

# Program Transcripts

November 2025



IN  
**SEARCH**  
OF THE LORD'S WAY<sup>®</sup>

# **SEARCH PROGRAMS**

**November 2025**

*Topics subject to change without notice*

## **NOVEMBER 2 – NOT BIBLICAL**

There are numerous things in popular religion among Christians that have no foundation in the Scriptures. True Christianity is rooted in the written word delivered once for all by the apostles and prophets of the first century.

## **NOVEMBER 9 – THE RESTORATION PLEA**

We strive to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. We reject many beliefs and practices because they cannot be found in the New Testament. Pure Christianity holds fast to the words of Christ.

## **NOVEMBER 16 – CHRISTIAN PHARISEES**

Just like the Pharisees of old who believed in human traditions, so many Christians hold fast to beliefs and practices that do not come from God but from councils and creeds that fail to remain in the teaching of Scripture.

## **NOVEMBER 23 – GIVING THANKS**

True Christianity remembers what God has done for us in Christ and shows gratitude. We do not desire a thankless faith that seeks more to please ourselves than to remember the manifold blessings of Jesus Christ.

## **NOVEMBER 30 – THE GOSPEL AND SALVATION**

Without the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there can be no salvation. When we explore how people were saved in the New Testament, the gospel is always at its heart.

## Not Biblical

Many people today feel a little like Rip Van Winkle. You remember Washington Irving's story about the fun loving but hen-pecked husband who hated profitable labor and was continuously nagged by his wife. Well escaping to the mountains to go hunting, Rip drank some liquor that caused him to sleep for twenty years. Well, when he awoke, he found everything has changed and he's in a different world.

You've probably noticed our culture has changed in recent years. Both morality and religion seems to have turned upside down. What used to be sinful is now legal, so society is telling preachers not to speak out against immorality or insanity. Society tells us not to call certain immoral behaviors sinful any more. Some say that marriage is obsolete. Society says husbands and fathers are no longer the heads of their homes. Some are pushing women to take leadership roles in the church. And many who stand with God's word are amazed and ask, "What has happened that people no longer hold to the Bible?"

Our reading today comes from the book of Exodus chapter 1 verses 6 to 10. And tell about the Israelites who down in Egypt when changes took place.

Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land."

Ah, he was worried. That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we know that many changes take place in life. But we know that You are the same. That You love us and watch over us and help us. Help us to stay faithful to You and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

I once had a dinner with an acquaintance who belonged to a prominent denomination, and the conversation turned to religion. This man told me how much his church had changed and how alienated he felt. He grimaced at the moral and spiritual compromises the leadership of his denomination had embraced. He felt like he was no longer in the same group. What he knew growing up and what he saw in the present were very different. He felt his denomination had abandoned what it had believed and had become something unbiblical.

Well society and secular progressives have pushed many religious groups to accept views that dismiss the Bible. They told the religious groups that they were childish, and backward and believers must accept what a more advanced society thinks or they will die. They said evolution is proven, and the church must give up its belief in creation. They said the unborn are not viable people until they are born and may be aborted. They glorified non-traditional families and said marriage was obsolete. They said the Bible wasn't for us today but only spoke to people in other ages. They decided love for people included tolerating everything and that was more important than loving and obeying God. They argued the grace of God meant the rules weren't important. In the end they denied that God has any authority over their lives or that He matters to them.

Sadly, the more any culture pushes God out of their thinking, and their ethics, or their morals, the more miserable and difficult their lives become. Societies can't thumb their noses at God and expect the Lord to bless them. And just because the thinking of people changes with the times doesn't mean that God has changed His mind. Psalm 33:11 says the, "The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations." People's attitudes change, but God's views on the sanctity of life and the

sanctity of marriage haven't changed. Just because people permit themselves to violate God's law doesn't mean God will permit it. We can't vote God's out. We can't vote on what His will is. You see, God is God, and we're not. Wherever you live, whoever you are, God's Word is binding on you.

The prophet Jeremiah revealed the will of God in Jeremiah 18:7 to 10; and God said, "If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it." Ah, God is far more in charge of the affairs of every nation than we might think. God plants nations, and God plucks up nations. He deals with nations on the basis of whether they are willing to listen to His voice. Are you listening to God?

I fear some think because many believe or practice something, that it must be approved by God. God, however, doesn't take a survey to determine what is right and wrong. 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." The popular, easy way isn't safe but leads to destruction. And only a few people follow God's narrow way, but it leads to life! Now even if everybody tells lies, lying is still wrong. Even if everybody steals, stealing remains sinful. And no matter how popular a sin is, sin will never be okay with God. You can't solve the problem of sin by making it popular.

The same is true with regard to religious groups. When people hear the Lord's voice and follow His teaching, He blesses them and counts them as His own. But when an individual or even some group ignores His teaching or departs from the way of the Lord into moral or doctrinal error, God holds them accountable. Sometimes people create religious groups and cults according to their own thinking rather than listen to God. You know even if that group grows very large, it's still accountable to God. The Lord created us all, and He will someday judge us all according to the Bible. He commands all men everywhere to repent. And we're accountable to the Lord whether we know it or even if we agree to it. We're still accountable.

Hebrews 4:12 to 13 says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." Time and distance don't erase accountability. A change in the winds of cultural worldview doesn't release anyone from His jurisdiction. We're accountable to the Lord in matters large and small. Rebellion over a small matter is still rebellion against God.

I must tell you: more than accountability, love is our motivation to follow the way of the Lord. When people love the Lord they enjoy being like Him. The Lord's way lifts up virtue and makes every person better and nobler. Aren't you tired of all the ungodliness, dishonesty, and indifference in our world? Aren't you weary of selfishness, greed, pride, and power-hungry attitudes? Aren't you hungry for what's pure and good? Don't you wish people were kind and trustworthy? We love the Lord, because we have seen what the love of our Lord does in the hearts and lives of the people who turn from sin to righteousness. They become new people filled with faith, hope, and love. Men become faithful and loving husbands and fathers. Wives become warm and loyal wives and mothers. Children look to parents with grateful hearts. Neighbors respect each other and bear one another's burdens. 2 Corinthians 5:17 rightly says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." And those new things are so much better than the old worldly ways.

Take God and His Word out of people's lives, and people will be empty and in misery. They'll turn to destructive behaviors that enslave them. They'll become indifferent to others, selfish, and ungrateful. They'll seek in vain to find something to take God's place, but nothing will. The Lord's way is so much better than the ways of the world. How could anyone prefer sin to righteousness, prefer lies to the truth, or prefer selfishness to love?

When churches substitute story-telling, pop-psychology, and humor for a study of the word of God from the bible, they've moved away from following the instructions of Scripture to being a social club. Paul charged Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2 to 5, "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." God expects preachers to preach the Bible, not their opinions, not their experiences, and not their imaginations.

If you attend a worship service that doesn't study the Bible, you're being cheated out of God's message. Has your religious group deserted the truth of Scripture so that they can entertain you or make you feel good? One popular speaker has decided that he will not speak out against sin or speak about salvation; he said he would leave this to others. Well, he may be a famous motivator, but he is no preacher of the gospel. He's made his own religion that has references to some of the Bible, but he's cheated his listeners out of the whole counsel of God.

Some religious groups study religious books written by men but never open the Scriptures. They may not realize that the human author may be contradicting Scripture or teaching something false. People who stop studying Scripture often fill their minds with half-truths and mistaken ideas. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 4 and verse 4, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." We need all of God's word to live as God wills. 2 Peter 1 and verse 3 says that, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence." We find the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but truth in the Bible. When we stop hearing the word of God, we can't be sure what we're hearing is true. Just because someone calls himself a preacher doesn't mean what he says is true.

Now this is why the Lord Jesus charged the apostles in Matthew 28:19 to 20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Or the end of the world. We must know the truth so we can distinguish what God really says from what people think. Acts 17:11 calls the Bereans noble, because "they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." And we too must begin examining the Scriptures daily so that we won't be fooled by something that's unbiblical. Colossians 2 and verse 8 says, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." Study your Bible, and don't let anyone lead you astray from the truth of God's Word.

Now if you attend where they substitute entertainment for worship, you may be cheating yourself out of true Biblical worship in spirit and in truth. Many religious groups have given themselves over to religious entertainment, where worship leaders and soloists perform religious music like a concert. God wants everyone to worship Him, not watch someone else perform for us. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6 and verse 1, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them,

for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.” When people take the focus off God and put it on themselves as in a concert, they aren't worshipping God, they're performing. Jesus said in John 4:23 to 4, “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” So don't substitute praising someone's talent for the worship of God.

Now why have I said this? Because I've met people who say the place they worship has moved away from the morals and the teaching of the Bible. And they feel empty and abandoned. Friend, some still hold firmly to the truth of God's Word and still examine the Scriptures daily to see what is true. Please consider studying with one of the churches of Christ in your area.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You've given us Your word. That we can read it and study it and know what You will for our lives. Help us to be faithful and loyal to Your word first and foremost. In Jesus name, Amen.

You may have experienced an unbiblical religion. Perhaps you're attending a worship service that isn't Biblical. Perhaps you're hearing preaching that doesn't come from the Word of God and isn't teaching the truth. Maybe you're being entertained rather than being called to worship. Well, you need the Lord. God said in Isaiah 55:8 to 9, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.” What our sick world needs is not more examining what people think and feel; we need to look up to God's holy word for His wisdom and the truth. What God teaches is far better than the ways of the world. Don't substitute human ways for what is genuinely from God and then rob yourself.

Isaiah 55:7 says, “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.” Oh, God yearns for every heart to come to Him, for people to leave their own ways and follow His teaching. When people turn their hearts, God abundantly pardons their past and blesses their future. So don't cheat yourself out of the truth.

To get right with God, believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Believing in Him means believing His teaching is true and obeying it. Real faith and love leads to repentance. Repentance means I will forsake every wrong and turn to what is right and Biblical. Repent and be baptized into Christ, immersed in water, confessing your faith. And when you're baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins according to Acts 22:16 and He will add you to His church according to Acts 2 and verse 47.



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the title and main subject of this lesson?**

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**What scriptures are referenced within the lesson?**

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**If this lesson includes any main Bible characters, who are they and what are some of their traits?**

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**Why is this message important?**

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**Are there specific things discussed in this lesson that you would like to work on in your personal life?**

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**How would you share this message with others and with whom would you like to share it?**

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## The Restoration Plea

Have you broken a favorite dish or dropped a treasured book into the water or mud? You probably groaned and wished you could bring back your prized possession to its pure and original state. You wanted to restore it, because it was ruined. Spiritually speaking, the restoration plea calls us to restore the pure and unbroken church as God meant for it to be by returning to the truth found in the New Testament.

Christianity has changed dramatically through the centuries. And many changes are departures from the written word of God found in the New Testament. Some changes came as innovations that were never imagined in Scripture; some changes came from the desire to make the church more popular with culture, and some changes caused Christianity to be blended with other religions. And in the end, the pure Christianity of the New Testament, as God willed it to be, was corrupted. It needed desperately to be rid of the human things and brought back to its original condition, to be what God desired. The original, God-given church can be seen in the New Testament.

And if we wear the name of Jesus Christ, we should faithfully follow Him! Shouldn't we abandon every belief or practice that leads us away from the truth in the New Testament? Shouldn't we seek God's teaching in everything we do? Let's restore the God's way.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 4 verses 1 to 6. And there he encourages them to remain true to the one way.

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

That's a reading from God's holy word that encourages us to turn to Jesus and Him alone. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have given us Your word and that we know that there is one right way to go and to live. Help us to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

In the early 1800s many church leaders grew weary of the strife found in the denominational world of their day. They believed the Lord wanted His people to be united, because division caused shame to the name of the Lord. Their divisive ways caused people to fall away from Christ in disbelief. They also objected to all that was of human origin that led them away from the pure New Testament Christianity.

The Lord Jesus prayed in John 17:20 to 21, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." The Lord wanted His followers to remain united. The whole concept of denominationalism is foreign to the New Testament.

They believed, and we believe, that the acceptance of human opinions, and human creeds, and councils, and human practices, and names, a human names, caused this divisive and hostile condition. We want something better—a pure and true Christianity that goes back to the Bible and remains free from human traditions. We know that if we abandoned the human and concentrated on what was divine and is divine, that we can find the basis for unity. We can have unity only through following the truth of God's Word found in the Scriptures. And this mean we have to cast off everything human and denominational and return to the Christianity that God proposes in the New Testament.

We must reject human traditions, human opinions and innovations, since these things cannot be found in God's word. We can't ask or require people to believe a doctrine not that's not taught in the

New Testament. "We speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent." We want unity in essentials, freedom in matters of opinion, and love in all things.

We also recognize the New Testament predicts that Christians would fall away from the truth and they would fall into error. God knew the hearts of men that they often follow their own paths. The apostle Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:29 to 30, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." Paul knew some would fall away from the truth.

The apostle Peter also predicted in 2 Peter 2:1 to 3, "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. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep."

Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:1 to 4, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths." Oh, we can see this in many religious groups today!

Early church history confirms that Christians began teaching and practicing things that were never taught or authorized by the New Testament. Within 500 years after the apostles died, many new practices and doctrines developed unknown to Scripture. For instance, the New Testament says nothing about holy water, lent, penance, infant baptism, intercession of the saints, sprinkling for baptism, sacrifice of mass, celibacy of priests, purgatory, confession to priests, archbishops, popes, instrumental music in worship, salvation by faith only, "once saved always saved," and many other things like these. The Bible condemns the inventing of new doctrines that differ from or contradict the teaching found in the New Testament.

Century by century groups that called themselves Christian moved farther from the simplicity of the New Testament Christianity. They no longer followed God's pattern for the church in the New Testament but became something different. God's way was corrupted by the will of man. And if we are to please God, we must return to what God willed in the New Testament. Restoration to the Lord's way is necessary, because repentance from error is necessary.

No one can remain in error and still please God. James 5:19 to 20 says, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." You see, straying from the truth can put our souls in peril with a multitude of sins. By casting off these sinful, manmade doctrines and practices, we can restore the doctrine, the worship and the organization of the New Testament church.

Our intent is not to start a new denomination, but to restore the church to God's will in the New Testament. Jesus built His church before any denomination ever existed. The Lord's church is not denominational, not inter-denominational, and not even non-denominational. The church that Jesus built was undenominational. It's also "pre-denominational." And the idea of denominationalism is foreign to the New Testament. The Lord Jesus would never approve of unifying the truth with error.

The New Testament never entertained the idea of so many groups with different names, and creeds, organizations, and forms of worship. The Bible condemns the creation of new doctrines that differ from

the teaching found in the New Testament. So, churches of Christ strive to "do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names." We believe that we must discard from our faith and our practice everything that's not found written in the New Testament of the Lord and Savior, and to believe and practice whatever is instructed there.

The concept of "restoration" arises from the teaching the Bible is the complete and it is the eternal authority. What was true in the first century is still true today. And just as a seed will produce only after its own kind, so the seed of God's word will produce the same Christianity today that it did in the first century. Luke 8 and verse 11 says, "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God." As long as you keep a pure seed, you will have a pure Christianity. If you corrupt the seed, the teaching of the Word of God, you will have a corrupt Christianity.

The Bible is complete in that it gives us all of God's revealed will for life and godliness. Jesus promised His apostles that they will be inspired in John 16:12 to 13. He said, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." I tell you the Bible is all-sufficient and contains every spiritual truth that we need to have eternal life and to live the Christian life. We aren't lacking anything that God wanted for us.

But many people are not content with pure teaching, the pure teaching of the gospel, so they say we must change. Well we must ask, "Change to what?" If they call for change that leads us back to the doctrine of Christ, then we can rejoice in that. But if they call for change that leads us away from God's will to fit popular thinking, let's not be fooled.

When people go beyond the Scriptures to teach other doctrines, they produce something other than the church that Jesus built. And they're making a church in their own image rather than honoring God's will. To add to the Scriptures, to take away from the Scriptures, to edit the Scriptures to fit today's culture is to corrupt the pure message or seed and to substitute for it something that will not accomplish God's intended purpose. And rather than fall for a substitute, let's demand pure Christianity.

The Lord Jesus desires unity in His followers; but before He prayed for unity in John 17:20 to 23, he first prayed for his followers to be sanctified that is to be "set apart" in the truth (John 17:17). Jesus wanted all His followers to know and to practice the truth. Christ didn't pray for a unity that sacrifices or compromises the truth. No, it's our faith in the truth that unifies us and unites us. Christian unity is not ecumenism, where groups unite but maintain conflicting and contradictory beliefs and practices, no. To be faithful and true, Christians must hold to the truth and refuse error.

The Lord Jesus said in John 8:31 to 32, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Jesus himself, distinguished true disciples from others by their willingness to abide in His word. What we believe may not matter to today's culture, but what we believe and practice matters to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The New Testament provides for us examples and patterns showing how God wishes for us to respond to His grace, how should we come to Him in faith and obedience, how should we worship, how we should live, how we should organize ourselves, and how we should treat one another. You can find all those things in the bible. Now some object to the concept of patterns in the New Testament, but the Scriptures are clear about the need to follow the apostles' doctrine and example. God expects us to believe and obey His instructions found in the New Testament.

For instance, Romans 6:17 to 18 says, "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form (or pattern) of teaching to which you were committed, and

having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." 2 Thessalonians 2:15 says, "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us." The apostle Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13, "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."

Now if the sun, the planets, and the moon in our universe follow a pattern, if every cell in our body has a DNA pattern, and if every leaf on every tree follows a pattern, why would we suppose that the Lord's church has no pattern? If there is no pattern to the church, then it's the only thing that God ever produced that didn't have a pattern.

The New Testament speaks of the love and grace of God, but these 27 books also have commands, instructions, and examples for us to follow. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." He demonstrates how this affect our relationship with God in John 15:8 to 10. The Lord Jesus said, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, (Jesus says) I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

Now obedience to the Lord is not some kind of legalism, no; obedience from the heart is how we love God. If we wish to abide in the love of God, we must be obedient to His commands.

Let's pray together. Oh Father we pray that our love for You will lead us always to keep Your commandments. And to follow You and You alone. Help us to resist the influences of the world. And always to listen to You. In Jesus name, Amen.

God always requires people to repent of their sins when they learn the truth. Repentance means we leave error and embrace the Lord's will. Repentance is how we are restored to the Lord. Do you need to repent? Do you attend a church that goes beyond the teaching of the New Testament? Are you a true disciple that abides in the words of Christ? If you aren't, repent and restore your faith. Attend a New Testament church!

Restoration leads the lost out of sinful error into eternal life. If this is true for an individual, it's also true for groups and churches. Even churches can fall from God's grace, when they abandon the truth. Jesus anticipated disciplining whole churches in Revelation 2 and 3, if they did not repent. When a church falls away, the Lord will remove its candlestick. We must remain faithful to God and His word. We must hold to the truth and do it at all costs. If we unite with error, we have corrupted ourselves. We'd rather speak the truth with the Lord than to fall for the devil's popular lies. We'd rather lovingly teach the truth that gives—even if it first offends—that gives the truth, than spread false hope that destroys. Love demands that we tell the whole truth of God, because it is the truth that saves and sets us free.

The truth is there and it's only in one gospel, one body or church, and one baptism. And in order to enter the Lord's church, and believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Out of faith, repent of sin, confess the Lord Jesus, and be baptized. Now the one baptism of Jesus Christ is not sprinkling but an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins according to Acts 2:38. When you're baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins and add you to His church. When you're baptized God will make you His child according to Galatians 3:26 and 7. Oh, why not be baptized today?



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Christian Pharisees

The Pharisees were often called a sect, but they were actually a fraternity of Jews who had decided to separate themselves from pagans and other Jews who were impure. As time passed their elders began adding to their own traditions. And they added them to the Law of Moses. You see they claimed that Moses was the source of their traditions and handed them down orally. Well, they were traditions that were added to the Scripture. As time passed their man-made traditions actually took greater precedence than the written word. They annulled the Scripture to honor their traditions. They didn't tolerate disagreement with their judgments, because they considered themselves as superior to others.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:19 to 20, "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." We cannot ignore the written word to require human commandments and then judge others for not keeping our traditions. The Lord Jesus told people not to judge in Matthew 7, because the Pharisees were judging others on the basis of their man-made laws. They will be judged by how they judge others.

Our reading today comes from Luke chapter 18 verses 9 to 14. And there Jesus describes the difference between people who exalt themselves and those who humble themselves before God.

And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

A good lesson for all of us to learn. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we are thankful that Your grace is so wondrous and so good to us. Father help us to look at ourselves and see the sin in our lives. Help us to be humble and confess and to repent of the things that we have done wrong. And Father we pray that You will bless the reading of His word. In Jesus name, Amen.

Jesus and His disciples did not follow the Pharisee ritual of washing their hands before they ate. Mark 7:2 to 5 says the Pharisees "had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?" Actually they were accusing Jesus and His disciples of being sinners!

Well, centuries before Jesus, Jewish teachers of the Law sought to keep the Law. Their deep respect for Scripture seems commendable, but they built a hedge around the commandments of the Law by binding rules and customs upon the people. Now these human traditions were regarded just as sacred as the written Law of Moses. The Pharisees taught Moses received the "written law" and then he also received another law, which he didn't write down. And he was to deliver an "oral law" to the elders of the congregation. Well, there's no evidence this "oral law" came from Moses.

This oral law, they maintained, was the only authorized interpretation of the written law according to them. The oral law explained the written Law, according to them. These traditions or interpretations in this oral law were forced upon the people, the common people, and the punishment for violating them was as severe as the punishment for the violation of "the written word." The Pharisees became authorities among the Jews, even though they couldn't prove their traditions came from Moses.

So when the Pharisees accused Jesus and His disciples of eating with impure hands, the Lord Jesus felt the need to answer them. He said to them in Matthew 15 verses 3 to 9, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'honor your father and mother,' and, 'he who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God," he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. (then Jesus said) You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' "

The Pharisees were separatists and they distinguished their fraternity from the common people. They relied on keeping the commandments of men to show their purity and their religious superiority over the rest of the Jews. The source of their traditions was in man not God. They presumed their human traditions made them more pure than others. And they made these human traditions necessary to keep. You see the Pharisees were convinced that the human traditions of the elders allowed them to transgress and invalidate the word of God!

You might recall the Pharisees opposed the Lord Jesus and anyone who followed Him. John 9:22 says that some of the common people were afraid of the Jews, at the advice of the Pharisees, "for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him (that is Jesus) to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue." John 12:42 to 43 shows that the power that the Pharisees had. It says, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God."

Though the Pharisees were powerful in the first century and judged others, they offered false hope. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 15 verses 13 to 14, "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." God doesn't bind laws that He didn't make, but will uproot human traditions, so the faithful shouldn't follow a blind guide or follow their traditions. Blind guides lead their followers to fall into a pit. The Lord Jesus warned the disciples in Matthew 16:6, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Well they were wondering what do you mean and He explained in verse 12 "the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

Now Paul, who once was a Pharisee, exposed their false hope in Romans 10 verses 2 to 3. He said, "For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." Oh he found that there was something better than self-righteousness and legalism.

He said in Philippians 3:7 to 9, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own

derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”

In Matthew 23, the Lord Jesus repeatedly called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites because they paid attention to the outward appearance and neglected the weightier matters of the Law. You know what, I find this same fault with people today. Among those who call themselves Christians are religious groups that have councils made up of men and possess creeds written by men. And these councils and creeds bind their human doctrines and regulations on their religious groups. And many of these doctrines and practices are never imagined in Scripture. Sadly, the words of the leaders became more important than the words found in the New Testament.

Let's look at some human traditions. First, some people loudly proclaim that we're saved by faith alone. People often quote John 3:16 as if it told all and was the end of the matter about how we're saved. And that we're saved by faith alone. Now I treasure John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Oh I believe this verse, but I also know that there are many things it doesn't teach.

It doesn't show the necessity of our love for God, which is the first and great commandment. It says nothing about our need to repent, and repentance is absolutely essential to be right with God. It says nothing about baptism; but unless a person is born of water and the Spirit (that is baptism), he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3 and verse 5). It speaks of faith, John 3:16 does, but not of obedience. John 3:36 in the New American Standard Bible says, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Second, people say that, “All you have to do is just say this little sinner's prayer to be saved.” Peter didn't say this when he preached the first gospel sermon to the guilty souls at Pentecost. He said in Acts 2:38 to 40, “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, 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!” Now no one ever heard about the sinner's prayer until the last century. Did you know that? It's become a popular human tradition, but it has no foundation in the written word of God, the Scripture.

Third, some say that, “Baptism is a work, and you can't be saved by works!” Well when they say such things, they often miss the point about baptism. It is true that one cannot be saved by trying to earn one's salvation. Ephesians 2 and verse 8 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” It's also true that one cannot be saved by the works of the Old Testament Law. Galatians 2:16 says, “Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law (that is the Law of Moses) but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

Well now, baptism is neither a meritorious work nor a work of the Law. Baptism is actually a work of God rather than men. Think with me about the command to be baptized. It's a passive imperative. The command of baptism in Acts 2:38 urges every one of those present to be baptized, that is, to allow themselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of their sins. We don't baptize ourselves; someone else immerses us in the water.

And in the same way God is the One acting upon us spiritually in baptism. He saves us in baptism (1 Peter 3:21); He buries and raises us with Christ in baptism (Colossians 2:12); He forgives our sins in baptism (Colossians 2:13); He adds us to His people in baptism (Acts 2 and verse 41); He makes us His

child in baptism (Galatians 3:26 to 7); He washes away our sins in baptism (Acts 22:16); He causes us to be born again in baptism (John 3:5); and He frees us from sin in baptism (Romans 6 verses 6 to 7). So God is the worker when it comes to baptism, not us. To be baptized means we allow God to save us as His gift. We did nothing to earn it, but we must be willing to receive His gift.

Fourth, some teach once a person is saved, he can never be lost. But 2 Peter 2:20 to 21 says, "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." Galatians 5 and verse 4 describes people who have fallen from grace.

Hebrews 3:12 and 13 says Christians, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Oh we need to take warning seriously. We can lose our souls.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for Your word that corrects the errors that men teach in their human traditions. And Father help us always to turn to You for the truth. In Jesus name, Amen.

If there are blind guides today and we follow them, what will happen to us? We must ask, "Is this teaching from God or man? Is this practice from God or man?" If it comes from man, can you trust it? If it's a doctrine never taught in Scripture but first taught in the sixteenth century or the twentieth century, can you trust it? Do you know that there was no such thing as a denomination until the sixteenth century? Some people say they are non-denominational, but they still teach doctrines and practice things not found in Scripture. They still follow human traditions. We must leave them alone. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 15:13, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up."

Have you placed your hope in a doctrine or practice planted by men but not God? Did someone tell you that you were forgiven before you were baptized? Read Acts 22:16 and Romans 6:3 to 7. Baptism is when our sins are washed away and when we're freed from sin. Were you sprinkled for baptism? Then you were not buried in baptism. The word "baptism" in the original language refers to an immersion not sprinkling. Did someone tell you once you're saved, you're always saved? Remember Hebrews 10:26 and 7 and 2 Peter 2:20 to 21. One can fall from grace.

Rather than follow human traditions, let's do what we know is true from God's word! Our souls are purified by our obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1:22). Believe in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins and turn to righteous, confess Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Now that is from the first gospel sermon presented by Peter as the Spirit gave him utterance. So let's follow the truth!



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the title and main subject of this lesson?**

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**What scriptures are referenced within the lesson?**

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**If this lesson includes any main Bible characters, who are they and what are some of their traits?**

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**Why is this message important?**

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**Are there specific things discussed in this lesson that you would like to work on in your personal life?**

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**How would you share this message with others and with whom would you like to share it?**

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## Giving Thanks

In the hurry of our busy lives, it's easy to overlook the simple yet profound act of giving thanks. The Bible places great emphasis on gratitude in our relationship with God. From the Psalms of David to the epistles of Paul, Scripture repeatedly calls believers to cultivate a heart of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving in the Bible isn't merely a polite response to blessings; it's an attitude that shapes our faith, fosters joy, and draws us closer to the Creator. James 1:17 says that, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow."

Gratitude isn't optional; it's essential for spiritual vitality. The Apostle Paul said this in 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 18, urging believers to "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Now this verse sets the tone: thanksgiving covers every situation. Giving thanks is rooted in God's unchanging character. Whether in abundance or adversity, gratitude acknowledges His ever-present watchfulness and care. Paul said that he could rejoice and be content in whatever circumstances he was in (Philippians 4 verse 11). We all face tough times and we all feel the uncertainty of what lies ahead. Let's focus on what we have in Christ, and rejoice, and give thanks.

Our reading today comes from Psalm 100. This is a psalm of thanksgiving.

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations.

Oh what a wonderful Psalm. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that Your love and Your kindness and Your blessing has come down to us. Even to this generation. Help us always to love You from our hearts. Help us to put You first in everything. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

First, let's examine reasons to give thanks, that are grounded in God's attributes and His actions. And then, we'll explore what we can do to express our gratitude. The reasons to say thanks to God are limitless, but here are some important ones. Psalm 107 verse 1 says, "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever." God is certainly good to us. Psalm 136 repeats the refrain "His love endures forever" 26 times, and it's paired with accounts of creation, some of deliverance, and some of His provision. This psalm teaches that God's mercy is eternal and prompts us to continual to give thanks. In a dark world stained by sin and suffering, God's goodness shines as a beacon, calling our praise and thanksgiving.

God's goodness shifts our focus from the problems we have to His wisdom and providence. Revelation 4 and verse 11 reminds us of the prayer of those around the throne of God in heaven: "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created." His goodness reminds us that even when we have trials, His love persists. We couldn't breathe without His air; we couldn't quench our thirst without His water; we couldn't nourish our bodies without the food that He provides. We wouldn't know the truth, if He had not spoken through the Bible.

So first, God sustains us every day, providing food, and shelter, and safety. The Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 6:25 to 33, "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe

how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

“But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Yes, God cares for His people! Philippians 4:6 to 7 reminds us, “Be anxious for nothing, (that is stop worry about anything) 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.”

Second, we couldn't be saved were it not for the body and blood of Jesus, sacrificed for our sins. God's goodness and love shines on us, even when we don't deserve it. The Lord Jesus reminds us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us in Matthew 5:44. Well why? “So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

Our salvation and the promise of eternal life does indeed come through our Savior Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:13 to 14 proclaims, “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Oh He rescued us at great cost. When I consider the Lord's suffering, the beatings, the scourging, and the terrible cross, I marvel at His love. He did this for our sakes. The sacrifice of Jesus encourages us to joyously give thanks “to the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light” (Colossians 1:11 to 12).

Hebrews 12:1 to 3 urges us, “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” Oh everything Jesus did at His trial and on the cross, He did for us. Let's not grow weary and lose heart over the struggles that we face today.

Third, we should be thankful that God answers our prayers. In Luke 17, as Jesus passed between Samaria and Galilee, ten lepers called out, “Master have mercy on us!” Well, verses 14 to 18 tells the story: When He saw them, He said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?”

In our own lives we often forget to say thank you to the One who provided all the good things that we enjoy, things for which we have asked God. Many of our prayers ask God for what we need and want. It's right to do this now! But when God grants our requests, let's give thanks. Let's not be thankless people who rejoice in our blessings but forget the One who gave it. Are you one of the nine? Or, are you like the Samaritan? David said to God in Psalm 30:11 to 12, “You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness, That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.”

Giving thanks is not merely an expression of faith and gratitude. It should reflect what we hold dear in our hearts and how we react to the challenges we face. James 1 verses 2 to 4 says, "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 be thankful for the difficult circumstances of life, because God uses them to shape and mold our character, so that we can be mature and lacking nothing.

We actively give thanks in several ways. First, we give thanks in prayer. Colossians 4:2 says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving." 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to 18 urges us to "pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Second, we also give thanks to God through singing with our brothers and sisters. Ephesians 5:19 to 20 says, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." When we sing together we give thanks and we also encourage others to do the same. We must always give thanks. When you sing in your assemblies do you go through the motions or do you give sincere thanks to God. Hebrews 13:15 exhorts us, "Through Him (that is Jesus) then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name."

Third, we can give praise and thanksgiving to God in our friends' presence every day. A dear friend, many years, urged me to "speak a good word about Jesus." Some of the best sermons are really only a sentence long. Just a word about God's goodness to a friend can encourage that friend and perhaps waken them up to what great good God can do for them. David wrote in Psalm 28:7, "The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him." Your example of giving thanks daily can make a difference in someone's life.

Fourth, we can give thanks to God by our offerings and service to the church. 1 Peter 4:10 and 11 says, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

When we worship at church, we're giving thanks. When we worship as children of God, we are praising God and giving thanks. When we teach and when we listen to the wisdom of God in Bible classes and assemblies, we're showing our appreciation for God's word. When we take communion, we remember and give thanks for the body and blood of Jesus Christ. When Paul urged the Corinthians to give to the needy saints in Jerusalem, he knew that it would produce thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9 verse 11). He wrote, "For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all."

Paul frequently gave thanks for churches and for brothers and sisters who served the Lord in faith and love. When I see good deeds given out of hearts of love, it fills my soul with joy and it encourages me to do more. Paul told the Philippians who supported him in Philippians 1:3 to 6, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

Well why does all this matter? It matters because thankfulness, thankfulness identifies us as Christians. If you are thanking God, you don't have time for complaining, gossiping, or fighting with others. If you're giving thanks to God, you'll remain close to God. And when you count your blessings, your heart will be grateful for each of them. Oh, Paul urges us in Ephesians 5:1 to 2, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." Giving thanks to God means following Him and loving like He loves.

Let's pray together. Oh Father help us always to love You from the bottom of our hearts. To serve You and to live close to You. In Jesus name, Amen.

Obedience to His word honors God and shows love and gratitude. The Lord said, "If you love Me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14 verse 15). Thankfulness puts God's kingdom and righteousness first. Loving God means taking His word seriously. Thanks for God also demonstrates itself in serving others. The Lord said in Matthew 25:40, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of (the least of) these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me."

You know if we've been blessed, let's pay it forward. Volunteer, help neighbors, or give to your local congregation. Acts of service offers thanks to God. Hebrews 13:16 says, "And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." 1 John 3:16 to 18 says, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."

Living the Christian life has a beginning, a new birth with newness of life and freedom from sin. When we believe in the Lord, and we repent of our sins, we confess His name, we're ready to be born again in baptism. Romans 6 verses 3 to 4 says, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 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." Won't you be born again and serve the Lord?



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the title and main subject of this lesson?**

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**What scriptures are referenced within the lesson?**

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**If this lesson includes any main Bible characters, who are they and what are some of their traits?**

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**Why is this message important?**

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## The Gospel and Salvation

Many churches teach that babies are born with original sin. They say this is inherited, original sin that so corrupts a child that he's utterly lost and incapable of choosing or even desiring God. They claim that without the miraculous intervention of God, a person is not able to respond to God's call for them to respond to the gospel. They say a person must go through a spiritual experience with God before they can even believe in Jesus Christ.

But reading through the Bible—and especially those early stories of conversion in the book of Acts, you find something quite different. Instead of stories about some miraculous experience opening the corrupted hearts of people so that they can believe, you read about the apostles and disciples preaching the gospel to the lost. They preached how Jesus fulfilled the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament and the good news of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. When people heard the preaching they believed and responded to what they heard. These lost and sinful people can and did desire and choose God! Amazing! Preaching the gospel and salvation are indeed related.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Matthew chapter 28 verses 18 to 20. And there Jesus says,

And Jesus came up and spoke (to His apostles) to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

That's the word of God. That's the thing that Jesus the apostles to do and what we should do as well. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have given us Your word. Help us to make disciples of those who don't know You. To bring them along to help them to know the truth and be saved. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus gave His marching orders to His disciples, the great commission. The Lord said in Matthew 28:19 to 20 to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Jesus commissioned them to preach the gospel to every person in every place for all time.

Reading through the book of Acts, you'll find a constant emphasis on preaching the gospel. Peter and the eleven preached on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. When Peter revealed to the Jews how God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ, and that they had crucified Him, well the people then were filled with guilt. They wanted to know what to do. Well Peter didn't spend any time telling them the Holy Spirit had already worked a miracle in their lives. No. He told them to repent and to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2 verse 38).

Verse 41 says, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." Now these Jews, who had crucified Jesus and needed forgiveness, heard and accepted what Peter said and obeyed it. Three thousand repented and were baptized! They came to the Lord by obeying what they heard. They didn't have an experience. They didn't pray through. They simply accepted what Peter preached and obeyed.

Verse 42 says, "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." They devoted themselves to learn more and more of the will of Jesus Christ. They told the story of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus repeatedly to everyone. Acts 4 and verse 4 says, "But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the

number of the men came to be about five thousand.” There was no spiritual experience miraculously changing their nature. They simply heard the message and believed.

Acts 6 and verse 7 says, “The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.” The more they preached the gospel the more people believed and became obedient to the faith.

When persecution arose and the Jews stoned Stephen, the church didn't stop believing or stop preaching. Acts 8:4 to 5 says, “Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria. He began proclaiming Christ to them.” Preaching led to the way. And it led them to act in verse 12 Acts 8 says, “But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.” Again, there is no miraculous changing of hearts by the Holy Spirit. The power to change hearts was not some direct operation of the Holy Spirit but a change from the preaching of the gospel.

Later in Acts 8, Philip taught an Ethiopian eunuch. Now an angel and the Holy Spirit spoke directly to the preacher Philip, but the communication between Philip and the Eunuch was a normal conversation. There is simply no indication of some spiritual experience changing the Eunuch miraculously from a sinner to a believer. What we have is a simple, gospel preaching.

In Acts 8:34 the eunuch asked Philip, “Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?” Well this is not a question of a man who is miraculously saved; this is the sincere question of someone seeking the truth. Verses 35 to 36 say: Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?” Well here it was the preaching that made the difference.

When Saul of Tarsus was on the road to Damascus, he was miraculously blinded and had a conversation with the Lord Jesus. Acts 9, however, says nothing of Jesus miraculously changing Saul's heart on the road. In Acts 9 verse 6 Jesus said, “but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.” Now though Saul fasted and prayed fervently, he was not saved until three days later when Ananias came to him and told him what he must do. He said, “Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22 verse 16). For Saul of Tarsus salvation was not a “better-felt-than-told” experience, no, but the washing from sin that came when he responded to the gospel in baptism. That is when his sins were washed away.

Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, was a devout man who feared God with all his household, continually prayed, and gave many alms to the Jewish people; but he was not saved. An angel appeared to him, but there's no suggestion he was saved when the angel appeared. The angel told him to send for Peter in Joppa, and Cornelius did so. Well, Peter came to preach Jesus to Cornelius and his loved ones. According to Acts 11 and verse 14 Peter spoke “words to you (that is Cornelius) by which you (Cornelius) will be saved, you and all your household.” It wasn't the gift of tongue speaking that saved Cornelius and his household; it was gospel preaching.

Now God uses the gospel to touch people's hearts, to convict them of sin, and to teach them about salvation. Paul wanted to preach in Rome, so people could be saved. Paul said in Romans 1:13 to 16, “I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 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.” It isn't some experience that saves but a response to the gospel. According to Romans 1 and verse 5 Paul

said he “received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith.” Gospel preaching leads people to gospel obedience!

And Paul explained in Romans 6 verses 16 to 18, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

First, people choose to obey sin or obey the Lord. People aren't so totally corrupt that they can't desire or decide to follow Christ. Second, these slaves of sin understood and obeyed the teaching from the heart. Their hearts weren't so corrupted that they were prevented from obeying righteousness. Third, obedience to the teaching transformed these slaves of sin to servants of righteousness. This passage in Romans says nothing about a direct operation of the Spirit that miraculously changes people before obedience. Romans clearly says believing and obeying the gospel is what transforms people from sinners into servants of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 1 verse 21 says, “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” Salvation is not in the messenger but in the message of God's love and the cross. The Bible clearly says faith comes from hearing the gospel preached. Romans 10:17 says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (or God).” People come to faith when they hear the word of Christ. Faith follows hearing the gospel, not some experience.

John wrote in John 20:30 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 gospel story of Jesus brings faith, which can lead to eternal life. The Scriptures are divinely inspired, God-breathed, and have the power to bring faith and to save.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:1 to 3, “Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” When people hear, receive, and take their stand on the gospel of Christ, they can be saved by it. They must hold fast to it to be saved.

James 1:21 says, “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” People must repent and humbly accept God's word. The implanted word, the word of God, “is able to save your souls.” James didn't tell people to “pray the sinner's prayer” or ask God for an experience. What he did was he pointed to repentance and humbling the heart so that they might receive the Word.

Peter knew being born again was not through some miraculous experience but from hearing and obeying the word of God. Peter said that Christians purified their souls by their obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1:22). He explains this in verses 23 to 25, “for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For, ‘All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’ And this is the word which was preached to you.”

The Spirit directly inspired the apostles and prophets who wrote Scripture. And Jesus promised to send out scribes in Matthew 23 and verse 34, and they recorded His words for all generations. And that's

why we go to the Bible. We can know the words of Jesus, because scribes wrote them down in the New Testament. 2 Peter 1:20 to 21 says, "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." Those who wrote Scripture were moved by the Holy Spirit. They didn't write on their own initiative or make up stories. God produced the Scriptures by working in and through men, yes. God uses the Divine message to pierce our hearts (just as He did on Pentecost).

God draws us through the gospel. The Lord Jesus said in John 6:44 to 45 that, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'and they shall all be taught of God.' You see everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me." The Lord draws us when we hear the message of His love and grace. Preaching the cross draws people to God, not some personal experience. The Lord Jesus said in John 12:32, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." Christ demonstrated His love and grace through suffering on the cross. And His message is what draws us to love and serve Him.

Let's pray together. Oh Father help us to look to the message, to know the truth so that we might be saved and have eternal life. Help us always to do Your will as it's written and revealed in the bible. In Jesus name, Amen.

1 Timothy 2 and verse 4 says that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." The Father gave His Son on the cross to save us and He gave us the gospel message so that we might know the truth. Even in sin, people can repent and choose to follow the Lord. There is hope for you! The gospel is "good" news! And Jesus wants the gospel preached to everyone! He cares about you and He cares about your soul.

Sometimes people quote Acts 16 and verse 14 and say the Lord directly and miraculously changes our hearts. Acts 16:13 to 14 says that Paul "sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." Well yes, the Lord opened Lydia's heart by the power of the gospel message itself. In Colossians 4:2 to 4 Paul urged the church to pray "that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak." Why pray for an opportunity for the Word? Because God uses the gospel to open hearts!

To be saved, we must hear the word of Christ. Faith comes by hearing. If we welcome the gospel message, the Word will open our hearts. With love and faith we must respond to the gospel by placing our trust in Jesus Christ, by repenting of our sins, by confessing Jesus as the Christ and God's Son, and by being baptized. Now baptism into Christ is an immersion in water. And when you're baptized, the Lord washes away your sins (Acts 22:16), He buries and raises you with Christ (Romans 6:3 to 7), and makes you His child (Galatians 3:26 and 7), He also adds you to His church. Won't you believe and come to God today?



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the title and main subject of this lesson?**

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**What scriptures are referenced within the lesson?**

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**If this lesson includes any main Bible characters, who are they and what are some of their traits?**

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**Why is this message important?**

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**Are there specific things discussed in this lesson that you would like to work on in your personal life?**

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**How would you share this message with others and with whom would you like to share it?**

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