

WHAT MUST I DO



SEARCH PROGRAMS

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Topics subject to change without notice

OCTOBER 4 – HEARING THE GOSPEL

God gave us ears to hear, but are we listening to His most important messages? The gospel is first and foremost a message to be preached and to be received. No message is more important than the gospel.

OCTOBER 11 – BELIEVING IN JESUS

Faith in Jesus Christ distinguishes the people who belong to God from those who belong to the world. In this lesson we're going to explore what it means to believe, truly believe, in Jesus Christ. Do you believe?

OCTOBER 18 – REPENTANCE

When we become Christians, we must leave the ways of the world and take up our crosses to follow Jesus. Repenting means leaving sin and following righteousness. When one loves the Lord, one is willing to make these important changes.

OCTOBER 25 – BAPTISM

Those who became Christians in the New Testament were baptized or immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Baptism is the time when God washes away sins by the blood of Jesus and makes one His child.

Hearing the Gospel

God gave us ears to hear, but are we listening? Today we're going to explore the importance of listening to God. We want everyone to hear and to know the Lord. We know that the true way to know the Lord is through a thorough study of His Holy Word, the Bible. We can't count on feelings or the thoughts of men. We want to hear God speak for Himself, so we go to the Scriptures.

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea, And from the north even to the east; They will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, But they will not find it” (Amos 8:11-12). For many today, there is a famine for the Word of God. I fear what happened to Israel in the eighth century before Christ is happening today.

While the Bible is still the number one bestseller of all time, and while 82 percent of Americans revere the Bible as sacred literature, they simply don't read it and don't know what it actually teaches. In a recent report by the American Bible Society, 79 percent of the people believe that they are knowledgeable about the Bible, but only 45 percent could identify the four gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Sadly, many people know very little about God's teaching on sin, the soul, salvation, or the judgment. If we want to live with God eternally in heaven with joy and peace, then we must hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our reading today comes from 1 Peter 1: 22- 25. “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For, ‘ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.’ And this is the word which was preached to you.”

Proverbs 1:5 says, “A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.” From our earliest days in school, our teachers encouraged us to listen and to follow directions. Listening, really listening, may be one of the hardest tasks of life. We can hear words, but have we learned to listen and to receive the message that we heard? Have we sought God and treasured up His Words in our hearts?

The Bible everywhere emphasizes the importance of listening. The psalmist sang, “With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word have I treasured up in my heart, That I may not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have told of All the ordinances of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, And regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word” (Psalm 119:10-16).

Some say they don't like rules; I hear that a lot, but the psalmist rejoiced in the ordinances or rules that God gave. In fact, he set his heart to delight in them, to store them up, to meditate upon them, and to consider them significant, so he would not forget them or wander away from them or sin against God. I hope that you seek the Lord with all your heart and that you love God's Word like that.

Every parent who loves the Lord wants to see his children follow God's ways and wisdom. Solomon said, "My son, if you will receive my words, And treasure my commandments within you, And make your ear attentive to wisdom, And incline your heart to understanding; For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; And if you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the LORD, And discover the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:1-5). Solomon knew how important, how utterly important knowing God and His Word was to his children. Do you know? Have you made the Word of God a priority in your home, mothers and fathers?

The Lord Jesus more than once said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" as He did in Matthew 13:9. In the book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, we can read seven times: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." God wants and demands to be heard. God spoke from heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration about Jesus. He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. Listen to Him" (Matthew 17:5).

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record one of the Lord's parables. Some call it the parable of the sower, and others the parable of the soils. It really describes how hearts respond to the teaching of Jesus. We'll be looking at Mark's account. If you will, turn with me to Mark 4:14-20. There the Word of God says, "The sower sows the word. These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. In a similar way these are the ones on whom the seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And those are the ones whom the seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and they accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."

In this parable, the seed is the Word of God, the gospel. The first group is like the soil beside the road. Matthew 13:19 explains, "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and he doesn't understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what's been sown in his heart. And this is the one on whom the seed was sown beside the road." Just as the seed never quite breaks into the soil, so the Word never quite breaks the hardened heart. Some never take the Word seriously, never believe, and they lose their opportunity to become Christians.

John 1:11-13 tells how Jesus "came to those who were His own, and those who were His own didn't receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of the will of God." Satan came and stole the Word from them, so they never heard what was necessary for them to know the truth and so be saved. Many today never have the Word planted in their hearts, never truly hear the gospel, and never know the truth about Jesus.

The Jesus that they think they know and the Jesus that is revealed in Scripture are really for them two different people. Why? Because Satan is a deceiver. He doesn't want people to have the truth in their hearts, and so he substitutes a mythical Jesus for the real one. This is a Jesus that never challenges them, that's Satan's Jesus; that never condemns anybody, that's

Satan's Jesus. Oh, He's very attractive, but He's phony. He's not the Jesus of the New Testament.

Then, there's the rocky soil. These folks hear the message and they believe quickly; but when temptation comes, they fall away because they lack the deep spiritual roots that they need. Their shallow, superficial faith isn't strong enough to sustain them. They only believe for a while. Trials or persecution cause their faith and their commitment to Christ to just dry up. They heard the good news of salvation, yes; but they didn't treasure it up in their hearts, so they leave their faith behind.

Third, Jesus tells of the thorny soil. They hear the word, but they let other things choke the Word of God out of their hearts. They have a little room in their hearts for God, and a little for His Word, but because of the cares of the world, because of their delight in riches, because of the pleasures of this life which become their focus, the Word of God gets pushed out.

Colossians 3:1-4 says, "Therefore if you've been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." That's where our hearts must be, where we must remain if we wish to live with Christ in glory. The psalmist said, "With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments" (Psalm 119:10). We need that way of thinking; otherwise we too might have hearts filled with distractions that take us away from God.

The fourth soil is made up of "good and honest hearts." Oh, they hear and they understand the Word. Rather than argue with God, they accept it and they hold fast to it. In the end they bear fruit with patience, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold. A good and honest heart is willing to be in subjection to God because God loves Him and he's willing to be honest about himself. Many hearts lie to themselves about their need for God or about their need to change and repent. Many hearts would rather argue about what is and is not sin than really to listen to what God actually says. An honest and good heart will listen to God and make then the needed changes.

God is able to produce fruit in a good and honest heart because His Word is firmly fixed there. If you're not willing to listen to God, God cannot help you; but if you're willing to listen, God can do great things in your life! Many want to claim the promises of God in the Word but they're unwilling to let God's Word be the moral and spiritual authority in their lives. But you can't have the promises of God if you're unwilling to accept the rest of what God says. God is God, and we are His creatures. We don't know more than He does. We're not wiser than He is. We must listen to Him rather than think that we can tell Him what we ought to believe.

Listening to God means that we regard His written Word as the final authority. Instead of going with our "gut feelings" or listening to other voices that are in this world, we're going to listen to Him in the Word. Listening means that we quit trying to rewrite what the Bible says, quit trying to remake God in our own image, and quit thinking God is subject to our culture. God is God! He was God before He created the world, and He'll be God after this world comes to an end. He doesn't change, and His Word doesn't change. Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, (forever) O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven." What was true when Jesus spoke it in the first century is settled in heaven and has not changed. The Lord Jesus said in

John 10:35 that the Scripture cannot be broken. That is, you can't change it; you can't edit it; or dispose of it. It stands written.

The book of Galatians reminds us that there is one, unchangeable gospel. The gospel of Christ is not a cafeteria, where people can choose what they want and leave the rest. No, the Lord determines what the gospel is, and our task is to hear and to be obedient.

Paul wrote, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we've said before, so I say now again, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" (Galatians 1:6-9). We must follow the one, true gospel. We must not imagine any other gospel will do.

The one, true gospel points to Jesus Christ, crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. First Corinthians 15:1-4 says, "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."

Why is all this important? It's important because we can be deceived, and frankly many people have been. If we believe a gospel that has been tampered with, we'll be following a lie. We must hear and obey the one, true gospel. The Lord Jesus said, "Take care what you listen to" (Mark 4:24). A false gospel will only destroy those who follow it. The devil likes to counterfeit the gospel and deceive people. He likes to make people think they are saved even when they're following a lie. We must be careful not to fall into his trap and lose our souls. We're going to spend this month looking at what God desires from us to obey that one, true gospel. And so, please study with us each week this month. The Lord Jesus said, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it didn't fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall" (Matthew 7:24-27).

The Lord Jesus defines a wise man as one who hears and does what He has said. He doesn't add to the gospel, or doesn't take away from it. He doesn't suspend what God has said, or try to rewrite the gospel. He simply hears and obeys the words he heard. On the other hand, the foolish man hears, but he does not do what he heard. He does something else. He builds a house yes, but not a house built on the solid foundation of the Words of Jesus. So, when the time of testing comes, the one who listens and obeys survives, but the one who ignores what he hears and does what he wants to do, that person is going to be ruined.

Hear the Lord and obey Him; become a Christian today! Put your faith in Christ and confess Him, repent of your sins, and be baptized into Jesus Christ and into His death. When you're baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16) and He'll raise you up to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). Today is the best day for you to hear the Lord and respond to His message.

Believing in Christ

Do you truly believe Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God? Today we're going to explore what it means to believe, truly believe, in Jesus Christ. We believe God, so we believe what He says in His Word, the Bible. God has shown us the way to eternal life in Scripture. We know God will keep every promise, but we also realize that God makes a distinction between those who will obey Him and those who won't. So, we study the Scriptures and we strive to follow the Lord.

If you wish to be right with the living God, faith is a necessity. You probably recall the verse that we all heard in Bible classes from our childhood. The Lord Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only (and some versions say only begotten) Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). But do you recall the next two verses, verses 17 and 18? The Lord also said, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

Believing in the name of the only Son of God is necessary if we're to have eternal life. It's not just believing God exists; it's also believing in Jesus as God's only Son. We must put our faith in Christ. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). The way to God is through faith in Jesus. We must put our faith in Him.

Our reading today comes from the book of Hebrews 11:1-6. "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it's impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." That's a reading from God's Holy Word. Let's pray together. Father, we're thankful that Your Word can teach us and help us to come to have faith in Your Son, Jesus. Help us, Father, to believe in Him with all our heart and soul. And Father, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!

For the next fourteen or fifteen minutes, I want us to look at faith from God's perspective. Many look at God and Christianity through the eyes of popular culture. Salvation is not an entitlement that God owes us. It's a gift to those who believe. But we must understand the idea of believing as God teaches, not try to read into it what we think it means. Let's take some time to listen to God, asking what kind of faith God wants from us. We seek to please God.

Throughout the Bible, God distinguishes those who please Him, those who abide in His grace and have His approval, from those who don't. Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it's impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek him." We must believe in God, but we must also know about the God that we believe. We must know He rewards those who seek Him. Many people believe a God exists, but the God they seek is not the God of the Bible.

Our postmodern society thinks it should design its own god and wants to sit in judgment of God rather than seek the God who created them. Some manufacture a god that fits with the times. Faith in a culturally-correct god is not the same as faith in the God who made the world and will

one day judge it. We must believe in God as He reveals and defines Himself in His Word, the Bible, not in a mushy god popularized by our culture.

Our culture thinks of God as one who winks at sin, who never condemns anyone, and who believes everything that we believe. Many think the God of all grace doesn't care about righteousness or truth. Others have forgotten that God is not just holy, but He's utterly holy. Habakkuk 1:13 says of God, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor." Some think God doesn't care what we believe or do, but God is vitally interested in our living holy lives devoted to the truth, serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

We cannot speak of having faith in Jesus Christ but then believing anything we want to believe. Nor can we speak of having faith in Jesus Christ and living any way that we want to live. When a person comes to Christ as a believer, He belongs to Jesus. Paul told the Christians in Corinth, "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). If we wear the name Christian and we believe in Jesus Christ, we can never forget that. We're not our own; we belong to Jesus. He's our Lord and Master, and we are His servants.

Moses wrote, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (Psalm 90:2). The eternal God stands above our changing culture. The Lord is not subject to the changing philosophies of humanity. His holiness, His righteousness, His purity, and His justice do not change with popular opinions. We must accept Him and His revealed will in the Scriptures as He gave it to us instead of trying to remake Him in our own image. Faith in God doesn't mean we can believe whatever we please. How can anyone say He trusts in God, when he doesn't believe what God says? Faith means we believe what the Lord Jesus teaches. Why? Because He is Divine. He knows all things and has all authority. He gives us His wisdom in the Bible, His Word, because He loves us and wants us to know the truth.

Believing in the God of the Bible also necessitates trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son. The Old Testament prophesies of Jesus as the coming Messiah. The New Testament tells how He fulfilled dozens of prophecies. Believing in Jesus means that you believe the claims that He made to be God's Son. Jesus said that He would rise from the dead, and He did. Jesus said Jerusalem would fall, and the Romans destroyed the city in 70 A.D.

The Bible says, "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-13). As with God, many people approach Christ with preconceived notions. If Jesus fails to measure up to what they want or imagined, they aren't willing to believe. Some will only believe if Jesus never judges anyone and never calls for moral change. That kind of Jesus simply doesn't exist. To know the real Jesus, we must read all of the New Testament, all that it says about Him, not just pick out certain passages and ignore the rest.

The Lord Jesus doesn't play games. He came to His own people but they didn't receive Him. The Lord Jesus blesses only those who believe in His name, who believe who He really is and what He really teaches. Only they are given the right to become children of God. Jesus loves you, but He's not obligated to save you unconditionally. Jesus isn't your servant; He's your creator and Lord.

Faith stands between being accepted and being rejected. God made that decision, and we can't overrule God. The Lord Jesus said, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:18). On another occasion Jesus taught the Jews that He had come from the Father in Heaven. He said, "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am He

you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). Believing in Jesus means believing He truly is the Christ, the Son of God. It means believing that He is the fulfillment of God’s prophecies of the Messiah.

Saving faith is not simply believing in the act of believing. It’s believing in the Person. Believing in Him means that you believe what He claims, what He says, and what He promises, that all of these things are true. If I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, then I will recognize His authority over my whole life. Faith includes duties and responsibilities. The Lord Jesus said, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). If I regard Jesus as Lord, I cannot pick and choose which of His commandments I will obey and which I won’t.

There are times when we wonder why God asks the things that He asks. But trusting faith means that we act even when we don’t understand. Hebrews 11:8 says, “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.” Abraham didn’t argue with God, because he trusted God; he simply obeyed. He showed his confidence in God, though he didn’t know what lay ahead. We trust God in things that we don’t know because we find Him trustworthy in what we do know. We know God is true and loving.

The apostle Paul said, “For this reason I also suffer these things, but I’m not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I’m convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2 Timothy 1:12). Paul could face the future with peace and confidence because He knew God and how God kept His promises. We can trust God in what we do not know because God has proved Himself worthy of our trust in what we do know!

Hebrews 11:3 says, “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.” By faith we can understand God created this world in six days just as He said in Genesis, chapter one. While no one was around to witness the creation, we can trust God’s word about the creation. Why? Because we know God is trustworthy, and worthy of our faith.

The early disciples were willing to die for their faith for two reasons. First, they were eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus “presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of forty days*” according to Acts 1:3. They saw Him, heard Him; they touched His body. They were so convinced that when they were threatened by the Jewish council, they replied in Acts 4:20, “we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” They were eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Second, they believed in Jesus because they saw how He fulfilled Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. If you had grown up as a Jew in first century, your Bible studies at the synagogue would constantly include prophecies about the coming Messiah. Jesus was born in the right place, at the right time, in the right tribe, with the right family lineage, and with the right kind of mother—a virgin. A star announced His birth, and wise men came from the East looking for Him. The apostle Philip said to his brother Nathaniel, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). As you read through the book of Acts, the apostles and evangelists time and again preached that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah.

What we know is true about Jesus is that He is the promised Messiah who arose from the dead. For this reason, we call Him “Lord” and “Christ.” Since we have confidence He is the Son of God, we can trust what He says about creation, about Adam and Eve, about the flood, about Sodom and Gomorrah, and every other story found in the Old Testament. When Jesus spoke of the Old Testament, He treated what He read there as true, historical events. For this reason we can believe the Old Testament is trustworthy and true. Why? Because we trust Jesus Christ.

Because we have a living Savior, we want a living faith, not a dead one. James 2:14-18 says, “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save

him? Now if a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what's necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'" Dead, inactive faith is useless. It doesn't reveal that one truly believes in Jesus Christ. It doesn't save.

Saving faith is always obedient. The Lord Jesus said, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; and whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). You can claim to believe; but unless your faith leads to obedience, you really can't be right with God. When the Bible speaks of saving faith, it's always an active, obedient faith. Turn with me in your Bible to the book of Galatians 3:26-27, which says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." James said, "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." Are you a doer or merely a hearer? Faith means I'm willing to do what God wants me to do. I'm willing to be the kind of person God wants me to be. I'm going to hear what He says; I'm going to believe it's true; and I'm going to do it; I'm going to be obedient. Oh, the believer "has eternal life, but the one that does not obey shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36) Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we're thankful that You have given us so many evidences of Your Son, Jesus, that we might believe and know that He truly is the Son of the living God. And, Father, we praise You as a lover of all men because of Him, and because of what He did for us. Father, help us to believe in Him and to be obedient to His Word. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!

After Lazarus died, Jesus visited his sisters Mary and Martha. In John 11:23-27 the Scripture reveals a conversation between Jesus and Martha. Jesus told Martha, "'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'Well, I know that he'll rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' But Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. And whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.'"

You need to ask yourself, "Do you believe this?" Do you believe God created the world in six days? Do you believe the Bible is true? Do you believe that Jesus arose from the dead and is Lord? Do you believe Jesus' death on the cross can atone for your sins? Do you believe that you will one day be raised from the dead? Do you believe in the Judgment Day? Do you believe in Heaven and Hell? Faith in Christ means believing what He taught and what He did to give us eternal life.

If you really believe, put your faith into action by repenting of your sins; confessing Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God; and by being baptized into Christ. Baptism is an immersion in water of a penitent believer. It's done in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Baptism is the time when you become a child of God, free from sin, and added to the Lord's church. The Lord Jesus said, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Oh, we hope that you'll become a Christian today. Won't you.

We do ask that you please get involved with a church of Christ in your area. Now if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.

Repentance

Someone said, “You cannot repent too soon because you don’t know how soon it will be too late.” Today we’re going to explore what it means to repent. We’re now in the third part of our series on obeying the gospel. Two weeks ago we studied about hearing the gospel. Last week we explored what it means to believe in Jesus Christ. Today we’re looking at the importance of repentance in responding to the grace of God. As always, the Bible will be our guide because we know the Bible gives us God’s true teaching. We want to love and please God, so we’re going to take the time to hear what He actually says about this and every other topic.

The New Testament reveals the great love that Jesus showed to sinners. The Pharisees criticized the Lord Jesus Christ for eating with tax-collectors and sinners. In those days, the Pharisees, though a small group, had bullied the Jewish society into following their human traditions. They had no room in their hearts for anyone but those who followed their dictates. But Jesus followed a truer, better path that showed the love and compassion of God for all.

Jesus touched the lepers and told the story of the Prodigal Son. Jesus cared about every soul. The Lord said, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Let’s be clear, just because Jesus loved sinners didn’t mean that He tolerated their sin. Jesus told the man that he healed on the Sabbath Day, “do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you” (John 5:14). The Lord Jesus doesn’t leave us where He finds us. He lifts us up out of sin and transforms our lives. Oh, thanks be to God.

Our reading today comes from the words of Jesus found in the Gospel According to Matthew 21:28-31. “But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’ And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it and went. The man came to the second and he said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I *will*, sir’; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?’ They said, ‘The first.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.’” Let’s pray together. Father we pray that we may not only hear the things that You want us to do but be willing to do them. Help us to change our hearts and do what You would have us to do. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus’ name, Amen!

The New Testament word “repentance” comes from the Greek word *metanoia*: “meta” means “after”; and “noia” means “thought.” Repentance then is an afterthought. People use an afterthought to mend their ways, to change their thinking. An afterthought yields to us a new way of thinking, different from our former thoughts. Considering the destructive nature of sin and the loving grace of God, penitent people have a change of heart and mind that leads to a change of life and behavior.

The Lord Jesus, was and still is, in the saving business, but salvation includes transforming the life of those who follow Him. That transformation included what God would do for us in His grace and forgiveness, and what we must do. God expects His people to believe and repent. The Lord Jesus preached repentance to the Jews of His day. After his baptism and temptation, Jesus began His ministry, preaching throughout Galilee. Matthew 4:17 says, “From that time Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

When the Pharisees grumbled at Jesus for eating with tax-collectors and sinners, Jesus replied, “It’s not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31-32).

When Jesus sent the twelve out into the towns and villages of Galilee, He called for those cities to repent. When some of the towns rejected Jesus, “Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. ‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it’ll be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You’ll be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you’” (Matthew 11:20-24).

Jesus was serious. Jesus loves sinners, but He calls them to repent. Repentance is not optional. If we wish to please God and be right with Him, we must repent. Luke 13 tells of some folks who told Jesus about some Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Jesus responded in verses 2 to 5: “Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” If we wish to please the Lord, we too must repent.

The apostle Paul, on Mars’ Hill in Athens, told the pagan philosophers, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31). God won’t do your repenting for you, as some people suppose. God commands you and everyone to repent.

Peter likewise called men to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38. The apostle Peter wrote, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). God doesn’t want anyone to be lost; but when people refuse to repent, they sadly choose their sins over God. When people say no to God, they perish. On the other hand, the Lord God celebrates when people change their lives and serve Him.

The Lord Jesus told this parable to respond to the Pharisees who were grumbling because He ate with sinners. “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he’s lost one of them, doesn’t leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he’s found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together all of his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there’ll be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:4-7). When a person turns his life around and leaves his sin, the God of Heaven rejoices.

Some people think repentance is a punishment, but actually it’s healing for our souls. Some worry about all the things they have to give up, but the heart that loves God finds new and wonderful pleasures in righteous living. He trades the old, destructive habits for a new and real joy in Christ. You don’t give up all pleasure to become a Christian. You give up the temporary, sinful pleasures that end up enslaving and destroying you. But you take on new, spiritual joys that are indescribable and everlasting. Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal

and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Oh, we have an abundant life in Christ that keeps getting better and better.

Repentance is more than ceasing to sin. While repentance requires a person to stop doing evil, it also turns his heart to the Lord. A penitent person learns to despise the evil he did in the past, yes; but repentance also plants in the heart a hunger and thirst for righteousness. A penitent person wants to please God everyday and completely. The Ephesians made known their repentance by turning from paganism and superstition, “bringing their books (their books of magic) together and burning them in the sight of all” (Acts 19:19). I wonder if there are some sinful things in our lives that also need to be destroyed. They may be books or movies or songs. We need to rid our hearts of evil thoughts, ugly ways, and selfish intents.

When a person repents, he must also fill his life with the Lord and His teaching. The Lord Jesus gave this illustration, “Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and doesn't find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came’; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That's the way it will be also with this evil generation” (Matthew 12:43-45). When a person is forgiven of sin but fails to fill his life with the Lord, he becomes vulnerable to terrible sins coming back into his heart. One may cease to do evil, but real repentance means one lovingly fills his life with the Lord's way.

When a person repents, he'll be truly sorry for his sin against God. He's sorry that he hurt and grieved God by his transgression of God's law. He's also sorry when he realizes that Jesus suffered on the cross for his sin. The Bible says, “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). It was our sins, our lust, and our selfishness that sent Jesus to the cross. Repentance means that we've taken seriously how grievous sin is to God and how destructive it is.

Sin separates us from God. Thankfully, God is willing to forgive when we repent. But once we come to God, we can no longer remain in sin. Paul once asked, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” (Romans 6:1-2). Because we love God, we can't keep grieving God with our sins.

A penitent person is also sorry for his sins against other people. He realizes that his sins have caused other people to suffer. We hurt others with what we say and do. When we sin, we teach others to sin. Jesus said that one who sets a stumbling block before a little one sins grievously (Matthew 18:6-9). The penitent person also mourns because of the hurt that his sin has caused against himself. Solomon said, "His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin" (Proverbs 5:22). Every person who sins eventually has to face the consequences of his sin. The sinner's life unalterably ends in misery and regret.

A person who loves God, however, wants something different. He wants an opportunity to change his life and live a clean and righteous life. After his sin with Bathsheba, David longed for something better than his selfish, lustful, and hurtful ways. David prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). Hungering to do what is good and right fills the heart of a penitent man. This sorrow for sin and hunger for righteousness means that he will hate what is evil and love what is good. Romans 12:9 says, “Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.” This doesn't say hate evil people; it says hate what is evil.

If I love God, I will hate what is evil and hurtful. I can love a thief while hating the evil that he does. I can love a drunk while hating the evil a drunk does to his family while he's drunk. Christians call people to change their behavior because they love them, and they know how sinful behavior will cause them harm. We don't speak out against sin because we are haters of people, no. We speak out against sin because we hate the evil and the harm of sin. Christians love their enemies and pray for them.

Paul describes how a Christian should deal with those caught up in sin. He says, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:24-26). God is truly in the saving business, and so are we. But people can be so deceived by the devil that they think they're all right spiritually when they're actually lost.

So, we ask why are we talking about repentance? Why are we asking people to repent? I hope you understand. We're speaking this way because we love you and we want God's blessing for you. You can't be right with God without repenting of your sins and turning to Him. Sin can harden your heart and cause you to be lost. Romans 6:23 says, "the wages of sin is death." We want you to know Christ and the joy of forgiveness and eternal life.

Don't let sin harden your heart and rob you of eternal life. Don't stiffen your neck and refuse to change your ways. You're grieving God and just hurting yourself. Like the prodigal, come back home to God, and do it today. Let's pray together. Oh, Father, may we be able to see through Your eyes how terrible and how horrible sin is, and how hurtful. And, Father, may we come to change our hearts to love You and to serve You. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!

God won't force you to repent, but He does lovingly appeal to you to repent. You need to know, however, that if there's no repentance, neither is there any pardon. The Lord promises forgiveness to penitent people who change their lives, but there's no promise for the person who time after time refuses to obey God. One day there will be an end to God's patience and a day of reckoning. Isaiah 55:6-7 says, "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." If we delay our repentance even one more day, we have a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in.

Some young people came to a wise, old man and asked, "When should we repent?" The old man answered, "Repent the day before you die." The young people objected, "But we don't know when we'll die." The old man replied, "Then, repent today." Instead of trying to excuse your sins or justify yourselves, why not acknowledge your sins and repent. Change your heart and change your life.

Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of life. We repent because we love the Lord and we believe in Him. Faith, love, and repentance begin in the heart. I hope your heart looks at that old way of sin as something to be rejected. I hope that you hunger for righteousness. If you believe and love the Lord and have repented of your sins, confess Christ and be baptized in His name. Baptism is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ. When you're baptized, God will wash away your sins, He'll give you the gift of the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:38 and 22:16. Oh, obey the Lord today!S

Baptism

Sometimes people ask, "Well, why is baptism so important?" Today we're going to explore the meaning and the purpose of baptism. Please don't ever take the Bible for granted. It's not simply another religious book. It's unique and filled with God's truth. It's the only book that can teach us where we came from, why we're here, and where we're going. The Bible teaches us the words that lead to eternal life. The Word of God is settled in heaven but it can touch our lives for eternity. If we're born again at all, we're born again through the preaching of the Word. First Peter 1:23 says, "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God."

Today we're going to complete our series on how we respond to the gospel of Christ and what we must do. We've talked about the necessity of hearing the gospel and obeying what God says. We've shown the necessity of faith in Christ and how faith is the foundation of Christianity. We've seen the necessity of repentance, turning away from sin and to the ways of the Lord. Today we're focusing on the need to be baptized to be saved.

Few people doubt the need to believe or repent in order to be saved, but there's much controversy over baptism. People have mistakenly said baptism is a work that people do to earn salvation. This simply isn't true. While it's true we're commanded to be baptized, baptism is not so much about what we do as it is about what God does for us. We're going to study what baptism into Christ means and why everyone who chooses to follow Christ should be baptized to be saved.

Our reading today comes from The Letter of Paul's to the Romans 6:3-7. "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin." Let's pray together. Father, we're thankful that in baptism You can bury us with Christ and raise us up again so that we might walk in newness of life, freed from sin. Father, help us to always be obedient to Your will. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines baptism as "a ceremony or sacrament of admitting a person into Christianity or a specific church by dipping him in water or sprinkling water on him, as a symbol of washing away sin." This definition describes what baptism means in the English language, considering there are many different "Christian" groups that baptize in a variety of ways. But simply because the many denominations do things differently doesn't mean that that's what the New Testament teaches, or that they teach all these different ways to baptize, and that all of them are God's will.

So, what does the New Testament teach in regard to the act of baptism? What action does the New Testament describe? The Greek word, *baptidzo* means to dip, to plunge, or immerse. It refers to the specific act of dipping or immersing in water. A different Greek word *rhantidzo* describes the action of sprinkling. If the Lord or the Holy Spirit had wanted us to sprinkle for baptism, they would have moved the writers of the New Testament to use that word *rhantidzo* rather than *baptidzo*.

After an exhaustive survey of more than 200 examples in Greek literature and ancient translations, an author, Thomas J. Conant, in his book, *The Meaning and Use of Baptizein*, concluded: "That the word *baptizein*, during the whole existence of the Greek as a spoken language, had a perfectly defined and unvarying import. In its literal use it meant, as has been shown, to put entirely into or under a liquid, or other penetrable substance, generally water, so that the object was wholly covered by the inclosing element."

When the New Testament speaks of baptism, the event described points to an immersion in water. In Matthew 3:16, after Jesus was baptized, He "went up out of the water." In John 3:23 John baptized in the Jordan River "at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there." Baptism or immersion would, of course, require enough water to immerse an adult. In Acts 8:3-39, Philip and the Eunuch went down into the water, Philip baptized the Eunuch; and they both came up out of the water. Whatever happened in this baptism, it took place while they were down in the water.

The apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). The likeness of being buried and raised in water is striking here! It's not an accident that baptism is a burial and a resurrection that leads to newness of life. Romans 6:5-7 says, "For if we've become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin."

Baptism is that time when our old body of sin is crucified with Christ and done away with. It's buried! At that point we're no longer slaves to sin. When we are raised up with Him, we have new life just as the Lord Jesus had new life when He was resurrected. The resurrection caused the new life for Jesus, and our resurrection with Christ in baptism causes our newness of life. Before baptism we are dead in sin, but after baptism we are freed from sin and walk in newness of life!

Commenting on this passage William Barclay said, "Commonly baptism was by total immersion and that practice lent itself to a symbolism to which sprinkling does not so readily lend itself. When a man descended into the water and the water closed over his head, it was like being buried. And when he emerged from the water, it was like rising from the grave. You see baptism was symbolically like dying and rising again. And the man died to one kind of life and rose to another; he died to the old life of sin and rose to the a new life of grace."

There is a second passage that links baptism to the burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Colossians 2:12-13 says, "having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses." Baptism is an act of faith in the powerful working of God. In baptism we demonstrate our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We're united with Him in His burial and resurrection by baptism. Before we were baptized, we were dead in our sins, but in baptism God makes us alive just as God made Christ alive. In making us alive, God forgives us of all our trespasses.

Did you notice in this passage how God is active in forgiving us and in making us alive. Baptism is an act of faith on our part. The command in Acts 2:38 and 22:16 is to "be baptized." Grammatically, "be baptized" is a command, but it's a passive command. God commands us to demonstrate our faith by letting someone baptize us in the name of Jesus Christ. "Be baptized"

means someone else is immersing us in water. Someone else is acting on us. We receive the action. That's what "passive" means.

Just as we receive the physical act of baptism in water, we receive God's gracious actions on us in the forgiveness of sins and making us alive. In baptism, we are born again or born from above with newness of life. God is the One powerfully working on us. Baptism is not some work of merit on our part to earn salvation. No! Baptism is an act of faith on our part whereby we receive God's powerful working in our lives just as He powerfully raised Jesus Christ from the dead. God buries our old man of sin; God raises us up; God makes us alive; God washes away our sins; and God makes us new.

When people say, "Well, you don't have to be baptized to be saved," they've missed the point. If baptism is the time when God acts on us, then baptism would have to be necessary for us to be saved.

So, there is great importance to immersing as baptism. We should respect what God is doing to us by saving us in baptism or immersion. We have no right or authority to substitute sprinkling for immersing in fulfilling God's commandments. If God is providing salvation to us through our baptism, then shouldn't we be careful to abide by the Lord's commands. Shouldn't we cooperate with what He's told us to do. Sprinkling and immersing are different things; they're not the same. While many have sprinkled people and called it baptism for centuries, sprinkling for baptism has no basis in Scripture; you just can't find it there. Baptism into Christ is by immersion. Baptism by sprinkling is an old, human tradition begun centuries after the New Testament.

Obedying the Lord doesn't mean doing what's conventional or doing what's popular. Obeying the Lord means honoring the Lord to the point that you're willing to do what He says. Honoring and respecting God means you won't add to God's commands, take away from God's commands, or edit God's commands to suit yourself. You simply, lovingly, humbly obey the Lord.

Why should a person who is penitent and believes in Christ be baptized. There are numerous reasons. Peter told the guilty people at Pentecost in Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." People repent and are baptized so that their sins will be forgiven. Ananias told Saul of Tarsus, "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). Baptism is the time when God washes away our sins.

Baptism is the time we clothe ourselves with Christ or become united with Him. Galatians 3:26-27 says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Baptism is a necessary act of faith. Placing your faith in Christ necessarily includes baptism. The faithful sons of God today are baptized into Christ and clothed with Christ.

We've already seen in Romans 6:4-7 and Colossians 2:12-13 that baptism is the time that God unites us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. In baptism we are crucified with Him, buried with Him, and raised with Him to walk in newness of life. Since the old man of sin is crucified with Him in baptism, God at that time frees us from sin and its guilt. Baptism is also that time when we begin sharing our new life in Christ and with Christ. From that day forward we are new people who belong to Him. His blood has cleansed and purchased us; we are no longer our own. We have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

When we're baptized, the Lord adds us as God's children to the church. The Bible says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Baptism unites us with Christ and with those who are in His body, the church.

To be in the church is to be in God's kingdom. Paul wrote the church at Colossae, "For He (speaking of Jesus) rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14). Forgiveness and membership in the church or kingdom are benefits of being baptized into Christ. This agrees with what the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:5, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God." How are we born again of water and the Spirit? This is surely by baptism. The Lord says that without baptism we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

In Christ, we have the grace and blessing of God. Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." In Christ, we have the promise of eternal life. First John 5:11-12 says, "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; and he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." The way to have the Son is to respond to the Son by baptism when you confess Christ and repent of your sins. Baptism is certainly not the only thing necessary to faith. We've seen in this past month that hearing God, believing in Jesus, repenting of sin, confessing Christ as the Son of God are also necessary to obey the gospel.

So then, why is baptism so important? Why are we talking about its necessity? Because baptism is that culminating act in our obedience. Our faith, repentance, and confession lead us to baptism. But baptism is that point when God acts upon us, transforming us from people dead in sin to people alive in Christ. That's when we are born again and become members of the Lord's church. To talk about baptism means revealing how God unites us with Christ, saves us, makes us His children. Oh, what a blessing! Nothing else could be so very important for today and for eternity! Let's pray together. Father, we pray that each one that is listening and studying with us will come to know You and love You, will believe with their hearts, will repent of their sin, confess Your name and be baptized if they have not yet done those things. Father, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!

The New Testament gives us many examples of people being baptized. The 3,000 who obeyed the gospel at Pentecost in Acts 2:4 were baptized that very day. In Acts 8:12, when the Samaritans believed the preaching of Philip about Jesus and His kingdom, they were baptized right then. They didn't wait. The Eunuch in Acts 8:36 asked to be baptized. It was urgent! He wasn't content to wait until another day. He came up out of that water rejoicing. In Acts 22:16, Ananias asked Saul of Tarsus, "why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." In Acts 16, the jailer and his household considered baptism so important that they were baptized in the middle of the night. Why the urgency? Why the emphasis on acting quickly?

I'll tell you why. Being baptized is necessary for you to be saved. It's necessary for you to receive the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism is necessary for you to be united with Christ and to become a Christian. The Bible never contemplates the idea of a Christian who has not been baptized. Baptism is not something that you do after you have been saved; baptism is the time when God saves you. That's when God takes the blood of Christ and washes you free from sin and makes you His child. First Peter 3:21 says, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism is how we appeal to God to be saved and to have a clear conscience. Have you been baptized into Christ? If you believe and you're repentant, won't you be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins today?