



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

*Program  
Study Guides*

**For**

**November 2013**

## **The Message of the Cross**

### **Luke 23:33-37**

Though Jesus bore the cross two thousand years ago, it \_\_\_\_\_ has a message for us. Today we're going to look at the cross. Jesus prayed at Gethsemane for the cup to \_\_\_\_\_ from Him, but still chose to do His Father's \_\_\_\_\_, knowing that he would be scourged and crucified. A crowd with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ came for Him. Judas, His own familiar friend, betrayed him with a \_\_\_\_\_. His disciples \_\_\_\_\_. They arrested and bound him, taking Him away like a \_\_\_\_\_. They falsely accused Him in a series of illegal \_\_\_\_\_. Peter \_\_\_\_\_ Him three times, once in His presence. They \_\_\_\_\_ Him and \_\_\_\_\_ Him, spit upon Him, and in the end condemned Him. When Pilate placed Him before a crowd in the Praetorian, they \_\_\_\_\_ for His crucifixion. People earlier praised Him as their Messiah, but now they denied Him as their \_\_\_\_\_. Roman soldiers mocked Him and scourged Him. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ the very cross of His destruction through the streets. The Romans forced a stranger to \_\_\_\_\_ Him. Carrying that cross up to Golgotha, in the presence of all, they stripped Him of His clothes and drove \_\_\_\_\_ through His hands and His feet into the cross. They suspended Him between heaven and earth on the nails and left Him to \_\_\_\_\_. Imagine being mercilessly mocked and spurned, despised and rejected, while hanging in utter \_\_\_\_\_ for six long hours. Imagine the \_\_\_\_\_ of the world laid upon Him. That \_\_\_\_\_ your sins and mine. Imagine the \_\_\_\_\_ being darkened, and an earthquake shaking the foundations. When He could last no longer, He cried, "Father into Your hands, I commit My \_\_\_\_\_." The Lord Jesus gave \_\_\_\_\_ for us.

### **Our reading today comes from the Gospel According to Luke 23:33-37.**

What was Jesus trying to \_\_\_\_\_ when He died upon the cross? I can't imagine His enduring that punishment without trying to \_\_\_\_\_ some message to us. There may be other things He is saying, but here are three that I think really \_\_\_\_\_. First of all, Jesus was saying, "I \_\_\_\_\_ you." If anyone ever doubts the love of God, all he needs to do is \_\_\_\_\_ long and hard at the cross. The apostle John said, "Anyone who does not love does not \_\_\_\_\_ God, because God is love. In this the love of God was manifest among us, that God \_\_\_\_\_ His only Son into the world, so that we might \_\_\_\_\_ through him. In this is love, not that \_\_\_\_\_ have loved God but that he loved \_\_\_\_\_ and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:8-10). We've all seen small measures of love in our lives; people were \_\_\_\_\_ to us and \_\_\_\_\_ us. Yet, I wonder if any love we've ever seen could \_\_\_\_\_ up to what Jesus did for us. We know the \_\_\_\_\_ of love by looking at the cross. No one could be

more eloquent, more determined, more willing to sacrifice, more moving with their love than Jesus. When Jesus says, “I love you,” no one can \_\_\_\_\_ it.

Once in a while, I hear someone who says, “Phil, I don’t \_\_\_\_\_ very loved by God.” These folks somehow feel \_\_\_\_\_ or neglected. But when I hear someone say that, I \_\_\_\_\_ the words of Isaiah. “But Zion said, ‘The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.’” To which the Lord answers, “Can a woman forget her nursing \_\_\_\_\_, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I \_\_\_\_\_ forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:14-16). God has \_\_\_\_\_ forgotten us, if we are one of His. We are engraved on His hands. We’re not a passing fad or an acquaintance or a stranger; we are His \_\_\_\_\_ child. If we are His child, God cares about us the way any \_\_\_\_\_ father would care for His child. We are always on His \_\_\_\_\_. God loves more than men are \_\_\_\_\_ of loving. Read what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:9-11. God is \_\_\_\_\_ than the \_\_\_\_\_ of fathers. He really \_\_\_\_\_ for each one of us.

The love of God implies something \_\_\_\_\_. It implies that we, every one of us, are \_\_\_\_\_. Some people regard themselves as unlovable, but Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ things in us that we don’t often see in ourselves. People didn’t want to be around the tax collector, Zacchaeus, but Jesus went to his \_\_\_\_\_. People were afraid of and avoided lepers, but Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ them. The prodigal son was fearful and ashamed, “I am not worthy to be called your son”; but the father (that is God) said, “This is my \_\_\_\_\_...” It’s a slam on God to say that we are \_\_\_\_\_ in His eyes – He loves every one of us. We may be \_\_\_\_\_, but God loves us anyway. Sin makes a person feel \_\_\_\_\_ in his own eyes. But God sees not only what we are but also what we can \_\_\_\_\_. He gives us \_\_\_\_\_. Read what Paul said in Titus 3:3-5. God loved us even in our \_\_\_\_\_. He didn’t save us because we had \_\_\_\_\_ heaven for ourselves. He saved us when we were filthy with sin and He \_\_\_\_\_ us clean through His mercy and grace by the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus; and He does it in \_\_\_\_\_. He knew what we could become. He took us as diamonds in the rough and made us shine as \_\_\_\_\_ to the world.

Second, Jesus is saying through the cross, “I want to \_\_\_\_\_ you” – and I’ll pay the supreme \_\_\_\_\_ to do so. Paul said that Jesus “gave himself for our sins to \_\_\_\_\_ us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (Galatians 1:4). God couldn’t look down at this sinful world and do \_\_\_\_\_. He wanted to \_\_\_\_\_ the direction of the world. He wanted to find a way for men to \_\_\_\_\_ of sin and live righteous and good lives. By means of the cross, God made a \_\_\_\_\_ to save us from sin and to change our lives. Our salvation is personal to Jesus. It’s not a passing fad; it is what he was \_\_\_\_\_ to live and to die for. Peter said, “He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might \_\_\_\_\_ to sin and \_\_\_\_\_ to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24). Jesus wouldn’t have been willing to sacrifice His body if our salvation wasn’t important.

The Hebrews writer said, “without the shedding of blood there is \_\_\_\_\_ forgiveness of sins” (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus couldn’t bring about our forgiveness \_\_\_\_\_ way than shedding His blood on the cross (John 10:18). Jesus out of love took the initiative to die for our sins so that we could be forgiven and live a \_\_\_\_\_ and different life.

The forgiveness of God implies something; it implies that we are \_\_\_\_\_. God \_\_\_\_\_ to forgive us. Do you \_\_\_\_\_ to be forgiven? No matter how ugly, how terrible, or how mean you may \_\_\_\_\_ of yourself or \_\_\_\_\_ to yourself that you are such a sinner that God could never forgive you, sinners are the only kind of people that God saves, and God still loves you. Jesus told a meaningful parable in Luke 18:9-14. No matter how \_\_\_\_\_ you’ve wandered away, God will let you come home, if you will humble your heart and you’re willing to be \_\_\_\_\_.

When Jonah preached to that ungodly city Nineveh, they \_\_\_\_\_; and God relented. God does have a criteria for those whom he \_\_\_\_\_ – repentance and confession. David said, “The sacrifices of God are a broken \_\_\_\_\_; a broken and contrite \_\_\_\_\_, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17). And again, “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18). God won’t \_\_\_\_\_ you if you come to Him humbly and penitently.

The third thing that Jesus says with the cross is “I have a cross for \_\_\_\_\_.” Read what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. Jesus died for us to \_\_\_\_\_ us from sin so that we could make a difference for others. Read the words of Jesus in Mark 8:34-38. Jesus wants us to \_\_\_\_\_ Him, and that means we too must \_\_\_\_\_ our cross. We must \_\_\_\_\_ to ourselves and \_\_\_\_\_ for Him. The old song says, “Must Jesus bear the cross \_\_\_\_\_ and all the world go free? No, there’s a cross for everyone; and there’s a cross for \_\_\_\_\_.” Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said, “But may it never be that I would boast, except in the \_\_\_\_\_ of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14). The cross was meant for the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus, but for every Christian it’s also a symbol of \_\_\_\_\_ and salvation. We carry our cross to say to the world that we have \_\_\_\_\_ living the way the world lives and \_\_\_\_\_ living like Christ. Paul again says, “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the \_\_\_\_\_ with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24). The heart of a Christian longs to love the Lord and \_\_\_\_\_ Him and Him alone.

Carrying our cross implies something; it implies that Christ has a \_\_\_\_\_ for us to do. God expects \_\_\_\_\_ of us than simply to attend church. Some folks think they have little \_\_\_\_\_ so they are of little \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord and His church; but every member of the church has a value in God’s eyes. God has equipped every person with at least one talent and He expects each of us to \_\_\_\_\_ our talents for His glory. Paul uses the phrase that we are,

“workers together with Him” (2 Corinthians 6:1). We are God’s partners in this world; “we are God’s fellow-workers” (1 Corinthians 3:9). How are you using your life for the Lord? How are you \_\_\_\_\_? If you’ll take up your cross, God will use you to make a \_\_\_\_\_ in this world no matter who you are.

Why have we spoken today about the cross? Because it has a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ message for each of us. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ us to come to Him in Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” God wants your love and your help to \_\_\_\_\_ a lost and dying world. Will you help Him? When Christ is in your heart and life, you become the \_\_\_\_\_ of the earth and the \_\_\_\_\_ of the world. Will you take up a cross and follow Him?

Imagine Jesus hanging on the cross, suffering for our sins. He sacrificed His \_\_\_\_\_ and His \_\_\_\_\_ to demonstrate to us His unquestionable love and His desire for us to be \_\_\_\_\_. While Jesus was on the cross, He was hoping and praying people would \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. What more could Jesus have done to \_\_\_\_\_ us of His love and His offering of forgiveness? His great love and sacrifice ought to touch our \_\_\_\_\_ deeply.

How would Jesus feel, if the people that He loved and wanted so badly to be saved instead simply \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Him? Can you imagine anything more \_\_\_\_\_ than the way people ignore the cross of Christ? Can you think of anything more ungrateful than the way our society has told the Lord to \_\_\_\_\_ about sin? Can you think of anything more arrogant than to say to the Savior who died for us that we don’t \_\_\_\_\_ saving?

How would Jesus feel about people who took the cross to heart, changed their lives, and took up their own crosses to \_\_\_\_\_ Him? What does Jesus think about you? Is He \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ about the way that you have responded to Him?

Take a long, close look at the cross and let it \_\_\_\_\_ your heart. If you wish to become a Christian, \_\_\_\_\_ in the Lord Jesus with all your heart, love Him, \_\_\_\_\_ of your sins, \_\_\_\_\_ the name of Christ before others, and be \_\_\_\_\_ in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. That’s what Peter told the Jews on the day of Pentecost to do in Acts 2:38; and these were people who had actually participated in \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus. It was what they needed to do, and it’s what you need to do as well. Today is the best day to make a difference in the rest of your \_\_\_\_\_. Don’t put off obeying the gospel; take up your cross today.

November 10, 2013

## “Whatever” Colossians 2:6-8

Many say they love \_\_\_\_\_, but do they love the \_\_\_\_\_? Someone has called this the “whatever” generation, because people will \_\_\_\_\_ nearly anything. Is this \_\_\_\_\_? We love the \_\_\_\_\_, because it reveals God’s eternal, unchangeable teaching. God’s Word is \_\_\_\_\_ fickle. Since God’s Word doesn’t \_\_\_\_\_, we can count on His \_\_\_\_\_ to remain true. When God promises to forgive \_\_\_\_\_, we can be forgiven. When God promises the obedient a \_\_\_\_\_ in heaven, we can freely \_\_\_\_\_ to be obedient and enjoy that promise.

The U.S. Military Academy at West Point has a simple but rigorous \_\_\_\_\_ code. It simply says, "A Cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor \_\_\_\_\_ those who do." Honesty and integrity have always been \_\_\_\_\_ to our nation’s military. Sometimes gullible and sometimes deceptive, Americans today seem all too ready to \_\_\_\_\_ whatever they like, whether it’s true or not. Many have lost their ability to \_\_\_\_\_ between what is true and what is not, between what is right and what is wrong. Many believe “whatever” is \_\_\_\_\_ at the time and they are undisturbed when “whatever” is false or harmful.

In a pluralistic society, where people feel pressured to believe that \_\_\_\_\_ is okay, many believe that all religions are the same and they end up believing in nothing with any \_\_\_\_\_. Many have ceased to \_\_\_\_\_ for the truth or to \_\_\_\_\_ it. If \_\_\_\_\_ belief is true, then \_\_\_\_\_ belief can be counted on. If every belief is true, then nothing is \_\_\_\_\_. Nothing matters. People who say that \_\_\_\_\_ religions are okay are actually confused and deceived. People often say that we cannot say any doctrine is \_\_\_\_\_, but is this true? What has happened to \_\_\_\_\_ the truth and being \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord Jesus?

### **Read what Paul wrote to the church in Colossae in Colossians 2:1-8.**

Colossae was a \_\_\_\_\_ town in the Lycus River Valley on the main route from Ephesus to the Euphrates. Other nearby cities were larger and more important. Colossae had \_\_\_\_\_ much of its importance. Romans and Greeks and transplanted Jews lived there, and the frequent visitors made it a place that was susceptible to every \_\_\_\_\_ idea that came along. The inspired apostle Paul wrote the Colossian letter to deal with a \_\_\_\_\_ doctrine arising among some members of the church. He wrote to \_\_\_\_\_ them of the false teaching and the deception that was in worldly philosophy. A smooth talking stranger can easily \_\_\_\_\_ a naïve person with false promises and worldly traditions that sound \_\_\_\_\_. Paul \_\_\_\_\_ them not to be fooled by such nonsense. They would find the \_\_\_\_\_ in listening to Jesus Christ.

Learning to distinguish what is true from what is false is one of the most important \_\_\_\_\_ of life. Some traditions are \_\_\_\_\_, while others are \_\_\_\_\_. A tradition is merely a belief or a practice that's been \_\_\_\_\_ down from one generation to the next. When a belief is in error in one generation, it will be an error in the next; but the second generation has never heard anything else and so it \_\_\_\_\_ that what it heard was true. Once a deceptive tradition becomes accepted and is passed down from generation to generation, that idea can hardly be shown to be \_\_\_\_\_. So, people get convinced of a lie, and they \_\_\_\_\_ it's the truth, and they remain in \_\_\_\_\_. How very \_\_\_\_\_! How \_\_\_\_\_!

Disbelief is the \_\_\_\_\_ of a belief or a doctrine; it's a refusal to accept it. To disbelieve in Jesus is to reject him as the \_\_\_\_\_ of God. This might come in the form of denying His \_\_\_\_\_ or refusing to believe in His \_\_\_\_\_. It also might come in the form of refusing to believe the things that He \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord Jesus said, "The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the \_\_\_\_\_ that I have spoken will judge him on the last day" (John 12:48). Many people will find themselves rejected on the last day \_\_\_\_\_ they failed to believe what Jesus teaches in the Word.

People misbelieve when they believe something false but they \_\_\_\_\_ it's okay, that it is correct. Some deceive by causing \_\_\_\_\_ to believe a lie. The Lord Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ those who teach falsehoods and errors. Paul was \_\_\_\_\_ at one point when some false teachers were misleading the churches of Galatia. **Read Paul's strong language in Galatians 1:6-9.** Why did Paul say teaching a false \_\_\_\_\_ leads one to be accursed? Because \_\_\_\_\_ what God teaches leads people to believe a lie. When people believe a lie, they \_\_\_\_\_ after something other than God and they \_\_\_\_\_ themselves from God. Satan separates people from God by \_\_\_\_\_ to them. The Lord Jesus said about the devil, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). The devil lied to Eve and caused her to \_\_\_\_\_ against God and to \_\_\_\_\_ spiritually and physically. Lies \_\_\_\_\_ lead people into sin and spiritual death. It does \_\_\_\_\_ what we believe.

People today are deceived by all \_\_\_\_\_ of falsehoods and half-truths. A half-truth is when someone tells you a truthful \_\_\_\_\_ but leaves out \_\_\_\_\_ relevant information. For instance, it was \_\_\_\_\_ that Sarah was Abraham's half-sister. Sarah was \_\_\_\_\_ Abraham's wife. So when Abraham, because he was \_\_\_\_\_, told Pharaoh that Sarah was just his sister, he was only \_\_\_\_\_ right. Abraham's lie caused lots of \_\_\_\_\_; half-truths are some of the most \_\_\_\_\_ kind of lies. There's enough truth to fool people into \_\_\_\_\_ them, but there is enough falsehood to \_\_\_\_\_ to destruction. A Christian must be very \_\_\_\_\_ to examine everything he hears.

Some false prophets in the days of Jeremiah began \_\_\_\_\_ their prophecies. Jeremiah said, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Do not \_\_\_\_\_ to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are \_\_\_\_\_ you into futility; They speak a \_\_\_\_\_ of their own imagination, not from the \_\_\_\_\_ of the LORD’” (Jeremiah 23:16). False prophets in every age have \_\_\_\_\_ countless souls \_\_\_\_\_ from the will of God. We don’t want to be led into error and lose our souls; and this is why we must \_\_\_\_\_ everything carefully. Acts 17:11 says, “Now these (talking about the Bereans) were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the \_\_\_\_\_ with great eagerness, examining (or searching) the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” We, too, should \_\_\_\_\_ every belief by God’s Word to see what is true and what is false.

We \_\_\_\_\_ ourselves greatly when we lie to ourselves. God said, “The \_\_\_\_\_ is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the LORD, \_\_\_\_\_ the heart, I \_\_\_\_\_ the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the \_\_\_\_\_ of his deeds” (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Our hearts may tell us what we \_\_\_\_\_ to hear rather than what is \_\_\_\_\_. If we listen to our hearts and our desires rather than to the Lord, we can easily do the \_\_\_\_\_ thing spiritually, morally, or practically. Solomon said, “There is a \_\_\_\_\_ which seems right to a man, But its \_\_\_\_\_ is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12). When people \_\_\_\_\_ for something to be right; and they want to \_\_\_\_\_ it; they want to \_\_\_\_\_ it; they begin to \_\_\_\_\_ in their own minds that they can do it whether it’s right or not. These folks set their \_\_\_\_\_ to follow this error and can hardly be persuaded to \_\_\_\_\_. They must find out the \_\_\_\_\_ way. The prodigal son was like that. He had to have his inheritance and live the way that he \_\_\_\_\_. When his father gave in, he took his money to a far country and he wasted it in a \_\_\_\_\_ lifestyle. He had to \_\_\_\_\_ himself before he would \_\_\_\_\_ how foolish and sinful he had been. We hope that you haven’t allowed your heart to deceive you into making foolish \_\_\_\_\_. The prodigal son lied to himself \_\_\_\_\_ he couldn’t believe his lies anymore. Then he came to his senses, \_\_\_\_\_, and went home.

Many people are \_\_\_\_\_ to believe a lie, if they think it will \_\_\_\_\_ them. In a politically correct world people turn a \_\_\_\_\_ eye to the truth and they \_\_\_\_\_ on what’s convenient and popular. They would rather give in to a \_\_\_\_\_ lie than embarrass themselves by taking an unpopular position. Some people think it \_\_\_\_\_ wisdom or love to take a position of neutrality on every controversial issue. Others think we can never \_\_\_\_\_ what is true, so every view is as good as every other. But this idea is miles away from the heart and the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus. It may appear \_\_\_\_\_ to accommodate others, but accommodating sin and lies shows no \_\_\_\_\_ for the will of God. God did not \_\_\_\_\_ every religion; not every religion teaches His will. God wants His people to love Him but also to love the \_\_\_\_\_!



**Read what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23.** Being religious does not \_\_\_\_\_ that one is righteous. Some people say they are saved by faith \_\_\_\_\_, but this passage makes it clear that one must in addition to believing also \_\_\_\_\_ God's will. These people who lived lawless lives \_\_\_\_\_ themselves into thinking that they were still all right with God. Jesus, however, told them to \_\_\_\_\_. He never \_\_\_\_\_ them or had a relationship with them.

It matters \_\_\_\_\_ we believe and \_\_\_\_\_ we live. People embrace the \_\_\_\_\_ of salvation by "faith only." They suggest that \_\_\_\_\_ one must do to be saved is just to believe, and once saved one \_\_\_\_\_ be lost. But this doctrine didn't come from \_\_\_\_\_. People who believe in the "faith only" doctrine always have to take it \_\_\_\_\_. They will confess, "You can't be saved without \_\_\_\_\_ God (and that's true), or without \_\_\_\_\_ (and that's true), or without \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord Jesus (and that's true)." Faith is essential, but it takes \_\_\_\_\_ than simply believing to please God.

People say one religion is as good as another and all religions are the same; but the Lord Jesus said, "I am the \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_. No one \_\_\_\_\_ to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Acts 4:12 says about Jesus, "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other \_\_\_\_\_ under heaven given among men by which we \_\_\_\_\_ be saved." It's \_\_\_\_\_ to say that all religions are the same, but the Scriptures \_\_\_\_\_ otherwise. We need eternal truth that doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ or compromise. We \_\_\_\_\_ eternal truth in the words of Jesus. No one but Jesus can \_\_\_\_\_ sins. No one but Jesus will \_\_\_\_\_ in the clouds. No one but Jesus will \_\_\_\_\_ us on the last day. No one but Jesus can take us to \_\_\_\_\_.

**Read what the psalmist David wrote in Psalm 103:15-16.** Life on earth is \_\_\_\_\_; we won't live here forever. When we want to do what is right, the devil will tell us, "later," to get our minds off \_\_\_\_\_ things. He doesn't want us thinking about the \_\_\_\_\_, about the \_\_\_\_\_, about our \_\_\_\_\_, or about heaven and hell. He wants us to live for the \_\_\_\_\_ and to ignore our souls and the \_\_\_\_\_.

Today is the only day that you have to make your soul \_\_\_\_\_ with God. Yesterday has passed, and tomorrow is not assured. If you love the Lord and want to be right with Him, put your \_\_\_\_\_ in Him. Repent of sin and be \_\_\_\_\_ in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you obey the Lord by repenting and being baptized, God \_\_\_\_\_ away every sin and He \_\_\_\_\_ you to His church. There are no good \_\_\_\_\_ to think about it "later." Why not attend one of the churches of Christ near you. Tell them that you want to obey the gospel and be right with God. Study with them. Get involved in the church, and serve the Lord. Make your faith a priority. Won't you do that today?

## The Answer is God

### 1 Timothy 3:1-5

Someone commits a violent \_\_\_\_\_ in America every 26 seconds and a \_\_\_\_\_ every 36 minutes. Why? Psalm 1:2 tells about the \_\_\_\_\_ man. God said, “his \_\_\_\_\_ is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he \_\_\_\_\_ day and night.” If you want a \_\_\_\_\_ world, it begins with you. Don’t wait on \_\_\_\_\_. Today, begin \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord and meditate on His Word. Learn what God desires from you and \_\_\_\_\_ it. The Lord Jesus said, “If you love me, you will \_\_\_\_\_ my commandments” (John 14:15).

Lately we have seen lots of violence and heard lots of the word “\_\_\_\_\_.” The nightly \_\_\_\_\_ carries many stories of assault, and rape, and murder. Violent crime has \_\_\_\_\_ dramatically in the last 50 years. According to the FBI, there were 288,000 violent crimes in 1960; but in 2011, there were over 1.2 million violent crimes reported. In December, we grieved when a young man in Connecticut took the \_\_\_\_\_ of 27 other people, including 20 little children, and then killed himself. We wonder \_\_\_\_\_ anyone can be so cruel and hard-hearted. While some psychologists spoke of this young man being \_\_\_\_\_ disturbed, others said that he was evil. Perhaps it takes crime as horrific as this for us to \_\_\_\_\_ that there is such a thing as evil. Postmodern America has spent so much time \_\_\_\_\_ itself and justifying its sins, it has \_\_\_\_\_ how wicked and how evil humans can be. More than anything, we need the teaching and the love of Jesus to \_\_\_\_\_ our hearts and to live righteously.

### **Our reading today from God’s Holy Word is from Paul’s Second letter to Timothy 3:1-5.**

From the earliest days, the \_\_\_\_\_ speaks of violence in this world. In Genesis 4 God had regard for \_\_\_\_\_ and his offering but for \_\_\_\_\_ and his offering God had no regard. Cain became very \_\_\_\_\_ and his face fell. **Read how God warned Cain in Genesis 4:6-7.** But, Cain let his anger \_\_\_\_\_ in spite of God’s warning. “Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and \_\_\_\_\_ him” (verse 8). What Cain did was \_\_\_\_\_. He planned to kill Abel out of his \_\_\_\_\_. God said, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own \_\_\_\_\_” (Genesis 9:6). God has \_\_\_\_\_ considered taking the life of another as evil. The Lord’s Ten Commandments say, “You shall not \_\_\_\_\_” (Exodus 20:13). Murder is and has always been \_\_\_\_\_. “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for the \_\_\_\_\_, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

The New Testament \_\_\_\_\_ us not to follow Cain. “We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own \_\_\_\_\_ were evil and his brother’s righteous” (1 John 3:12). Cain first \_\_\_\_\_ evil and then put his deadly plan into \_\_\_\_\_. We, too, must master our thoughts and not \_\_\_\_\_ evil to overcome us. **Read what Jesus said in Matthew 5:21-22.** The Lord condemns evil in the \_\_\_\_\_, even if we don’t act upon it. Anger, hate, and vengeance are as \_\_\_\_\_ as murder itself. We shouldn’t even entertain the \_\_\_\_\_ of harming or slandering another person. **Read what Jesus said in Mark 7:21-23.** Because our inner thoughts affect how we behave, we must be \_\_\_\_\_ to keep our hearts free from evil.

According to Jesus, murder \_\_\_\_\_ when people lose respect for another person. Spitting in the face of another, looking with contempt upon another, or releasing one’s anger are \_\_\_\_\_ of a murderous spirit. Jesus forces us to \_\_\_\_\_ our thoughts and our words, that we don’t \_\_\_\_\_ our anger and hatred to overwhelm us. **Read what the Bible says in Ephesians 4:31-32.** We must learn to let go of ugly \_\_\_\_\_ and be kind to others, even if they’re not kind to us. Evil in the heart \_\_\_\_\_ to the most terrible sins. Even \_\_\_\_\_ people, if they allow jealousy or hatred to build up in their hearts can do unspeakably cruel things to others. The chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees were behind the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus Christ. They chose Barabbas, the criminal, to be spared, while they cried out for Jesus to be \_\_\_\_\_. They didn’t \_\_\_\_\_ Pilate, however. Mark 15:10 says, “For he (that is, Pontius Pilate) perceived that it was out of \_\_\_\_\_ that the chief priests had delivered him up.” Why were they envious? First, because Jesus could perform \_\_\_\_\_; but they couldn’t. After Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ Lazarus from the dead, some men told the chief priests and Pharisees. **Read what they did in John 11:47-48.** The second reason came from their \_\_\_\_\_ of losing their livelihood at the temple. They figured it was \_\_\_\_\_ for Jesus to die than for them to lose their nation. Many people \_\_\_\_\_ do horrible things out of jealousy and envy.

Another cause of hatred is something you might not expect; it’s the \_\_\_\_\_. People don’t want the truth told if it \_\_\_\_\_ their sins. **Read what Jesus said in John 3:19-20.** Sinful people want the darkness to \_\_\_\_\_ their sinful ways. They hate for their sins to be exposed and they hate \_\_\_\_\_ who exposes them. Herod had John the Baptist arrested. He bound him and put him in prison \_\_\_\_\_ of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. For John had been saying to him, “It is not \_\_\_\_\_ for you to have her” (Matthew 14:4). Herod was grieved about the matter, (that is, John being put in prison) but Herodias \_\_\_\_\_ to have John beheaded. An evil person who has \_\_\_\_\_ in his or her heart has no compassion. They will take vengeance into their own \_\_\_\_\_.

Selfish desire also \_\_\_\_\_ people to commit murder. People who are \_\_\_\_\_ for power and gold will do anything to eliminate their competition. The Bible says, “When Jehoram had ascended to the throne of his father and was established, he killed all his brothers with the sword, and also some of the princes of Israel” (2 Chronicles 21:4). His lust for \_\_\_\_\_ caused him to do horrible things; he did it even to his own family. James 3:16 says, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.”

Sexual \_\_\_\_\_ can also lead to much evil. When David lustfully committed adultery with Bathsheba and got her pregnant, it \_\_\_\_\_ to many other sins. He tried to \_\_\_\_\_ it up by getting Bathsheba’s husband Uriah to come home to her. When nothing else worked, David arranged for Uriah to \_\_\_\_\_ in battle. Nathan the prophet rebuked David (2 Samuel 12:9). Remember, when we sin against \_\_\_\_\_, we’re sinning also against \_\_\_\_\_ Himself. If we \_\_\_\_\_ God, we will not allow selfishness to dominate our lives.

The apostle Paul listed a number of fleshly \_\_\_\_\_ in Galatians 5; and each of them arises out of this selfishness. When people \_\_\_\_\_ against God and must have their own way, they lose sight of everyone else. They grow callous and they don’t \_\_\_\_\_ who they hurt. **Read what Paul said in Galatians 5:19-21.** People who hold to fleshly sin \_\_\_\_\_ live with God forever. Therefore, we must be \_\_\_\_\_ to set our hearts on serving the Lord rather than living like the world. **Read 1 John 2:15-17.** Sinful desire has led many into \_\_\_\_\_. Selfishness leads people \_\_\_\_\_ from God, and loving God leads people \_\_\_\_\_ from selfishness. The \_\_\_\_\_ to evil is God’s love. Paul explains how loving God and loving people lead us away from evil. **Read Romans 13:8-10.** Just as filling your heart with anger and hateful things leads to sin, filling your heart with what is good and loving leads one to act righteously. There is a stark \_\_\_\_\_ between the person who loves God and his neighbor, and the person who loves only himself.

Keeping God in our hearts isn’t \_\_\_\_\_. It’s not a \_\_\_\_\_. It is the most \_\_\_\_\_ thing that we can do. It \_\_\_\_\_ our lives and the lives of everyone around us. Jude 21 reminds us to keep ourselves in the love of God. When God is our focus, we \_\_\_\_\_ what is right and good; but when we push God out, every evil thing comes into our lives. **Read what the Bible says in Romans 1:28-32.**

Why are we so angry and violent in America? Why has evil become so prominent? It’s because we’ve \_\_\_\_\_ our God; we no longer “see fit to acknowledge God.” We’ve stopped reading the \_\_\_\_\_; we have stopped going to \_\_\_\_\_; we’ve convinced ourselves that we are an accident of evolution rather than \_\_\_\_\_ beings with intelligent design. We have let sinful behavior and politically correct behavior \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Holy

Word, so that what God calls sin is now morally \_\_\_\_\_. Without \_\_\_\_\_ we've loved darkness and hated light; we have loved sin and blasphemed righteousness. We fill our media with every ungodly \_\_\_\_\_, every ungodly \_\_\_\_\_, and every ungodly \_\_\_\_\_. We \_\_\_\_\_ sin and \_\_\_\_\_ righteousness, and when we choose to be godless, why should it surprise us that our society becomes ungodly? When we reject the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, why should it surprise us that we become angry, hateful, and callous?

When we shut God out of our hearts, we let the \_\_\_\_\_ walk in. When God can't \_\_\_\_\_ our schools, Satan and his followers will. When we can't \_\_\_\_\_ the Bible or \_\_\_\_\_ in public any more, why should we be \_\_\_\_\_ that sin is everywhere. We won't let the Bible into our \_\_\_\_\_, but we want them in our \_\_\_\_\_. Shouldn't that \_\_\_\_\_ us something? We need God in our \_\_\_\_\_ and in our \_\_\_\_\_.

The solution to violence is this: the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus must be in our hearts and His \_\_\_\_\_ in our lives. When Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ the man and said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will \_\_\_\_\_ by the sword" (Matthew 26:52).

The Lord Jesus knew people get \_\_\_\_\_ and are \_\_\_\_\_. He taught people a \_\_\_\_\_ way. He said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall \_\_\_\_\_ your neighbor and \_\_\_\_\_ your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and \_\_\_\_\_ for those who persecute you, so that you may be \_\_\_\_\_ of your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:43-45). If we're to be \_\_\_\_\_ God, we will love and even pray for our enemies.

Jesus did more than teach this; He \_\_\_\_\_ it. Do you remember how Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ when they were nailing His hands and feet to a cross? "Father, \_\_\_\_\_ them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The \_\_\_\_\_ of God can even forgive the violent. Peter told the Jews at Pentecost that they were responsible for the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus. He said, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

They were cut to the heart over their \_\_\_\_\_ and they \_\_\_\_\_ what they could do to be forgiven. Peter responded, "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" (Acts 2:38). When we \_\_\_\_\_ our hearts and we are \_\_\_\_\_, we, too, can find God's forgiveness. The \_\_\_\_\_ we draw to God, the \_\_\_\_\_ our world will be.



**God's Love**  
**Ephesians 3:14-19**

We can never \_\_\_\_\_ too much about God's love for us. We're going to try to get a glimpse on a topic \_\_\_\_\_ our comprehension—the love of God. People know when they're loved, but they don't always realize how much \_\_\_\_\_ loves them or all the \_\_\_\_\_ that He loves them. We'll explore that love, so that we may live everyday with \_\_\_\_\_ in our hearts. Fully realizing how \_\_\_\_\_ God loves you can really be a life-changing experience for you. No matter who you are, God sees you as someone He wants to \_\_\_\_\_ and to make His child. The more you \_\_\_\_\_ God, the more you'll love Him. The more you count your \_\_\_\_\_, the more you will see the \_\_\_\_\_ that He has done in your life. God's kindness and goodness \_\_\_\_\_ us to Him (James 1:17).

Read Psalm 139:1-6. The Bible describes David as a man after God's own \_\_\_\_\_, yet David was a very imperfect man. He was deeply \_\_\_\_\_; he loved God and wrote beautiful songs like Psalm 23. Yet David was very much human and \_\_\_\_\_ against God. David longed to build a \_\_\_\_\_ for the Lord because he grieved that the ark of God dwelled in tents, while he lived in a house. But according to 1 Chronicles 22:8, God would not let David build the Temple because he had "shed so much \_\_\_\_\_ on the earth." While David showed many \_\_\_\_\_ qualities, he also committed adultery with Bathsheba and had Uriah her husband killed in battle. David is so much like all of us, sometimes doing \_\_\_\_\_ and sometimes doing \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord Jesus described the \_\_\_\_\_ of man, "the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). We want to do \_\_\_\_\_ but often find ourselves doing what is \_\_\_\_\_.

It's the tendency of people to downplay their \_\_\_\_\_, to excuse or dismiss sin as some \_\_\_\_\_ thing of no consequence. We laugh at our sins and have \_\_\_\_\_ at times how to blush. Selfishly, we would rather \_\_\_\_\_ our actions than to \_\_\_\_\_ that we're wrong. Some buy into the notion of situation \_\_\_\_\_, that the situation determines whether an act is right or wrong. By doing so, they \_\_\_\_\_ God out of their lives. They think God doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ wrong in what they do, \_\_\_\_\_ they don't want to think it's wrong. But God has \_\_\_\_\_ clearly in Scripture about sin and its consequences. Every sin, yours and mine, is utterly offensive to \_\_\_\_\_. Habakkuk 1:13 says of God, "Your eyes are too \_\_\_\_\_ to approve evil, And You cannot \_\_\_\_\_ on wickedness with favor." We may consider some sin as a \_\_\_\_\_ matter, but God sees sin very differently. He cannot \_\_\_\_\_ evil.



The Bible teaches in 1 John 4:8 that God is \_\_\_\_\_. That's so very \_\_\_\_\_, and we are indeed grateful for that. Read 1 John 1:5-6. Whatever understanding we have about the loving \_\_\_\_\_ of God must also be understood in the light that He is utterly righteous and morally pure. We can't walk in \_\_\_\_\_ or live in sin and still have \_\_\_\_\_ with God. Proverbs 15:9 says, "The \_\_\_\_\_ of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves one who \_\_\_\_\_ righteousness." God rejects the way of the \_\_\_\_\_ as an abomination, as unclean and loathsome. God's love does not \_\_\_\_\_ how He sees sin; God despises sin. But God's love will determine how He regards \_\_\_\_\_. God utterly loves the person who makes it his \_\_\_\_\_ to pursue righteousness. It is only when we see \_\_\_\_\_ through God's eyes that we \_\_\_\_\_ the full extent of His love for us. Our sins make us \_\_\_\_\_ and profane in His eyes; but God is able to see beyond our sinful ugliness to what we can \_\_\_\_\_ through His grace and mercy. The Lord sees our sin, yes; but He prepared a way to \_\_\_\_\_ us from our sins, so that we might become altogether lovely to Him. By sacrificing His Son Jesus, He was able to \_\_\_\_\_ us all our sins and to transform us into His children.

The love of God is not \_\_\_\_\_; it was demonstrated beyond dispute in the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross (Romans 5:6-8). We were weak, ungodly, and sinners; but Christ was still \_\_\_\_\_ to die for our sins and to \_\_\_\_\_ us clean in His blood. Such love is truly beyond comprehension. Read 2 Corinthians 5:19-21. God washes us clean in the blood of Christ to \_\_\_\_\_ for our sins, so that we may be \_\_\_\_\_ to be reconciled, that is to have a loving relationship with Him. Read Micah 7:18-19. God loves us, \_\_\_\_\_ because we are so loveable. God loves us because \_\_\_\_\_ is so loving, so good, and so gracious. The Lord's love is compassionate beyond \_\_\_\_\_. He treats us much better than we \_\_\_\_\_. Each sin is abominable to \_\_\_\_\_. If a person sinned only once a day, he would have sinned \_\_\_\_\_ than 18,000 times by the age of fifty. Even Christian people who \_\_\_\_\_ to do right find themselves doing things they \_\_\_\_\_. The Scriptures teach that "\_\_\_\_\_ have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). First John 1:8 says to Christians, "If we say that we have \_\_\_\_\_ sin, we deceive ourselves, and the \_\_\_\_\_ is not in us." The fact is we are all \_\_\_\_\_. "The \_\_\_\_\_ is willing but the \_\_\_\_\_ is weak" (Matthew 26:31).

Many people think if a Christian \_\_\_\_\_, he's a hypocrite; but this is not so. A hypocrite is someone who \_\_\_\_\_ to be something he does not intend to be. The faithful Christian may sin, but he \_\_\_\_\_ he hadn't. In fact, he will penitently \_\_\_\_\_ to God that he has

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done wrong and ask God to \_\_\_\_\_ Him. There's a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ between this person who loves God and the one who loves to sin and then \_\_\_\_\_ he's righteous. Being \_\_\_\_\_ is not the same as being a hypocrite.

God knows all about us; He knows our weaknesses, and yet loves us in \_\_\_\_\_ of ourselves. Read Psalm 103:8-14. God's love is great toward those who \_\_\_\_\_ Him and \_\_\_\_\_ Him. We live and die on this earth, but God's love lasts for an \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 103:15-18). God's love for His people is not only for this \_\_\_\_\_ but extends into \_\_\_\_\_.

God's love reaches into our lives far beyond the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ (Romans 8:32). When we become children of God, God blesses \_\_\_\_\_ aspect of our lives (Ephesians 1:3). He gives us His \_\_\_\_\_ to teach and guide us. He hears our \_\_\_\_\_. He gives us \_\_\_\_\_. He provides for our \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 6:31-33). God takes \_\_\_\_\_ of those who love Him. We sometimes imagine God has somehow \_\_\_\_\_ us. Read Isaiah 49:15-16. God cannot and will not \_\_\_\_\_ you. The Lord \_\_\_\_\_ us to cast all our cares, all our worries, all our anxieties upon Him, "because He \_\_\_\_\_ for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

God doesn't see us as \_\_\_\_\_, as nations, as cities, or as families. He sees us as \_\_\_\_\_. Each person \_\_\_\_\_ greatly to Him. The Lord loves the whole \_\_\_\_\_; but He loves you for who you are. He deeply desires to have a relationship with you. He wants you as His precious \_\_\_\_\_, not a meaningless \_\_\_\_\_ (1 John 3:1). Of all the \_\_\_\_\_ that we possess, nothing compares with being a \_\_\_\_\_ of God. When you become a \_\_\_\_\_, you become a child of God, holy, beloved, and chosen. God blesses you with His grace and favor and is preparing a \_\_\_\_\_ in heaven just for you. He wants you to come and live with Him in glory \_\_\_\_\_ (John 10:10). God's love doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ that we won't face pain and challenges. God doesn't stop pain, but He \_\_\_\_\_ us work through the pain and often gives us blessing from it.

To enjoy God's love for eternity is \_\_\_\_\_ any sacrifice or struggle (Romans 8:38-39). To become a Christian, one must \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Without faith we cannot \_\_\_\_\_ God. Faith and love leads a person to \_\_\_\_\_ of sin, to turn to what is right. The blessing of repentance \_\_\_\_\_ our lives and heals our souls. A penitent believer is willing to \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord Jesus Christ before others and to be \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ happens in the waters of baptism (John 3:5).