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*Program
Study Guides*

**For
July 2016**

Saying “No” to God 2 Peter 2:4-9

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

You can say “yes” to God or you can say “no” to God; but if you say “no”, you must realize there’s a _____ to pay and much to lose. The Bible teaches the love and the grace of God; it gives us an unchangeable _____ of truth and righteousness. The Scriptures provide both an _____ for the soul and a north _____ to guide us in the right path. It not only helps us to know more about God, the Bible provides a mirror for our _____. The more we study God’s Word, the more we understand about ourselves. We need to be able to see ourselves as God sees us so that we may make the _____ necessary to please Him.

I can think of few things more precious than a newborn _____. I love the thought of something so _____ from heaven. Sweet Jackie and I have twelve grandchildren. We had four daughters of our own, and now we enjoy the love and the blessing of our grandchildren. They’re such a _____! When a little one gets to be about 18 months to 2 years, however, they learn a _____ that starts a challenge that lasts for a lifetime. They learn to say the word “_____”! They’ve heard it from their parents, and now they’re telling their parents “no.”

Many think challenging authority is the way to _____! Some never imagine that “doing your own thing” could be more _____ than it’s worth. Saying “no” to God, challenging His _____ doesn’t go unnoticed by God. He sees and knows _____ we do and _____ we do it. We can’t expect to live by our own _____, to act outside the morals of the Scriptures, to ignore the Word of God, and to escape the judgment of Jesus Christ on the last day.

Our reading today is from 2 Peter 2:4-9. The battle of a lifetime is one inside our _____. Ultimately, it’s the battle for our _____. Will you do your own will or will you _____ authority? The first authority is our _____. In time we learn that God is the _____ authority in our lives. The Bible urges us to be _____ how we deal with our inner person. Our hearts are important. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it *flow* the springs of _____.” If we let our hearts grow selfish and indulgent, we can _____ our lives by a moment’s foolish choice.

Rebellion is an _____ of the heart and will; it’s an act of defiance or resistance to one in authority. God gives us all freewill, and we can say “yes” or “no” to God. We can do God’s will or we can follow our own _____; God won’t stop us. You can choose to do what you _____. You can say “no” to God, but saying “no” to God comes at a great _____. God is gracious to the penitent and the willing; but when people _____ against him, there’s a price to pay. That price is always higher than you think.

In the days of Isaiah, hundreds of years before Christ, the people of Israel had _____ away from God and began living immoral lives that pleased themselves. The Bible says, “‘Come now, and let us _____ together,’ Says the LORD, ‘Though your _____ 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 _____, You will eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You'll be devoured by the sword.' Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 1:18-20).

Bible history shows that when people said "no" to God, they _____ Him out of their lives and they did it to their own destruction. God gave Adam and Eve only one boundary in the Garden of Eden. They could not _____ of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." God said, "in the day that you eat of it you shall surely _____." But they listened to the _____ of the devil, and they chose to say "no" to God and then to sin. They were _____ out of the garden, where they could have enjoyed eternal life and the fellowship of God. The woman bore children with _____, and the man would eat his bread by the _____ of his brow "till you return to the ground, for out of the ground you were taken; and you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

In Noah's day people also _____ against God. **Read what the Bible says in Genesis 6:5-7.** You'll remember that God sent a great _____ and destroyed every person except those on the ark—eight souls in all.

Bible students will remember what happened to Israel as the people came into Palestine. In Joshua and Caleb's day, the people _____ to do God's will. In Numbers 13:1-2, the Bible says: "Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying, 'Send out for yourself men so that they may _____ out the land of Canaan, which I'm going to give to the sons of Israel; you shall send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, everyone a leader among them.'"

Twelve went out and ten came back and brought a _____ report. The Bible says, "We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with _____ and _____, and this is its fruit. Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified *and* very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there" (Numbers 13:27-28). They were _____ and they counseled the people not to go into Canaan. Numbers 13:32-33 says: "So they gave out to the sons of Israel a _____ report of the land which they had spied out, saying, 'The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that _____ its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of *great* size. There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); we became like _____ in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.'"

Numbers 14:1-4 says: "Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. All the sons of Israel _____ against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the _____? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be _____ for us to return to Egypt?' So they said to one another, 'Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.'" The people showed a lack of faith; they _____, and they rebelled against God.

Numbers 14:5-9 says: "Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation of the sons of Israel. Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, 'The land which we passed through to spy out is an

exceedingly _____ land. If the LORD is _____ with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not _____ against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not _____ them.”

Verse 10 says, “But all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Then the glory of the LORD appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel.” The Lord was _____ with Israel and thought about smiting them all with pestilence. But Moses interceded for the people, asking for their pardon. The Lord pardoned the people, but they had a _____ to pay.

In Numbers 14:21-23, the Lord God says, “Indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD. Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it.” Every rebellious person in that generation twenty years old and upward _____ in the wilderness. Only Joshua and Caleb entered the Promised Land.

In Jesus’ day, there were disciples who had seen many _____. When they heard Jesus _____ something they didn’t understand or like, these disciples turned away from the Lord. The Bible says: “As a result of this many of His disciples _____, they weren’t walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, ‘You don’t want to go away also, do you?’ Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the _____ of eternal life. We have believed and we’ve come to know that You are the Holy One of God’” (John 6:66-69).

When people say “no” to God, they _____ more than they imagine. They may think they have gained their freedom to do as they _____, but they often find themselves _____ to sin. Adam and Eve did as they pleased and were _____ of the Garden of Eden. The people in Noah’s day _____ their lives. The people in Caleb’s day _____ young and lost their inheritance. The people in Jesus’ day _____ “eternal life.”

Let’s say “yes” to God. Let’s be _____ to God’s will. We need to be like Moses. Hebrews 11:24 to 26 says, “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of _____, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.”

We need an attitude like the generation who entered the Promised Land after _____ years in the wilderness. God’s Word says: “They (that is, that younger generation under twenty at the time of the bad report) answered Joshua, saying, ‘All that you have commanded us we will _____, and wherever you send us we will _____. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses. Anyone who rebels against the command and doesn’t _____ the words in all that you (Joshua) command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous” (Joshua 1:16-18).

Later, Isaiah also showed a marvelous spirit when he said to God, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8). I’ll go; I’ll do what you _____. Here am I send me. Do you have that _____? We need the _____ and _____ for God that says, Tell me what to do and I’ll do it. Tell me what it is that

is _____, and I'll _____ it. We're not going to _____ with God. We're not going to give any "ifs," "ands" or "buts." We're going to _____ and do. We're simply going to trust God enough to _____ whatever He instructs us. We aren't going to _____ with Him or try to _____ His Word to suit ourselves.

The church began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was fifty days after he had been crucified. Peter preached a compelling _____ to the people proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and how the Father in heaven had made him both Lord and Christ. When the people heard it, they were pierced to the _____, because they realized the crucified Jesus was indeed the Lord and Christ. They were guilty and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we _____?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be _____ in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The Bible says, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were _____ about three thousand souls. They were continually _____ themselves to the apostles' doctrine (teaching) and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:41-42).

These people said "yes" to God, "yes" to repentance, "yes" to baptism, and "yes" to the church! God _____ them with forgiveness and with an abundant new life. He made them His children and heirs and citizens in His _____, the church. They had _____ and they had eternal life. You too are making a _____. Will you have the blessing of God, or will you _____ against God? Will you say "yes" to God, or will you say "no" to God? You can say "no", but just think about what you've _____. Don't play around when the _____ of your soul is at stake.

I fear these days some folks are more sold on what they _____ about morals and about truth than what God teaches. For instance, they permit all kinds of sin and they endorse them, even though God _____ it. Sometimes when God teaches, they will only say "yes" when God _____ with them. Otherwise, they _____ their own course and ignore the moral teaching and the truth that God gives us. It's unwise to say God will just _____ us to choose our own ways, our own morals, and our own beliefs. It's unreasonable to imagine that God will let us _____ and _____ whatever we wish and then never judge our morals, our beliefs, or our actions.

Rather than follow our _____ paths, we ought to say "yes" to God, "yes" to repentance, "yes" to baptism, and "yes" to the church! When we realize that we have sinned, and the _____ of sin weighs on our souls, we ought to repent and be baptized. No "ifs," or "ands," or "buts" about it. No substituting what we'd like to do for what God asks us to do. Obedience is doing God's _____ in God's _____. It doesn't attempt to justify error or suggest that we have something better than the ways of God.

Let's say with our hearts and with our lives, "yes, Lord! We will come to you and serve you by _____ what You've taught us. We will, out of faith and love, repent of our sins, confess Jesus Christ as Lord, and we'll be baptized. We love you and want to be _____ to your will." Baptism is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sin. Saying "no" to God or changing the instructions would be the _____ thing that we could do; but saying "yes" and obeying is the best thing we can do. Let's say "yes" to God and make things right. Let's not permit one day, not even one day to go by in rebellion to God, but make up our minds today that we will follow the Lord!

July 10, 2016

Is Marriage Obsolete? Ephesians 5:25-30

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

A recent report _____ that four-in-ten Americans say that marriage is obsolete. Is marriage obsolete? What is God's _____ for couples who wish to live with each other? Does marriage matter? The Bible provides us the _____ way and the _____ way to live. That's why we go to it again and again. A Pew Forum survey released in November said 39 percent of Americans say marriage is obsolete. This change in thinking profoundly impacts our country and especially _____. In 1960, 72 percent of the _____ in America were married, but today only about half are married. Many are waiting until _____ in life to marry, and the number of single people who are divorced has tripled since 1960. More than that, the number of couples living together without marriage has _____ dramatically.

God gave Eve to Adam in the beginning because it was not _____ for him to be alone. Marriage; that is, one man and one woman for life, was and is today God's _____. The home made up of a married father and mother still provides the very _____ foundation for the happiness and the prosperity of the whole family.

God has _____ my wife Jackie and me with 42 years of happy marriage and four wonderful daughters. We now have twelve grandchildren. I consider my wife Jackie as God's precious _____ and a treasure. I'm so thankful for her. I've often wondered, though, how she's put up with me. When we married, we made a _____ to God and to each other that we would live together as husband and wife until death do us part. After all these years, we still love each other deeply and are even more determined to _____ that promise.

Our reading today comes from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 5, verses 25 to 30.

When I was a teenager growing up in Shawnee, Oklahoma in the 1960s, we used a _____ that I don't hear much these days. It described a _____ behavior that was considered sinful and shameful. We used the term "fornication" to describe all kinds of sexual intercourse outside of _____. Today nearly 60 percent of American adults _____ that "fornication" or sex between an unmarried man and woman is morally acceptable. Only forty percent think it's _____ to have sex outside of marriage.

This change in thinking reminds me of what happened at Corinth. **Read what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 5:1-2.** Rather than be _____ of sin, people have become arrogant! We've assumed that we have moral _____ to do as we please without spiritual or physical consequences.

I think that explains in part why we're seeing some significant social _____ in America. The number of couples who are living together has _____ dramatically! Cohabiting has nearly doubled since 1990. More than _____ of adults between the ages of 30 and 49 say that they've lived with someone at some point in their lives. Even many people who call themselves

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Christians have turned a _____ eye to the common practice of cohabiting.

As in the days of Jeremiah, many Americans today have no _____ about anything. Jeremiah 6:15 says, “Were they ashamed because of the abomination they’ve done? They were not even ashamed at all; they didn’t even know how to _____.” From our movies, to our television sets, to the internet, there’s a constant _____ that sexual immorality is now morally acceptable. But is it? When did God change His mind? Has God ceased to be _____? Habakkuk 1:13 says about God, “Your eyes are too _____ to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor.” My friends, God hasn’t changed!

The National Center for Health Statistics reports that nearly 44 percent of births in 2014 were to _____ mothers aged 15-44. In 1960, that number was only _____ percent. Today, one in four children is growing up in the home of a _____ parent. Children who grow up in single-parent families often face _____ social, financial, and moral challenges than other children do. People who value marriage less are more likely to value other family relationships less as well. Those who don’t want a _____ often don’t want a relationship with his cohabiting partner’s family either.

Two-thirds of the children entering stepfamilies do so in the _____ where adults are cohabiting rather than married. Studies show that children who live in cohabiting homes show _____ emotional development than children do from married, two-parent families. Cohabiting means people can _____ their partner rather than face the challenging responsibilities of a home and family. Cohabiting families, unfortunately, rarely think of their spiritual lives or giving their children a spiritual _____.

Even when two people have lived together a long time in cohabitation, they don’t feel obligated to _____ with this partner forever. Couples who live together often define their relationship as “_____” and do not feel the need to remain exclusively loyal to their partner. Cohabiting couples, frankly, are less willing to _____ or be financially responsible for their partners. Such couples usually take steps to keep their _____ separate from their partners. A woman who lives with a man without marriage may be his girlfriend, but a girlfriend is not a wife. She is not yet _____; she is only a live-in lover. Many couples say they want to live together for a while before marriage to see if they’re _____. They assume that if they can get along _____ marriage, they can get along after they say “I do.” They figure that they need to see if they can handle the down times as well as the good; and breaking up before marriage is better than going through a messy _____. All of this sounds good, but there is a substantial _____ between “trial” marriages and real commitment for life.

A trial is just that...a trial. Somebody slips up and the other person _____. Marriage is much deeper and _____ than that. It has levels of _____ that the couple who is cohabiting will never know. Marriage is for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, and until _____ do us part. Cohabiting means I’ll put up with you as long as you keep me _____. In the meantime, we’re on a month-to-month agreement. No assurance, no security, and no long-term commitment.

If you get sick, lose your job, or become unable to take care of yourself, your live-in partner will feel less responsible for your _____. They may even abandon you when you most _____ them. One live-in partner said to the other, “If you ever need me, we’re going to be in trouble.” Couples who cohabit want the sexual _____ but not the responsibility. This selfish, self-absorbed attitude means it’ll be harder for them should they marry to have a _____ and _____ marriage.

Studies show that two people who deeply love each other and are willing to _____ their lives to each other in marriage will live longer, healthier, happier, and more prosperous lives than those who are not married. For instance, sociologists Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher cite a study that showed ninety-percent of married men at the age of forty-eight would live to be sixty-five; but only sixty-percent of never-married men at forty-eight would live to see retirement at sixty-five. Among married women, nine in ten at 48 percent reached 65, but among those never-married or divorced, only 80 percent reached 65. Married people, generally speaking, live longer than those who do not marry.

Some cohabiting couples end up marrying, but they _____ far more frequently than do couples who wait until marriage to live together. In their book, *The Case for Marriage*, Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher show substantial evidence that married people are happier, healthier, and better off financially than those who choose other lifestyles. They cite hundreds of studies showing marriage is indeed a _____ of God. Marriage has not failed us; we have failed it.

Waite and Gallagher conclude their book with these words: “Decades of social-science research have _____ the deepest intuitions of the human heart: As frightening, exhilarating, and improbably as this wild vow of constancy may seem, there is no substitute. When love _____ permanence, a safe home for children who long for both parents, when men and women look for someone they can count on, there are no substitutes, for the word that we call marriage.”

In reality, what some people have tried to _____ for marriage is simply living in sexual immorality with the same person. The Bible says, “Let marriage be held in _____ among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will _____ the sexually immoral and adulterous” (Hebrews 13:4).

God’s _____ is that people marry rather than live in sexual immorality. First Corinthians 7:2 says, “But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own _____ and each woman her own _____.” Paul advises widows and the unmarried to live as celibate singles as he did. Then he said, “But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should _____. For it’s better to marry than to be aflame with _____” (1 Corinthians 7:9). The Bible never _____ of cohabiting outside of marriage.

Some today repeat what the Corinthians said long ago, “All things are _____ for me.” The apostle Paul quotes this saying because the people thought they were _____ to commit acts of fornication. But the inspired apostle Paul answers them, “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are _____. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be _____ by anything. Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of

them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:12-13).

The Bible says, “Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man _____ against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a _____ of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a _____: therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). The Lord expects those who follow Him to live a _____ and _____ life, not like the people of the world. **Read what the Bible says in Ephesians 5:3-6.**

When people marry, they publicly _____ before God and witnesses that they will care about and care for each other. Married couples _____ together; they take _____ of each other; they provide for each other; they _____ common goals and dreams. The money they earn they _____ and spend together. They share their _____ and raise their children together. They worship together, pray together, and work together. They share their joys, their sorrows, their faith, and their love. They become one _____ and one in _____. My friend, this is the Lord’s way for people, both men and women, to live together.

God realized that it was not good for Adam to live _____, so He made a helper suitable for him. “So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man” (Genesis 2:21-22). When husbands and wives highly value their mates as _____ from God, they will find greater satisfaction in marriage.

But when couples live together without marriage, they snub their nose at the _____ of God. Many couples who cohabit stop going to _____ and push God out of their lives. It’s hard to draw close to God while you continue _____ in sin. Why not give up the sin and come back to God’s way? Why not turn your heart and your life around and live as God _____? You’ll never regret doing the right thing, but you will _____ regret your sins.

When Jackie and I married, we inscribed some words of a Scripture in our wedding rings: “Two are _____ than one” (Ecclesiastes 4:9). **Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.** We believed this forty-two years ago. Today, we know it to be _____. The Lord’s way is the _____ way to live.

The Word of God _____ itself over time. The Lord Jesus said, “if anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself” (John 7:17). The Lord’s teaching is from God and has proven itself again and again. That’s why we must _____ God’s teaching on marriage, on salvation, and on the Christian life.

If you love the Lord, come out of sin and live righteously; _____ Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and do it before others; and then be _____ in water in the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “you _____ be born again” (John 3:7). That new birth of water and the Spirit comes through the grace of God when one is baptized into Christ. God washes away our sins in baptism (Acts 22:16) and causes us to walk in newness of life, free from sin (Romans 6:4). Perhaps you’ve given in to the lust of the flesh and you need forgiveness. There’s never a better time than today to get things right with God. Won’t you do that?

July 17, 2016

A Church Member Hebrews 10:22-25

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Many people want Jesus, but they're not _____ about the church. Some have _____ organized religion and others have started worshipping at _____. What does the Lord say about church membership? Is it the will of God?

Many people today say, "Jesus, _____; but the church, _____." They want to be Christians but not _____ of any "organized religion." Others have decided to become Christians "at large" or to establish small "house churches"; they don't want to be _____ of the organized church with elders and deacons that's mentioned in the New Testament. But, can a Christian _____ God and live apart from the church? Is attending church and being a church member _____? Or can a person just live a good life without the church and without the association of brothers and sisters? Should Christians be church members?

I'm told that eighty percent of Americans _____ that you can be a good Christian and yet not be a member of any church. This seems odd to me since the New Testament is _____ of references to the church. People forget the church is made up of the called-out people of God who are _____ by the blood of Jesus and who are devoted to following Him. The church is not some man's idea but it's God's. If you could be a member of the church of Christ, the church that He built, and if you believe and practice what the Lord teaches, wouldn't you _____ to be a part of that church? The good news is that you _____ be a member of the Lord's church.

Our reading today comes from the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 22 to 25.

In trying to understand the _____ of the church in God's plan and scheme of things, the first thing that we must do is see the connection between Christ himself and His church. There are a number of passages that show such a _____ relationship that one can hardly think of Christ and not also think about His church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus responded to Peter's confession that He was the Christ, the _____ of the Living God, and He said "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock (that is, the confession) I will _____ my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The church itself is built upon the _____ that Jesus is the Son of the Living God. Jesus built His church, and it _____ to Him!

In Acts 20:28, Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own _____." When I think of the purchase price that Jesus paid for the church, I can only conclude that the church must have been very, very _____ to Him. People only _____ for the things that are most important in their lives. If the church were that important to Christ, it ought to be that important to those who _____ the Lord and want to follow in His steps. The church is the _____ thing mentioned in Scripture that Jesus purchased with His blood. For this reason, we cannot please God and _____ as if the church were optional.

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Paul said that the church is so closely related to Christ that it may be called his _____, suggesting that the church is how Jesus Christ is working in the world today. Paul said, “And He put all things in subjection under His (that is, Jesus’) feet, and gave Him as _____ over all things to the church, which is His _____, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23). The head and the body are so closely connected, interconnected, that they should _____ be divided. Christ without the church is like a head without its body. Those who want Christ but _____ the church need to think through their theology. The church was Christ’s idea.

Read what Paul said in Ephesians 5:25-27. Christ loves the church with the same fervor that a husband loves his wife. When people criticize and slander the church, Jesus must feel the _____. How would you feel if people said ugly things about your family? Jesus thinks of every member of His church as His _____.

The apostle Paul also reminds us that Jesus is “the _____ of the church” and “the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23). The church is not the Savior, but the “saved.” Christ is the Savior of the church. In Acts 2:47, we learn that the Lord _____ the “saved” to His church. If you are saved, the Lord has added you to His church, you’re a church _____. If you’re not in the church, then (Biblically speaking) you’re not _____ the saved. The church is not an optional thing that you can take or leave at your will. It’s the Lord’s _____ body of people whom He has saved, whom He loves, and whom He purchased with His own blood.

It is for this reason that Paul said, “For no man can lay a _____ other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). People need to be _____ with what the Lord has founded. You cannot substitute something else in its place. You can’t build your own spirituality, your own arrangement, or your own church and expect to _____ the Lord Jesus. Jesus, the Lord said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be _____” (Matthew 15:13). Man-made religion doesn’t work with God. Some think they can reinvent the church, but it may end up back-firing on them. The Lord’s foundation is the _____ foundation.

We ask, “What was the church like in the New Testament?” The word “church” refers to an assembly, a congregation that has been called together for a specific _____. After Paul had established several congregations on his first missionary journey, he _____ to those congregations, strengthening and encouraging them. Acts 14:23 says, “When they had appointed elders for them in every church (congregation), having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Later, Paul wrote “To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers (that is, bishops and elders) and deacons” (Philippians 1:1).

These were organized churches with established _____. They were visible, recognizable congregations, meeting at set times, and in set locations. Paul mentions many of the _____ of the church at Philippi or Rome or Corinth by name. Yes, sometimes churches met in some family’s _____. But in those days a large house could hold a congregation. In some cases, congregations met outside or in caves. You have to remember that the church was _____ persecuted and considered illegal. The earliest church buildings date about 250 AD. Although they could not openly show themselves, they were _____ organized.

When the church of the New Testament was faced with a _____, they brought it to the apostles and later to the elders of each congregation. They didn't get _____ and start their own churches with their own doctrines and their own ways. The Hebrew writer gave instructions to members of churches, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your _____ as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17). God wants us to fulfill His _____ and purpose for His church, not reinvent the church with our _____ ideas and designs. David said, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house (temple) of the LORD'" (Psalm 122:1). We too ought to be glad when we _____ today with the household of God, that is, the church. The church is God's temple today according to 1 Corinthians 3:16. Some of my most treasured moments have been spent with God's people worshiping and serving. My dearest friends are fellow _____ of the church. They've helped me and blessed me richly through the years. I look forward to being with my spiritual family at church each Lord's Day. I'm glad when they say, Let us go to church.

The notion that we can "be the church" but not be a part of any local congregation is a human _____. God's people assemble with one another. The Hebrew writer said, "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our _____ assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25). In the New Testament, when a Christian _____ assembling with the church, he was falling away from God. He was _____ the faith. He was hurting himself and hurting the church by returning to the _____.

Solomon said, "Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). People in the church make _____ stronger, better, and more faithful and committed. Each Christian needs the _____ of love and faith that his brothers and sisters give him. Each Christian needs to so _____ and so _____ that he provides an example of commitment to the cause of Christ to those surrounding him. Saying, "Well, I love Christ, but I won't go to church," sends a _____ signal. It says I love God, but I will choose which commands I will _____ and which I will not. Such a person isn't really obeying God but he's obeying himself and obeying his own _____. Solomon said, "Two are _____ than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them _____, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they will keep _____, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can _____ him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). God knew that his people needed the _____ and love that each one could give the other to grow and to remain strong in the faith. Two are better than one because they have each other.

Where would we be _____ Bible teachers and without godly examples? In the early church, God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13). God _____ that His people

needed training and equipping to do the _____ that He called them to do: and that is to take the _____ to the world, to _____ up the church, and to render _____ to the needy.

Through the years, the church has been so good to Jackie and me. Over thirty years ago, when our four children were small, my lovely wife Jackie had to be in the hospital for several days with a back problem. We had no physical family within 500 miles at that time. The church was our _____. The church we attended in Mississippi helped us with food and cleaned our house. An older lady, Mrs. Edwards, watched our children when we had to go to the doctor. The hardest year of our lives was made better by the goodness of people who loved and cared for us. We can never forget that we had loved ones who helped us when we needed it.

When Katrina destroyed much of Louisiana and Mississippi, churches all over middle Tennessee and Kentucky raised _____ to send to their brethren affected by the hurricane. I watched truck after truck _____ with supplies and food and water go to churches where the needed items were distributed. No red tape, just brothers and sisters _____ brothers and sisters. One church of 100 members in Gonzales, Louisiana, fed 300-500 people every day for weeks. Churches gave millions of dollars to _____ this disaster. They didn't get much publicity, but the people there knew where to go to get help. They got it from God's _____, the church. I'm so grateful for what the church is doing all over everywhere, and what a difference it makes in the _____ of people. We need the church for good examples; we need the church for the teaching they give; and we need the church for the help they can give when we need help.

Someone says, "Well Phil, you just don't understand. We had a _____ experience at church and won't be going back." Many times the problem is not with the _____ church but with an individual or two who hasn't acted as he should. The Bible teaches that when a fellow Christian _____ against you that you're to go to that person privately and talk to him, trying to restore the relationship (Matthew 18:15). Many times people, rather than following the instructions of the Lord, simply just quit and _____ themselves from the godly people that they need in their lives. Don't quit the church over some _____ brother or sister. Talk to that person and work it out, and draw close to Jesus when you do it.

I became a Christian because of Jesus. He is my Lord and Savior. I want to _____ with Him forever. My pride is not as important as going to heaven. I won't let anything or anyone come _____ my God and me. I will always have to deal with rude, selfish, and immature people; but if the Lord was gracious enough to _____ me of my many sins, I can be gracious enough to forgive those who sin against me. I don't want to risk my soul by refusing to forgive a brother or sister in the church. I'd rather forgive and be forgiven than to die lost.

There's no greater honor and no greater blessing than to be a _____ of God. You can be one today, if you will. The Lord opens His heart and His hands, reaching for you with the _____. If you'll accept the gospel—that Jesus died for your sins, was buried and arose on the third day—and by _____ in Him, _____ of your sins, _____ His name before others, and by being baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins, then you too can be a child of God. You can be His child, an heir of eternal life. Won't you do that today?

July 24, 2016

Is Satan Real? Ephesians 6:10-13

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Is Satan real? Should we take him seriously? Does he really _____ us and want to steal our soul? What does the Word of God say about the devil and what should I know about him?

For most people Satan is a _____ that won't go away. We've heard about him, known about his evil influence, and wrestled with him more than once. Many folks, however, don't know what to make of Satan. A recent Barna poll found that more than half of American adults (almost 60 percent) say the devil, or Satan, is not a living being, but just a _____ of evil.

Medieval Christians depicted Satan as a character with a _____, dressed in a _____ suit, smelling of brimstone (that is, sulfur), and carrying a pitchfork. They believed that he was the warden of _____ and will torture us for an eternity; and he'll torture the unfortunate, evil souls who are cast from the presence of God.

Hollywood usually _____ Satan as rich, cunning, successful, powerful, and good looking. He appears as a winner with every _____ that he wants. His prime work seems to be to _____ over the earth seeking individuals who will sign over their _____ to him in exchange for special powers or possessions. In the end of a Hollywood script Satan never wins but gets outwitted and reverts to a more familiar angry, immature, hate-filled guy with horns and revenge in mind. To Hollywood, Satan doesn't seem particularly intelligent because he's easily _____ by humans. But is that the _____ Satan?

The Bible always tells the _____. If we want to know what Satan is _____ like, let's go to the Bible. We don't want someone's imaginary _____ about Satan. We want what _____ has to say. Only the Bible can give us the _____ picture

Our reading today comes from Ephesians, chapter 6:10-13.

People who _____ the supernatural usually regard Satan as merely a symbol of evil. For them Satan is a spiritual threat but not an _____ being. To them the devil, or Satan, is only an impersonal evil _____ present and operating in the world. Since mentioning hell or judgment is politically incorrect, they have no _____ for Satan. Many believe that everyone is ultimately going to be _____, so Satan is merely a token, spiritual opposition. For 13 percent of Americans, hell is just a symbol for a _____ outcome after life is over. Many people regard Satan as the personification of an influence.

The Bible describes Satan and his demons as actual beings during the days of Jesus, but churches that hold classical _____ views explain Satan away by saying the first century was pre-scientific and used the concepts of demons and Satan to _____ people into obedience and to account for events and diseases for which they had no other explanation. They regard belief in Satan and demons as real, say that they're real today as a view that was _____ from a pre-scientific day.

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The word “Satan,” as it appears in both Hebrew and Greek, means “_____.” The word describes a person who lies in wait as an _____. Satan is commonly called “the devil,” which points to one who engages in slander or accusing. In addition to these two principal names, the Scriptures also call Satan the tempter (Matthew 4:5); Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24); the enemy (Matthew 13:39); Belial (2 Corinthians 6:15); an adversary (1 Peter 5:8); the deceiver (Revelation 12:9); and the father of lies and a murderer (John 8:44). First John 3:8 says the devil has “sinned from the beginning.” The Lord Jesus describes Satan as the “evil one” (Matthew 13:16); that is, he is the one whose _____ and _____ are given over to evil. Moral evil is his dominant attribute. The devil stands in stark _____ with God the Father who is the “Holy One” (Isaiah 1:14).

He is also called “the dragon,” and “the old serpent” in Revelation 12:9; he is “the prince of this world” (John 14:30); and he is “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). Paul calls him “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), and “the spirit that is now working in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2).

Satan’s _____ is very great in the world. He is like a “roaring _____, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Satan is the one who takes the _____ away from men (Mark 4:15). The Bible says people are “taken _____ by him” (2 Timothy 2:26). Paul warned Christians against his “_____” (2 Corinthians 2:11). James called on Christians to “_____” him (James 4:7).

The Lord Jesus _____ Satan when he was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). Satan tried to persuade Jesus, the Son of God, three times to follow His desires and to _____ the will of God. However, Jesus met each temptation by citing to the devil _____ from the Word of God, specifically from the book of Deuteronomy. In the end, the Lord Jesus said, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.’” Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him (Matthew 4:10-11). Luke 4:13 notes that when “the devil had finished every temptation, that he left Him (that is, Jesus) until an opportune time.”

In this Biblical passage, one has to admit the devil is just as _____ as the angels are. If Satan is merely an influence, this passage actually becomes nonsense. When Jesus told Satan to “go,” He wasn’t speaking to a symbol but to a _____. In these verses, the Bible speaks of the devil as a person who travels, speaks, reasons, and is persistent. Such characteristics belong to a person, not a symbol.

When Jesus predicted to his apostles that He must go to Jerusalem and there suffer many things, be killed, and rise again the third day, Peter took Jesus aside and _____ him saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” In response, Jesus said, “Get behind Me, Satan! You’re a stumbling block to me; for you’re not setting your _____ on God’s interests, but man’s” (Matthew 16:21-23). Calling Peter “Satan” suggests that Jesus considered Peter’s behavior like that of the evil person Satan, who sets his mind on _____ interests. Personalities (not symbols) set their minds, make decisions, and oppose the will of God. Satan is a person!

In Luke 22:31, Jesus revealed that Satan had asked permission of God to _____ Peter like wheat. Such language again suggests that Jesus considered the devil as a person.

Again, the Lord Jesus recognized the _____ that the church at Smyrna faced in living in a city where they were being blasphemed. Jesus condemned “the blasphemy by those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan” (Revelation 2:9). The book of Revelation reveals that the final _____ of Satan, or the devil, and what it’s going to be. If Satan were just a symbol, such a graphic statement would be meaningless. Revelation 20:10 says, “the devil who deceived them was _____ into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” You can’t torment a symbol; one can only torment a person.

That Paul regarded Satan as a real person may be _____ in many of his statements about Satan. When he wanted to visit the Thessalonians, Paul said, “Satan _____ us” (1 Thessalonians 2:18). In 2 Corinthians 2:11, Paul described Satan as one who had “schemes”; that’s a sure indication of intelligence and personality. In 2 Corinthians 11:14, Paul reveals that Satan “disguises himself as an _____ of light.” From this, Paul says it’s not surprising that “his servants also disguise themselves as _____ of righteousness” (chapter 11:15).

Paul judged the man who had his father’s wife by delivering “such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his _____ may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:5). In 1 Timothy 1:20, Paul handed over Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan, “so that they will be _____ not to blaspheme.” Such statements do not _____ a mere influence, but rather suggest one who has the ability to do physical harm to disobedient saints.

In a different way, Paul also speaks of being given a “thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!” (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul was well aware of the _____ in the heavenly places with which he wrestled. Satan was not an influence, not a personification, and not a symbol; he is a person.

Read again God’s Word from the text in Ephesians 6:10-13.

Each of us faces a _____ in life against the devil. This is a personal battle, and we can’t _____ this battle off to somebody else. When people fought battles in ancient times, the one who was standing at the end was the winner; the other was _____. Our battle is spiritual; we’re not fighting for our lives; we’re fighting for our _____. We’re also fighting to show others what side we are on—to _____ others to fight the good fight and to stand.

We need the Lord’s _____ in fighting this battle. We need His _____ and the armor that He provides to us. If we fail to arm ourselves with God’s strength, we will fall _____ to the devil. If we are unwilling to _____, we will perish spiritually. To lose this battle means we’ll lose our _____. This is no matter to take lightly.

Read what God’s Word says in Ephesians 6:14-17.

The Lord loves us and so He equips us with armor that will _____ us win. Fasten on “the belt of _____.” Why, because the devil is a liar and the truth exposes his lies. God gives us the knowledge of the truth in the Word of God. The best way to defeat the devil is to _____ him

for what he is, an enemy who lies and accuses people falsely in order to gain power. He gains power when he _____ people to sin. He promises the pleasure of sin, but that pleasure never _____. In the end, it enslaves and destroys.

The Lord equips us with the _____ of righteousness. God lovingly forgives and cleanses us from sin. Righteousness motivates us to do what is _____ and to avoid destructive sins. The Lord equips us with protective _____ that allow us to move quickly in the gospel of peace. The gospel of Christ gives us peace and confidence, so that we can handle life's spiritual challenges without _____.

The Lord equips us with the _____ of faith, which is able to put out the fiery arrows of the devil. When a Christian believes in Christ and believes in His love and in His Word, he has the _____ to block the lies that the devil tells. He knows Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and every word that He spoke is _____ and righteous altogether. He knows that whatever Jesus says is right and there's a _____ between right and wrong. He knows he's a created being not a _____ of evolution. He knows heaven and hell are real destinies of each of our _____.

The Lord equips us with the _____ of salvation. That helmet protects the _____ from the blows of the opponent, and our salvation protects us today. The Scriptures marvelously promise, "if we _____ in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, that we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). Verse nine says, "if we _____ our sins, He's faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we walk with the Lord Jesus and confess our sins, asking God to forgive us, we have an ongoing relationship with God that keeps us completely free from sin.

The Lord also equips us with the _____ of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. God's Word instructs, reproves, corrects, and trains us so that we might fight the good fight of _____. Soldiers used the sword both defensively and offensively. Scripture _____ us from sin and also helps us to _____ the devil by exposing his wicked ways. You can trust the Bible to give you the _____ that you need to overcome temptation, overcome sin, and overcome the devil. So keep your Bible close to your heart if you wish to win this battle for your soul.

The Scriptures reveal that the devil is a deceiver, a liar in disguise. He wants people to think he's an angel of light, while in reality he is pure evil. Make no mistake, Satan is not now, nor has he ever been, your _____. **Read what the Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8-9. Also read James 4:7-8.** God wants us to draw close to Him and _____ to His commandments. If we draw close to God and resist the devil, the devil will _____ from us, and we'll win this battle.

How do you draw close to God? Submit your heart and your will to Him, place your trust in Him. You can't be friends with sin and be friends with God. You must give up the sin and submit to God. With your faith and repentance, out of love, you must be willing to confess your faith in Jesus Christ before others and to be baptized in the name of Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). At that point, God cleanses you from sin, and adds you to His family, the church. If you draw close to Him, He will draw close to you! If you're a Christian who's moved away from Christ, why not come back to Him by repenting of that sin and praying to God for forgiveness.



Is Hell Real?
Matthew 17:13-14

There are fewer blanks than usual in order to retain complete passage quotations.

One day you'll _____ your eternal destiny. Will it be a day of _____ or will it be a day of _____? We know that if God _____ it, that it's true and significant. We're going to be judged one day by the _____ found in this book. The Bible is God _____ to us! We need to _____ what it says and to take it seriously. God doesn't tease or joke around when it comes to our _____.

Our study today deals with our eternal _____ after this life is over, and it should matter to you. We're all going to face an _____ destiny someday. According to a recent Pew Forum poll, 72 percent of Americans believe in _____, but only 58 percent believe in _____. Only a few people believe they will be _____ in hell. It would be _____ to think you're saved when in fact you're not. While most folks know there is a hell, they _____ it. If we could open the _____ of the dead and ask them about Hades, that unseen place where the spirits of the dead go, we might be more inclined to think about our future. Whether they were in a place of comfort or a place of torment, they would say with one loud, clear voice, "Do everything you can to _____ God and go to heaven; and do everything you can to stay out of this place of torment." I wonder if we take our afterlife seriously enough. Moses said in Deuteronomy 32:29, "Would that they were _____, that they understood this, that they would discern their _____!" What will happen to us when we die? The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27 it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes _____.

Our reading today comes from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself as He was speaking in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:13-14. That is a surprising passage for many.

The Lord Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who've done good to the resurrection of life, and those who've done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29). At the resurrection, we will stand before the _____ of Jesus our Lord. Jesus said, "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious _____. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will _____ them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He'll put the sheep on His right, and the goats on His left. And then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (Matthew 25:31-34). Verse 41 continues: "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Verse 46 says: "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

There are two destinies _____ the resurrection and judgment; the blessed one with joy in heaven, and the other is hell. The word hell or *gehenna* appears _____ times in Scripture,

mostly from the lips of Jesus. Some people think preaching hell is _____ or uncouth, but Jesus preached on it because people _____ to hear about it. Heaven and hell ought to be _____ to us since we'll spend eternity in one place or the other. I find no joy in thinking about the final end of unbelievers or sinners.

God said, "Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no _____ in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11). Perhaps you remember the broken heart of Jesus as he _____ over Jerusalem. He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Matthew 23:37). There are people who will not come to the Lord, people who will not _____ of their sins, people who will not _____ the truth, and will not serve God. It breaks God's heart to think about the _____ they have made. Jesus could have remained _____ about hell and just let them perish, but he did not do that. If hell is real, it's _____ not to tell people about it. Cruel preachers _____ the subject. That's why Jesus spoke on the matter—He did it out of _____ and out of truth.

Read the warnings of our Lord in Mark 9:43-48. Jesus warns us about the consequences of _____. It's worse to be _____ in sin than to lose an eye, or a hand, or a foot. On another occasion Jesus warned, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can _____ both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Dying is tragic, but it's even more tragic to be lost in _____.

When the Bible speaks of the eternal punishment of sinners or unbelievers, it uses phrases such as "outer darkness," "weeping and gnashing of teeth," an "unquenchable fire," or an "eternal fire, and "the place where the worm does not die." Hell is the place of complete separation from God.

Paul describes the second coming of Jesus as a frightening one for those who _____ God. Jesus will come again to _____ His followers, but He'll also come to _____ those who reject Him. This inspired apostle said, "and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Can you imagine how _____ it would be to spend eternity separated from God? God closes his _____ to their prayers in eternity because they have closed their _____ toward Him in this life.

What can you expect of the future? That depends on you. The Bible says, "He will render to each one according to his _____: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does _____, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality" (Romans 2:6-11). Those who choose to rebel against God and to ignore Him will indeed

_____ eternal punishment according to Matthew 25:46.

The Bible warns us about where sin will lead. Hebrews 10:26-27 says, “For if we go on sinning deliberately (willfully) after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.” Verse 31 concludes, “It’s a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Some people ask if hell is really _____. The New Testament uses the words *aion* and *aionios*—eternity and eternal—141 times to speak about someone or something that is unceasing, endless, or perpetual. If the word eternal means “without end” when applied to the blessings of eternal _____, it must also mean “without end” when describing the eternal punishment of the lost.

The Bible describes our eternal punishment, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or his hand, he will also drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name” (Revelation 14:9-11).

Someone at this point asks, “Well, isn’t all this just a _____ of speech?” There are many figures of speech in the Bible. Many people fall into doctrinal _____ because they interpret a passage literally when they should interpret it figuratively, or they interpret it figuratively when it should be understood literally. Many think because a passage is figurative that this somehow _____ what the passage is trying to say. But this is not right at all. Jesus did not use figures of speech to _____ what he was saying. He used them to _____ the points he was making. He felt it important enough to emphasize it with a figure of speech. Because He wanted people to remember what He had to say is why He sometimes uses figures of speech.

We learn a little more about this _____ punishment in Revelation 20:13-15. The Bible says, “And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” I can’t imagine anything _____ than going to hell; it’s a horrible thought. I don’t wish that for anybody. The only thing worse would be that I _____ someone else to go there. It’s not just you or me that’s involved here; when you choose to do evil, you may lead someone _____ to do evil; it’s often those who we love and who we influence.

At this point somebody says, “Well, how can a _____ God send anyone to hell and punish them forever?” This is an important question and it deserves an _____. First, God didn’t make hell for people, for humans; according to Matthew 25:41 He made Hell for the _____ and his angels. If anyone is lost, it’s by his own _____ to follow the devil by giving in to sin. Hell is filled with people who either ignore God or live in rebellion toward God and His _____.

Second, God must punish sin to be _____ and righteous. When sinners follow evil, they become _____ to sin. When people become unchangeably set in their thinking and their ways, they’ll likely always wish God would just go away and quit interfering with their lives. They

can actually begin to _____ righteousness.

Third, God has done everything possible to _____ us from being lost. He's given us the Bible to teach us; He's given us the church to help us; He sent His Son as a sacrifice for us. Before you _____ God is unloving, remember that He sacrificed His Son for you, and Jesus suffered terribly on the cross for you. The Lord Jesus didn't suffer for his _____ sins, but for your sins and mine. Jesus has demonstrated beyond question His great _____ by dying on the cross for us. He died in our place; He bore the punishment we should have received. The Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, so that we could live free from sin and _____ with Him forever. He took our place on the cross so that we could be set _____ from sin and death. If God had not provided an answer for hell, we'd all be in a sorrowful condition; but Jesus sacrificed His body on the cross to give us a solution to the threat of hell; He did it willingly; and He gave it to us freely. God hasn't left you without _____. You don't have to be lost. You can go to heaven if you'll love and serve the Lord Jesus.

Each day you're choosing whether you want to _____ closer to the Lord or whether you're going to _____ away from Him. If you wish to have a home with God in heaven, you need to let God have a home in your _____ and your _____. The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23). Could God make His _____ with you? Do you love God? Are you living in obedience to His Word? Have you given God even a second thought? Are you for Him, or living in rebellion to His Word? What are you choosing for your _____ destiny?

The Bible says that God "desires _____ people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). Jesus came to _____ and to _____ that which was lost so that they might not go to that place. Jesus chose twelve apostles and gave the _____ the task of taking the gospel to every person. Because He doesn't want you to be _____ eternally, he wants you for his own. I have no desire to see anyone lost, and that's why I have spent my whole life _____ the good news of Jesus Christ. That's why churches of Christ and many individuals _____ this program. We're in the _____ business, teaching people about the love of God and the blood of Christ. Part of preaching is helping people to see how sin _____ us, but the other part is telling how God has opened a _____ of hope and forgiveness for them.

The loss of your soul is the _____ thing that can happen to you. I don't have words to describe the hopelessness and the horror of that place the Scriptures call "hell." Rather than ignore the Scriptures or reject the Lord, listen to His _____ and come to Him. I pray that you'll come to Him by loving and _____ in the Lord Jesus, _____ of your sins, by _____ Him publicly to all, and by being _____ in water for the remission of your sins. When you do this, the _____ of Jesus will cleanse you. You may have become a Christian many years ago but maybe in more recent years you've rebelled against Him. You need to come _____ to Him. I want everyone, everywhere to be a citizen of heaven. One day the only question that will matter will be whether we hear: "Well done, good and faithful servant," or "Depart from me, you worker of lawlessness." My friend, what will you hear? What will you hear?