

Program Transcripts

For September 2015



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

September 2015

Topics subject to change without notice

SEPTEMBER 6 – MACK LYON

35 years ago Mack Lyon began the "In Search of the Lord's Way" program. For more than thirty years you were able to hear Mack Lyon preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. August 5th, 2015 Mack went home to the Lord at the age of 93. We miss him, and we know you miss him too! He was indeed a great soldier of the cross who loved the Lord and His cause.

In this special program we take time to honor Mack. Mack loved to preach the gospel and although his health would not allow it, he dreamed of being able to preach once more. So, we have selected portions of three of Mack's favorite sermons from our library to share with you today. The first one is from 1984 and talks about the power of Christ's resurrection. The second is from 1998 and speaks of the need to glory in the cross. The final selection is from 2010. Here Mack speaks of his love for scripture and our need to hold it up as a standard.

SEPTEMBER 13 – TRUE RELIGION

We want our faith to be built on the truth. We want it to be authentic, genuine, and real. True religion is devoted to the will of God found in Scripture; we could never want anything more or anything less.

SEPTEMBER 20 – POOR IN SPIRIT

The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). What does it mean to be "poor in spirit" and why is it important? In this lesson we'll recall just how much we need the Lord!

SEPTEMBER 27 – PURE IN HEART

Have you wondered what happened to people's desire to be chaste and pure? We live in a sexually confused world devoted to fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. If we wish to see God, we must learn to be pure in heart.

Mack Lyon

Hello, I'm Chris Lyon, and this is a Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's Way." As many of you know, my father, Mack Lyon, founder of Search, left this life on August the 5th, 2015. Today this special program will remember him and honor his request to preach for us one more time. We will be sharing some of his lessons that have made a difference to millions of people over the many years of his ministry.

Phil Sanders: Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're excited to have you join us for this special program looking back over Mack Lyon's television ministry. As always, we're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. From my earliest days as a Christian, I saw the need to follow the Scriptures and to be a New Testament Christian. Without the New Testament we wouldn't know what the Lord Jesus is like, what He expects from us, and how we can have eternal life in heaven. Without the New Testament we wouldn't know how the church is to worship or be organized. Without the New Testament we wouldn't know how wonderful and glorious is the grace of God. The New Testament provides for us what we most need to know in order to please God and to enjoy His grace, His mercy, and His blessing. That's why we go back again and again to Scripture.

For more than thirty years you were able to hear Mack Lyon preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ on this program. As we mentioned, he went home to the Lord on August 5th at the age of 93. We miss him, and we know that you miss him, too! He was indeed a great soldier of the cross who loved the Lord and His cause. Mack loved to preach the gospel. In recent years Mack suffered from Parkinson's disease which prevented him from being able to preach. Earlier this year Mack told me that every night he dreamed of being able to preach again.

Since many of you wanted to hear Mack again we selected some clips from our library to share with you today. We have sections of three sermons. The first is from 1984, from the early days of the Search program. He'll speak of the power of the resurrection. The second section from 1998 speaks of the need to glory in the cross. Our third clip comes from 2010 and reveals the need for a standard.

This first section comes from 1984, when Mack was only on a few stations in Oklahoma and the surrounding states. Early on, Mack dreamed of reaching the entire state of Oklahoma. God opened doors and ultimately he reached the whole nation. In this section, Mack will be discussing the power of the resurrection. Listen with me.

The essential elements of the Christian's faith are all confirmed by historical evidence. The birth of Jesus Christ is a matter of historical fact. His life and the fact that He also secured a great following of people during His personal ministry in so short of time is a matter of history. His influence upon all of that part of the world can be attested by history. It can be proven by historical evidence. Not only so, but the fact that Jesus Christ was crucified on a Roman cross outside the city walls of Jerusalem that day is also an historical fact. And that His grave was empty the next Sunday morning is a matter of history as well. The Bible says "now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulture bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulture and they entered in and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass as they were much perplexed there about, behold two men stood by them in shining garments, and as they were afraid and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, 'why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. Remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee saying. The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified. And the third day rise again.' And they remembered His words, and returned from the sepulture, and told all those things unto the eleven and to all the rest" (Luke 24:1-9).

The grave really and truly was empty. The body was gone, but how do you explain it? Various attempts have been made to explain away the disappearance of the body of Jesus in that three day period. Some have said that the enemies of Jesus came and stole away the body. But surely had that been true, they would have delivered the body. Only about seven weeks later, the apostles began to

preach that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God, and therefore was the Son of God. They would have produced the body of Jesus, and would have silenced those apostles once and for all. Christianity never would have been born. The Jews then would have had the victory over the claims of Jesus Christ merely by having presented the body which they were supposed to have stolen.

Somebody has said, "Well, the enemies didn't steal away the body, but we don't know who stole it away because the guards said that somebody stole the body while they slept." Doesn't that sound a bit ridiculous to you. If the guards were so sound asleep at the grave of Jesus, that somebody could come in and roll away that huge stone and then remove the body, then how would they know who it was that stole it? How would they know that somebody had come there and stolen the body of Jesus. The truth is they couldn't testify as to what happened. They wouldn't be very good witnesses.

Others have tried to explain away the empty tomb by saying that the friends of Jesus came and stole away the body and then went out and said that He was raised from the dead by the power of God. But that isn't reasonable either, is it? In reality these men suffered severe persecution for preaching the resurrection of Jesus. Some of them were beheaded; some of them were crucified; some were crucified head downward; some were exiled. They were persecuted even to death. Don't you know that while they were being persecuted, and while they were enduring all of this suffering, if they knew in their own hearts that they had actually stolen the body of Jesus themselves and they were only propagating the doctrine, a false doctrine that He had been raised from the dead, that they would have renounced that? They wouldn't have continued that even to the point of death.

Phil Sanders: In this second section from 1998, Mack Lyon reveals his love for Jesus Christ and the importance of the cross in the life of a Christian. The Lord Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me" (John 12:32). We've got to look to Christ and His cross if we would be right with God. Let's hear what Mack Lyon has to say.

The cross of Christ, the message of Christ's crucifixion, His burial and His resurrection from the dead is the very heart and the soul of the Christian message. Paul, the great man of God, wrote to the Corinthian Christians, "I brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God." He had not appealed to the vanity of their great wisdom, nor had he exhibited great oratorical skill before them for he continued, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." It isn't that He never mentioned the church, or obedience, or baptism, or worship, or judgment, or heaven, or hell, or a whole host of other Bible subjects. But, whatever He taught them, had meaning only in the light of the cross of Jesus Christ. And He said, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling, and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and the power, that (oh now that word that means that here is a statement of purpose) that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Oh, for more preaching like that today, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. The cross of Jesus Christ packs power into the sermon. The preacher that thinks he has something better on which to build your faith is blinded by his egotism and pride. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross, the story of the crucifixion of Jesus, His burial and His triumphant resurrection is the firm immovable foundation, the truth on which the church would be built. How audacious, how outrageously vain, how conceited, how very prideful and deceitful of any man to start a church of his own and to dare to compare it with the one that Jesus, the Son of God, built upon the firm foundation of His blood stained cross. "Upon this rock," He said to Peter, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). It wasn't that He was building a stone, like the impetuous sometimes wavering Peter. The church was to be built upon Jesus Christ, who by His death, and burial, and resurrection fulfilled God's plan for human redemption. He proved

himself to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). Jesus, keep your church near the cross.

The church is important to the world only as long as it relates to the cross. The church simply must not permit itself to lose sight of the cross. God forbid that the church should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ. Religious traditions are vain (Matthew 15:1-10), except as they relate to the cross of Christ. Second Thessalonians 2:15 declares that also. Religious rites and ceremonies are meaningless, save as they relate to the cross of Christ. Likewise, innovative changes in church teaching or doctrine, in the worship, in the agenda of the church, all of that are but glitter, except as they draw us near to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. God forbid that the church should glory in any of that, but only in the cross as our Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil Sanders: In this last section, Mack Lyon says, "Give Me a Standard." He reveals the need to go to God's standard in the New Testament in order to obey the Lord the way the Lord wants to be obeyed. How desperately our world needs to turn away from pluralism and come back to the teaching of Christ. Let's listen again:

We need a standard. A truth that will be truth everywhere and always to all people. A standard by which all of us can determine what's right and what's wrong, and what will be right and what will be wrong everywhere and with all people wherever we go. The pluralism of the prevailing post-modern thought is just not working, friend. It's wreaking havoc on our national faith and morals. Like the merchant who carefully balanced the sack of coffee in his hand until it felt like a pound. Many people do what they do in religion simply because it feels right to them. Or, they feel led to do it. They seem not to be aware of the truth of which the Bible speaks. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death (Proverbs 16:25). Chaos and confusion abound everywhere. Anarchy reigns, and we cry "O God, give us a standard."

Like the old time merchant who measured out his yard of gingham between two notches cut out in the counter by his grandfather or grandmother. He knew full well that his grandfather was honest and would never cheat a customer, though he really might have been doing it all along without even knowing it. So, many people today are clinging to the religious beliefs and practices of their honest and good fore-parents. They have no other reason for being what they are, or doing what they do, but that their grandparents were that, and that's the way they did.

Oh, how we do need a standard. Something by which everyone can live and be certain he's doing and believing what's right. Just as it was before we had a Bureau of Standards of Weights and Measures, when each state had its own. In religion today there is no standard. Each group has its own authoritative council or maybe it's a creed that defines truth for them. What's said to be right for one group is not right for others. Each one does what is right in its own eyes. The result is confusion and chaos, even unbelief. Just as Jesus said it would be in John 17:20-21. Oh, how we do need a standard.

That one short verse we read for our text aptly describes not only the conditions that existed in a period of some of the formative days of Israel's history, but it just as aptly describes the conditions in our own period of religious and moral decline in America. It was during the reign of the judges, and the times were difficult because God's will had been abandoned, and the scripture says "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." My friend, God has given us a standard already. Yes, He has. Even as He had then. But the people scorned it then as many do now. The Bible is God's Word. When man rejects it and sets his own rules for life, he's on the downward course to disaster. Jeremiah, the Old Testament prophet who wept over the sinful and condemned state of Israel, cried, "Oh Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). It's an awesome truth that God has spoken and revealed His way to man. It's awesome I say, not only because it's inspired and inspiring and wondrous, but because it's fearful and appalling, and it makes a dreadful demand on man for an appropriate response. The only such

response is obedience to it. It's irreverent and even blasphemous the way some people profess to speak for God, pretend such camaraderie with Him as to carry on casual conversations with Him, at their own will and at their command. My friend, God does not come down and sit on the side of the bed and talk to these people like that. He never did. Even Moses was not permitted to do that. God said to Him, "You cannot see My face; for no one shall see Me and live" (Exodus 33:20). Nor, does God speak to us through the traditions of our ancestry, not even through the councils of the best-of-intentioned men, neither in the creeds written by the most scholarly of them, but through His Word, the Bible. There's our standard!

And it says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible, then, is here by the breath of God. It's to be used for teaching doctrine, for reproofing the erring, for correcting the course of the misled life, for instruction in the things that are right, so that the man of God can be complete, and is completely supplied by the Scriptures with everything necessary to every good work. There's our standard. Oh my, we must get back to it!

Of course, there have always been in every generation those who have given short weights and measures for ill-gotten-gain. They flourish and prosper in spite of the Bureau of Standards of Weights and Measures. And so it is in Christianity. There have always been, and always shall be, I suppose, the Elmer Gantry's, who prey upon the unlearned and unsuspecting for profit. That's why the Scripture says, "Be diligent (King James says, "study") to present yourself approved to God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (Some versions say, "handling aright the word of truth.") It's "the word of truth." Let's not forget that. Let us pray. Holy Father, thank You for the revelation, the translation, the preservation of Your Holy Word, a standard by which we can all live in unison. We pray Your blessings as we strive to walk in its light. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

How we need to get back to the Bible, God's standard for our lives today. Most of the problems that people face today come from their unwillingness to follow the Lord Jesus. You can't rebel against God and expect God to bless you. When we study the Bible, we must truly want to conform our lives and our faith to it and to it alone as God's everlasting and unchangeable standard. We must always be on guard against imposing our opinions and prejudices on the Word of God, and trying to use the Bible to justify our preconceived ideas or our selfish desires. We must follow the Lord. Faith in Christ means accepting everything the Lord says in His Word, and conforming our lives to it. Now if you aren't willing to deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and to follow Christ, you are a Christian in name only. True disciples live their faith!

There is still but one standard gospel of Christ, and we must obey that gospel to be saved. To become a Christian believe in the Lord with all your heart. Out of love repent of every sin and turn your heart and thoughts to righteousness. Confess your faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and be baptized into Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism is an immersion in water that likens us to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We don't sprinkle for baptism because it's not God's standard, and we don't baptize babies because they aren't mature enough to believe and repent. The apostle Peter said, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). That's what we urge you to do today. Let the cross of Christ draw you to Jesus and follow His teaching.

And now a final word from Mack Lyon: "Say! We're so glad that you were with us today. We pray you've been blessed. And, we hope you will join us again next week. God bless you now. We love you."

True Religion

Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. Our dear friend and brother in the Lord, Mack Lyon, began this program in 1980 and was its only host for thirty years. Our dear friend passed away August 5th and is now with the Lord. We remember him.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Mack Lyon recently reminded me of Ephesians 4:4-6 "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called in one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." When there is just one, there can't be more than one. We want to find that one true body, the one true Spirit, the one true hope, the one true Lord, the one true faith, and the one true baptism, and the one true God who is over all. We're grateful to you for joining us in this search of the Scriptures because we don't want to settle for anything other than the truth.

On September first, 1980, Mack Lyon spoke on In Search of the Lord's Way for the very first time in Ada, Oklahoma on KTEN. Brother Lyon saw the need to broadcast the gospel truth to our nation so people could see the difference between the church of the New Testament and many religious groups today. He wanted people to become true Christians and be added to the New Testament church, and that's our desire today; so, we go to the Bible, the Word of God, to find the truth. We want nothing more and nothing less.

Brother Lyon was a genuine Christian. What you remember on television was what he was every day! He wanted everyone to love and to serve the Lord. He spoke the truth in love, and a whole generation became endeared to his kind and humble ways. Because of God's blessing and his hard work, people in every corner of America today can view this television program. And we're grateful for the love of God that we saw in his life.

Our reading today comes from the Epistle to the Colossians 2:6-8. "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." We must live our lives according to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in His Word. Let's pray together. O Father, help us to avoid the traditions of men and to look to You for our truth. And, Father, may we always be obedient to Your Word, to love You and to serve You. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

Since this program is entitled, In Search of the Lord's Way, we seek for the true, genuine, and authentic faith in Christ. We realize that there are many false religions in the world; we're seeking the true religion, the true church. We aren't interested in imitations or substitutes; we're not interested in opinions or the guesses that arise out of someone's imagination. We want the truth, unembellished truth, uncompromising truth, and the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If we settle for anything more than the truth or less than the truth, we'll find that our hope has no firm foundation.

The Lord God rebuked Judah more than once because the people would forsake the truth to follow the idols of the nations surrounding them. Through his prophet Jeremiah, God said, "Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living

waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:11-13).

Ancient Israel knew how precious water was because they had so little. Many of their creeks would only run during certain seasons of the year. Living water was flowing and pure; the water in cisterns would often become foul. If a tiny crack formed in the plaster inside the cistern, all the water could eventually leak out, and the cistern would be empty. The Jews chose a broken cistern in their idols over the living river of water in God. How shocking! Who would do that?

People today have done the same thing! They've sold out the genuine Christianity of the New Testament for pop psychology, for manufactured religions from false prophets, for entertainment-based enterprises, or for a false god that accepts everyone and everything and never judges. They've traded the truth for a fantasy, for a broken cistern.

The Lord Jesus said, “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Matthew 7:13-14). These verses surprise a lot of people; they don't even know the Bible says this. Most people think that almost everyone is going to be saved and almost no one's going to be lost, but the Bible doesn't teach that. Even people who call Jesus “Lord” may be lost if they fail to live as God teaches. The Lord Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). We're saved by God's grace, but not a grace that accepts people no matter what. God expects His people to do His will on earth as it is in heaven.

True religion points to the Lord Jesus; false religion points to the men who presume they are an addition to or better than Jesus. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. And no one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Jesus was insistent on this. Later, Peter told the Jewish Council, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). We have God's truth in Jesus Christ! If we add anything to Him or take away anything from Him, we have left the truth for a broken cistern. Jesus is Lord; He's the only Lord. He alone paid the price for your sins and mine; He alone has risen from the dead; and He alone will judge you on the last day. Don't sell Him short; He has no equal.

True religion realizes that we're created in the image of God; false religion tries to recreate God in our own image. Many people don't want God unless He's like us or agrees with what we already think. Many people would rather manufacture a god that suits them than they would to listen to the true and living God that's revealed in the Scriptures. This is not a new thing; people throughout time, throughout history, have resisted God in order to worship their idols. They wanted a god that followed them rather than the one true God they had to follow. Romans 1:18-23 explains, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they didn't honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.”

True religion holds to the inspired Word of God, the Bible; false religion points to the writings of men, or to creeds and councils. True religion searches the Scriptures to see if these things are so;

but false religion swallows whatever people like. True religion is content to hold to what is written in Scripture; but false religion feels it must edit what God has said to suit the times. If you want to find the truth, you must search for it in the right place. You can't get a full understanding of God in the woods, or in space, or in philosophy, or even in people; you find God in the Scriptures. The Lord God revealed Himself most fully and most accurately through the written word. Paul wrote, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21).

This is why Solomon said, "Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding" (Proverbs 23:23). You find that truth by your diligent study of the Scriptures; there are no substitutes or shortcuts. The Bible applauds those who devote themselves to a careful, serious study of Scripture. The Bereans practiced that. Acts 17:11 says, "Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; and they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." They didn't take the word of some individual; they wanted to know what the Bible itself said! The Scriptures settled the truth for them, and it should settle the truth for you, too!

True religion is poor in spirit; while false religion is full of selfish ambition. James described the difference, "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, oh no, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere" (James 3:13-17). Many religions make their followers their focus, wanting them to do what makes them feel good about themselves. Instead of helping people to become focused on God, they lead them to become focused on themselves.

True religion sees our utter need for God; false religion thinks God has an utter need for us. True religion is about love and service to God and others; false religion is all about self-esteem and what I feel. True religion longs for truth and fellowship with God; false religion longs for power. True religion makes one a servant of the living God; false religion turns a human into a god. True religion loves the truth and grieves at the lies that men tell; false religion so longs for its own ways that it ignores or dismisses the truth.

True religion appeals to the soul and the spirit; false religion appeals to the flesh. True religion is unashamed; false religion must hide what it really believes. True religion wants righteousness; false religion wants to please itself or please people. Many churches today have accepted as moral what God calls immoral in Scripture. They have chosen to please the people rather than follow God's teaching. They have chosen to appeal to the flesh rather than think about their souls. Moses once said about Israel, "If they were wise, they would understand this; that they would discern their latter end!" (Deuteronomy 32:29). People will live as they choose, but God will judge them according to His standards, not theirs. Solomon said, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

True religion calls men to repent; while false religion demands everyone accept them as they are without the need for repentance. True religion understands that repentance is turning away from what God defines as sin to what God defines as righteousness; false religion wants to rewrite what God says about morals. While true religion accepts responsibility and repents; false religion excuses

its sins by pointing to the failures of others. False religion says that since everyone sins, we should accept everyone as they are without asking them to change. False religion says accepting people is more important than accepting God's moral law. The world expects religion to change, but God expects the world to change. When religious groups leave God's will, they leave God. When churches forsake the truth and the morals of God, God removes them from His grace.

True religion makes every person responsible for himself while false religion blames our sins upon others. God said, "Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). Throughout this chapter God says clearly that each of us will face judgment for our own actions, not the behaviors of our parents or our children. God will hold each one of us accountable only for our own sins, not for the sins of others. Ezekiel 18:30-32 says, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live."

Why does all this matter? It matters because true religion recognizes the wrath of God is real, while false religion ignores it. True religion realizes that Jesus will return someday to judge the world, but false religion acts as if everyone will be saved regardless of their beliefs or their behavior. Don't be deceived! If your sins aren't washed away by the blood of Jesus, you'll face God as a condemned sinner. John 3:36 says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." Are you right with God? Let's pray together. O Father, we pray that we may come to love You more and to serve You more, and to do Your will in our lives. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen!

George Orwell said, "The farther a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those who speak it." Jesus predicted that evil people would hate Him and hate those who followed Him because evil people hate the light that exposes their evil deeds (John 3:20). Jesus loved the world, even when the world hated Him. Many think it's okay to discriminate against Christians, but think with me a little. People who love others tell them the truth even when it hurts; but people who remain silent about sin and allow half-truths and lies to be spread, these are people who have no compassion.

You may think you're being kind by being tolerant toward those who are in sin, but remaining silent about the destructive forces of sin is the worst kind of cruelty! You're allowing people to condemn themselves by failing to warn them. Remaining silent about sin or false doctrines robs people of hope and salvation. Many who believe a lie have built their houses on false hopes that rob people of eternal life. Jesus loved sinners, but His love for them meant calling them to repentance. Jesus didn't leave people where He found them. He didn't leave them deceived about sin or about salvation, or even the church. Jesus spoke out against sin and against doctrinal error because He loved their souls.

If you love your soul, if you love the Lord Jesus, then place your trust in Him, turn away from every sin, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ! You're baptized into Christ when you're immersed in water in His name. In baptism, God unites you with Christ; He makes you His child; He adds you to His church; and He forgives every sin. Don't wait another day to become a child of God. Become a Christian today!

Poor in Spirit

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Today we’re going to explore the blessedness of being “poor in spirit.” How we think of God makes all the difference in the world. If we love Him and humble ourselves before Him, God will bless us richly; but if we fail to give Him our respect and our obedience, we’ll find the blessed life disappear. The more we get away from God, the more the blessings of God get away from us. That’s why we continually go to the Word of God, the Bible, to find the truth of God and the blessing of God. You won’t find it anywhere else. God’s way is the right way, the blessed way, and the true way.

Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man in the world in his day. God allowed him to have this power in order to punish Israel for her sins. Three times Nebuchadnezzar’s army entered Jerusalem, and the third time completely destroyed the city, including the temple. Nebuchadnezzar’s home was the great city of Babylon, whose hanging gardens were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Chapter four of the book of Daniel tells how Nebuchadnezzar became proud and said, “Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?”

Because he forgot God, and he forgot that God was the true ruler of the world, God humbled him by making him like a beast of the field for three and a half years. He ate grass like cattle, and his hair and his nails grew long. Afterwards Nebuchadnezzar praised and honored the Most High God. He learned his need for God the hard way.

Our reading today from God’s Word comes from Isaiah 1:16-20. “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. ‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword.’ Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” Let’s pray together. O Father, help us to live as You would have us to live. To draw close to You, and to love You and serve You in every way. And, Father, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to hear Jesus speak in person? In 2006, Jackie and I visited the site near the Sea of Galilee where Jesus supposedly delivered the Sermon on the Mount. The crowds gathered to the mountain to hear Him speak. They hung on every word. The people knew about Jesus’ power to heal, His godly teaching, and kind ways. Matthew 4:23-25 says, “And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So His fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought Him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and He healed them. And great crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.” These people wanted to hear what the Master had to say—I hope that you have that kind of hunger for the Word of God.

How would you begin your signature sermon? The beginning statement of a sermon is usually what catches people’s attention. Jesus made a surprising and captivating comment about being “poor in spirit.” He said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). He started His sermon talking about people who are “poor in spirit.” He started there because He knew how vital being “poor in spirit” was to our relationship with Him

and with the Father. If we're not "poor in spirit", we may never have room for God in our lives. The blessed person not only has room for God; the blessed person cannot live without God!

What does it mean to be blessed? The word "blessed" means more than being "happy." Happiness is merely an emotion, and it's often dependent upon outward circumstances. To be blessed here refers to the ultimate well-being of a person, a person who has a lasting spiritual joy arising from his relationship with God. The beatitudes are not simple statements; they're exclamations! They're saying that these are the kinds of people that God sees as having the ultimate in well-being.

I'm reminded of Habakkuk, a prophet in the Old Testament, who lived at a very difficult time. Habakkuk 3:17-19 says, "Though the fig tree should not blossom, And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail, And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold, And there be no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the Lord of my salvation. The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds' feet, And makes me walk on my high places." Oh, a relationship with God is a wonderful and fulfilling blessing because it assures us of an eternal home, and even when our world here falls apart, we have a time with God.

The Lord Jesus, before His death, gave some assurance to His apostles. Jesus knew that He would be crucified and they would be sorrowful; but the Lord said, "Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you" (John 16:22). In Christ, no one can take away our joy or our hope. In Christ, we have forgiveness, the right to pray, eternal life, and an inheritance in heaven. No one can take this away from us! We may have all kinds of change in this world, but nothing can change and take away all the joys that Christ gives. If you're counting on this world to bless you, remember this world is fickle and temporal, but Christ is eternal.

We don't always see things the way God sees them. The people that we think are blessed aren't necessarily the ones that God says are blessed. God said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

The world values riches, honors, fame, intelligence, appearance, and strength. These beatitudes emphasize inward dispositions not outward circumstances; so God has different values than people do. Jeremiah 10:23-24 says: "Thus says the LORD, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the LORD." Men shouldn't boast over their human wisdom, power, or wealth. These things don't make a man blessed in God's eyes. If you wish to boast about something, boast that you know and understand the Lord God of heaven who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth. Those things are truly valuable.

When God calls someone blessed, he is blessed indeed! God never lies but calls things as they truly are! If anyone else blesses you, that blessing may last for a time, but God's blessings last for all of our lives and beyond this life. God's blessings are both physical and spiritual. He meets our physical needs for food, water, clothing, and shelter; but He also meets our spiritual needs. 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 do have every spiritual blessing that we could even hope for. We have access to the Father, peace, joy, assurance, and love. In Christ, we have forgiveness. Romans 4:7-8 says, "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." Forgiveness through the blood of Christ opens the door to an eternal fellowship with God on earth and in heaven, and that's truly a blessed state and condition!

The Lord said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." There are two words for poor in the New Testament. First, there are those who are poor who are needy and have to work from day to day just to earn a living. They have food and clothes enough to survive but very little else. Second, there are those who are destitute beggars, living in absolute poverty—the person who has nothing at all and is desperate. It is this second word that's used here; and that's what makes this so surprising! The blessed person is the one who "in spirit" has nothing at all. He has nothing and is utterly dependent upon God.

The "poor in spirit" are not the same as people who are "poor-spirited", that is, who are dejected, or self-pitying creatures who go about in fear or in indifference. No, this is speaking of people who realize their spiritual poverty without God. They realize they have an utter need and a dependence upon God. Since they know their condition, they're humble and they yearn for God's help. They put their whole trust in God. They realize they owe their existence and their salvation to God. They realize that on their own, without God, they're lost in sin and have no hope. They know they cannot earn their salvation.

Ephesians 2:8-10 says, "For by grace you've been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it's the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." A person "poor in spirit" will become wholly dependent upon God—that is, God means everything to him! We must realize that we need God's help and we need His strength; only God can give us eternal life. We must put our trust in Him.

A person "poor in spirit" doesn't invent his own religion and he doesn't invent his own way to be saved. A person "poor in spirit" is willing to listen and do what God says and do it God's way. He doesn't try to correct God or change God's laws or morals. He doesn't propose his own solutions to the problems of sin or question God's wisdom and justice. He loves God and is willing to follow the Lord and learn from Him.

Because a person "poor in spirit" realizes His need for Jesus to be His Savior, he also regards Jesus as His Lord! He belongs to the Lord and takes what God says seriously. God said, "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:2). Does the Word of God make you tremble? It should. God's Word will one day determine your eternal destiny. God is the eternal authority, and one day you will have to give an account for your life to Him.

When we think about all of these matters, one of the things that we realize is that God is the only one who could make the moral laws of life. The Pharisees were a sect of Jews that lived by its own human traditions and judged others for not keeping their rules. They would even judge Jesus for not keeping their traditions! They were fooling themselves. The Lord Jesus said, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone [that is, the Pharisees alone]; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit" (Matthew 15:13-14).

A proud person doesn't think he needs God's wisdom and he thinks God should be honored just to have him around. The Lord Jesus "told this parable to certain ones who trusted in

themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: he said, 'Two men went up into the temple to pray, one was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' Jesus said, 'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted'' (Luke 18:9-14). God cannot use a man who is full of himself because such a man has no room for God!

The Bible also tells us of an arrogant church that didn't know it needed the Lord. The Lord Jesus sent His message to the church in Laodicea: He said, "I know your works: that you're neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I'm going to spit you out of my mouth. For you say, well I'm rich, and I've prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. And if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:15-20).

Oh, these things matter because we all stand in the utter need for God. My friend, are you "poor in spirit?" Do you need God?

Let's pray together. Oh Father, open our eyes that we may see how much we need You in our life, Your laws, Your morals, Your love and Your forgiveness. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Blessed is the person who has realized his own utter helplessness and who has put his whole trust in God, for only by emptying himself out can he render to God that perfect obedience which will make him a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. Obeying God is a demonstration of our faith, our love and, our attitude toward Him. James said a man shows his faith by his works.

The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it" Luke 9:23-24). You must empty out your pride and your willful ways and humble yourself before God if you wish to enter the kingdom of heaven.

To become a Christian, we must die to ourselves, so that we may live for Christ! Trust in the Lord with all your heart, remove the sin from your hearts and lives in repentance, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ by being immersed in water. Baptism is when our old man of sin dies and we're born again to walk in newness of life. Romans 6:3-4 says, "Do you not know that all of us who've been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Start a new life in Christ today by obeying the Lord!

Let me also encourage you to get involved in the church. When you're baptized, the Lord saves you and adds you to His church. As a Christian, you keep your connection with God by staying faithful in His church. Don't think that you can go it on your own. You need the Lord and you need His people to help you stay faithful and to reach heaven. Get involved in church!

Pure in Heart

Have you wondered what happened to people's desire to be chaste and pure? Today we're going to explore what it means to be pure in heart. More than anything I want to please God and go to heaven. I want to see my Father in heaven who has loved me and sent His Son Jesus to redeem me from sin and give me eternal life. To have eternal life I must conform to the will of the One who is in heaven, not my own will.

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

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

Our reading today comes from Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 6, verses 14 to 18. "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. 'AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' Says the Lord Almighty." That is such important and good teaching from the Word of God to remain pure. Let's pray together. Father, we're grateful for Your Word that teaches us what we need to do and what we need to avoid. Father, may Your will be done on earth, by all of us, just as it's done in heaven. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

A person who is "pure in heart" is single-minded about God and doing His will. He wants to do what is right and avoids doing what is wrong. He distinguishes the good from the evil, the right from the wrong, the truth from a lie, and what builds up from what tears down. He takes seriously what God commands because of his love and devotion to God. He doesn't want any sin barrier to break his relationship with God. Sin offends God and separates us from His grace. Isaiah 59:1-2 says, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." You cannot expect God to bless you if you cherish your sins. Psalm 68:18 says, "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."

If we keep on sinning, we cannot presume the grace of God will still cover our sins. Paul asked the Romans, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:1-2). God's grace and forgiveness is a precious gift that came at a great cost. God forgave us so that we might die to sin

and live to righteousness. Continuing to sin shows that we have forgotten the cross. Continuing in sin after we become Christians puts our souls back into peril.

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

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

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

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

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

Thessalonians 5:21-22 says, “but test everything; hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.” You must leave the ways of the world to follow Christ in righteousness.

Colossians 3:1-4 speaks of this change. “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, where He’s seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are 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 your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

A little bit later, in verse 5, Paul continues by saying, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passions, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. And on account of these things the wrath of God is coming. And in these you too once walked, (you lived like that) when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, and wrath, malice, and slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you’ve put off the old self with its practices and you’ve put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” Don’t excuse your sin but put it to death. Don’t blame someone else; put your sin to death. Don’t redefine sin; put sin to death.

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

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

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

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

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

Fourth, we need to flee from sin. Sometimes fleeing is the best thing we can do to overcome our temptations. First Corinthians 6:18-20 says, "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." Today people do everything but flee from sexual sin. Our sex-crazed world has lost the ability to blush or even to feel ashamed. Lust will kill your faith and your love for God and rob you of your soul.

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

Why does all this matter? It matters because we belong to Christ. We're accountable to God. We've been bought with a price, the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Paul said, "I've been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Since we belong to the Lord Jesus, shouldn't we serve Him? One day we'll give an account for the choices that we've made, whether we lived a chaste and righteous life or a wicked and indulgent life. Are you living a life devoted to God or one polluted by the sins of the world?

If you follow the world rather than Christ, you will undoubtedly have to give an account for your sins. Why not change the direction of your heart and your life? Die to sin and live for God. There is no other choice if you wish to have eternal life. Let's pray together. O Father, help us to turn away from sin and to turn to You and to be obedient to Your will. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven every single day in our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Romans 13:11-14 says, "Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let's walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." None of us is getting any younger. As each day passes we are one step closer either to the end of life or to the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

If you've been involved in sinful practices, isn't it time that you woke up and repented? Why would you risk your eternal soul for a brief moment of passion? Remember: "if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." The Lord Jesus died upon the cross so that you might have the forgiveness of sins; but His grace has some conditions. You can't continue to live in sin and expect God to save you on the day of judgment. Grace doesn't work that way. Grace teaches us to "to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:12).

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