

Program Transcripts

July 2023



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY [®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

July 2023

Topics subject to change without notice

JULY 2 – WONDERFULLY MADE

The more I look at the universe, the world, and even the human body as God made it, the more I marvel. We are not an accident but come by the supernatural intelligence and power of the Almighty God.

JULY 9 – THE BLESSINGS OF PRAYER

God has given us a privilege and blessing that we must never overlook, the blessing of prayer. We're going to explore all the good things that come God through the blessed privilege of prayer.

JULY 16 – THE NATURE OF GOD

Do you really know the God of the Bible? In this lesson we're looking at what God declares about Himself. We want to see more than only one characteristic but to see the many facets of the nature and character of God.

JULY 23 – FOUNDATIONS

“If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3). When people reject the foundations of God, they end up destroying themselves and everything around them. We need God's foundations.

JULY 30 – PURE IN HEART

Have you wondered what happened to people's consciences? Have you wondered what happened to people's desire to be chaste and pure? In this lesson we're going to explore what it means to be pure in heart.

Wonderfully Made

The more I look at the universe, the world, and even the human body as God made it, the more I marvel. Today we're looking at how each of us was "wonderfully made."

When God saw all the things He created, the universe, the world, and humans, He saw that it was very good. What our God made and what He intended people to be was very good. It shows God's infinite intelligence, wisdom, power, and providence for our needs. The evidence reveals humans were intelligently designed for life on this rare planet Earth. When we dismiss the belief that we are "created" beings, we lose sight of our purpose for existence. We aren't accidents from mindless change. No. We're skillfully and wonderfully made. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

For more than a century people have debated whether we were specially created or evolved from other forms of life. While we grant there is such a thing as microevolution, where small things like eye or hair color change with generations, we have no evidence for the change of one form of life into another. The changes necessary for an ape to become a human, for instance, are far greater; and no one has established that this has happened. It's merely a scientific hypothesis.

In 1953 scientists James Watson and Francis Crick discovered the amazing DNA structure found in the nucleus of a cell. Now DNA reveals the incredible complexity of the human body. The encoded information in each DNA determines how a cell functions and our individual traits. Dr. George Church of the Wyss Institute and Professor of Genetics at Harvard Medical School estimates that 1 gram of DNA can hold up to 215 petabytes (now 1 petabyte is equal to 1 million gigabytes) that is 215 million petabytes of information. That's overwhelming! Only an infinitely wise and powerful God could arrange DNA to store that much data!

Our reading today comes a psalm of David. Psalm 139 verses 13 to 16 where David talks about how God created and made him.

“For You formed my inward parts;
 You wove me in my mother's womb.
 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
 Wonderful are Your works,
 And my soul knows it very well.
 My frame was not hidden from You,
 When I was made in secret,
 And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;
 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;
 And in Your book were all written
 The days that were ordained for me,
 When as yet there was not one of them.”

That's the faith of David. Let us pray. Father we're thankful that You have skillfully and wonderfully made each of us. And help us Father in our souls to know that truly. Father may our love for You grow more and more as we see Your intelligence and power. And help us always Father to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

Believing God intelligently created the world and everything in it is not a blind leap of faith. No. It's built on observing all the order and purpose that's evident in the world. Proverbs 3:19 says: "The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens." God purposefully designed

the world and all His creatures with wisdom and understanding. And the more we study this world and the human body, the more we realize the order and purpose God put into everything He made.

The purposeful design all around us argues for an intelligent designer. And that designer is God. He's the only one with the unlimited power and wisdom to create us. Revelation 4:11 says, "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."

Anyone who has ever looked at the human body closely realizes how incredibly well-designed and intricate we are. Some scientists once believed that man had vestigial organs, body parts that lost all or most of their original function through evolution. There were supposed to be 180 such vestigial organs in humans. Now this list included such things as the tailbone, the appendix, even parts of the ear and eye. And that list is now itself obsolete. Medical science discovered these organs played very essential roles and were not "useless."

Charles Darwin in the *Origin of Species* said, that "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down." Then he added, "But I can find no such case." However on page 167 of the *Origin of Species*, Darwin spoke of the eye. And he said, "To suppose that the eye...could have formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree possible." You see even from the beginning Darwin doubted himself. He didn't know in 1859 what we know today about the eye.

Bioengineer John Lenihan said, "The eye is an exceptionally sensitive optical instrument displaying many striking features of design and performance; even the windscreen washers and wipers have not been forgotten." Just think! Your eye can see moving images by the thousands as they change. Your eye makes adjustments to the amount of light, to the distance, to the angle automatically. Every camera we own was patterned after the eye. Wayne Jackson argues, "If the function of the camera demands that it was 'made,' does it not stand to reason that the more complex human camera, the eye, must also have had a Maker?"

Researchers tell us of the amazing complexity of the single, living cell. Microbiologists Benjamin Miller and Ruth Goode said, that "The cell has been likened to a power plant, a furnace, a chemical laboratory. In its reproductive functions it has been described as a factory complete with manager's office, files of blueprints and plans, intercommunication system, assembly line with foremen and workers. And none of these fanciful analogies does justice to the living cell. All of these man-made systems put together, however ingenious they are and however efficient they are, could not reproduce the functioning of this single unit of life, too small to be seen with the unaided eye." Wayne Jackson, in his book, *The Human Body—Accident or Design?*, asks, "If the living cell is more 'ingenious' than any 'man-made system, who made it? Are we to conclude it just happened? That's wholly illogical." He says.

The human body is an engineering miracle. It's indeed fearfully and wonderfully made. We have trillions of cells in our bodies, and they are marvelously designed and show their function. For instance, the human red-blood cells are saucer-shaped and fairly flat, permitting the transfer of oxygen and carbon dioxide throughout the body. Nerve cells, on the other hand, "have long, thin extensions to transmit messages." Hebrews 3 and verse 4 says, "For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God." These exceptionally complex cells didn't just happen! God designed and built them for their functions. And only a wise God could make them!

When God made Adam physically, He breathed into him the breath of life; but humans are more than flesh and bones. Each person has a God-given spirit within. Hebrews 12 verse 9 speaks of God as the Father of spirits. The Lord Jesus said in John 4:24 that "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The physical is one thing, but people are both physical and spiritual. Paul wished for the Christians in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, he said this. He says "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." We are spiritual beings because God is a spiritual God!

Now Paul told the philosophers at Mars Hill in Acts 17:24 to 29, that "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of (all) the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.

And since we're spiritual in nature, we have many spiritual aspects. We can think and reason. The fact that we're communicating messages over a television, a radio, or the internet reveals that we have intelligence. You're watching me because God gave you a mind that can understand sights and sounds. How did material things by themselves ever produce consciousness? How did we ever become aware of ourselves and of other things around us?

How did material things by themselves ever produce language? Language demands the organization of words and symbols that are understood by more than one mind. How did language pass from person to another person? Now you're listening and reasoning about what I am saying. How did you gain the ability to reason? That we're conscious of ourselves, our surroundings, of events, and of our experiences is no small thing. That we can see, hear, learn, and evaluate life is a gift from God. It didn't come from physical things. That man can communicate, discover, invent new technologies, and make judgments didn't just happen! God made us!

Tom Wilson, in his book *Intelligent Design Required*, said, that "We are moral beings with a sense of right and wrong. We're not robots or puppets. We're conscious of our attitudes, behavior, and words. We are free moral agents who can choose to do right or wrong. We have a mind, and a heart, and a spirit within us that makes decisions, that chooses the direction of our lives. And this didn't happen by accident. It's illogical to think that intelligent life could become able to do things by 'dumb luck.' Morality doesn't come by accident; it comes by intelligence. The brain tells the body what to do, but who tells the brain what to do, what to think, how to act, or why to act? Having a brain doesn't explain our self-awareness, our conscience, or our ability to make choices. Your sense of holiness or morality didn't come by 'dumb luck' or by 'accident.' God made you."

Because humans are made in God's image and have a spiritual nature, they can appreciate things of beauty and design. People treasure art, music, poetry, architecture, and literature. They can enjoy the pleasure of a flower, a sunset, an ocean, or the stars at night. They can enjoy a cool breeze or a warm sun. They can delight in sweet smells and soft touches. They can delight in truth and justice for the oppressed. Because we're made in God's image, we can bow down with gratitude and honor our God for all His blessings.

Since humans are made in God's image, they can see the design and order of the universe and the seasons. They realize God's promise in Genesis 8:22 is true: that "While the earth remains, Seedtime and

harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease.” They can know when the moon is full and when the summer starts. Whenever a person lives, north or south, the northern or southern hemisphere, he can predict the length of each day as the earth rotates on its axis. You see people know that the southern hemisphere and the northern hemisphere of the earth will differ in seasons.

The words of David in Psalm 19:1 to 2 are true indeed: that “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.” Yes, this universe points to an all-wise and all-powerful Designer, who can be only our great God. It also points to a supreme moral Governor of holiness and justice. Again, the God of the Bible fits this description!

Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3 and verse 11, that “He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.” There is everywhere a longing and desire in the heart and spirit of mankind to recognize and worship a higher power. Every person longs to know what Job asked in Job 14:14, that “If a man dies, will he live again?” This is instinctively knowledge in us that there is more than life in the here and now.

Hebrews 9:27 reminds us, that “it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.” Since I have been created by God, I owe my existence to Him. And we need to recognize our accountability to do right and wrong and our accountability to our Creator.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so grateful for Your love and we're grateful that You have made us. Help us to recognize our accountability to you to do Your will and to love You for all the good that You have done for us. This is our prayer in the name Jesus. Amen.

Our physical body shows an incredible amount of design. And it's reasonable to believe that we have been created! We aren't products of natural selection. It takes far more faith to believe that non-living matter produced life than it does to believe in God. It takes far more faith to believe that an eye or an ear were accidents of nature than to believe God designed them. The fact that you can think and have consciousness points to a spiritual aspect of creation.

This world contains the marks of all-powerful and all-wise Designer, and that Designer is the one true God of the bible. He made you, gave you life, loves you, hears your prayers, and wants you to live with Him in heaven for an eternity. You can learn all about Him in the Bible. And He gave us this precious book, this wonder message, to answer our most important questions of life. It's the only book that will tell you where you came from, why you're here, and what will happen to you after you die.

To enter into a spiritual relationship with the Lord, believe in Him with all your heart, turn away from sin and follow His Word, confess the name of Jesus as the Son of God, and out of love be baptized into Christ. And when you're immersed into Christ, you're baptized into His death. It's at that time that the Lord will wash away your sins by His blood (Acts 22:16) and He'll add you to His church. And nothing you can do is more important than getting into a right relationship with the One who created you. We hope you will come to Christ today and let us know about it.

The Blessings of Prayer

God has given us a privilege and blessing that we must never overlook. In this lesson we'll be looking at the privilege and blessing of prayer to our Father in heaven.

We'll never experience the beauty, power, and love found in prayer, unless we begin praying. We must never be self-righteous or rote in our prayers; they must come from our hearts and souls. Prayer helps us understand our Father in heaven, who we are, and Whose we are. When we kneel in prayer, we exalt our God. Prayer is based on God's love for believers. And through His grace, God gives them more things than they deserve, while through His mercy He shields them from those things which they do deserve. God keeps His promises and God hears our prayers.

In his book, "Continuing Instant in Prayer", Mack Lyon quoted an anonymous author who said, "Souls may be lost in good works, as surely as in evil ways. The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray." Our brother Mack understood that "The person who says he believes in prayer but thinks that what can be achieved by prayer can also be achieved without it, really doesn't believe in prayer." You have the opportunity today to approach the Creator of the Universe in prayer with the requests of your heart. What a blessing we have in prayer!

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Luke, chapter 18, verses 1 through 8. And here Jesus tells us the importance of keeping on in our prayer.

"Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, 'In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I'll give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she'll wear me out.' And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?'"

Let's pray together. "Father, we're thankful that we can come to You in prayer, that we can show You our love and tell You what a great God You are, and ask for Your forgiveness. And Father we pray that You will keep our prayers in Your heart, and grant us the things that we request. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

When we start counting the blessings we enjoy through the love and grace of God, we should never overlook the privilege of prayer. Prayer gives us multiple blessings that encourage our hearts and remind us of the need to remain faithful to God and to serve Him. What are some of these blessings?

Well first, prayer allows us to draw close to God. Prayer brings us into the very presence of God. Paul described his prayer, "I bow my knees before the Father" (Ephesians 3:14). And when we pray to the Father in heaven, we approach Him with our hearts and lips. As His children, God grants us the privilege of prayer. He's available to us every hour of every day. And He expects us to come into His presence. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 1:2 to 3, that "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father."

Prayer is a conversation with our Father in heaven. Mack Lyon said, "It's an invisible, supernatural line of communication between the creature and the Creator." God, who is the father of spirits (Hebrews

12 verse 9), is very connected to our spirits and He knows our hearts and our thoughts. He wants not merely to be included in our lives but to be in the center of our hearts and lives. The Lord Jesus said the foremost commandment of God is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22 verse 37). Well how can we love God to that extent, if we fail to talk with Him from our hearts. Prayer is one means by which we show our love God.

Second, prayer is essential to help us in our spiritual growth. Growing in faith and love towards God and man is essential to the Christian life. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 12 and verse 30, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." Well how can we say we love and believe in God, if we never pray. God expects every Christian to grow spiritually, and that growth is dependent upon a deep and abiding relationship with the Lord Jesus. Prayer is a big part of that relationship. God said in Isaiah 41:10, "Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

When we pray, we are hungering and thirsting for God Himself. "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42 verses 1 and 2). In all our fears and anxieties, we realize our dependence on God. God is the ultimate provider of every human need and every good thing. Yes, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1 verse 17). Now we pray for our physical needs, but God is also conscious of our emotional and spiritual needs. Because He's concerned for our well-being, God allows His children to have immediate fellowship with Him at every moment.

Third, prayer is essential to guard against the schemes of the devil. The Lord Jesus taught us to pray, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6 and verse 13). While we strive to live godly lives in an ungodly world, prayer reassures us that we aren't fighting this battle for our souls alone. God is with us! Jesus told the apostles at the Garden of Gethsemane, "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26 and verse 41). Watching and praying means that we're preparing for the devil's temptations.

Ephesians 6 verses 10 to 13 says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. And therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."

We're in a spiritual war and we need to put on the full armor of God. We shouldn't suppose that we can fight the devil for our souls apart from the strength that the Lord provides. If we fight the devil on our own, we'll surely lose. We must give it our all and rely on the strength the Lord provides as well. The devil is never stronger than you when you have the strength of the Lord. The Lord wants us to wear the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the gospel of peace as shoes. He urges us to take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6 verses 14 to 18). And to this Paul adds: "Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end (He says), keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6 and verse 18).

Now in another passage, Paul prayed that God would strengthen the Christians at Ephesus in the inner man (Ephesians 3:14 to 16). You see, Paul wanted Christ to dwell in their hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17). Our war against the devil is indeed spiritual. And the closer we draw to the Lord Jesus, the better

prepared we are to fight and win. We fight the good fight of faith and love. And Paul urged Timothy, "But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. And take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6 verses 11 to 12). Again he says, "So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2 verse 22).

Now God's grace can help us transform our lives, and prayer helps us to call for God's help. Titus 2:11 to 14 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, (that is) the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

Even the most devout Christian, scheduling time for prayer will be a battle. Distractions, problems, and the cares of the world can crowd out prayer time. And unless we make time for God, we'll not have enough time for God. We all face stress, anxieties, and burdens that weigh on our spirits. We wish we had someone to listen to us and to care. And the inspired apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 5:7 to 11, "Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brethren throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:7 to 11).

God can help us through the greatest struggles. I love God's promise found in Isaiah 65:24 "Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear." God will hear you; and you can count on Him, because He loves and cares for you.

Fourth, we ask God as Christians to forgive our sins. When we're baptized into Christ, the Lord forgives our sins for the first time. Christians, however, find that they sin after being baptized and becoming a Christian and wonder how sins are forgiven after they are baptized into Christ. God's prepared a way, that is for Christians who have sinned to find forgiveness. They can confess their sins and pray for forgiveness. James 5 and verse 16 says, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

Yes, praying for forgiveness means being honest with God, and the wrongs you've committed. God loves His children and wants to forgive us when we humbly and penitently come to Him for forgiveness. 1 John 1 and verse 9, says that "If we confess our sins, that He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now God is faithful to keep His promises, and one of His promises to Christians can be found in Hebrews 8 and verse 12, "For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." God is just, or righteous, and He will do the right thing. When we confess our sins and penitently ask God's forgiveness, we can be assured that God will keep His promise to forgive us. He'll cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now when God forgives, He forgives all our sins, every single one of them.

God's gracious forgiveness and the Lord's sacrifice on the cross leads us to understand clearly just how much God loves us and wants us to spend eternity in heaven and with His children, and as His children. Now, such love motivates us to live righteously and Godly lives. Forgiveness brings us peace with God, a clean conscience, and relief from the wrath of God. Forgiveness of sins moves us to avoid

temptation and sin. You know it's hard to pray one moment and sin the next, it's hard to approach the throne of grace and give in to the devil's temptations.

Our forgiveness from God also leads us to be gracious to others. If the Lord God could forgive us of great sin, we can forgive others for the sins they commit against us. Since God grants us peace in His forgiveness, we can grant peace to those who mistreat us. Colossians 3:12 to 13 says, "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."

Fifth, prayer offers the blessing of being thankful. The happiest people in the world are those who count their blessings regularly and give thanks. James 1:17 says, "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." The joy and hope that we possess in Christ Jesus should remind us how very blessed we are. Christians have the forgiveness of sins, have God as their Father, and have the hope of eternal life in heaven. Counting our blessings helps us to see the ongoing love of God in our lives; giving thanks is one means by which we show our appreciation and love to God. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because He first loved us."

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for all the good that You have done for us. We're thankful for the forgiveness of sins, we're thankful for life in Christ, we're thankful for the hope of heaven, we're thankful for good brethren. And Father we pray that You'll help us to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen."

When should we pray? Well the Scriptures are clear: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 17). Now the Lord Jesus "told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). Colossians 4:2 says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving." And in Acts 2:42 shows the example of the earliest Christians in Jerusalem: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Now Paul reminds us in Ephesians 5 and verse 20, "Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father."

Pray before you get up in the morning and before you sleep at night. Pray before you eat and thank God for all He provides. Pray for comfort when you hurt, strength when you're weak, and forgiveness when you sin. Pray for a heart willing to forgive others as God forgave you. Pray for wisdom when you don't know what to do (James 1 verse 5). Pray for those who are sick and those who grieve. Pray when you face difficulties, worries, or fears. Pray for family and friends. Pray for the authorities and for our nation. Pray for our enemies. You can take every hurt and concern to the Father in heaven, because He cares.

God wants to see you saved and see you know the truth. To do just that, you must believe with all your heart Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, you must repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ, and be baptized into Christ, immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins. Why not do this today?

The Nature of God

Do you know the God of the Bible? Let us look at what God declares about Himself.

God's Word opens our hearts to the truth about God, about life, about morals, and about eternity. We do well to follow Paul's advice to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15, "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 must study God's Word and handle it accurately to know the truth. We can't pick out one passage, hold tight to it, and then ignore other inspired passages. We want the whole truth, not just part of the truth. Thanks for taking time with us. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

I believe in the God of the Bible. Many have notions about God, but the God they think exists and the God of the Bible are not the same. They've locked in to one or two characteristics of His love and grace and ignored other vital characteristics. We must come to understand God is God, and we aren't. God makes the rules, and we don't. The Lord loves us but is our judge at the end of time. Our culture has wanted to hush God up. They don't want to hear about sin, repentance, or hell. They would rather have a God who allows them to do anything that they wish and never punish them; but that's a fantasy. It's not the God of the Bible.

Fantasy is never as good as the truth. It's fictional not real. People often deceive themselves with the fictional, which cannot save them. Only the truth can set us free. Don't shortchange your salvation by believing in a manufactured God rather than the God of the Bible.

Our reading today comes from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 1, verses 16 to 20. And here Isaiah, inspired prophet, talks about the desperate need of Israel to change.

"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. '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'll 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."

Let's pray together. "Oh Father help us to live in ways that honor You, and honor Your teaching, to love You and to serve You. And Father help us to stay away from sin and from the evil of this world. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

To know God is the greatest knowledge of all. We must understand as much as we can about Him, and this will take a lifetime of study. We certainly can't say everything in one program. But we can scratch the surface in understanding God's love on one hand and His justice on the other. God is both loving and just. One doesn't exclude the other. And so, let's examine God's ways a little.

God is the Creator. Genesis 1 verse 1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Yes, there was a beginning, a creation. The order and design of the universe necessitates that we recognize a Supreme power that ordered and designed all that we see. Romans 1 and verse 20 says, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made." Now we are part of that creation. The Lord God made you and me! He made us all. Genesis 1:27 reminds us, that "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Paul told the Athenians in Acts 17:26 to 28, that "He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their

habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He's not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'" God wants you to find and to love Him and serve Him.

Now God has the right to be part of your life. Nehemiah 9 and verse 6 says, "You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, The heaven of the heavens with all their host, The earth and all that's on it, The seas and all that's in them. You give life to all of them, And the heavenly host bows down before You." Because the God of the Bible created us all, He is Lord of all. Now whether you believe in Him or not, one day you'll have to face and be judged by the One who made you.

We can't understand the God of the Bible without seeing that He is the God of love. 1 John 4:7 to 9 says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him." Yes, God is love indeed, and to know Him is to know what true love is all about. Love takes place when one is willing to sacrifice for the needs of others. And God sacrificed His Son Jesus so that we might live with Him eternally.

Now Jesus didn't merely give up His life; He bore the painful cross for hours. He gave Himself by bearing the punishment due to us for our sins. Isaiah 53:4 to 6 says, "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." God punished Jesus for your sins and mine. He took the punishment that was due to us.

He is indeed the God who forgives! And God said to His people in Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins"; but God's love doesn't stop at forgiveness. God's love embraces every aspect of our lives. Romans 8:32 says, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" The Lord God cares for His own. To them God represents several things. Romans 15:13 calls Him the "God of hope." Romans 15:33 calls Him the "God of peace." 1 Peter 5:10 calls Him the "God all grace."

We can see God's loving care for us all around us, it's in this world. He gives us air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat, and clothes to wear. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:31 to 34, "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. So don't worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." Yes, God is a loving and caring God for those who love Him; but we must not so exaggerate one characteristic that we miss other characteristics that also define God's nature and character.

1 John 3:1 to 3 points out, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world doesn't know us, because it didn't know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we will be. We know that when He appears, that we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." God's character calls us to live a godly life of moral purity. God didn't forgive and save us so that we could continue to wallow in sin.

Our God is a Holy God. The prophet and king David wrote in Psalm 5 verse 4, "For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You." Now we may laugh and smile at evil, but evil offends God. 1 Peter 1:14 to 16 says, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

Many people think sin doesn't exist or doesn't matter to God, but God takes note of wickedness. We can't assume that God thinks about sin the way that we do. Isaiah reminds us in Isaiah 55:6 to 9, "'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. 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.'"

God sees and knows all things. We get so accustomed to the values and morals of our culture, that we think surely God must see things like we do. Some think He must approve what we approve and disapprove what we disapprove. In many cases people have manufactured a fantasy God who is just like themselves, and thinks like them, and follows their advice. We don't create God; God created us. The manufactured God of the twenty-first century culture is not much different than the manufactured idol of ancient times. The idolater can tell the idol what is true; and people today think they can tell God what is right and wrong. The true God of the Bible, however, is Lord of all and tells us what to do. Idols of ancient times were fantasies, who could do nothing! Only the true God could answer prayer and make a difference.

God asked in Isaiah 46:5 to 7, "To whom would you liken Me And make Me equal and compare Me, That we would be alike? Those who lavish gold from the purse And weigh silver on the scale Hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; They bow down, indeed they worship it. They lift it upon the shoulder and carry it; They set it in its place and it stands there. And does not move from its place. Though one may cry to it, it cannot answer; It cannot deliver him from his distress." What a foolish notion that one could make an idol whom they perceive to be a god! It can't speak, hear, or do anything. It is just a hunk of wood, stone, gold, or silver.

The Corinthian Christians of the first century were tempted to eat things sacrificed to idols. The apostle Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 8:4 to 6, "Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him."

Now God sees our behaviors, He hears our words, and He knows all about us. He knows the good and the evil. He always knows. We may think God overlooks our sins, but God doesn't approve of sin. God is offended by our sins; after all, we're sinning against Him. Sin is breaking God's laws and resisting His will in our lives. God hates sin, and God doesn't want us to live in sin. God wants us to repent and to come to Him. And when we sin, we separate ourselves from God.

In Psalm 50 verses 16 to 21 God says to the wicked, "What right have you to tell of My statutes And to take My covenant in your mouth? For you hate discipline, And you cast My words behind you. When you see a thief, you're pleased with him, And you associate with adulterers. You let your mouth loose in evil And your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son. These things you have done and I kept silence (God says); And you thought that I was just like you; (and then God says) I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes."

God made us in His image, but God didn't make us sinners. We chose to do evil on our own. While we changed from innocent to evil, God remained pure and holy.

Now we're all born innocent. Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 19:16, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the heaven or the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." But living in a wicked world, we learn to sin. And Paul explained the change from innocent to guilty in Romans 7 verse 9, he said "I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died." Once we're old enough to know right from wrong and sin, we become spiritually lost and dead in sin. God wants to forgive us. He wants us to know the truth and to live godly lives that honor His will. Are you willing to serve God?

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, we're thankful that You have taught us right and wrong. Help us to serve You, and to do what is right, and to refuse to do what is wrong. Father forgive our weaknesses and our sins, and help us always to do Your will out of love and faith. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

We will never understand God correctly until we understand how He has many facets to His nature and character. We should also understand how our Creator views us. He's hurt to the depths of His heart and offended when we transgress His will, and yet He still loves us. He's just and will punish sin; but God is also full of grace and mercy for those who repent. Our Lord God says to us just what He said to Israel in Isaiah 1:18 to 20, "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'll 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.

My friend, you are a free moral agent and you choose the direction of your heart and life, you're responsible for yourself. If you rebel against God, you'll only bring suffering on yourself; but if you consent and obey the Lord, you will be blessed. Why not decide to love and believe in the Lord Jesus. Why not consent, why not obey, and consenting and obeying means that you're willing to confess your faith and to repent of your sins. Once you have repented and confessed Christ, you must be born again (John 3 and verse 7) and that takes place by being baptized into Christ, being born of water and the Spirit. And this is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Now once you're forgiven, you become God's child, you become a citizen of His kingdom, you become an heir of heaven. Now this gift of God's grace is wonderful and must never, never be taken for granted. So host fast, hold fast your devotion to the Lord, and never, never give up on Him.

Foundations

Psalm 11:3 says, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" In this study we are looking at the foundations of Christianity.

There are few things so relevant and necessary to life as our understanding of where we came from, who we are, to whom are we accountable, and what will happen when this life is over. The Scriptures answer all these questions and give us the foundations upon which our lives are built. Everything points back to the God of the Bible, which is the source of truth. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

Psalm 11:3 asks, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Without these foundations there is no Christianity. You can individually destroy Christianity in your personal thinking and life, but my friend, you can't destroy it completely. The truth of Christianity has stood the test of time, and it will continue strong in a remnant. The Jews and the Romans tried to stamp it out, burning churches and destroying Scripture manuscripts; but the way of the Lord survived to this day. And nothing can destroy the way of Christ because nothing is stronger than Christ.

John 18 verse 37 records a conversation between the Lord Jesus and Pontius Pilate: Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." The truth is important to Jesus, and it should be to us. If we wish to be people of the truth, we must listen to the voice of the Lord. If we want a sure foundation for our souls, let's listen to the Lord Jesus.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle, his first epistle to the Corinthians chapter 3 verses 18 to 23. And there he discusses how strong and how wise our God is.

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, '*He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS*'; and again, '*THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS.*' So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God."

Oh aren't you thankful to be a Christian. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for the wisdom for the love for the grace and for the joy that You give to us in Christ Jesus. And the inheritance we have when this life is over. Father help us to put our faith solidly in You and in the truths that You teach us. And to do Your will in Jesus name, Amen.

In the short time we have, I want to look at ten foundational principles that are essential to understanding and being a Christian. These are essential to our commitment to the Lord. And without these things we'll only have, what we only will have is a poor substitute religion that cannot save our souls.

Now the first foundation is this: that Jesus is the Christ, that is the Messiah. Certainly, Jesus filled the many prophecies found in the Old Testament. Luke 2 verses 8 to 12 describes the angels addressing the shepherds. It says: In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the

city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. "This will be a sign for you: (that) you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

You'll recall when the Magi came from the East, they asked Herod, "Where is He who been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east have come to worship Him," Herod consulted the chief priests and scribes. They answered, "In Bethlehem of Judea," and cited the prophecy of Micah 5 and verse 2. Now the Messiah was the anointed One, the Christ! He was a prophet, priest, and a king. Jesus fit these prophecies. He was born of the tribe of Judah, a son of David, and the suffering servant of Isaiah. When John the Baptist introduced Jesus, Andrew told his brother Simon Peter in John 1:41, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ).

A second foundation is that Jesus is the Son of God. Luke 3 verses 21 and 22 says, "Now when all the people were baptized, (that is by John the Baptist) Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.'" Now we all have read that wonderful passage from John 3 and verse 16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." Jesus normally referred to God in prayer as "Father."

Third, Jesus died for our sins. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15 verses 1 to 4, "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, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

Ephesians 1 and verse 7 says, that "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." 1 Peter 2 and verse 24 explains, that "He Himself (that is Jesus 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." We can have forgiveness, because Jesus paid the price to atone for our sins on the cross. He bore our sins with a crown of thorns, whips on his back, and nails through His hands and feet. It was personal and loving beyond our comprehension.

Fourth, Jesus arose from the dead. Matthew 28:5 to 7 says, that "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. 'He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.'" Now the apostles did see Him in Galilee and they were willing to die preaching His resurrection.

Peter on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 preached the first gospel sermon. Acts 2:22 to 24 says, "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." The multitudes knew that He could work miracles and even raise the dead, so the resurrection was not impossible to them.

Fifth, Jesus is Lord. Peter concluded the first gospel sermon in Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him (Jesus) both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified." Now Peter remembered the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:18, that "All authority has been

given to Me in heaven and on earth.” We should not suppose that Jesus is only Lord of His church. No. He is Lord of all, and you and I, we are accountable to Him, whether we believe in Him or not we're accountable! Philippians 2 reminds us that Jesus was humbly obedient to the Father and He went to the cross.

“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2 verses 9 to 11). Now if we love the Lord, we'll keep His commandments (John 14 verse 15). We won't argue with Him or drift away from those commands.

Sixth, Jesus promised to give us the truth (and that is all the truth). The Lord Jesus said in John 8:31 to 32, that “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.” Now we can know the truth that makes us free when we continue to study God's words and stay in them. Jesus could proclaim in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; (and) no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

The Lord Jesus promised the apostles in John 16:12 to 13, He says “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.”

Seventh, the Bible is truly the Word of God. Its many prophecies, predicting the future, show that it is inspired of God, that it's true and authoritative. We must not discount God's word. The Bible is the most read and the most revered book of all time; it is the most translated and the most studied. It has endured because it is truly God's Word! 2 Peter 1:20 to 21 says, that “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.” That's why we can think of every word of this as being God's Word.

Now because the Bible is God's Word, we can trust it to teach what is right and true. The Word of God is inerrant, that is, it has no errors. Now since God does not lie, the words that He inspired only record what is true and accurate. We should believe His promises and take His warnings seriously. The Warren Christian Apologetic Center recently published a book called “The Utterance of God”, which provides many reasons to trust the Word of God. It also provides a valuable argument for the existence of the God of the Bible.

Eighth, Jesus built His church. In Matthew 16:15 to 18 Jesus promised His apostles, when He said “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” Jesus built His church; and it belongs to Him. I don't want to be part of any other church than the one Jesus built.

Acts 20:28 reminds us that Jesus purchased the church with His own blood. He's the foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3 verse 11), and He is the one and only head of His church (Ephesians 1 and verse 22). And you can't separate Christ from His church or His church from Christ. I sometimes hear people say that they want Jesus, but they don't want organized religion. Let me tell ya not all organized religion is the church that Jesus built. I don't want a church designed by men. I want the Lord's church and nothing else. I'm not asking you to join just any religious group. Let's turn to the Lord and His Word

and follow Him in all that He teaches. And we can see the difference between the true church Jesus built and false religions by studying the New Testament.

Ninth, Jesus is coming again. The Lord promised in John 14:1 to 3, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. (and) In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

When Jesus comes again, we'll meet Him in the air. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 to 17 says, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord." Jesus is not coming back to this earth to stay. We will ascend to Him and be with Him, in the air, from that time onward.

Tenth, Jesus will judge us and He'll separate the saved from the unsaved. The Lord Jesus said in John 12 verse 48, that "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day." We will be judged by Jesus and by His words. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." I tell ya we are accountable to Jesus. Hebrews 4 verses 12 to 13 says, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature (not you or me there is no creature) hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." My friends if we're accountable to the Lord Jesus, then we must listen to and serve Him from our hearts.

Let's pray together. Oh Father help us always to listen to Your son Jesus. To do His will, to serve Him, to love Him and may our hearts always serve You and be close to You. In Jesus name, Amen.

If I wish to go to heaven, the eleventh foundation says that we must believe and obey the Lord out of love. Now if I'm to be saved at all, I'll be saved by the grace of God, through faith when I obey the gospel out of love. We are indeed saved by grace, the gift of God; but we must receive the gift in faith and love. Gifts must be accepted. Faith and love always act in ways that honor the gift. John 3:36 says, that "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." Later the Lord said in John 8:51, "Truly, truly, I say to you, (that) if anyone keeps My word he will never see death."

Now this obedience out of faith and love require that one repent of sin. The Lord Jesus said twice in Luke 13:3 and 13:5, that "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Peter told the guilty Jews at Pentecost in Acts 2:38, "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." Paul told the pagan philosophers at Mars Hill in Acts 17:30, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent." Now repentance and baptism is how we respond to the gospel message. It's how we receive by grace the forgiveness of sins. This was true at the first gospel sermon, and it's still true today. God's way to salvation has never changed. And that's why I urge to you repent and be baptized, immersed in water for the forgiveness of sin, Acts 2 and verse 38.

Pure in Heart

Have you wondered what happened to people's desire to be pure? Let's explore what it means to be pure in heart.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 and verse 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." To have a pure heart means it's not divided or compromised. A pure heart means I haven't mixed God's will with worldly pleasures. Proverbs 16 and verse 2 says, "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit." What you think is pure and what God thinks is pure may be different. And just because you approve of some lifestyle doesn't mean God approves. Habakkuk 1:13 says of God, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor." God isn't like us. We may approve the sins of others, but God can't. His holy character will not permit Him to approve of sin.

Hebrews 12 and verse 14 says, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." The Lord forgives our sins, but He also expects us to forsake our sins and to live holy lives. God didn't forgive our sins so we could continue living in sin. And unless we strive for holiness, we won't see the Lord. A pure heart leads to a pure life. Are you pure in heart or have you allowed sin into your desires?

Our reading today comes from 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 14 to 18. And there, the apostle Paul talks about our relationship with God and being pure and living like God's people.

"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

'I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;

AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

'Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,' says the Lord.

'AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAR;

And I will welcome you.

'And I will be a father to you,

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,'

Says the Lord Almighty."

If you wish to be a child of God. Then do not touch the things that are unclean. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have loved us so much that You want to walk in our midst and have us as Your sons and daughters. Help us to respect You to love You and to do Your will always. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

A person "pure in heart" is single-minded about God. He wants to do what is right and avoids doing what is wrong. He distinguishes good from evil, right from wrong, truth from falsehood, and the helpful from the hurtful. He takes seriously what God commands, because of his love and devotion to God. He doesn't want any sin barrier to break his relationship with God. Sin offends God and separates us from His grace. Isaiah 59 verses 1 and 2 says, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made (you) a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." You can't expect God to bless you if you cherish your sins. Psalm 68 verse 18 says, "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."

If we keep on sinning, we cannot presume the grace of God will still cover our sins. Paul asked the Romans, the question, in Romans 6 verses 1 and 2 "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" God's grace and forgiveness is a precious gift that came at a great cost. God forgave us so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. Continuing to sin shows that we've forgotten the cross. Continuing in sin after we become Christians puts our souls back into peril.

Romans 8:12 to 13 says, "So then, brothers, (now he's not talking to people in the world, he's talking to Christians) we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." The Scriptures get even more specific in Hebrews 10:26 to 31, "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Many Christians aren't serious about their faith but are Christians in name only. Oh, they'll tell you they believe, but their behavior hardly differs from the behavior of the world. And though they wear the name of Christ, they cause others to slander Christianity. You can't flirt with lust and sin, and it not hurt you. Sin can overcome you and harden your heart, destroy your faith, and dull your love for God. Hebrews 3:12 to 13 says, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

So, what can we do to keep ourselves from getting overcome by sin and lose our souls? First, watch over your heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life." Well, why is the heart so important? The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 15:19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander." Choices begin in the heart; people choose what they want to do and what is important to them. When people choose to sin, their hearts can lie to them. Their hearts may say, "oh, it's no big deal," or "no one will get hurt," or "it's only once," or "no one will find out." Oh, sin is deceptive and it's destructive by its very nature. And that's why God urges us and instructs us not to sin. He loves us and knows what sin will do to harm us.

When people justify sin in their hearts; they corrupt their lives and other people around them. Titus 1:15 to 16 says, "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed." Don't let sin get a foothold in your life; it'll destroy you. Rather, control your thoughts and focus on God and what's good. Philippians 4 and verse 8 says, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Focus your heart on God and the good He's doing in your life.

Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of ways. You'll never fully repent until your heart turns against sin and hungers for righteousness. It's not simply that you stop the sin, you don't want to sin anymore at all! You want with all your heart to love and serve God. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 to 22

says, "but test everything; hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." You must leave the ways of the world to follow Christ in righteousness.

Colossians 3 verses 1 to 4 speaks of this change. It says, "If then you have been raised with Christ, (that is when you're baptized and made a new creature) seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Colossians 3:5 to 10 continues, it says, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, (evil) passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (he says) On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." Don't excuse your sin; put it to death. Don't blame someone else; put your sin to death. Don't redefine sin; put it to death.

Second, pray fervently for God's help. When the apostles at Gethsemane could hardly keep their eyes open, the Lord Jesus said to them in Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

We too need to watch and pray that we will avoid the temptations of life. The devil tempted Jesus. Yes. Even when Jesus overcame the devil's temptations, the devil was not content to quit tempting Him. Luke 4 and verse 13 says, "When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time."

The devil attacks us when we're weak or unprepared to resist. James 4:7 to 8 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." Some folks, tempted to sin, flee from God in fear. Hebrews 4:15 to 16 reminds us, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." If you draw close to God, He will help you through every temptation.

Third, study the word of God diligently. The psalmist asked in Psalm 119 verse 9, "How can a young man keep his way pure? (the answer is) By guarding it according to your word." The psalmist then resolved in Psalm 119:11 "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." The best way to know God and to know His will is to study His word. God gave us His wisdom in His word to protect us and to guide us.

Romans 12 and verse 2 reminds us, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Loving God means loving His will. You'll be happy to live it out in your life. When you live God's way, you prove to yourself and everyone that His way is right! The will of God leads everyone to become good and honest and kind. People want to be around them; they're acceptable. Who wants to be around a drunkard when he's drunk? An angry person when he's angry? A thief when he's stealing? Or a cruel person when he's mean? God's ways lift up rather than tear down; and that's why we need to study and know God's will. Because His way is truly perfect.

Fourth, flee from sin. Sometimes fleeing is the best to overcome our temptations. 1 Corinthians 6 verses 18 to 20 says, "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body,

but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” Today people do everything but flee from sexual sin. Our sex-crazed world has lost the ability to blush or to feel ashamed. Sexual lust will kill your faith and love for God. It'll rob you of your soul.

And if you want to stop sexual temptation, then avoid anything that promotes it. Put to death bad habits of viewing sexually explicit things on television or the internet. Stop reading literature designed to inflame sexual passions. Flee the source of your temptations. 2 Timothy 2:22 says, “So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” By all means, get involved at a church of Christ near you.

Why does this matter? It matters, because we belong to Christ. And we're accountable to God. We've been bought with a price, the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Paul said in Galatians 2 and verse 20, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Since we belong to the Lord Jesus, shouldn't we serve Him? One day you'll give an account for the choices that you've made, whether you lived a pure and righteous life or a wicked and indulgent life. Are you devoted to God or are you corrupted by sin?

If you follow the world, you'll have eternal consequences of separation from God. Why not change and life?

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for Your love for Your grace and for Your guidance in the word of God. Help us to follow Your will and to leave the things that hurts and the things that are sinful. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Romans 13:11 to 14 says, “Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” No one is getting any younger. As each day passes, we're one step closer either to the end of life or to the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

If you've been sinning, isn't it time you repented? Why risk your eternal soul for a brief moment of passion? Remember: “if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” The Lord Jesus died on the cross so you might be forgiven; but His grace has some conditions. You can't continue in sin and expect God to save you. Grace doesn't work that way. Grace teaches us “to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age”.

Do you need to repent? Today's the best day to do that. Place your trust in the Lord Jesus, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Focus your heart on serving the Lord.