. We didn't get

it from a non-living matter or from animals that have no morality. A conscience came from being created in the image of a moral God, who knows right from wrong. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Have you ever wondered where that desire to be good came from? It came from God.

If there is no God, what about Jesus Christ? How do you explain the existence of predictive prophecies made about Him centuries before He was born? Micah 5 and verse 2 says, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." Well, this passage was well known to the people in the first century, even though Micah wrote it in the 8th century B.C. The chief priests and scribes could answer the Wise Men's question to Herod about where the King of the Jews was born. And yes, Jesus was born in Bethlehem Ephrathah, where it was prophesied.

The prophet Daniel in the sixth century prophesied to Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar about four great kingdoms that would come about over the centuries. And Daniel said during that during the fourth kingdom in chapter 2 verse 44, "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever." Daniel was prophesying about the divine, forever kingdom that would crush all the others. That kingdom was set up by the Lord Jesus in the first century, when the fourth kingdom existed. That kingdom is the church! The church is not an after-thought; Jesus purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20 and verse 28).

Psalms 22 and Isaiah 53 prophesy much about the death of Jesus. David wrote in Psalm 22 a thousand years before Jesus was born and Isaiah prophesied in the 8th century B.C. And there are actual copies of these prophecies in the Dead Sea Scrolls dating more than a hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ. David tells us that His hands and feet were pierced, that they divided His garments, and cast lots for His clothing. Isaiah mentioned that He was pierced for our transgressions, that all our iniquity fell upon Him, that He did not open His mouth, that He was violent or deceptive, that He was numbered with the transgressors, that He was a guilt offering, and His days will be prolonged. Such foreknowledge could only belong to God.

There are numerous prophecies of Jesus, and they all came true. The Lord Jesus could say to His disciples about the prophecies of His death and resurrection in Luke 22 and verse 44, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Oh, and they were, just as they were prophesied. There's no other book that gives such specific predictions hundreds of years in advance. The Bible is unique and divinely inspired.

That Jesus arose from the dead is not a myth or fanciful story. Eyewitnesses of His resurrection devoted their lives and endured great persecution and even death in order to tell the truth about His resurrection. The gospel accounts Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have been researched countless times and shown to be credible history. Historians Gary Habermas and Michael Licona in *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* researched thousands of published documents on the matter and said that historians and scholars strongly attest these things: that Jesus existed, that died at the hands of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem, that the disciples believed that He arose again from the dead, and that the church persecutor Paul was converted, and Jesus' skeptic brother James converted. Three fourths strongly attest that the tomb of Jesus was empty! Empty.

The eyewitness apostle John wrote in John 20 verse 30 and 31, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have

life in His name.” Reading and getting to know the Bible is the first step to developing a strong faith in the Lord Jesus. Romans 10:17 says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” (or the word of God) Oh the more you know about God the more you know about Jesus Christ, the more you will believe in them and the more you’ll love them.

Find a church home with one of the many godly churches of Christ, there you’ll learn the truth, you will worship according to the scriptures with friendly and loving people, and you know what, you’ll develop a strong spiritual life. If you’ll put God first and be part of His family. Having a church family will help you stand strong against the evil in hard times and grow in faith and love. A church family can strength you when you’re weak, comfort you when you hurt, and help you find the way to a heavenly home with the Lord.

Let’s pray together. Heavenly Father we’re thankful for Your word that teaches us the truth. Help us to know Father that You are real and that You keep Your promises. And that You love and care for us and provided for us a life here and the life hereafter. And Father help us always to do Your will and to love You with all our heart, and soul and mind. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

When I believe in God and in Jesus Christ, I have everything to gain and nothing to lose. I’ve seen my prayers answered and will one day go and be with my God in glory forever. But even if there is no God, I’ve had an abundant life of love in Christ and have lost nothing. But if I don’t believe in God and Jesus, I’ve lost every good promise of God and have nothing to gain or look forward to in eternity. If God is real and I don’t believe in Jesus, I will lose my soul forever and be eternally out of favor with God. And I lose everything. I won’t have a dwelling place in heaven.

Do you want a life without God? If you ignore Him or forsake Him, you will lose your relationship with Him. He’s not dead but you don’t have His favor. Psalm 66 and verse 18 says that, “If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear.” There’s no advantage to a life without a relationship and the favor of God. There’s only hopelessness, misery, and death. You can imagine there’s no heaven or hell, but you can’t change reality. God exists and so do heaven and hell. Choose God and heaven.

If you’ve never placed your faith in the Lord, do so today. Believe in Jesus Christ, turn from sin to righteousness by repenting, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And when you’re baptized into Christ, God washes away your sins with the sacrificed blood of Jesus, makes you His child, adds you to His church and you have hope, but don’t take your salvation for granted. You must stay faithful and remain committed to Christ. Won’t you start your journey of faith today? Today is the best day to do what is right and serve the Lord.

Spiritual Growth

Now just as people are of different ages and maturity levels physically, so many are at different maturity levels spiritually. Some act childishly, some are uneducated, and some have not grown in their love for God. The Lord Jesus gave this answer to the lawyer's question, "which is the great commandment in the Law?" He said in Matthew 12:37 to 40, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

To love God with all our hearts, souls, and minds demands everything from us. To love God with our whole being is intentional and demands that we discipline ourselves and put God first. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6 and verse 33, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." Spiritually mature Christians have their priorities in place. They know what really matters in christianity. And many Christians depend upon others to tell them what they need to know rather than search the Scriptures for themselves. Mature Christians are able to discern right from wrong.

Our reading comes from the book of Hebrews chapter 5 verses 11 to 14. And here the Hebrew writer laments because of the weakness and the immaturity of some Christians.

Concerning him (that is Melchizedek) we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Oh Father help us to mature in our faith to grow strong, to become people who understand the things that You would have us to be and to do and to show You our love and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

Many Christians haven't matured in the faith, because they've become dull of hearing. They haven't taken time to seek the truth for themselves. Many are weak and spiritually dying because they're looking in the wrong place for spiritual truth. Many have gone to the feel-good religions that entertain; others are enamored with a false health and wealth gospel. A Christianity that doesn't put God first is no Christianity at all. A Christianity that doesn't listen to what God says about sin isn't faithful to God.

Some believe that God's grace can save them whether they repent or not. They're willing to contradict God rather than admit that they've sinned. They demand that loving a person means that we have to approve and accept their sinful behavior even when they will not repent. This is simply not true. Repentance is still demanded of us all! And no matter who you are or how religious you once were, God will not accept you if you persist in ignoring Him and continue in sinful behaviors.

After David sinned with Bathsheba and was discovered, he realized how he had lost the favor of God. He could say in Psalm 51:3 to 4, "For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified (speaking of God) when You speak And blameless when You judge." God desired that David be honest with himself. And he cried out in verses 6 to 9, David did, "Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom. Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins And blot out all my iniquities."

David didn't make excuses for his sins and iniquities. David didn't blame others and he didn't demand others approve of him in his sin. David realized his committing adultery with Bathsheba and causing the death of her husband Uriah was wrong. He knew his heart was wrong and he needed to be washed from his sin. He prayed in Psalm 51:10 to 12, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit." David knew that he needed a clean heart and a steadfast spirit. That he needed God to be close and he wanted God's salvation to be restored to him. He wanted God's willing spirit again.

When you quit going to church, quit studying your Bible, and quit praying, you're turning away from God and from the things that give you wisdom, peace, and hope for eternal life. You lose the joy of God's salvation and God's favor. Like David, many of us long to be purified and delivered from the sins that we've committed. People outside of Christ need to become Christians, and people who have wandered away from the Lord's church need to repent and come back to God.

Next, if you wish to be spiritually mature, then search the Scriptures and study them. Don't rely solely on someone else just because he or she is a religious leader. The real standard of truth is not in people but in the written Word of God. Check out with Scripture what you hear. Check me out to see whether what I'm saying is true. Psalm 1:1 to 3 says, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers."

God wants us to progress in our faith to add many things to our spiritual lives. 2 Peter 1:5 to 7 says: "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love."

Now in addition to our faith, we must with all diligence add virtue or moral excellence. Faith in God leaves no place for moral compromise. God wants His people to live holy, unspotted lives. James 1:27 says, "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world." Oh it's absurd to think that God accepts our worship when we live ungodly lives.

We must with all diligence add to our moral excellence, knowledge. This knowledge is God's teaching. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." We need to know God's Word so that we can know God Himself and His will for our lives.

We must add with all diligence to our knowledge, self-control. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:25 to 27, that "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and (I) make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified." If we don't discipline ourselves, friend, we can lose our souls.

We must add with all diligence to our self-control the idea of perseverance or patience. True Christians don't quit the Lord just because things are difficult. Jesus bore the cross for our sins until He died. He didn't give up on us. We must not give up on Him. Acts 16:22 to 25 tells of the faith of Paul

and Silas at Philippi. They were beaten and jailed but they never gave up their faith: "The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." Such faith and endurance is what every Christian should strive for. Mature Christians aren't babies who cry at the least inconvenience.

We must add with all diligence to our perseverance godliness. Godliness takes place when God is foremost in our hearts and lives. We don't follow our own will but follow the will of God. Godly people take God seriously. You will never mature spiritually until you take God seriously. Mature Christians strive to be like Christ. 1 John 2:3 to 6 says, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."

We must add with all diligence to our godliness brotherly kindness. Brotherly kindness is simply brotherly love and affection in action. We treat our brothers and sisters in Christ with kindness and affection as if they were our siblings in the flesh. 2 Corinthians 8:1 to 5 tells of the Macedonian Christians who gave to the churches in Jerusalem who were financially supporting the needy saints in Jerusalem. He says: "Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God."

We must have that feeling too and that love for others. We have to add with all diligence to our brotherly kindness love. Love is unselfish concern and care for others. The Lord Jesus asks us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12 and verse 33). And to love God includes loving your brother and your neighbor. 1 John 3 verse 18 says, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." 1 Corinthians 13:4 to 8 reminds us that, "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, (love) does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; (love) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

2 Peter 1:8 to 11 says, "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

When these characteristics and values are present in our lives, they make us useful in the eyes of God and fruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But a person who doesn't have these things has become blind to what really makes a Christian. Mature, spiritual Christians belong to the Lord Jesus and walk like He walks. Immature Christians haven't gained a strong knowledge of the Lord or of

the truth. They have forgotten the most important things that they should know. Leaders have to coddle them like little children who want their way all the time.

Now earlier we read about some Christians who had become dull of hearing. Sadly some Christians today don't want to hear the truth and preachers who like to teach only what pleases people is what they go after. Hebrews 5:12 to 14 says: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."

Well why does this matter? Well you may be an immature Christian and not realize it. You may rely on others to spoon feed you this feel-good religion that never asks you to repent or to grow in faith. That's not the Christianity of Scripture! Please take Christ seriously and grow strong!

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for Your word that teaches us and helps us to mature. Father help us not to ever be dull of hearing but to hear and listen closely to the things that You have taught us so that we might love You and do Your will. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Where are you in your spiritual walk with the Lord? Are you like a child needing milk, or have you grown in your faith and knowledge of God's word? Do you show that you can discern between good and evil trusting God's word to be your standard? Some today judge right and wrong by their feelings or by popular culture, and many are approving sinful practices? Who is first in your life, God or yourself? Do you let every little thing come between you and serving God? How much time do you spend in giving the Lord your service in prayer, or Bible study? Do you use your time and your money to serve the Lord?

Mature Christians love everyone, but they also love God with all their heart and soul and mind. They're not willing to ignore God and what God calls sinful. Loving people means telling them the truth rather than letting them believe a lie about the cost of sin. The truth is often hard to hear but it is necessary. Repentance is how we heal of the brokenness in our lives. And Jesus called people to repent because He loved them and didn't want them to perish.

We become Christians today the same way they became Christians in the first century. We come to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith, believing that He's truly the Son of God and He died on the cross for our sins and He was raised from the dead on the third day according to the Scriptures. We turn from sin in repentance; we confess our faith; and we're baptized in the name of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2 verse 38). Now baptism into Christ is an immersion in water, and it's when God acts upon us to save us, to make us His children, and to add us to His church. And so become a Christian today.