



IN
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*Program
Study Guides*

**For
October 2021**



Impoverished in Spirit

I know something inherently _____ about every person. What is that truth? You desperately _____ the Lord Jesus in your life. We're here to _____ the Scriptures for God's will. How we think of _____ makes all the difference in the world. If we love Him and humble ourselves before God, God will _____ us richly; but if we fail to give Him our respect and our obedience, we'll find the blessed life disappear. The more we get away from God, the more the blessings of God get away from us. That's why we continually go to the Word of God, the Bible, to _____ the truth of God and the blessing of God. You won't find it anywhere else. God's way is the right way, the blessed way, and the true way.

Nebuchadnezzar was the most _____ man in the world in his day. God allowed him to have this power in order to _____ Israel for her sins. Three times Nebuchadnezzar's army entered Jerusalem, and the third time completely destroyed the city, including the _____. Nebuchadnezzar's home was the great city of Babylon, whose hanging _____ were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Chapter four of the book of Daniel tells how Nebuchadnezzar became _____ and said, "Is not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" Because he forgot God was the true _____ of the world, God humbled him by making him like a _____ of the field for seven periods of time. He ate grass like _____, and his hair and nails grew long. Afterwards Nebuchadnezzar praised and honored the Most High God. He learned his _____ for God the hard way.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Matthew and contains the words of Jesus Himself as He begins His sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:1-6.

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

How would you begin your signature sermon? The beginning statement of a sermon is usually what catches people's _____. Jesus made a surprising and captivating comment about being _____ in spirit. He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the _____ of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). He started His sermon _____ about people who are "poor in spirit." He started there because He knew how vital being "poor in spirit" was to our _____ with Him and with the Father. If we're not "poor in spirit," we may never have _____ for God in our hearts. The blessed person not only has room for God; the blessed person cannot _____ without God!

What does it mean to be blessed? The word "blessed" means more than merely being "_____." Happiness is merely an _____, often dependent upon outward circumstances. To be blessed here refers to the ultimate well-being of a person who has lasting _____ joy arising from his relationship with

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God. The beatitudes are not _____ statements, they are exclamations! They are saying these are the kinds of people that God _____ as having the ultimate in well-being.

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

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

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

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

When God calls someone blessed, he is blessed indeed! God never _____ but calls things as they truly are! If anyone else blesses you, the blessing lasts for a time, but God's blessings last for a _____ and beyond. God's blessings are both physical and spiritual. He meets our _____ needs for food, water, clothing, and shelter; but He also meets our _____ needs. Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with _____ spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

In Christ we have every spiritual blessing that we could ever _____ for. We have _____ to the Father, peace, joy, assurance, and love. In Christ we have forgiveness. Romans 4:7-8 says, "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been _____, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose _____ the Lord will not take into account." Forgiveness through the _____ of Christ opens the door to an eternal fellowship with God on earth and in heaven. That is a truly blessed state, a truly blessed condition!

The Lord said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the _____ of heaven." There are two words for poor in the New Testament. First, there are the poor who are _____ and must work from day to day to earn a living. They have food and clothes enough to _____ but very little if anything else. Second, there are the destitute beggars, living in _____ poverty—the person who has nothing at all and

is desperate. It's this second word that is used here in the poor in spirit; and that's what makes this so surprising! The blessed person is the one who "in spirit" has _____ at all. He has nothing and is utterly dependent upon God.

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

Ephesians 2:8-10 says, "For by _____ you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the _____ 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 _____, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." A person poor in spirit will become wholly dependent upon God—and God means everything to him! We must realize that we need God's help and strength; and only God can _____ us eternal life. We must put our trust in Him.

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

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

False religions think they can make their own rules and decide their own morals, but God is the only One who can _____ moral laws. The Pharisees lived by their own _____ traditions and judged others for not keeping their rules. They would even judge _____ for not keeping their traditions! They were really just deceiving themselves. The Lord Jesus said, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be _____ up. Let them [that is, the Pharisees] alone; they are blind _____. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a _____" (Matthew 15:13-14).

A proud person doesn't think he needs God's _____ but imagines God should be honored just to have him around. You remember the Lord Jesus "told this parable to certain ones who _____ in themselves that they were righteous and viewed others with contempt: 'Two men went up into the temple to _____, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus [some versions say prayed to himself, and he said]: "God, I thank you that I'm not _____ other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but he beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, a _____!" I tell you, this man went down to his house _____, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted'" (Luke 18:9-14). God cannot use a man who's so full of himself, because such a man has no _____ for God!

The Bible also tells of an arrogant _____ that didn't know that it needed the Lord. The Lord Jesus sent this message to the church in Laodicea: "I know your _____: that you're neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will _____ you out of my mouth. For you say, 'I am rich, I've prospered, and I need nothing,' not realizing that you are

wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and _____. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. And if anyone _____ my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation. 3:15-20).

These things matter because we all stand in _____ for God. Are you poor in spirit? Do you need God? Do you wish to enter the kingdom of God?

Blessed is the person who _____ he needs God and puts his trust in God, for only by lovingly denying himself can he take up a cross to follow the Lord. Obeying God is a demonstration of our faith and love. James said a man shows his _____ by his works. The Lord Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, let him _____ himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” (Luke 9:23-24). Humble yourself before God to enter the kingdom of heaven.

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

Get involved in the church. When you’re baptized, the Lord saves you and adds you to His church (Acts 2:41 and 47). Keep your connection with God and with His people by regularly worshiping at church. You need the Lord and His people to help you stay faithful and to reach heaven. You can do nothing more important today than getting right and staying right with the Lord Jesus.

So focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. There’s probably a church of Christ near you. If you’re looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we’ll gladly help you find one.

Mourning Over Sin

Since sin is real and can cost you your soul, how do you _____ to the guilt of your sins? Some _____ the consequences of sin and actually celebrate evil. What does God say? We're here to _____ the Scriptures for God's will. The Bible is an entirely practical book, dealing with our everyday lives and the attitudes of our _____. The Lord Jesus never speaks needlessly; we must know how to _____ our hearts and lives within the Father's will. The difference between following the Lord and not following the Lord is a difference between eternal _____ and eternal destruction. We must take God and our _____ seriously.

The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are those who _____, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). Most people think of this passage when they have _____ a loved one; but it may not be referring to this, but to mourning over _____. Certainly the loss of a loved one hurts deeply and needs comforting; but the Lord is here speaking about something _____ than death. You can suffer death and still have _____ of eternal life with the Lord in heaven. The apostle Paul referred to his potential death at the hands of Caesar that he said he had "the desire to _____ and to be with Christ, for that is very much better" (Philippians 1:23). Though we grieve for the loss of a loved one, we can _____ when a faithful Christian is with the Lord.

If, however, a person refuses to believe, refuses to repent of sin, or refuses to obey the Lord, he'll face eternity without the Lord and without His _____. In such cases we not only mourn our loss over a loved one, we also mourn for the fate of his _____. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one _____ to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).

Our reading today comes from the book of James 4:7-10. James is here talking about a group of people who unfortunately had made themselves _____ of the world, and became a little arrogant about it.

In every _____ people have forgotten God and rejoiced over wicked ways, ignoring the consequences of their sins. Some have hardened their _____ for so long they've forgotten the guilt, shame, and the harm that sin produces. Don't imagine that our _____ was the first to depart from the ways of God.

Before the flood found in the book of Genesis, it says, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only _____ continually. So the LORD was _____ that He had made mankind on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart" (Genesis 6:5-6). Humanity had indeed corrupted its way on the earth with violence, so God determined to _____ them and had Noah to build an ark.

After the flood, God told Noah and his sons, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Genesis 9:1). Instead, the people gathered at Shinar and decided to _____ God. They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a _____, otherwise we'll be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4). At that time God confused their language, so that they couldn't understand each other and scattered them abroad over the face of all the _____.

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God used Moses to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt, to give them a _____, and establish them as a holy nation. As the centuries passed, the people _____ God and His laws. They began serving other _____. The prophet Jeremiah said: “Thus says the LORD, ‘What injustice did your fathers find in Me, That they went _____ from Me And walked after emptiness and became empty?’” (Jeremiah 2:5). We wonder about why people who call themselves Christian today have wandered far from God for an _____ way of life. Jeremiah 2:11-13 says, “‘My people have _____ their glory, For that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this, And shudder, be very desolate,’ declares the LORD. ‘For My people have committed two evils: They have _____ Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, That can hold no water.’”

In parts of ancient Israel, there were few springs and creeks, so the people _____ cisterns in strategic places to catch the rainwater during the rainy seasons. They would hollow out a place in the ground and seal it on the inside with a kind of plaster; but if there was even the slightest of earthquakes, or the plaster might crack, then the water would slowly _____ out. An empty cistern was _____.

Our society has forgotten God and gone our _____ ways. We’ve forgotten God’s _____ and deliberately mocked God with our confused and chaotic morality. Editing God’s ways and morals to suit ourselves is _____ beyond measure. When we imagine that we’re _____ than God, we’ll start drinking unclean water from a broken cistern.

Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet, because of the _____ of the people. He said in Jeremiah 9:1-3, “‘Oh that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might _____ day and night, For the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the desert, A wayfarers’ lodging place; That I might _____ my people, And go from them! For all of them are adulterers, An assembly of treacherous men. They bend their tongue like their bow; Lies and not _____ prevail in the land; For they proceed from evil to evil, And do not _____ Me,’ declares the LORD.” Jeremiah prophesied and preached for forty years to Judah, but they didn’t _____ to God’s words that came through him. Jeremiah said, “‘But if you will not listen, my soul will weep in secret for your _____; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the LORD’s flock has been taken captive” (Jeremiah 13:17). Sinful desires can not only enslave us, they can also _____ our hearts and drain out our faith and love for God. Psalm 119:136 says, “‘My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your _____.”

The New Testament also speaks of the _____ when people mourn over sin. Do you remember the parable of Jesus about the Pharisee and the tax-collector in Luke 18? The self-righteous Pharisee who prayed to _____ rather than to God did not see his need for God, but the _____ tax-collector knew that he needed God’s forgiveness. The Lord Jesus said, “‘But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the _____!’ I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:13-14). God knows our hearts and He knows whether we have a heart that mourns our sin and _____ for righteousness.

Peter was a man who often spoke and acted before he thought, but He _____ the Lord and wanted to do right. That describes many of us. The Lord Jesus predicted that Peter would _____ Him three times in the night before He was crucified. Luke 22:55-62 tells what happened: “‘After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, ‘This man was with Him too.’ But he _____ it, saying, ‘Woman, I don’t know Him.’ A little later, another saw him and

said, 'You're one of them too!' But Peter said, 'Man, I am not!' And after about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, 'Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too.' But Peter said, 'Man, I don't _____ what you're talking about.' And immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. The Lord turned and _____ at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, 'Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and he _____ bitterly." Have you ever wept over your sins?

Some folks, instead of weeping, become indignant and act like sin doesn't really _____. Paul dealt with this in the church at Corinth. He said, "It's actually reported that there is immorality _____ you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's _____. You've become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who's done this deed would be removed from your midst" (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). They ignored the situation, they tolerated it, and even boasted about an incestuous sin that the _____ wouldn't even allow. Paul acted and he _____ the man in the presence of the church. He wouldn't _____ the church at Corinth to have fellowship with sexually immoral people. This apparently made the Corinthians stop and think about what they were doing. They needed to _____ of tolerating sin.

Paul wrote, "For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I don't regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—I now _____, not that you were made sorrowful, but you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the _____ of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a _____ without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces _____. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this _____ sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter" (2 Corinthians 7:8-11). When people remain unwilling to judge others' sins, even though they don't commit it themselves, they're _____ with wickedness not with God.

We tend to celebrate today's sinful _____ and forget what the Lord Jesus said. We also forget the Lord Jesus is coming again to _____ us all. One day the Lord will call us to give an _____ of our lives, and no one will be celebrating sin on that day. We should be like Moses. Hebrews 11:24-26 says, "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to _____ the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the _____." What matters to you? Do you count the fleeting pleasures of sin more valuable than a _____ in heaven?

There is a Day of Judgment coming, when the Lord Jesus will either reward or punish us according to the _____ that we've done in the body. Christians face a lot of animosity from those who do not know God or believe His teaching. Second Thessalonians 1:7-9 says to faithful Christians, "and to grant _____ to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not _____ the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of _____ destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might."

What should we do? James 4:7-10 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will _____ from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and _____ and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will

exalt you.” Let’s look into our hearts and consider our _____. Let’s be done with sin and draw _____ to God. Yes, we should mourn our sin; but God will comfort us.

Why does this matter? Remember the Lord’s words. The Lord Jesus said, “If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it’s _____ for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into _____. And if your right hand makes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it’s better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell” (Matthew 5:29-30). Being in sin is worse than losing an eye or hand, and it’s even worse than physical _____. You can die physically and still go to _____; but you can’t cherish sin and refuse to repent and enjoy eternal life. Only those who _____ from sin and walk in the light with the Lord can enter heaven. Revelation 14:13 says, “Blessed are the dead who _____ in the Lord from now on! ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘so that they may _____ from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.’” I can find no such _____ for those who are lost in sin. We can’t hold fast to our sins and presume that we are still in the _____ of God. We’re in great spiritual _____ without God. So let’s turn our hearts toward Him, repent of our sins, and draw close to Him.

The Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be _____.” God doesn’t want to _____ us in mourning for sin and not give us any hope of salvation. He wants to comfort us, and He does this by giving us _____ and by saving us from sin. Though our sinful ways plague us, we have hope in the _____ of Jesus Christ to cleanse us. The Lord God told Solomon, “if my people who are called by my name _____ themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will _____ from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). You can find healing and comfort from God when you humble yourself, pray, seek the face of God, and _____ from your wicked ways.

We need to follow the Lord Jesus to do His will and do it His _____. There’s no _____ to heaven and righteousness except the Lord’s way. Don’t delight in the thinking or the practices of the _____, but turn your heart toward God and take up your cross to follow Jesus.

To be right with God, place your trust in the Lord Jesus as God’s Son and listen to His word. Turn from evils of sin and renounce them. Determine to live righteous lives and confess Jesus Christ before others. Be baptized into Christ; that’s how God causes you to become united with Christ, to be born again, and to be freed from sin (Romans 6:3-7). God washes you of your sins when you’re baptized, immersed in water, for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16). What are you waiting for? Turn to God in faith and fulfill His desire for you to know the truth and to be saved. There’s no better day than today.



Hungering for Righteousness

I'm sure at some point in your life you've been really hungry, but we're not talking about _____ food. What we're talking about is hungering for righteousness. God's Word gives us the _____ to feed the hunger of the soul and quench our thirst for an eternal life. That's why we _____ the Scriptures for God's truth and His promises.

In the last few weeks, we've been seeing the blessedness that comes from being _____ in spirit and wholly dependent upon God; we've also seen blessedness that comes from taking an honest look at our sins and _____ over them. Today, our focus is on Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be _____ (or filled)." We all know what it is to be hungry and what it is to be thirsty, and we also know what it is to be _____. The hunger and thirst of this passage, however, is not the _____ hunger and thirst for food and water but the _____ hunger and thirst of a person who must have food and water to survive. Such desperate hunger and thirst for righteousness will cause a person to _____ it, that he has to have it. In Christ one can _____ the filling satisfaction that they must have.

How hungry and how thirsty are you to be _____ with God? If you truly know your need for God and you truly mourn over your sins, then you'll realize the importance of finding the fulfillment that comes from being _____ of those sins and being right with God. A _____ person in sin is empty and broken, while a _____ and faithful person is filled. You have a _____ in your soul that only God can fill. You have a nagging in your conscience that cannot be satisfied until you get right with the Lord, and you find that forgiveness that you _____. Are you hungering and thirsting for the righteousness that only comes through the _____ of Jesus Christ?

Our reading today comes from Philippians 3:7-11.

There's a _____ difference between being hungry and being filled physically and spiritually. Just as there comes a time when you must _____ to survive, so there's a time when you must _____ to the Lord to survive spiritually. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one _____ to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). The apostle Peter clearly said about Jesus, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other _____ under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). People seek spiritual fulfillment in many places, but there's only _____ that can fill your soul with the promises of God.

The Devil uses _____ and broken lives to keep us empty. Many don't know their sins and their focus on the _____ is what makes them empty. Jeremiah spoke of the empty people among the idolaters of his day, but the same is _____ of people who pushed God out of their lives today. Jeremiah 2:13 says, "For My people have committed two evils: They 've forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, That can _____ no water." To survive physically we must have an adequate supply of _____ water, and to survive spiritually we must have a _____ relationship with God.

In our hurried world today, people have forsaken God for their _____ busy lives that have little room for all the joy and blessing that comes from serving God. First John 2:15-17 warns, "Do not love

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the world, nor the things _____ the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is _____ in him. For all that's in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives _____."

Perhaps you've seen what I've seen in people. The person who is spiritually and emotionally _____ wishes to be made whole and healed. The person enslaved by sin longs to be _____ from the hold that sin has on him. The person who knows he's _____ in sin wishes he could be righteous. The person filled with _____ wishes he could make things right. The person who has a defiled conscience wishes that he could once again _____ himself. The person who feels _____ with sin longs to be pure and clean. The guilty _____ hungers for forgiveness.

The person who is filled with conflict longs for _____. The person who's unloved hungers for _____. The confused person thirsts to know the _____. The person who has no _____ wishes that he could trust in the Lord. The lost person who has no hope hungers for the hope that can fill his soul. The lost person who only sees judgment longs for the _____ that opens the doors of heaven.

Righteousness means loving God with all your heart and allowing God to _____ in your heart. It means loving the things that God loves and avoiding the things that _____ God. It's all about Jesus Christ being your Savior and your _____. You long for His mercy, but you will _____ have to respect His being your Lord and Master. It's all about _____ with God. We won't find purpose, love, rest, joy, peace, or hope, _____ we find it in the Lord Jesus Christ. You will remain hungry until you taste and see that the Lord is _____.

The apostle Paul realized that his _____ wouldn't give him what the Lord Jesus could give him. He wanted _____ than what he had as a Jew and as a Pharisee. He wanted to "be found in Him (that is, in Christ), not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through _____ in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Philippians 3:9). Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it's no _____ I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who _____ me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Paul knew that God's grace came as a _____ that he couldn't earn. He knew the Law of Moses couldn't give him _____. He said, "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law (speaking of the Law of Moses), then Christ _____ needlessly" (Galatians 2:2). He explained, "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him (that is, Jesus) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who _____ is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). We're not saved by the blood of bulls and goats but by the blood of Jesus Christ. We're now under the _____ covenant of Christ not the _____ covenant given at Mount Sinai.

Have you considered how _____ God hungers and thirsts for people to become righteous? If you want people you love to be _____, and I know you do, God does even more so. Remember the words of Jesus, "For God so loved the world, that He _____ His only begotten Son (others just say only Son), that whoever believes in Him shall not perish (or should not perish), but have _____ life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:16-17). God loves every person, every man, every woman, every boy, and every girl.

In 1 Timothy 2:3-4 the Bible says, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires _____ men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." God wants everyone to be

saved and everyone to know the _____ of the gospel that's found in His Word. God has never wanted people to lose their souls; He wants them instead to _____ and to live righteously. Ezekiel 18:31-32 says, "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and _____ yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no _____ in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord GOD. "Therefore, repent and live."

Have you considered how _____ the Lord Jesus wants you to be righteous and to be saved? In Matthew 23 Jesus pronounced several _____ upon the scribes and Pharisees, calling them hypocrites and describing their sinful behavior. Yet He says, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I _____ 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!" in Matthew 23:37-38). His heart was _____ that the religious leaders of his day refused to believe and refused to leave their hypocrisy.

John wrote words of encouragement: "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not _____. And if anyone sins, we have an _____ with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2). Do you know what Jesus is doing in _____ right now? He's serving as an advocate, defending you to the Father, even though you've sinned as a Christian. He's at God's right hand interceding on your _____ (Romans 8:34).

Even when the lukewarm and offensive church at Laodicea thought they were rich and needed nothing, Jesus was concerned about _____ them back. The Lord Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; and if anyone hears My voice and _____ the door, I'll come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). The Lord wants to have a relationship again, even with people who have _____ away from Him. He never quit loving you, even if you've quit loving Him.

Did you know that even the Holy Spirit is _____ by whether we live righteously or live in sin? Ephesians 4:30 says, "Do not _____ the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Yes, the Holy Spirit grieves when we _____. We think of how sin affects us and we _____ how it affects the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Sin offends God; it transgresses God's law; it's an abomination to God; it causes us to be _____ from God spiritually. Isaiah 59:1-2 says, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not short, That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your _____ have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear."

In God's eyes, sin brings spiritual _____. Romans 6:23 says, "the wages of sin is death", and that hasn't changed. Culture may lead you to think that sin doesn't _____ to God, but it does. Don't take sin _____; God doesn't. Don't act like God won't _____; He does. Don't imagine God will hold others responsible for sin but will overlook yours, He won't. God is no respecter of persons and will hold _____ responsible for his sins. If your sins are not washed away by the blood of Jesus, you will bear the _____ and the punishment for your sins. We have no other hope than Jesus Christ.

This fact ought to make us hunger for God's grace that saves and the transforming of our lives to _____ what the will of God truly is, "that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2). We can't be saved apart from God's _____. You can't earn grace, and God doesn't _____ it to you. Grace is God's _____ that frees you from sin and punishment, but that's not all that it does. God's grace "instructs us to _____ worldly desires and to _____ sensibly, righteously, and godly" (Titus 2:12).

Grace opens the door to _____ our lives, freeing us from an old man of sin destined to be punished and leading us to a new life that lives in love like Christ lived.

This newness of life, the new birth, means the old man of sin is dead, and you are _____ again. You were dead _____ sin, now you're dead _____ sin and alive in Christ. If that's so, God expects you to live as a person born again who has repented and intends to _____ free from sin. We must never take the grace of God for granted, as if it were something _____. Jesus paid a great _____, His precious blood. Only His blood can wash us _____ (Revelation 7:14). He does this when we unite with Him in His death and resurrection, and that takes place in _____ (Romans 6:3-7).

Do you want to be _____ from sin? Do you want a _____ conscience? Would you like to respect yourself again? The grace of God can _____ you to a pure heart and a life that God intended for you. So place your trust in the Lord, turn from your sin, and be baptized into Christ. God never wanted you to hate yourself when you look in the mirror. His way will give you _____ for your soul and give you promise in the life to come. I can't imagine living one day, one hour, or even one minute without the grace, love, and promises of God. Do you hunger for a close, loving relationship with God?

When Jesus passed through Samaria, he sent the disciples into town to get Him some food, but the events of that day led to something _____ important to Jesus than a meal. When the disciples returned with food, there also came men from the town to hear what Jesus had to say. Jesus refused to _____ at that time and explained, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His _____" (John 4:34). Jesus' focus was on _____ the Father's will and teaching the people. Nothing else was as important. The Lord Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:33 to "seek first His _____ and His righteousness." What are you seeking? Paul urges us to "pursue righteousness" (2 Timothy 2:22). What are you pursuing?

There's only _____ way to be right with God, and that takes being justified by the blood of Jesus Christ. To be justified means that God _____ us as innocent of sin. Romans 5:8-9 says that "God demonstrates His own _____ towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the _____ of God through Him." We're saved by grace through faith when we put our trust in Christ, turn from sin in repentance, confess His name, and are baptized into Christ. Romans 6:3-7 says that in baptism we have newness of life, we're crucified with Christ, and we're freed from sin. Now baptism is an act of faith in the working of God (Colossians 2:12), and it results in being made alive in Christ and the forgiveness of sins. Consider being baptized into Christ today? If you hunger for righteousness, don't put off responding.

The Beauty of Forgiveness

When we realize that we're _____ spiritually, we seek for mercy. God's gracious _____ helps us understand the beauty of forgiveness. We're here to _____ the Scriptures for God's will. We search God's Word, because it gives us a glimpse into the heart of the One who can save us and give us _____ life. We want to please Him and follow His instructions out of _____ for Him. We're not interested in pursuing our _____ agenda but in pursuing God's will.

Seeing the beauty of forgiveness, David said, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose _____ is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!" (Psalm 32:1-2).

Someone has well noted that the beauty of grace and forgiveness is greatest when we realize the bitter misery and consequences of our sin. We love God most for His great sacrifice in the giving of Jesus upon the cross for our sins. "For Christ also _____ for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

Forgiveness is not forgetting but "forgetting against." When God forgives us, He no longer _____ our sins against us (2 Corinthians 5:19). He no longer holds _____ against us so that we might be reconciled to Him (2 Corinthians 5:20). Humans can't undo their past sins, but God can _____ them against us so that we're no longer guilty or in sin. Psalm 85:2-3 says of God: "You forgave the iniquity of your people and _____ all their sins. You set aside all your _____ and turned from your fierce anger." Because Jesus _____ the punishment for our sins, God no longer counts them against us.

Our reading today comes from 1 Timothy 1:12-16.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 says, "Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does _____ and who never sins." For that reason Psalm 130:3-4 says, "If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could _____? But there is _____ with You, That You may be feared." Without the grace and forgiveness of God, we would all be lost and _____ for eternal punishment. Without God's grace we have no _____.

But Micah 7:18-19 reveals the _____ of God: "Who is a God like You, who _____ our iniquity, And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He doesn't _____ His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging _____. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will _____ all their sins Into the depths of the sea." Because of His great love and grace, God has compassion on us and disposes of our iniquities and sins, so they are no longer on His _____.

Forgiveness is indeed a beautiful _____ on God's part. David wrote, "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to _____ and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not _____ with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is

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His lovingkindness toward those who _____ Him. As far as the east is from the west, So far has He _____ our transgressions from us. Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who _____ Him” (Psalm 103:8-13). I’m deeply grateful for the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10) who can _____ us in times of temptation and can forgive us when we sin against Him. What does forgiveness do?

First, forgiveness _____ one from the bondage of sin. John 8:34 says, “everyone who sins is a _____ to sin”; but verse 36 says, “if the Son _____ you free, you will be free indeed.” Romans 6:17-18 reminds us, “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became _____ from the heart to that form of _____ to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became the slaves of righteousness.” God’s Word gives us the _____ to freedom from sin. Earlier in the chapter we _____ about that form of teaching that frees. Romans 6:3-7 says that our baptism into Christ means that “our old self was crucified with him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no _____ be slaves to sin; for he who died is freed from sin.”

Second, forgiveness releases one from the _____ or penalty that’s incurred by sin. Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is _____, but the free gift of God is eternal _____ in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Sin separates us from God, and without forgiveness we’ll _____ separated from God eternally. Forgiveness releases one from the _____, in spite of what one may deserve. Forgiveness shouldn’t be confused with injustice, as when a guilty person _____ punishment through lies or bribes. Forgiveness is a pardon; the sin was _____ but now no longer matters because Jesus bore the punishment for our sins on the cross.

Third, forgiveness creates the opportunity for a _____ beginning. Second Corinthians 5:17 says “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (a new creature); the _____ has (passed away, it’s) gone, and the _____ has come!” Forgiveness means God has cleared out the old record of sin, and God looked upon us as if we had _____ sinned. His past, your past, my past, no longer matters to God, for we have _____ to sin and have undergone a new birth in Christ. With the past buried by the love of God, God and man can now start a new covenant relationship, brought about by the _____ of Jesus. This new birth (John 3:3-7) allows a person to _____ over with God. One can think, act and speak like _____.

Fourth, forgiveness is the _____ by which God reconciles the world to Himself. Reconciliation involves repairing a division caused by _____ between two parties. Sin causes hostility, anger between God and man. But reconciliation _____ the favor, and a loving relationship, between God and us. Second Corinthians 5:19 says, “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not _____ men’s sins against them.” Reconciliation is the bringing back into _____ a world that was alienated by sin.

Sin completely separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2), so that God no longer even _____ our prayers. Forgiveness restores the relationship by _____ the sin that causes the separation. When God forgives our sins, we can once again _____ God through Christ. Forgiveness is really better than merely forgetting, for by forgiving us God demonstrates His _____ to us (Romans 5:6-8) by sending Jesus to die for us. We at that time were powerless, ungodly, and sinful. But His love for us _____ us to love Him as well. What this does is it heals the _____ relationship and causes it to be one of love and stronger than ever. The cross reaches out to us in love and “compels us” to love Him and to _____ Him. “And he died for all that those who live should no _____ live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Forgiveness is not an _____ of the sin that people commit. Forgiveness implies a _____ has been done, and God never approves of sin. Forgiveness does not _____ what people do. Sin is not a trivial thing, but _____ the Lord Jesus His life. Forgiveness is not justifying what they did. Forgiveness doesn't _____ a sinful act into a righteous one. Forgiveness is not denying what they did; forgiveness _____ exposes and recognizes sin for what it is. Forgiveness is not turning a _____ eye or acting like something never happened; nor is it merely forgetting about something so serious. Forgiveness doesn't _____ to take what is immoral and what is wrong, to take it seriously. Forgiveness doesn't _____ sin is harmless; sin is wrong because of its destructive and harmful nature. Sin always causes somebody to get hurt, and every sin is an _____ to God.

God's forgiveness of our sins is a great _____ of love and grace. God is not naïve but fully aware of the evil that has been done; nothing escapes His _____. Because He's aware of the harmful _____ of our sins, we marvel at His gracious love to be willing to forgive. When God forgives, He chooses to keep _____ record of wrongs. He removes our sins and releases us from the guilt. When He forgives, He refuses to _____ us for those forgiven sins. Once forgiven, God doesn't endlessly _____ us of what we did. He doesn't any longer _____ those forgiven sins against us. Since God is merciful, He doesn't give us what we _____. He sees us for what we have _____, and not for what we did in the past.

Forgiveness is an _____ of the heart and will. Just as God chose to give up Jesus to the cross because He loved us, God chooses to accept the atoning _____ of Jesus for our sins because He loves us. Jesus willingly and lovingly chose the path to the cross to bear our sins in His body, so that we might _____ to sin and _____ to righteousness. By His wounds we are healed of sin (1 Peter 2:24). Even though we had grievously sinned against God, God has had compassion on those who fear Him in Christ. He knows we are weak and helpless and in _____ of saving. Forgiveness opens the door to our salvation.

God is also forgiving for His _____ sake. Think about this; God said, "I, even I, am the one who _____ out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins" (Isaiah 43:25). Sin _____ a separation and hostility between the sinner and God. Forgiveness _____ that bitterness, and anger, and hatred over some past offense. Psalm 103:9 says God "will not always strive (or fight) with us, nor will He _____ His anger forever." God would rather _____ those who come to Him humbly, lovingly, and penitently than remain angry forever.

The point of God's forgiveness is reconciliation. He wants to have a _____ relationship with you and me. Through Christ He is reconciling the _____ to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). This gracious forgiveness leads us to _____ our ways. We love because He _____ loved us (1 John 4:19). Ephesians 4:30-31 says to us, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be _____ to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." Because we are forgiven by God's _____, we don't let sin reign in our lives. Because we are forgiven, we _____ the old ways of sin with a life of good deeds that honors the Lord. Because we are forgiven, we aren't afraid to lead other people to God's forgiveness.

With confidence Christians can _____ in the grace and the forgiveness of God. They can say, "By God's grace I'm washed, sanctified, and justified in the _____ of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. I'm forgiven and can have a _____ conscience. I'm once again a _____ with God. The old man of sin has died. I'm _____ again into God's family with newness of life. I pray to my Father with confidence, knowing that He will do _____ than I ask or think. I'm blessed with the _____ of God, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. I'm a fellow _____ with the saints in the kingdom of heaven. I'm a _____ of the body of Christ with a purpose and function. I have _____

spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. Jesus has prepared for me a permanent dwelling place in _____ with my Father, where He will show me the “immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.”

Occasionally someone asks, “Did God _____ forgive my sins?” I answer yes. You can find His _____ in the Word of God, and God keeps His promises. God said, “For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will _____ their sins no more” (Hebrews 8:12). You can count on the promises of God, because God is _____. God was able to forgive those who crucified Christ on the day of Pentecost when they _____ and were baptized (Acts 2:38); God was able to show grace and wash the sinners of the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; and God was able to _____ away the sins of the apostle Paul who was at one time the foremost of sinners, the chief of sinners, but he was baptized and his sins were washed away (Acts 22:16). So we can have confidence that He’s _____ to save us as well.

Recall 1 Timothy 1:15-16. “I thank him who has given me _____, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though I formerly was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent opponent. But I received _____ because I acted ignorantly and unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to _____ sinners, of whom I am foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost (the chief), Jesus Christ might _____ his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.” God can forgive you too, if you will humbly _____ Him.

David said, “For You, Lord, are good, and _____ to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You” (Psalm 86:5). God will forgive if we _____ our hearts to Him. Isaiah 55:7 says, “Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly _____.”

We can call upon God like David did in Psalm 51:2; “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion, _____ out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.” God is gracious and wants _____ people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God doesn’t want anybody to be _____. Sadly, some won’t accept God’s provision to save us and instead _____ to remain accountable for their sin.

God has called us through the _____, which has God’s power to save (Romans 1:16). God calls us to _____ to His message. The gospel is the good news of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. When we place our faith in Christ, turn from evil to good, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and are baptized into Christ, God Himself washes away our sins and forgives us. When by faith we’re clothed with Christ in baptism, we become children of God (Galatians 3:26-27) and we’re born again (John 3:5). In baptism God redeems us and reconciles us to Himself. When we’re baptized, God adds us to His kingdom, the church. Oh, I hope and pray that you aren’t saying no to God. I hope you’re saying yes to Him, that you want and need to become a Christian.

The Righteous Life

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are _____. For the gate is narrow and the way is straight that leads to life, and those who find it are _____.” Which way are you going? We look to _____ with a hunger and thirst for righteousness. The Scriptures teach us how to _____ God and to live in a right relationship with Him. We want nothing less than to _____ God with all our heart and soul. God has _____ to satisfy our hunger and thirst for righteousness, if we turn from evil and seek His face.

The apostle Paul asked a serious question, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in _____ that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who _____ to sin still live in it?” (Romans 6:1-2). The grace that forgives our sins is the marvelous _____ of God. Faith in God, repentance of sin, and baptism lead to _____ from sin. When we repent, we die in our hearts to sin. We no longer determine to live in sin but to _____ the Lord Jesus. Grace and repentance work hand in hand. Grace forgives at baptism, but repentance _____ the heart toward righteousness and away from sin.

Titus 2:11-14 says, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, _____ us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to _____ self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed _____, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to _____ us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” Grace teaches us to _____ for the Lord and to turn away from evil. Allowing God’s love and grace to work in our hearts and lives yields the _____ of righteousness.

Our reading comes from the Second Epistle of Peter 1:5-11. Here we have the Word of God that gives us great and precious promises and gives us all that we need for life and Godliness. This requires faith, but it requires more than faith.

Righteousness generally _____ adherence to what is required according to God’s teaching and moral standards. Sadly some have sought to establish their _____ righteousness, since they didn’t know about God’s righteousness and didn’t subject themselves to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:3). The Pharisees adopted many humanly conceived traditions that caused them to _____ God’s own commandments, rendering their pursuit of ‘their own righteousness’ futile (Matthew 15:3-14).

Today people still think of themselves as being righteous, though they _____ and even celebrate what God calls sin in their lives. Many churches today _____ that we come as we are and leave the same way. Many ignore or forget the need to _____ (Luke 13:3, and Acts 17:30). So not wishing to confront or offend, many preachers no longer _____ of repentance. Repentance demands that we _____ our hearts from sin and reverse our lifestyles as well. Those who reject or ignore God’s laws become a _____ law to themselves, subjective and usually permissive. By doing so, they set their minds and hearts on their own _____. They don’t realize their rejection of God’s laws means they _____ be righteous in His eyes.

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Romans 8:5-8 says, “For those who are according to the flesh set their _____ on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is _____, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it doesn’t subject itself to the law of God, for it’s not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot _____ God.” If you wish to be right with God, you must consider where the _____ of your heart lies.

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 _____. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it’s better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into _____. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it’s 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). What we think about in our hearts matters, and we must learn to _____ our eyes, our thoughts, and our desires. Whether it’s the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life, we must _____ to deal with it.

Many today have forgotten the momentary _____ of sin have a high price. They may imagine there are no _____, but Scripture repeatedly warns of the dangers of sin. “Be sure your _____ will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). God will even _____ the secret sins (Romans 2:16). One may feel he’s justified in his actions and yet he’s only _____ himself. “There is a way which _____ right to a man, But its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12). All the changes happening in our _____ won’t turn a lie into the truth, won’t turn sin into righteousness, won’t turn the immoral things into moral, and it won’t justify having no morality at all.

Sin always _____ more than we think. Sin will always yield more _____ than we thought. The _____ of sin, which is death, will last longer than we can imagine (Romans 6:23). If we think we can live for our desires and never face any consequences, we’re only _____ to ourselves. Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Don’t be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man _____, 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 _____ life.”

Therefore, the faithful Christian who hungers and thirsts for righteousness needs to _____ virtue, integrity, and purity. The word “virtue” describes _____ excellence. The virtuous person not only avoids sin, he’s also highly involved in doing _____ to others. For him the pursuit of what is good is foremost in his daily thoughts. Paul described the way a Christian should think, “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there’s any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Not only does the virtuous person think properly, he _____ what he believes. Like Jesus in Acts 10:38, he goes about doing _____ and blessing others. He does more than is expected for others and is _____ to all. Since he knows he belongs to Jesus Christ, he looks for opportunities to _____ others. They please God and bless all who know them. Ephesians 5:-2 says, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and _____ Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

The righteous person is a person of integrity and honesty. He takes seriously the admonition in Romans 12:17, to “respect what is _____ in the sight of all men.” A righteous person is honest with himself, he’s honest with others. He doesn’t lie, cheat, or steal; and he doesn’t cover up for those who

do. A righteous person does an honest day's _____ for an honest day's _____. A person of integrity keeps his _____. Psalm 15 describes the person as one who shows integrity: whenever "he swears to his own hurt and does not change; He doesn't put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent." Integrity in _____ makes a person trustworthy.

The righteous man also values _____. The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are those who are pure in heart, for they shall _____ God" (Matthew 5:8). Paul urged Timothy to show himself an _____ of purity (1 Timothy 4:12). He said, "Now _____ from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). The righteous man shows self-control in his thoughts and his behavior. Sadly, some people _____ their minds, their speech, and their behavior to become anything but pure. Titus 1:15 says, "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, _____ is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled." Do people see you as a person of virtue, integrity, and purity?

Righteousness can also _____ to God's character of holiness and purity. We serve a holy and pure God, who doesn't sin, and doesn't permit sin, to please Him. We can learn about becoming righteous through the _____. The apostle Paul said, "For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the _____ 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 for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall _____ by faith'" (Romans 1:16-17).

The apostle Paul did not want a righteousness that comes from keeping the Mosaic Law but one that comes from _____ in Christ Jesus. Paul, who had been a leading Jew and a Pharisee wrote, "But whatever things were _____ to me, those things I've counted as _____ for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing _____ of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may _____ Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may _____ to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:7-11).

Because of Jesus, we can become _____ with God and enjoy the blessings of being His children and in His grace. Jesus suffered to redeem us and to make us right with God. The One "who knew no sin _____ sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might _____ to sin and _____ to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

We can have a right relationship with God through _____ in Jesus Christ. We're justified (that is, made righteous) "as a gift by His _____ through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:22-24). It's by the grace of God through faith that we're freed from the condemnation of sin and are able enjoy newness of life, being _____ again into the family of God and able to enter the kingdom of God. Of course, the faith that saves is an _____ faith (Romans 1:5).

The Lord Jesus said, "And you shall _____ the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). Righteousness means loving God with all your heart and allowing God to _____ in your heart. Many think of love as a _____ of the heart, but love for God requires the whole person: heart, soul, mind and strength. The Lord Jesus said love for God includes how we _____ to His commandments. He said, "If anyone loves me, he will _____ my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with

him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not _____ but the Father's who sent me" (John 14:23-24). Faith alone is not enough to show love for God; one must _____ be obedient to His will.

It means loving the things that God loves and avoiding the things that _____ God. It's all about Jesus Christ being your Savior but also your _____. You long for His mercy and grace, but you also must _____ His being your Lord and Master. Righteousness is all about _____ with God and giving God a home in your life. We won't find purpose, love, rest, joy, peace, or hope, _____ we find it in the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll remain hungry for righteousness until you taste and see the Lord is _____. Augustine of Hippo was right about our need for God when he said, "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in thee."

Jesus calls us to that rest, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will _____ you rest. Take My yoke upon you and _____ 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). If you wish to live as a righteous person, then come, come to the Lord Jesus.

What does the righteous life look like? How does living for the Lord make a difference? Galatians 5:22-24 says, "But the _____ of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; and against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the _____ with its passions and desires." These are marvelous gifts and beautiful ways of life; they _____ everyone. When you hunger and thirst for righteousness, that leads you to _____ in faith and obedience, and the blessings of life grow each day. God's grace can make a difference! Don't doubt what God can do in your life, if you deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acting in faith means putting away your _____ way of life and taking up the Lord's way. You can't find God's satisfying ways while you _____ in sin. You must hunger and thirst for righteousness. Do you thirst for God? Place your faith in the Lord Jesus and believe in the gospel. Turn from sin and follow the Lord in repentance. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38).

The apostle Peter wrote, "Corresponding to that, baptism now _____ you—not the removal of the dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). If you wish to be saved, don't argue with God or hold to your sins; be _____ to the Lord in faith. Today is the best day to let that hunger for righteousness lead you to be filled with faith, love, and peace.

We hope today's study has stirred you to consider whether you're living the righteous life. So focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. There's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one.