

# *Program Transcripts*

For September 2019



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



# **SEARCH PROGRAMS**

**September 2019**

*Topics subject to change without notice*

## **SEPTEMBER 1 – THE GOSPEL**

We receive many important messages in life, but none is more vital to our salvation and eternal life than the gospel. The good news of Jesus Christ gives life, changes hearts, and gives hope for heaven. We need the gospel.

## **SEPTEMBER 8 – HUNGERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Each day we get hungry for food, which we must have to live. Have you ever considered how important it is to hunger for righteousness? If we wish to live with the Lord eternally, then righteousness is a necessity.

## **SEPTEMBER 15 – ME TOO?**

When God says some behavior is sinful in Scripture, is it still sinful for everyone today? Are morals absolute or are they relative? Can people ignore the morals of the Bible and still please God?

## **SEPTEMBER 22 – WHAT GOD CAN DO**

God can and will do great things for those who love and serve Him. The Lord knows what we need and can provide the help, the hope, and the means to do His will. We can put our trust in God, because He loves us.

## **SEPTEMBER 29 – THE MUSTS OF CHRISTIANITY**

The word “must” is often found in Scripture. That concept means there are things necessary for us to do. The Lord Jesus often speaks of the things that He had to do and also speaks of the things we must do as well.

## The Gospel

We receive many important messages in life, but none is more vital to our salvation and eternal life than the gospel. God will make a difference in your life if you'll listen to Him and obey what He teaches. God has spoken, but you must respond. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." We hope you will trust the Lord to guide you to righteousness and joy.

In Search of the Lord's Way began on Sunday morning, September 1, 1980, 39 years ago. Mack Lyon spoke on the first program on KTEN in Ada, Oklahoma. Since that time, SEARCH has broadcast more than 2,000 programs. Today, SEARCH covers all the USA! Because of SEARCH, millions of souls in many countries have heard the gospel; many souls have come to the Lord to become Christians; and many others have returned to faithful service to the Lord. God has blessed us and opened hundreds of doors for this ministry; and we're grateful to Him, to our supporters, and to you, our viewers, for watching this program each week.

The word "gospel" refers to "good news." The New Testament speaks of the "good news" about the Messiah and His kingdom and how Jesus Christ gives us salvation and eternal life. Wherever the gospel is preached and received, lives change for the better. The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself" (John 7:17). If you take the Words of Christ seriously and practice them, you'll know that they show the wisdom of God.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Romans 1:14-17.

I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 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. For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

The gospel is the power of God for salvation. We hear the gospel, believe it, and obey it in order to be right with God. The Lord Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). The Lord charged the church to preach the gospel to everyone, because everyone needs to hear it. God will save those who believe and are baptized, but He will condemn those who refuse to believe it. Those who believe will not be content merely to say so; they will act on their faith.

While everyone agrees that faith is necessary to become a Christian, some mistakenly teach that faith alone is sufficient for salvation. Is obedience to the gospel necessary? Let's see what the Scripture says. John 3:36 says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Some versions say in the latter part of this verse, "does not believe" instead of "does not obey"; but the word here in the original language is different from the word for "believe." It means to refuse to follow or to disobey. Jesus asked His followers, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46).

The Lord Jesus made obedience to His teaching a necessity. He said, "Not everyone

who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS'" (Matthew 7:21-23). A lawless person is one who will not do what the Lord says. The disobedient, according to the Lord Jesus, will not enter heaven.

Hebrews 5:8-9 says about Jesus, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." The Scriptures link obedience to salvation just as they do faith. Paul said that he "received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5). The faith that saves is an active, living, obedient faith.

Paul says God, "WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation" (Romans 2:6-8). We're all obeying something. If we refuse to obey the truth and we live in unrighteousness, we can't expect to gain eternal life.

Obedience to the gospel is necessary to our salvation and is clearly seen in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10. Paul said, "and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

What then does God expect of us in our obedience to the gospel? He demands that we believe in Him as God's Son and Lord. The Lord Jesus said, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

Beyond this, the Lord expects those who come to Him to repent of their sins. Paul said, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). Failure to repent is a salvation matter. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

If you wish to be saved, you must repent. This is what the Lord was talking about when He said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it" (Luke 9:23-24). Unless we deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily, and follow the Lord; and all of that is repentance, we'll lose our life and our soul.

If you wish to be saved, you must obey the Lord by being baptized. Faith and baptism are intertwined. The New Testament never speaks of a Christian saved by faith alone; it

always speaks of a Christian as a baptized believer. Our faith is expressed through being baptized, but we're not free from sin until we are baptized. You ask, "where does the Bible say that?" That's a good and important question. The answer can be found in several passages.

Many say Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, but I question that. All Jesus told Saul to do was to enter the city and "it will be told you what you must do" (Acts 9:6). Three days later, after Saul fasted and prayed, 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). Saul, or the apostle Paul, still needed to have his sins washed away; he was still in sin and had a dirty soul until he was baptized. Baptism is how we call upon the name of the Lord.

Paul explained what happens in baptism in Colossians 2:12-13. He says, "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, (that is, with Jesus) having forgiven us all our transgressions." Baptism is when we're buried and raised together with Christ; baptism unites us with Christ. Before baptism, we were spiritually dead in our sins; during baptism, God makes us alive together with Christ and forgives our sins.

Someone says, "Phil, are you saying we earn our salvation in baptism?" The answer is no. Look at the passage again. We're "raised up with Him through faith in the working of God." The command is to "be baptized"; that's a passive command. We submit to baptism, and someone else baptizes us. They are working on us physically. In the same way, God is working on us spiritually in baptism. God is the active One and we are passive in baptism. We want Him to act upon us, to raise us up together with Christ, to make us spiritually alive, and to forgive our sins.

God is indeed active in baptism! He saves us; He forgives us; He adds us to the church; He makes us His children; He washes us in the blood of Christ; He causes us to be born again; and He unites us with Christ in His death and resurrection. When a person says one doesn't have to be baptized to be saved, he's actually interfering with what God does to us.

Titus 3:5-7 says, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life." God saves us and He does it through the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. Every ancient voice that talks about these matters spoke of the washing of regeneration as a reference to baptism. We are saved and justified by His grace through this washing that causes us to be born again, and that's baptism.

Peter said, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal (or an inquiry) to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). In baptism, we call upon the name of the Lord and we appeal to God for a good conscience. Baptism is when God saves us and frees us from guilt and shame.

Not only does the gospel message bring eternal life; it puts us into the grace of God. Once we're baptized, we are united with Christ and in Christ. 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.” From that time on, we have God’s favor and blessing. Since we’re with Christ, Christ is with us. That means God hears our prayers; God counts us as His children and heirs with Christ.

God saved us to transform us from sinners to saints, from lawless people to people who take God’s Word seriously. He gave us His Words to teach us and to protect us. Romans 12:2 says, “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.” When we live out the will of God, we show that it’s good and it blesses everyone. God’s will is indeed perfect, and we must never stray from it.

Paul knew the Christians in Rome would face struggles and persecution at the hands of the Emperor. He wrote words of encouragement to them, letting them know that God was with them. He said, “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, ‘FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35-39). God won’t stop loving you, but you can lose God’s blessing if you turn from Him.

The church at Laodicea became lukewarm and foul. They thought they were rich and didn’t need anything. They didn’t realize they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. They were blind to how God saw them. What about you? How does God see you? Does He see you as His faithful and obedient child, or does He see that you don’t need Him in your life?

I asked a moment ago, “How does God see you?” I hope you aren’t like the church in Laodicea. I hope you’re right with God. I wouldn’t want God to reject you. If you have ignored God and decided that you didn’t need anything, including Him, God may look at you like He did the Laodiceans. The Lord Jesus told this foul church that He wanted to spew them out of His mouth. But His love for them caused Him to say, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:19-20). Even though they had no need for Jesus, Jesus wanted to renew a close relationship with them. He was knocking at the door, hoping they would repent and let Him in. Will you let Jesus into your life?

To become a Christian, place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Listen to Him and obey Him. Repent of your sins, because the Lord rejects everyone who refuses to repent. Confess Jesus Christ, and be baptized. Peter told the guilty people on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38, “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.” If you were once a faithful Christian but have fallen away, repent and let Jesus back into your life? He’s knocking and asking to come in. Let Him in!

## Hungering for Righteousness

Each day we get hungry for food. Have you ever hungered for righteousness? Today, we're going to explore hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Matthew 4:1-4, says the Spirit led Jesus "into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But He answered, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" We can fill our empty souls by feeding them on every word that comes from the mouth of God. We find these words in the Bible.

The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6). Everyone gets hungry and thirsty. When we're hungry or thirsty, our body cries out for the food or water that we want and need. When you're really hungry or thirsty, you can't think of anything but food to eat and water to drink. That's the kind of hunger that we need in our spiritual lives. Psalm 42:1 says, "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God." Man possesses a spiritual hunger that only God can satisfy.

People seek what they hunger for. Some seek power, some fame, some money, and some the things of the flesh. All these things are temporal and will perish. What are you seeking? What you seek and hunger for determines the direction of your life. If you seek only the temporal and you miss the spiritual, you have missed the only thing that will satisfy you for eternity. Without God, everything is in vain.

Our reading today comes from Psalm 51:10-13. In this passage we're looking at that time when Nathan came to David after he had committed his sin with Bathsheba and killed Uriah. David said,

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. *Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners will be converted to You.

Here David cries out to God for a clean heart.

When we hear the word "righteous," we often think of a person's character; but the word actually describes a relationship. When people have a right relationship with the Lord, God considers them righteous. When people fail to have a right relationship with the Lord, God considers them as unrighteous. The righteous person loves and obeys God, while the unrighteous person ignores God and feeds on his passions. God described Rehoboam, the son of Solomon and king of Judah, this way, "He did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the LORD" (2 Chronicles 12:14). When people ignore the Lord and live according to their own desires, they fail to enter into a right relationship with the Lord. When people seek the Lord, they choose to live righteously.

How we regard God determines how we choose to live. Seeking and loving the Lord shapes our character. The more we know and love the Lord, the more we want to be like Him. God is righteous, and we learn righteousness from Him. God is holy and righteous, and He expects those who follow Him to live that way, too. The Lord God said, "be holy, for I am

holy” (Leviticus 11:44). Habakkuk 1:13 says of God that, “Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor.” God is utterly holy, and God wants us to live holy lives. Hebrews 12:14 says, “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”

Sadly, some have come to believe that we have no responsibility to clean up our lives, to leave the old man of sin behind and to conform to the ways of the Lord. Romans 12:2 says, “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.” Christianity always goes against the ways of the world. Those who think they are more religious or more Christian because they try to fit their faith into the culture have missed the mark. You can’t compromise what the Lord teaches about morals and salvation and at the same time become a stronger Christian.

The Bible never contemplates the idea of going back into an old life of sin in order to be a better Christian. Peter wrote, “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.’ If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:13-19).

The Lord Jesus paid the ultimate price so that we might be cleansed from all unrighteousness. He didn’t buy our freedom from sin with silver or gold. He paid for our freedom with His blood because He didn’t want us to continue that way of life. He expected something better from us and for us. Ephesians 2:8-10 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as 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 so that we would walk in them.” God’s grace is abundant; but He saves us in order to transform our lives. We must never cheapen God’s grace by taking it for granted.

Some intentionally choose to sin against God, believing they can ask for forgiveness later. They presume the grace of God allows them to live as they please as long as they pray for forgiveness afterward. Paul asked, “Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” (Romans 6:1-2). Christians must forsake that old way of life in order to fulfill God’s will for their lives. Second Peter 2:20-21 says, “For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, (that is, they become Christians) 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.” Christians who return to a sinful way of life and are overcome by it are worse off than if they had never become Christians.

Many today do not want a Jesus who judges. They want a Jesus who will approve of them no matter what they do, a Jesus who will not ask them to repent, and a Jesus who requires



nothing of them. They want to rest in the comfortable grace of Jesus, a grace that approves of them as they are and never expects a change. They presume the grace of God will cover them no matter how they live, what they think, or with whom they have sex. The Jesus they seek, however, is imaginary; you can't find a Jesus like that in Scripture. You can find Him full of grace, but not a grace that will leave you alone. The grace of Christ forgives but tells you to "go and sin no more." The Lord will not leave you where He found you. He will transform your life to conform with the holiness and righteousness that He teaches.

The Bible calls Jesus the "righteous One" (1 John 2:2) and the "righteous judge" (2 Timothy 4:8). Paul told the pagan philosophers, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

Our postmodern culture is very much like Jerusalem in the seventh century before the time of the exile. The people were idolatrous and had pushed God out of their hearts and lives. In the past, they had honored God, but their hearts had turned away from Him. Zephaniah 3:2 charged Jerusalem with four great errors: "She heeded no voice, She accepted no instruction. She did not trust in the LORD, She did not draw near to her God." Today our country will not listen to God's instructions; they no longer want to hear the gospel of Scripture. People today want to rewrite the gospel and take out the call to "repent." They prefer to live by their own rules and want God to accept their sinful lifestyles rather than conform to His will.

Righteousness includes obeying the commandments of God. Righteousness is the opposite of lawlessness. Paul told Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Paul instructed Timothy to handle God's Word accurately. A reckless handling of God's Word is a cause for shame. We must study God's Word to know what it says and to teach it correctly. Paul said "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you" (1 Timothy 4:16). To depart from the truth can cause a person to lose his soul.

It matters what we believe! Learn to think Biblically and to distinguish what the Scripture actually teaches from what is false and human. If the word of truth doesn't contain the doctrine, don't believe it. If the word of truth doesn't instruct the practice, then reject it. You can't follow God and follow man-made religion at the same time.

Some today have stopped trusting what God says in Scripture. They believe many of the narratives found in Scripture are myths or legends. They doubt Adam and Eve, the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea. They think they're the products of chance and evolution rather than created in God's image. If you doubt God, you see no reason to obey His moral teaching. Our coins say "in God we trust," but we've thrown His Word out of our public schools. References to God these days come in the form of taking His name in vain. We've ignored what He says about the sanctity of life and the sanctity of marriage. One in seven Americans no longer believes in the concept of sin. However, even if billions of people doubt God, God is still God. Even if billions of people doubt His teaching, the words of Jesus will judge us on the last day.

When people push God out of their hearts, they reap a bitter harvest. Proverbs 10:16

simply says, “The wages of the righteous is life, The income of the wicked, punishment.” It matters whether we follow God. Psalm 1 reveals the destinies of the righteous and the wicked. Verses 3 to 6 say the righteous “will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.” Righteousness isn’t some strange fad or hobby; it’s the difference between eternal life and eternal death.

Why does God require us to live righteously? He does so because He loves us and He wants what is best for us. Our faith makes a difference in every aspect of our lives. Christianity is not a once-a-week pastime; it’s a daily walk with God. God’s way is the way of love, of truth, of kindness, of peace, and of integrity. God’s way gives us faith, hope, and love. It teaches us where we came from, why we’re here, and what will happen to us after we die. It gives us reason to live, to serve, and to love. Christian righteousness lifts people out of harmful sins and behaviors and provides a new way of life that blesses everyone.

The fiber of our society and our families depends on our being right with God. Proverbs 14:34 says, “Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people.” When people forget God, they are far more willing to do things God will not allow. Love for God motivates us to live virtuous and noble lives. It helps us rise above selfishness and pride. It helps us overcome destructive behaviors. When people follow Christ, they’re better citizens, better fathers and mothers, better husbands and wives, better parents, and better neighbors. Nothing today will improve our lives more than taking hold of the Christian life and pursuing it with all our hearts. Let’s set our hearts to desire God and to seek righteousness. Let’s take our faith seriously and take up our crosses daily and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus said, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). The Lord has made righteousness and His kingdom a priority. He doesn’t merely say seek them; He says seek them “first.” We’re often so busy making a living, raising our children, and pursuing our passions that we forget our souls. The Lord said, “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds” (Matthew 16:25-27). Please take the Lord seriously. Get right with God, today!

You can’t earn a right standing with God by your own doing; it comes by the gift of God’s grace through the blood of Jesus. To enjoy God’s grace, you must meet God’s conditions. You must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; you must repent of your sins and determine to follow Jesus; you must confess Christ before others; and you must be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you’re baptized into Christ, you’re also baptized into His death according to Romans 6:3. Jesus shed His blood in His death. The Lord washes you in His blood when you’re united with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection in baptism according to Romans 6:4-7. If you seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, you’ll not wait to come to the Lord and serve Him.

## Me Too?

When God says some behavior is sinful, is it sinful for everyone in every age? Today, we're exploring the nature of morality. Are morals absolute or are they relative? Can people ignore the morals of the Bible and still please God? The Lord Jesus said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4). The phrase, "It is written," in this context means that God wrote it and it stands as binding and authoritative forever. The psalmist said, "Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens" (Psalm 119:89). God's Word doesn't fade away, doesn't change, and doesn't stop having authority over us simply because our culture changes. People change, but God and His Word do not change. They stay the same in every age, in every land, and in every culture. God is Lord over all!

A recent poll indicates only one-third of all adults, that is around 34%, believe in moral truth, that it's absolute and unaffected by the circumstances. Even more shocking is that 83% of American teenagers believe moral truth is relative to circumstances. They think moral truth changes with time and circumstances. It's not surprising today to hear, "You can't say that something is true for everybody! How do you know? Just because something is true for you doesn't mean it's true for everybody else." Such statements reveal not only what the speaker thinks about truth, but also about God. So, we ask, "Can God speak a message authoritatively to all people for all time that cannot be changed?" People who ignore the God who created us and then presume they can pursue their own morals are actually rebelling against God. They've allowed popular opinions to rule in their lives in the place of God. In fact, they've become their own gods.

Our reading today comes from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 6:9-11. He speaks straight about right and wrong and who can inherit the kingdom of God.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Yes, people can change and get right with God. How badly we all need to do that. Let's pray. Father, we're grateful that You have told us the difference between right and wrong. Help us to love You enough to be obedient to Your Word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

When someone tells me he can believe what he wants about morality, he's actually saying one moral belief is as good as another. That's popular thinking today; but the more you examine it, the more you'll see that that belief cannot be true. What people think about a behavior never determines whether it's moral or not. Just because someone thinks a behavior is moral doesn't make it right. Thieves may think stealing is a good thing, but you don't want anyone breaking into your home and stealing your valuables. Rapists may regard defiling a woman as pleasurable, but no woman wants to be raped. People who commit sin always downplay the harm that sin does, but the victim sees how wicked sin really is.

People have bought into the notion that love somehow transforms immoral behaviors into moral ones. They believe love makes wrong into right. God calls fornication, sex between two unmarried people, sinful; but many today think "love" makes fornication okay. It

doesn't matter that a child could be conceived out of wedlock or a serious social disease may be transmitted; love in their minds makes fornication morally okay. It never occurs to them that their sexual desire may lead them to lie to themselves about the morality of sexual sin.

God said, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he 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" (Galatians 6:7-8). The Lord tells us not to be deceived because man tends to lie to himself when he wants something. People get involved with a sin, and all of a sudden that sin isn't so bad. People have a family member that gets involved with some sin, and all of a sudden that sin is now morally okay in their minds. Do we honestly believe that God has changed His mind? Has God changed His mind or have we lied to ourselves about God's will? When people think they can overrule God's morality, aren't they mocking Him? Aren't they showing the greatest kind of disrespect? Don't they misunderstand God?

Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the LORD will stand." God doesn't change, and He especially doesn't change His morals in order to suit mankind. Moses wrote, "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" (Numbers 23:19). God said, "For I the LORD do not change" (Malachi 3:6). Psalm 33:11 says, "The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation."

We need to know why the Lord's counsel stands forever and why we should pay close attention to it. First, because the gospel is universal. The Lord Jesus said, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). When Paul spoke to the pagan philosophers in Athens, he said, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent" (Acts 17:30). Jesus commissioned the apostles to appeal to every culture in every land until the end of time. His message was for everyone and applied to everyone. The gospel gives hope to all men of salvation and forgiveness of sins.

The gospel was not merely a message for ancient Palestine; it's also a message for postmodern America and our postmodern culture. If the blessings of the gospel are available to all men—and they are—then all men are accountable to God. Salvation is necessary because people are lost in sin. If God met the need to save us from sin through Christ, isn't God also the authority that determines what sin is? Why would God send His Son to die on the cross when people can personally decide what sin is and what sin isn't? Actually, we've deceived ourselves into believing that we can determine right and wrong for ourselves. Believing we can overrule God with our personal beliefs must be terribly offensive to God.

Second, the Words of Jesus reveal His eternal and final authority. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Though men through the centuries have taken great pains to destroy and to suppress the teaching of Jesus, the Bible is still available throughout the world. The moral and religious teaching of Jesus won't disappear simply because our culture has changed its mind about certain moral issues.

On the night before His death, the Lord promised the apostles, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come" (John 16:12-13). Jesus



promised the apostles that they would be guided into all the truth. They wouldn't lack anything. God wouldn't withhold any spiritual or moral truth that they needed to bring men to life and godliness. The principles found in the New Testament reveal the complete and sufficient will of God. It's the whole truth, and it doesn't need help. In fact, the Lord takes offense at anyone who would add to His Word or take away from it.

Jude, the brother of the Lord, recognized that the faith, that is, that body of revealed truths given to the apostles, was given once for all time. He wrote, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). This faith was delivered only once for all time. The idea that the gospel would need reinventing for the whims of each passing culture is never contemplated in Scripture. Every culture was to conform to the gospel. The gospel was given to change the sinful things in every culture so that it might conform to the once-for-all delivered will of God. The faith is delivered once for all just like the sacrifice of Christ on the cross was once for all to bear our sins (Hebrews 9:28).

Third, the gospel is unchangeable. Solomon wrote, "Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words lest He reprove you, and you be proved a liar" (Proverbs 30:5-6). Revelation 22:18-19 warns everyone about this specific book of Revelation. He says, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." If this warning is true about the book of Revelation, wouldn't it also be true about any other book of the New Testament? We have no right to edit what God says to suit ourselves.

The book of Galatians describes some Jewish Christians who wanted to bind Jewish laws and traditions on the Gentile converts to Christianity. They were taking things from the old covenant made with Israel at Sinai and expecting the Gentiles to obey both the teaching of Christ and the Jewish laws and traditions. Paul wrote, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-8). God will curse anyone who would dare to change or edit the gospel. Anything that is unchangeable, especially coming from God, must necessarily be absolute.

These three characteristics, derived from an absolute God, make the gospel absolute truth. Those who espouse Christianity have very little to say or offer if the gospel they believe and preach is not settled in heaven. It's a great offense to God to suggest that in dealing with our sins somehow the death of Jesus wasn't enough or its message isn't universal, final, and unchangeable.

It is ultimate confusion to suggest that sin is an ever-changing concept subject to the passing whims of culture. This suggests that Jesus didn't know what sin is or was or what it will be. It means the all-knowing God in heaven really doesn't know as much as we do. It suggests that we can take a vote on what we think and then treat God as if He's subject to what we decide. God is God, and we aren't. He makes the moral rules that will judge us on the last day, and we are accountable to Him. He can't deceive Himself about right and

wrong, but we can deceive ourselves. He knows everything, and we'll never be as smart or as wise as He is. Shouldn't we listen to Him rather than imagine that we can reinvent morality to suit ourselves?

The universal, final, and unchangeable nature of the gospel, revealed by an absolute God makes it absolute, not relative. If we didn't believe our message is settled in heaven, we'd have nothing to offer. Paul argued that if the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was not true, then our faith is in vain and our preaching is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:14). In verse 17 he said, "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins."

The death and resurrection of Jesus provide an eternal and universal message. It's a consistent message of forgiveness and life. What people think doesn't change the truth or change the facts. Jesus either died for our sins or He didn't. Jesus either arose from the dead bodily or He didn't. Saying both options are true at the same time is illogical and contradictory. If both doctrines are true, we can't be certain we are forgiven or have a home in heaven. Truth matters in our practical lives. If the bodily resurrection of Jesus is both true and false at the same time, we have no hope at the grave of a loved one. If truth is relative to our whims, we must take back everything we believe. We're only fooling ourselves if we think we can sin against God and everything will be okay.

Why does this matter? It matters because God matters, His teaching will judge you someday, and you matter. When people draw their moral values from their personal desires rather than from God, they drift away from what's right and what's moral into what's wrong and immoral. Once people start setting God's moral law aside, they forsake God and they rush into immorality. Rhett Butler used a foul word in the movie, *Gone With the Wind*, in 1939; foul language soon became fashionable. Today movies and TV allow the most foul language imaginable. If we give the devil an inch, he'll feel free to take a mile. If you ignore God's moral law, you could ruin your life and risk your soul. Don't do that. Stay with God.

Let's return to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." Let's not deceive ourselves. Even the laws of the land cannot change God's laws. What God says is wrong is wrong and will be wrong till the end.

Thankfully, we have hope in Christ, hope that lasts forever. The sinful pagans at Corinth didn't remain in sin; they repented; they changed their lives. While they were in sin, God would not let them inherit the kingdom. But they came to Christ; and the Lord washed them, made them holy, and regarded them as righteous. There's always hope for people who forsake their sins and turn to the Lord. Rather than saying sin isn't sinful, repent! Rather than thinking you can change God's mind or His laws, be obedient to His will!

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." When people forsake the Lord's laws, they do so to their own peril. Instead, let's put our trust in Jesus, repent of our sins, confess the Lord Jesus as the Christ, and be baptized into Christ. Let's determine to deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily, and follow Him. Let's study the unchangeable Word of God and realize that it stands as written until the end of time!

## What God Can Do

God can and will do great things for those who love and serve Him. We'll explore what God can do. The Lord Jesus said, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority" (John 6:16-17). The Scriptures validate themselves. When people put what they learn into practice, they realize that God is the author of the messages found in Scripture. Because God spoke only the truth, we can have confidence in His Words.

Some think that God wound up the world like a clock, and then He lost interest and let it run down. Others question whether God exists, and still others think no one can know whether God exists. We can know that God exists and His teaching is true by putting His will into practice. Though some may think that God is dead, God is very much alive and willing to make a profound difference in our lives. If you let Him, God can transform your life and give you an abundant life; but you must give yourself to Him.

The Lord knows many are confused and hurting; He knows others have made a mess of their lives by following the ways of the world and sin. He wants something better for us. The Lord Jesus promised, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). If you follow Jesus, you can find a new life!

Our reading today comes from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians 1:18-23. The book of Ephesians has more than one prayer. We will look at the first of those prayers.

*I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The more I study the Scriptures, the more I realize how powerful God truly is. We often lose sight of how capable God is to help us and provide for our needs. God expects our faith, our love, and our obedience; but let's not forget all the good that God can do to bless us, to protect us, and to help us overcome the challenges of this world. God is indeed capable of making a difference in our lives. The prophet Jeremiah said, "Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you" (Jeremiah 32:17). The God who created the heavens and the earth also created you. He loves you and knows what you need even before you ask Him. Nothing is too hard for God.

Paul warned the Ephesians to understand God's power in their lives. He said, "*I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His

calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come” (Ephesians 1:18-21). If God could create the universe, and if God could raise Jesus from the dead, God can also exercise His power toward us who believe!

First, God is able to bless His people. When His people are striving to follow His will and serve Him, God will supply for them the things they need. Second Corinthians 9:8-10 says, “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written, ‘HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER.’ Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.” We need to put our faith in God’s ability to provide for us when we’re doing good in serving Him.

God not only helps us in our efforts to do what is right, He also works within our hearts to want to do what is right. He works in us through the teaching of the Scripture and through answering our prayers. Paul could speak confidently to the church at Philippi. He said, “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). The God who saved us from sin and transformed our lives from sinners to saints is interested in our pursuing good works according to His will.

Paul revealed, “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). God is interested in our attitudes. He wants to build our faith, strengthen our love, and embolden us to work for His good pleasure.

Paul wanted them to open the eyes of their hearts to understand just how great God’s power is towards us who believe. We should not think we serve a small and disinterested God who has little to do with us. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”

The apostle Paul urges us to come to the Lord for strength when we face temptation and the struggles caused by the spiritual forces of evil. Ephesians 6:10-13 says, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.” We can put on the armor of God through being strong in Christ.

This passage urges us to, “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” We do this by putting on the whole armor of God. The Lord can strengthen our hearts through the truth, through righteousness, through the gospel of peace, through faith, through salvation, through the Word of God, and through prayer. We must take advantage of these things to



grow strong in the strength of His might. He offers us the strength to overcome. Let's take advantage of that power.

Second, we should remember that God is faithful to His people. First Corinthians 10:13 promises, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." God wants you to overcome the temptations that you face each day. He will not allow them to be greater than your ability to resist. He will provide you a way to escape, so that you can maintain a pure life.

When the devil and the world seem overwhelming, remember that God is with you. God will see your faith and help you through your struggle. First Peter 5:8-10 says, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."

Second Corinthians 1:18-20 says, "But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us." God doesn't stutter or take back His promises. He's faithful to His Word. You can put your soul into God's hands, knowing that He will do what He's promised. The apostle Paul said, "I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Third, God hears the prayers of those who love and serve Him. Have you considered the fact that God invites us to pray? As God's children, we don't have to beg to be able to speak to our Father in heaven.

The Lord Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:7-11).

First John 5:14-15 says, "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." The Lord Jesus promised, "Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you" (Mark 11:22-24).

Someone says, "I prayed, but I didn't get what I asked for." God hears the prayers of those who love and serve Him. but the Scriptures declare that God will not bless evil. First John 3:22 says, "whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His

commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.” However, Psalm 66:18 says, “If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” We can’t presume that we may live sinful lives and still have the favor of God. Isaiah 59:1-2 says, “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or 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.” God loves us and He wants to hear our prayers, but our iniquities will separate us from God. When people turn their hearts away from God and they go towards this sinful world and focus not on being like God or serving God or loving God, they find that God isn’t any longer willing to hear their prayers. When they give themselves to God, God will hear. Where is your heart? Do you love and serve God?

Fourth, God will take care of you. The Lord Jesus said, “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:31-34). When you put God first, seeking His kingdom and His righteousness, God will supply your needs.

The apostle Paul stayed faithful to God, though He suffered many things. He knew God had something better for us in the future. He said, “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). When you hold fast to God, God holds fast to you and gives you a home in glory. Hold fast to God!

Hebrews 3:12-14 says, “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 quit on the Lord! Many people used to be faithful in serving God and worshiping Him, but have stopped believing and worshiping Him. There are many good reasons to love and serve Him. God wants you back; He wants to work in your life and to bless you. Will you let Him? Will you love Him and faithfully serve Him?

Today, is the best day for you to submit your will to Christ and get your life right with God. God will not bless you if you doubt Him, ignore Him, or rebel against His will. Like Jesus, you too must submit your will to the will of the Father. That is what repentance is. With faith and love for Jesus Christ, rather than hardening your heart, give yourself to the Lord! Believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God; turn to God from sin in repentance; confess Jesus Christ; and be baptized, that is immersed in water, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you’re baptized, God will give you newness of life, and He’ll add you to His church, make you His child, save you from sin, and give you an inheritance in heaven. Turn your heart and your life toward God! Obey the Lord, today!

## The “Musts” of Christianity

The word “must” is often found in Scripture. That means there are things necessary for us to do. Today, we will examine the word “must” as it’s used in Scripture. The Lord God speaks to us today through His written Word. The Bible says, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:35-36). The idea that faith alone is sufficient to maintain a right relationship with God is simply not found in Scripture; obedience to God is also necessary. It is a must! The phrase “does not obey” in verse 36 is not the same word as the one that means one does not believe. It translates a word that means one is not persuaded and so will not comply with God’s will. When a person will not obey, he faces the wrath of God and cannot have eternal life. This is how important God’s teaching is, and why we teach it with love. We want everyone to obey the Lord.

The word “must” is out of step with most people. It seems politically incorrect to suggest people must obey God’s teaching. Our culture is more inclined to make up their own faith or religion or to select what they wish to obey rather than to follow all the teaching revealed in the Bible. Most people want choices, and the word “must” means they have no choice. “Must” is a verb that describes an obligation, a requirement, a moral necessity. “Must” removes every other option. If we want to please God and have eternal life there are some things that we must do. This really isn’t strange because even Jesus had some things that he must do. My friend, so do you!

Our reading today comes from the Gospel According to Mark 10:42-45. The disciples had been having a discussion about who would be the greatest in the kingdom.

Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Jesus came to sacrifice Himself. There are times that we must sacrifice ourselves as well.

We may think that God has nothing that He must do, but God’s great love for us moved Him to send Jesus into this world. Love moves even the Lord to make a commitment. Jesus knew that He must do His Father’s will. Jesus said, “We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work” (John 9:4). While on earth Jesus lived within the time constraints, and so must we. We must now do God’s will.

Jesus knew that He must die on the cross; He prophesied His death and His resurrection. Matthew 16:21-23 says, “From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go (up) to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.’” Though Peter didn’t want Him to die, Jesus knew that He must fulfill God’s plan of redemption.

When the crowd came to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, Matthew 26:51-54

records what happened, “And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?’” The Lord Jesus knew that He must die in order to fulfill the eternal plan of God. He could have stopped it, but it was necessary for Him to fulfill the Scriptures.

Jesus was utterly obedient to the Father even when the Father demanded everything from Him. When the Father commanded His Son, Jesus, to go to the cross, the Lord Jesus obeyed. Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus told them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me” (Matthew 26:38). I can only imagine the pain that Jesus felt then. The Lord Jesus fell on his face on the ground. Luke 22:44 says, “And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.” But the persistent prayer of Jesus found in Matthew 26:42 was, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”

The example of Jesus is vital; we must follow in His steps. Hebrews 5:7-9 says, “In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.” The Father heard His prayer. Many think the prayer of Jesus was to remove the cup, and that is certainly what He wanted at one point. But the ultimate prayer of Jesus was “your will be done,” and God heard that prayer. Jesus was perfect in His obedience to the Father and He opened the way for you and me. He became the source of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him. We must believe, but we must also obey!

Some think, “You don’t have to do anything to be saved. God has done it all.” Yes, we are saved by grace through faith; and the Scriptures say salvation is a gift in Romans 6:23 and in Ephesians 2:8-9. But we must also realize that gifts often have conditions or obligations to fulfill. Meeting conditions does not earn the gift, but conditions do obligate the person who will receive the gift. For instance, in John chapter nine, Jesus healed a blind man by anointing the man’s eyes with some mud that He made with his saliva. Jesus told the man, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” According to verse seven he went and he washed and he came back seeing. The Lord Jesus gave that man his sight. No one would suggest that by washing in the pool the man healed himself or earned something so precious as his sight; but he had to meet the condition of the washing before he enjoyed the healing! The blind man didn’t argue with Jesus; he simply went to the pool and washed.

While we’re saved by grace, God’s gift of grace is conditional. The Scriptures plainly teach that there are things that we must do in order to please God; they are not optional. First, we must come to Jesus. Acts 4:12 says, “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.” If one is to be saved at all, he must come to Jesus; no one else can save him. The Lord Jesus said, “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If



anyone serves me, the Father will honor him” (John 12:26). We must follow Jesus.

Second, we must believe in God. Hebrews 11:6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” Faith in God means believing what He says and that He will keep His promises. It’s absurd to claim that we believe in God if we’re unwilling to believe what He teaches. In a conversation with the Jews about whether Jesus was from God and the Son of God, the Lord Jesus said, “I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). Faith in Christ means believing that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Lord of all. Believing in Him means taking what He teaches seriously. The Lord must be heartbroken that some people are Christians in name only, and that they profess to believe in Christ but follow after the ways of man.

Third, we must repent of our sins. The Lord Jesus said, “unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Repentance is not an option for anyone who wishes to live with God. Romans 6:11 describes what repentance does. Paul said, “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Repentance means stopping our old sinful ways and living for God. Romans 8:12-13 makes it even more clear. Paul said, “So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you’re living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you’re putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” To live with God, we must repent.

Fourth, we must be baptized. In John 3, Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. The Lord Jesus told Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’” (John 3:5-7). This birth of water and the Spirit refers to baptism, just as every early Christian testified and believed. One must be baptized in order to enter God’s kingdom. When Saul of Tarsus was blinded on the road to Damascus, the Lord Jesus Himself told Saul, “get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do” (Acts 9:6). Saul entered the city; he prayed; and he fasted for three days; and yet he was not saved. Eventually, Ananias came to Saul and told him, “Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16). God didn’t wash away Saul’s sins until he was baptized into Christ. We too must be baptized to be right with God.

Fifth, we must worship in spirit and in truth. The Lord Jesus said, “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Many today have confused true worship with a worship that entertains. True worship differs from pretense or man-made worship. Jesus defines true worship. He asks a question about worship, is it truly genuinely from their spirit or heart? Is worship authentically what the Word of God teaches? If it differs, if it’s not in spirit and in truth, it isn’t really true worship. According to Matthew 15:8-9, if practices come from the traditions of men, worship is vain, empty.

Sixth, we must pay close attention to God’s teaching. Hebrews 2:1-3 says, “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a

salvation?” The Scriptures demand that we pay attention and keep His commandments carefully. We must not add to or subtract from God’s teaching. We have no right to rewrite God’s teaching to suit ourselves or to satisfy the whims of our culture.

Seventh, we must obey God rather than men. When the apostles appeared before the Sanhedrin, the high priest said, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, (that is, the name of Jesus) and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us” (Acts 5:28). In verse 29 Peter and the apostles answered and said, “We must obey God rather than men.” We have to stand up for our God and our faith above all else. We must never suppose that God is content to be one voice among many. God is God, and He demands to be obeyed!

Eighth, we must help the weak. Paul said, “In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35). Christians must stand ready to help those in need, to provide for those who cannot provide for themselves, Christians ought to give of themselves just as Jesus gave.

Why does all this matter? Because there’s one more “must.” We must appear before God in judgment. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” On Judgment Day you will be there; you cannot escape this appointment. The Lord will judge righteously, saving His followers and condemning those who don’t believe or won’t obey Him. You and I must appear before the Lord. Are you ready?

In Matthew 25 the Lord tells the parable of the ten virgins. Five wisely prepared, and the other five foolishly remained unprepared to greet their master at the wedding feast. Matthew 25:7-11 says, “Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent (the wise), ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the prudent answered, saying, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. And later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ But he answered and said, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”

While Jesus offers His gift of salvation to everyone, sadly not everyone will be prepared to meet the Master when He comes. Just as the virgins needed oil, so you and I must not wait until the Lord comes to get right with God. We don’t know the day nor the hour when the Lord will return, so we must be prepared at all times.

Have you met the conditions of God’s grace? Do you believe? Have you repented? Have you confessed Jesus as the Christ? Have you been baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins? Have you remained watchful and ready to meet Him? Please don’t wait another day unprepared. Get right with God, today. Accept His offer of grace by doing what He commands. You’ll never regret doing what is right, but you’ll always regret being unprepared.