

Program Transcripts

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

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Topics subject to change without notice

MAY 6 – THE WAGES OF SIN

There is certainly a high price for low living! Sin is our greatest enemy and destroys everything it touches. We must not be fooled by the pleasures of sin but understand how it hardens the heart and condemns the soul.

MAY 13 – FREE FROM GUILT

God gave to every heart a conscience inside that accuses and excuses. The problem of guilt plagues the soul until a person seeks God. Only God can cleanse the soul from sin and cleanse the conscience from guilt and shame.

MAY 20 – WALKING IN DARKNESS

People can make bad decisions and walk down a road of sin and darkness. Some see the evil they have done and repent, while others continue down a road of destruction. What path are you travelling, and where will it end?

MAY 27 – WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Christians are children of the day and not of the night. They live according to moral and spiritual light brought into this world by the Lord Jesus Christ. In this lesson, we'll explore what it means to walk in the light.

The Wages of Sin

Some think they can sin and get away with it, but sin always costs more than they imagine. Today, we're going to look at the wages of sin. God has given us His Word to help us discern between good and evil. Sin is the breaking of God's laws, doing what God forbids. God doesn't make rules and laws to be mean to us but to protect us from the harm that sin does. Wisdom is following God. What causes a person to sin against God, to violate His Word? James 1:13-15 says, "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren." It's easy to deceive ourselves about sin. Sin starts from our selfish desires. The Lord Jesus said "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders" (Matthew 15:19).

The heart wants to do things it shouldn't do in order to fulfill its thoughts and desires. It focuses on the wrong things and plans when and how it will do them. The time comes, and a person acts. The lust conceives and gives birth to sin. When one accomplishes the breaking of God's laws, he separates himself from God in spiritual death.

"Don't be deceived, my beloved brethren." Sin is real, and it will bring forth spiritual death. Don't imagine that God doesn't see or know. Don't imagine that God will overlook your sins as if they had never happened. Don't imagine that He'll buy into excuses or listen if you blame others for your decisions and actions. God will indeed judge us according to our works, whether good or bad. God's forgiveness is the only solution for sin.

Our reading today comes from Paul's Letter to the Romans 6:19-23, where he talks very frankly to these Romans who came out of a pagan lifestyle, and now had become Christians, and how they were dealing with their sins.

I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We do not inherit sin as infants or the guilt of Adam's sin, like some people teach. Rather, we learn sin. We grow up in a sinful world and are exposed to sin when we observe others sinning. Learning sin is like learning a language. Then in time, our selfish desires tempt us, and we give in to them and then we sin. The apostle Paul said, "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me" (Romans 7:7-11). This is how people fall into sin and into spiritual death.

Sin is a universal problem. Everyone who reaches the age of responsibility, where he knows right from wrong, must deal with temptation and sin. Romans 3:10 reveals God's Word, "As it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one.'" Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We may wish we hadn't sinned; we may act as if we hadn't sinned; we may even say, like many, there is no such thing as sin; but this doesn't change what God has written. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Because we've sinned, we need to know how sin affects us. Committing a sin is no small matter; it affects us in profound ways. First, sin's temptation will deceive us about its consequences. The devil will tell you and show you all the fleshly benefits of sin, but he won't reveal the truth about what sin does to your soul or to your eternal destiny. He won't tell you how your sins will lead others to sin. The devil is a liar; and you can't believe him. Paul reminded the Ephesians of their former life outside of Christ in sin when he said, "in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit" (Ephesians 4:22). Sin promises pleasure, but it ends up destroying us.

Hebrews 3:12-14 warns Christians, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end." Don't let sin deceive you and harden your heart against God. Hold fast to the Lord! Sin will steal your faith from you. Those who don't want to deal with their sins often end up denying the existence of God. If sin robs you of your faith, it'll also rob you of your soul.

Second, sin will enslave you. The Lord Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin" (John 8:34). You may wonder how people could do terribly evil things. They do them not because they're mentally deranged but because they're spiritually enslaved to sin. Romans 6:16 says, "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?" Sin will enslave you, so that you do things that you hate. Continuing in sin will rob you of self-control.

Slaves of sin seek to enslave others with their sinful passions. Second Peter 2:18-22 says, "For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A dog returns to its own vomit,' and, 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.'"

Third, sin will corrupt you in more ways than you can imagine; it'll corrupt your mind and your body. When God speaks against sin, He does so to protect us from its devastating consequences. Sin will corrupt your thinking and your conscience. Titus 1:15 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." When people give in to sin, they allow evil to warp

their views about everything. They no longer know what purity is all about. First Corinthians 15:33 simply says, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'" When you fill your heart with wickedness, you no longer think about what's good.

Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." Sin has caused many diseases. Sin has filled the prisons and the cemeteries. Sin causes the greatest heartaches of our lives. We think we can pass laws that will stop sin—and we need laws to keep order; but until people change their hearts, laws won't stop people from evil and sin.

Fourth, once sin corrupts the heart, it hardens it. Ephesians 4:19 speaks of those who do not know God: "and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." When sin hardens the heart, people no longer care what they do. First Timothy 4:2 talks about the "hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron." Sin defiles and then it stops the conscience from feeling any guilt or shame at all. In the days of Jeremiah, the people of Judah had become so entrenched in their idolatry and sins they didn't give a second thought of their offenses toward God. The Lord said, "Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush" (Jeremiah 6:15). Sadly, our nation has become so used to vulgar speech and behavior that we don't blush much anymore either.

The Hebrew writer lamented over some Christians who had abandoned their faith in Christ. He wrote, "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6). They had so hardened their hearts they could crucify Jesus again and put him to an open shame. They wouldn't repent, because they felt no reason to repent. They were in a worse condition than before they became a Christian.

Fifth, sin causes spiritual death. Ephesians 2:1-2 says, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." Please don't think of sin as simply a mistake or an inappropriate action. Sin causes people to be separated from God and lost eternally! Spiritual death means we do not have God and we don't have His blessing. Proverbs 15:29 says, "The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous." Micah 3:4 says this about sinners, "Then they will cry out to the LORD, But He will not answer them. Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time, because they have practiced evil deeds."

People tend to downplay their sins, but God never does. God often calls sin an "abomination." We try to find ways to excuse sin and to justify ourselves. Some people blame others or blame God Himself for their own faults. When people sin, they offend God and break their relationship with Him. This breaks God's heart. After listing the hypocrisies of the scribes and the Pharisees and pronouncing woe after woe upon them, the Lord Jesus declared his heartbreak, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!" (Matthew

23:37-38).

We so often lie to ourselves about sin! In our hearts, we know sin is wrong, but we'd rather believe a lie and ignore the truth. First Corinthians 6:9 says, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" Galatians gets specific about what sins will keep you out of heaven. "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality (that is, sexual immorality), impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). The Scriptures are clear and plain. Ephesians 5:5 says, "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

If you do not come to Christ to find the forgiveness of your sins, you'll have to suffer the consequences of sin on your own. You won't want to suffer for your sins. Jesus paid the price of His blood, so that you would not have to face the wrath of God for your sins. Jesus Christ is the only solution to the problem of sin. Jesus Christ is the only way to find His grace, and the mercy of God that will forgive your sin and allow you to enjoy God's blessing and an inheritance in heaven.

If you have unresolved sin in your life, you cannot inherit a place in God's eternal kingdom. You simply cannot go to heaven. Sin will cost you your soul. First John 1:8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." Verse ten continues that thought: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." Will you humbly and obediently respond to the Lord's grace by lovingly placing your faith in the Lord Jesus, repenting of your sins, confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and by being baptized into Christ? If you've not done that, it is something that you need to think about very seriously.

When it comes to the problem of sin, each of us has to make a choice. We can do nothing and suffer the consequences of our sin. We can blame others and try to justify ourselves. We can act as if there were no God and no accountability. We can deny there is such a thing as sin, or we can humbly confess our sins and obey the Lord. Fools deny God's reality; wise people fear God and act responsibly. What are you doing with your life?

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 will die" (Ezekiel 18:4). My friend, your soul doesn't belong to you; it belongs to God. If you sin and separate yourself from God, you'll suffer God's wrath. Revelation 21:8 clearly says, "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Revelation 21:27 says about heaven, "and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." You're choosing today whether you want to be close to God and be blessed or pull away from God and be lost. Put your faith in Jesus Christ and confess Him as the Son of God, repent of your sins, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. God will then free you from sin and make you His child. Stay faithful, and He'll give you an eternal inheritance.

Free From Guilt

Some people say there's no such thing as sin; but their hearts proclaim sin is real. Today, we're going to look at the beauty of being free from guilt. The Bible is a practical book dealing with everyday life. God gives us His instructions so that we may avoid the evil that enslaves and destroys us. God wisely leads us away from evil and into the paths of righteousness, where there is peace. Guilt and shame destroy, but God's grace and mercy rescue.

Few things in life are more brutal than guilt and more precious than forgiveness. When a person feels the sting of guilt, he feels it to the depths of his soul. We feel the burden of "guilt" when we do something wrong. We all face guilt and feel its sting in our consciences, but removing the sting of the conscience and removing the guilt of sin are two different things. Some people can dull the conscience; but until they find the forgiveness of Jesus, the sin remains. We need the blood of Christ to remove our sins; nothing else will do.

David felt the heavy burden of guilt. He said, "For Your arrows have sunk deep into me, And Your hand has pressed down on me. There's no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation; There is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities are gone over my head; As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me. My wounds grow foul and fester because of my folly. I am bent over and greatly bowed down; I go mourning all day long. For my loins are filled with burning, And there is no soundness in my flesh. I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart" (Psalm 38:2-8).

Our reading today comes from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 2:11-13.

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

This passage gives us such great hope. Even though our past may have been separate from God, we can now be close to God and live with Him.

Everyone sins. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Every person who reaches the age of responsibility must recognize the consequences of his sin. If someone should suggest he's without sin, the inspired apostle John replies: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8 and 10). There was only one sinless adult who walked the face of the earth, and that's Jesus Christ according to Hebrews 4:14-16 and 1 Peter 2:21-24. The rest of us fail to live up to God's standards, so we must all come to Christ to find the solution to our sins.

Some folks ignore their sins or refuse to acknowledge what God calls sin. Whatever God calls sin is truly sinful whether our culture or religious leaders agree or not. Even if a majority of people say that some act is morally acceptable, God is the only one who has a right to determine what is or is not sin. Lying is still wrong; covetousness still offends God; and drunkenness is still evil. Sexual immorality is still sinful, even if the whole world disagrees. Galatians 5:19-21 says, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: (sexual) immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger,

disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

People try uselessly to get rid of guilt on their own. From the days of Adam and Eve, people tried to get rid of their sins by some means other than to confess and repent of them. In Genesis 3, Adam blamed Eve for giving him the fruit, and Eve blamed the serpent for her sin. In 1 Samuel 15, Samuel confronted King Saul for failing to fulfill the Lord's command to strike down all the Amalekites and the livestock. Saul tried to blame the people for his failure to obey the commandment of God. He first claimed he had kept God's commandments. He said he saved the animals to offer as a sacrifice. But the prophet Samuel said, “Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king” (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

People blame their parents, blame their circumstances, blame their friends, and even blame the Lord rather than accept responsibility for their sins. Blaming others and avoiding responsibility simply doesn't work with God. God sees and knows everything. Jeremiah, the prophet of God said, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds” (Jeremiah 17:9-10). The solution to sin and guilt is not in man; it must come from the Lord Jesus. Again, the prophet Jeremiah said, “I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

The Lord expects people to acknowledge their sins, to forsake them, and to seek His forgiveness. Nothing but the blood of Christ will atone for sin; it's the only remedy for forgiveness and a clean conscience. Hebrews 10:1-4 says this, “For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

The Lord Jesus did what the Law, the Law of Moses, was never able to do. His blood could take away sins! Paul said to the people in Perga in Pamphylia that through Jesus “everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses” (Acts 13:39). The Lord Jesus did not offer an animal sacrifice for you, nor did He offer silver or gold to pay for your sins. No, He offered something far more precious – He offered Himself. Ephesians 1:7 says, “In Him (that is, in Jesus) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”

People encounter that sacrificed blood when they're baptized into the death of Christ. Romans 6:3 says, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?” In baptism, we're crucified with Christ so that our sins could be done away with. We're buried with Him, and raised with Him to walk in newness of life. Just as God raised up Jesus to new life, God unites us with Christ in baptism so that we

can be born again and enjoy newness of life. In this new life, we are no longer guilty of sin or slaves to sin.

This is why Ananias told Saul of Tarsus, “Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16). This is why the Holy Spirit led Peter to write, “Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is the time when we call upon His name and appeal to God for a good conscience. We want to be saved from sin and to have a clear conscience free from guilt! Being born again means we can put the past behind us and start fresh as a new person in Christ. The past doesn't need to dominate our thinking or our behavior. The old man of sin is dead; he was crucified with Christ, so that we can live a life freed from sinful habits.

Being baptized is essential for the forgiveness of our sins; but the baptized, that is, people who are born again, will face the problem of sin, not just before but after they become Christians and throughout life. James 1:21 urges Christians, “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word (that's) implanted, which is able to save your souls.” Old habits can hang on and continue to disturb us. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of ways; and when a Christian sins, he sees the need to repent once more. Some sins are easy to quit, while others continue to tempt us. Each period of life brings its own temptation. For these reasons, the Christian must stay alert and resist the devil throughout his life.

God realizes our weaknesses and provides forgiveness for His children when they sin. When children of God, that is, Christians who were baptized, confess their sins, repent of them, and ask God's forgiveness, God abundantly forgives and cleanses them through the blood of Jesus Christ. James 5:16 says, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” Being honest about our sins is the first step to overcoming them. First John 1:9 says to the Christian, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

The necessity of ongoing repentance is vital to our relationship with God. We can't continue to live in sin willfully and expect God to continue to forgive us. Hebrews 3:12-13 warns us, “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” God expects us to put away our sins. Romans 8:12-13 simply says, “So then, brethren, we're under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” A Christian who lives for the flesh, and has sinful ways, that person “must die.” God will not continue to give him life. But we can put away sin.

Religious deeds, going to church, and giving to the poor are good things; but they're not a substitute for ceasing to sin and practicing righteousness. The Pharisees made a show of their religion, but did not cease from sin. The Lord Jesus described them, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:25-27). You won't have a clear conscience and be free from guilt, if you continue sinful habits. You may appear clean to the outside world; but in your soul, you will know that you're full of sin. God sees that and knows; this is why you should get serious about putting away your sins.

A Christian is to live a holy life, because God is holy. The apostle Peter encouraged Christians to live a life above the pagan life they inherited. First Peter 1:13-16 says, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" Christians must live lives that are free from sin and free from the compromise of the world. Why? Because they belong to Christ. When Christians live ungodly lives, they shame the name of the Lord.

That's why we must all put to death the evil deeds of the body and "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Colossians 3:5-10 says, "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality (that is, sexual immorality), impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him." That's what we must all do.

Christians must not allow the thinking of the world to keep them from living the transformed lives that God desires. Romans 12:2 says "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

God has called Christians out of the world to "be separate." Second Corinthians 6:14-18 says, "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."

Would you like to have a close, loving relationship with the Lord Jesus, free from guilt and the consequences of sin? To enter that relationship, you must place your faith in the Lord Jesus and in His teaching; repent of every sin and turn your heart to the Lord; confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God; and be baptized (immersed) in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins according to Acts 2:38. When you're baptized into Christ, you're baptized into His death, buried with Him, and raised with Him to walk in newness of life, free from sin, free from guilt, and born again (Romans 6:3-7).

Walking in Darkness

Some choose to walk in the light of God's teaching, while others choose to walk in the darkness of the world. Are you walking in the light or in the darkness? People feel free to walk in any way they like, but our paths take us in different directions. The Lord Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). We want you to find life by taking the narrow way, the Lord's way! Studying the Scriptures will keep you from straying from God's will. That's why we focus our thoughts on the Bible.

When we become Christians, God leads us out of darkness into light. People who walk in darkness cannot see clearly and never know what dangers are lurking. Spiritual darkness not only affects our lives; it also affects our souls. Christ is calling us out of darkness into His marvelous light. First Peter 2:9-10 speaks to Christians, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Because they follow Jesus, Christians are God's people who have received mercy. Paul described the church, "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light" (Ephesians 5:8). Because of Jesus, we don't have to walk in darkness. We can walk in the light!

Our reading today comes from Paul's Letter to the Colossians 1:9-14. In this passage, Paul makes very clear the beauty and the wonder of what it means to be a child of the light.

For this reason also, since the day (that) we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Sometimes people who once followed the Lord take a detour and follow the wrong path into sin. The Scriptures reveal several instances of otherwise faithful men who were tempted and took a walk in the darkness, leaving the narrow path and falling to temptation. We want to look at some of those who took a walk in sin, but later came home.

First is David. David was a man after God's own heart; he wrote nearly half of the book of Psalms; and was the model of loyalty to God for all the kings of Judah. Yet, he committed adultery with Bathsheba and caused the death of her husband, Uriah. Second Samuel 11, tells of David's temptation. He saw Bathsheba when she was bathing and he lusted for her. David called for her, slept with her, and caused her to become pregnant with child. He committed adultery, a sin that was punishable by death. In order to cover up his sin, he called for the mighty man, Uriah the Hittite, to come home to his wife; but Uriah did not go

home. As an honorable soldier, he slept at the king's door. David got Uriah drunk, thinking he might go home; but Uriah didn't. David then arranged for Uriah to be killed in battle so he could marry his pregnant widow. This "thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Samuel 11:27).

Because David sinned against God, he felt a heavy burden of guilt. David tried to conceal his sin, and that only made things worse. The Lord sent the prophet Nathan to David to rebuke him. Nathan revealed to David the story of a powerful, rich man who selfishly stole the only ewe lamb belonging to his poor neighbor to feed a guest. The lamb was precious and like a daughter to this poor man. David became angry and said that the rich man deserves to die. Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!" David was rich and had several wives, yet he stole the only wife of his neighbor. Perhaps like David you've realized that you're the kind of person who could commit some terrible sin against God. David left the light and decided to take a selfish walk in the darkness.

Thankfully, David confessed his sins, and God forgave him. In Psalm 51, David reveals the pain that he endured because of his sin. He spoke about his need for mercy to blot out his transgressions. He knew how badly he needed washing and cleansing from sin. His sins were ever before him. His guilt was like having broken bones. He cried out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit" (Psalm 51:10-12). David sinned against God. The momentary pleasures of sin never last, and David suffered greatly for his walk in the dark.

The Lord Jesus tells the story of a younger brother who grew up in a godly home but decided to leave home and live as he pleased. The Lord Jesus tells this parable in Luke 15:11-24, "A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.' So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate."

Because of his choice to walk in sin, this young man became destitute. Sin cost him everything! He wasted his inheritance; he gave up his self-respect; he lost his ability to make a living and eat! He had no friends and no kinfolk in that far country! Friend, are you in a far

country? Are the sinful habits of your life costing you your self-respect and a clear conscience? Do you need a reset button and to come to your senses? The prodigal son finally recognized his sinful ways. This honesty is the first step to healing. His sin shamed him to the point that he no longer felt worthy to be the Father's son. When people see the great harm of sin and they begin to grieve over it, they find the courage and strength to leave it. Thankfully, this younger brother repented and came home to his father.

Luke tells of the apostle Peter's fall to temptation. The Lord Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Peter responded, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death" (Luke 22:31-33). On the Mount of Olives, Peter boasted, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." I'm reminded of Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall." Jesus had predicted, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times" (Matthew 26:34). Jesus' prophecy proved true, and Peter even with the best of intentions fell to temptation.

Matthew 26:69-75 says, "Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, 'You too were with Jesus the Galilean.' But he denied it before them all, saying, 'I do not know what you are talking about.' When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' And again he denied it with an oath, 'I do not know the man.' A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.' Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know the man!' And immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, 'Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly."

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record Peter's denial of Jesus. Thankfully, Peter did turn and come back to the Lord. Though he denied knowing the Lord Jesus at the trial, he stood with the eleven and boldly preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the Day of Pentecost, just fifty days later! Jesus didn't cast Peter out and have no use for him. In John 21, when Jesus asked Peter three times whether he loved Him, Peter affirmed his love. Jesus told him to "feed my lambs, ... tend my sheep, ... feed my sheep." Repentance ceases from sin, yes; but it also gets busy doing the work of the Lord.

You may have at some time in your life taken a walk in the darkness. I want you to know that there's hope for you if you'll come back to the Lord and serve Him. Jesus said that He prayed for Peter, and Jesus is praying for you to turn from sin and live in righteousness. The Lord didn't give up on Peter, and He won't give up on you. Don't give up on Him or on yourself.

There is a constant battle going on in this world between good and evil, between righteousness and sin, between light and darkness. The apostle John told the church, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). It matters whether we follow the Lord Jesus or whether we follow the world. The Lord Jesus himself said, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Those who follow the crowds of the world will be lost, while those who take the narrow path in following Jesus will enter into life.

The reason we preach the gospel is so that everyone may find the truth and be saved by the Lord. God chose the method of preaching and the message preached in the gospel to reach out to people in darkness and to bring them to the light. Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

The Lord Jesus chose Saul of Tarsus; that is, the apostle Paul, to be a minister and a witness. The Lord said that He sent him to the Gentiles "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18). Paul reminded the church at Colossae what God had done for them. Paul said, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14).

We do not need to go back into the darkness, back into sin, or back into confusion and misunderstanding. We need to come to the Lord and to His Word and to serve Him always. Paul urged the Romans, "Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts" (Romans 13:11-14). That is what we must do – leave the darkness and come to the light.

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8:12). Jesus is the light of the world, but He desires His followers to show that same light of life. The Lord said, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

Let me ask you, do people see you as a light for Jesus? The world exists in spiritual darkness and desperately needs the light. They need Christ's love, His teaching, His grace, and His hope. You can't show the light of Christ if you walk in darkness and live in sin. You can't lead people to Christ if you aren't following Him. Repent, and God will forgive and heal you. Repentance is a great gift; it means you can start over clean. Jesus preached repentance, because repentance brings healing to lost souls.

Begin your journey with Jesus. Place your trust in Him, in what He has done for you on the cross, and in what He teaches. Trust means giving your heart and life to the Lord Jesus. When you give your life to Him, you'll start to live as He teaches and you'll give up the old sins. That's repentance. Trust in Christ means confessing Jesus as the Son of God. Trust in Christ means obeying the Lord in baptism. You'll be immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Oh, won't you obey the Lord today!

Walking in the Light

It's better to light just one little candle than to stumble in the dark. When we follow the Lord Jesus, we can walk in the light. God's Word provides the wisdom that we need to make the most of our lives. It helps us avoid the dangerous pitfalls of sin and lies. It shows us the way to eternal life, filled with joy and love. It warns us of the attitudes and mindsets that lead to conflict and danger. It blesses us by enlightening our minds to reality, to goodness, to true love, to kindness, and to faith. We need the Bible to show us the best life to live and the freedom that we have in Christ. Nothing else compares!

Many years ago, a popular song had the words, "It is better to light just one little candle than to stumble in the dark!" I found that song inspiring in those early days, and it still inspires me today. All of us have stumped our toes stumbling around in the dark at night; a small light would've made a difference. Jackie and I keep small flashlights by our bedside these days.

Moral and spiritual darkness can be even more dangerous than physical darkness. Moral and spiritual problems can cost us our health, our lives, and even our souls. The Lord Jesus said of the Pharisees who were caught up in the doctrines of men, "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit" (Matthew 15:14). The freedom that we have in Christ is far better than the blindness of human traditions and our worldly culture. We want the true source of spiritual and moral light that will free us from the dangers of evil and deception.

Our reading today comes from the little Epistle of 1 John 1:5-10, and it reflects the blessing and the beauty of having a relationship and fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus.

This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8:12). The best way to walk in the light is to look at the example of Jesus Christ. We're to "walk in the light as He is in the light!" The Lord Jesus lived a sinless life on earth. Though the devil tempted Jesus, Jesus never sinned. Jesus asked, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:46). No one could then, and no one can now! No one could point fingers at lies that He told or sins that He committed. He set the standard for telling the truth, for living a godly and righteous life, for loving others, and for giving Himself to bless others.

He wants us to follow Him by walking in the light as well. When we do, we are also a light. The Lord Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that

they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16). When we live like Jesus, we show light to the whole world; and that glorifies the Father in heaven.

First, walking in the light means I will show the attitudes that Christ has. The Lord Jesus said, “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell” (Matthew 5:21-22). Christ loved all people and treated them with respect, and so should we. Getting angry over little things is not the way of Christ.

Paul said, “Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity” (Ephesians 4:26-27). In verses 31-32 Paul wrote, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” James 1:19-20 says, “This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” Angry people are hurting and tend to hurt others. We must learn to control our anger.

Likewise, the Lord Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell” (Matthew 5:27-30). Jesus wants us to stop the evil behavior so that we can maintain a right relationship and fellowship with Him.

We must be careful what we listen to, what we think, what we read, and what we watch. The things that we put into our heads and hearts can shut God out and then fill our souls with darkness. Luke 11:34-36 says, “The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness. If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it will be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays.”

We must also treat others the way Jesus teaches. The Lord said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not

even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:38-48). These verses provide a serious challenge to be the sons of our heavenly Father, to think like He thinks.

Second, walking in the light means that I will adjust my speech to be like Christ. In Matthew 12, the Lord Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute. In response to this miracle, some Pharisees accused Jesus of healing this man by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons. Of course, Jesus healed the man by the power of the Holy Spirit! He could see their hardened hearts and spiritual blindness that kept them from seeking, or seeing the truth. Jesus said to them, “You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:34-37). How we speak reveals whether we’re walking in the light of God or walking in darkness.

God’s Word says, “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another” (Ephesians 4:25). Honesty is essential to our integrity. The devil is a deceiver. He’s the father of lies, and lying is his nature according to John 8:44. Christians should speak the truth and speak it in love. First Peter 2:1 says we are to put “aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.” We have enough fake news and enough hateful speech in our world already. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if people could speak honestly, respectfully, and lovingly about one another and to one another?

Ephesians 4:29 says, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.” Let’s build up rather than put down. Our speech needs to speak the truth in a way that blesses other people. Colossians 4:6 says, “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.” People gossip, falsely judge, and slander others without mercy these days. Christians must learn to live above this kind of speech. Wouldn’t the world be a better place if people could learn to speak kindly to others instead of unkindly about others?

Paul warned Timothy about people who “go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention” (1 Timothy 5:13). To let God’s light shine, we must watch how we speak to and about others. Curse words and foul language are inappropriate for any occasion. What a shame that someone who calls Christ the Lord would use foul language! Some think dirty jokes are mature or cute, but foul language is demeaning to the person who uses it. Ephesians 5:4 says, “and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”

Third, walking in the light means I will adjust my behavior to be like Christ. The Lord Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). Love is vital to the identification of a Christian who walks in the light. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Jesus practiced what He

taught. Jesus loved sinners and He loved the unlovely; His behavior teaches us how to love. First John 4:19 says, "We love, because He first loved us."

The Lord Jesus asks us to forsake evil and live righteously. The Lord said, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" (John 3:19-21). When we live righteously, we don't have to keep our lives hidden from others.

We must be careful not to let the world define how we live. Romans 12:2 urges us, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." To walk in the light we must know the will of God and practice it. So, "He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need" (Ephesians 4:28).

Let's give up worldly ways and walk in the light. That means serving others for the Lord. Galatians 6:10 says, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." Every kind deed, every act of love matters to God and it matters to people. First Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." When we serve God, we aren't wasting our time. We are declaring to the world our love for the Lord.

Are you walking in the light? Can people see Jesus living in you? In Acts 4:13 the Jews recognized that Peter and John were people who had "been with Jesus." Can people today say that about you, that they see the influence of Jesus in your life? Do you show the attitudes, the speech, and the behavior of someone who has been with Jesus? Yes, I know that we're all imperfect people and we need to grow more like Him; but where are you at this point in your life? Are you more like Christ today than you were a year ago or five years ago? The Hebrew writer spoke of Christians who should have become teachers but needed to be taught the elementary things themselves in Hebrews 5:12. I hope this common problem doesn't describe you, too.

Let's fix our eyes on Jesus. Let's follow His teaching. Let's see His kindness and patience. Let's see His love for the lost. Let's see His willingness to reach out to everyone and give them hope. Even though many rejected Him, Jesus had room in His heart for everyone. He said, "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" (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus was in the seeking and saving business.

If you wish to draw close to Jesus; if you wish to live like Him and walk in the light with Him; then come to Him. You do this by believing in Him; repenting of your sins; confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God; and by being baptized, immersed in water, into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Oh, come to Jesus today!