

# When I Have Christ



Phil Sanders

# **SEARCH PROGRAMS**

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*Topics subject to change without notice*

## **APRIL 7 – I KNOW I AM LOVED**

When you have Christ in your life, you can say, “I know I am loved.” Even if you feel unloved by others and by the world, you can see the love of Christ, who suffered upon the cross to bring you to God.

## **APRIL 14 – I HAVE A NEW LIFE**

You can start over again with a new and better life. The Lord causes every person who becomes a Christian to be born again. Yes, every person who obeys the gospel is born again. You can have a new life!

## **APRIL 21 – I CAN KNOW THE ANSWER**

There is so much uncertainty in this world and questions that seem to have no answer. But when you have Christ, you can know the truth that will set you free from doubts and fears prevalent in this world.

## **APRIL 28 – I HAVE HOPE FOR HEAVEN**

When you have Christ, you have hope and a promise of life beyond with the Lord Jesus. One day Christians will enjoy the place prepared and kept for them, a place that is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away.

## I Know I Am Loved

Now all this month, we're presenting a series of lessons with the theme, "When I Have Christ." We believe you'll be blessed by seeing the value of having Christ in your life. There's certainly a big difference between having Christ and not having Christ. If you do have Christ as your Lord and Savior, you'll be blessed beyond measure; but if you don't have Christ in your life, you're cheating yourself out of all the treasures of Christ in this life and in the life to come. Today we're focusing on knowing we are loved in Christ.

I recent spent a few weeks in South Korea teaching the gospel. My host during that week had been involved in prison ministry for many years. There are 44,000 prisoners in this country of 55 million people. And my friend had visited every prison in the nation. He said there was one thing that seemed common among all the prisoners: they grew up unloved. I tell you, love is vital to our well-being, and being unloved is one of the most cruel things in the world. We can shout it on the housetops: when you have Christ, you are indeed loved!

Our reading today comes from the very word of Jesus. Found in the gospel according to John chapter 15 verses 8 to 11.

"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Oh Father help us always to show our love to You by producing fruit and by keeping Your commandments. And Father help us always to abide in Your love and do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

Ethan the Ezrahite sang in Psalm 89 verse 1, "I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations." Oh the love of God is certainly something to sing about! In his pain at the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations 3:22 to 25, "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.' The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him."

The Lord Jesus said in John 3:16 to 17, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, (some say His only Son) that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." The Lord Jesus is in the saving business because He knows our needs. And one of those is to be saved. And He knows we need to be saved from the guilt and consequences of sin. We need to be rescued from the evil in this world.

I don't care who you are, what you've done in the past, what you're doing now, or what other people say about you. God loves you, and the Lord Jesus loves you. God loves every single person. And each person has been made in His image and created by Him. Now you may not love yourself; others may despise you; but God loves and cares about you. He loved you enough to send His Son to this earth to die for your sins. He loves you enough to give you an opportunity to make a change in your life and become something better than what you have been. God wants you to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Now the Lord Jesus said in John 12:32, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." Jesus was lifted up when He bore the cross. And that sacrifice and suffering have a power to help us see the love of God. God's amazing and immeasurable love was demonstrated in the cross of Christ.

Romans 5:6 to 10 says, "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward 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 wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." God wanted to be reconciled to the people who sinned against Him and were His enemies. I confess to you that the love of God is greater than I can describe.

1 Peter 3 and verse 18 says, "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, so that He might bring you to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." Yes Jesus suffered to show you His love and to reconcile you to the Father in heaven, against Him, against whom rather, you have sinned. Now no matter how painful the suffering and agony of the cross was, Jesus remained there until He drew His very last breath. He never failed us and never gave up on us. And love means caring so much for another that you would sacrifice yourself, your desires, and even your life for the best interests of another.

People who have known the love of God, the love of the Lord Jesus, will also bless others with the love that they themselves enjoy. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love, because He first loved us." You see, God's love fills our hearts with love. And the love of Christ causes much love in all the world. Love teaches us kindness, forgiveness, and patience. Love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:7 to 8).

Psalm 136 says 26 times that "His steadfast love endures forever." Now this "steadfast love" is a loyal love, full of grace and mercy. And it reveals God's covenant love. When we today are baptized into Christ, we enter the new covenant with Christ and enjoy his faithful love and favor, which includes redemption from sin. Now Exodus 34 and verse 6 describes our God as "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."

I tell ya even when the harshest things of life fall on us, we can count on the love of God. Romans 8:35 to 39 says, "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." I tell ya God is loyal to us; let's be loyal to Him!

1 John 4 and verse 16 says, "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." Does the love of God abide in you? We must not only know God exists but also know how much He loves us. And no matter how educated you are, your education is incomplete if you have no knowledge of God or of His love for you.

Mark 12:28 to 31 says: And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he (Jesus) answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important

of all? Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Loving God and loving our neighbor is the answer to so many problems in this world.

God desires that we love Him, and He teaches us how to love Him. We all have to learn how to love our parents, love our spouses, and love our children. You see love is a verb, and we must learn how to love others. To love anyone you must know them well enough to know how to please them. You do this by listening to them. To love the Lord Jesus, we must listen to Him. And He'll tell us how to show our love for Him. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." Now that's easy to understand. Some people falsely call careful obedience legalism, but Jesus calls it love.

Obedying the Lord is how we show our love. 1 John 2:3 to 6 says: And by this we know that we have come to know him, (that is have that relationship with Him) if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him", I got this love for God, but doesn't keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. And by this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." Now don't tell the Lord you love Him and then live like a pagan or do your own thing. You're just fooling yourself, and God knows when He is and is not loved.

The Lord Jesus said in John 13:34 to 45, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Disciples not only love God; they love brothers and sisters in Christ. 1 John 4:7 to 11 the bible says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (and) By this the love of God was manifested in us that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (that is the atoning sacrifice) Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

I tell you if everyone loved today the way that Jesus loves us, we wouldn't have war, we wouldn't have crime, and we wouldn't have the violence all around us. You know some point to wars started by Christians. But I tell ya the lips of Jesus never started a war. When others have started wars against the people of God, the Lord Jesus protects His people. The Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 5:43 to 48, "You have heard that it was said, 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' (Jesus said) But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Colossians 3:14 to 15 says this to Christians, "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful." The love of Christ is love designed to make peace inside our hearts and with others all around us. Romans 12:17 to 21 says, "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty,

give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

You see when I love others, it's like showing my love for Jesus Himself! The Lord Jesus reminds us that when we feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and the prisoner, we are serving Him (Matthew 25 verses 34 to 40). Christians love their brothers and sisters in Christ and even love their enemies. God doesn't want anyone to perish in sin, and you know what, neither do we. And that's why we bring this broadcast to you week after week. Now even speaking against sin is an act of love and kindness. We don't do it out of meanness. And when we speak of repenting and obeying the Lord, we're asking because we love you and want you to love the Lord Jesus too. And to live to please Him.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for the love that You have given to us. And help us to be loving people towards others, even our enemies. Father we're thankful that You teach us the right ways to live and help us to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

If God so loved you, how are you showing your love for God. Now if God were examining your live would He look down at you and say, now there's somebody who really loves me. Somebody who really cares about the things that I care about and takes me seriously. You see keeping the commandments of Christ is how we show our love for Him. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:15 that, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Folks that's not hard to understand. Later on He explains in verses 23 and 4 that, "If anyone loves me, he will keep 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 mine but the Father's who sent me." Now if you want to be close to God, if you really want and care about Him and live eternally with God, be that close, then love Him enough to keep His commandments. If you keep His commandments, He will make His home with you.

The love and blessing of God does have conditions. God loves those who love Him and keep His commandments in a way that is beyond His love for all others. Those who obey His will have reconciled to God and will live with God forever. Have you obeyed His will?

To become a Christian, hear the word of God, believe in Jesus and His word, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ is Lord and the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). You see the baptism that puts people into Christ is an immersion in water. In baptism we are crucified with Christ, we're buried with Christ, and raised up with Christ to walk in newness of life and free from sin (Romans 6 verses 3 to 7). Now perhaps you were once faithful to Christ but have drifted away from Him. And you've drifted away from the church. Repent and return to the Lord Jesus. Confess your sins, and the Lord will forgive. Please obey the Lord today!

## I Have a New Life

Have you ever wished that you could start over without the guilt and shame of the past? Do you regret what choices that you've made and what they caused you to be. Do you wish you could become someone different? Well when you decide to follow Jesus Christ, you can become the person that you can respect. You can have a good conscience rather than live in guilt and shame. The Lord can rewrite your future rather than let your past determine your destiny. The Lord wants to redeem you from sin and give you a new life filled with love and mercy.

Ah a guilty conscience filled with shame leads people to despise themselves; it's the worst life possible and has no place for joy or promise. A good conscience is a taste of heaven. Freedom from the guilt and shame of sin is a great blessing. Knowing that God's love and mercy shine down on you can fill your heart with love and gratitude. Knowing you have changed gives you a new life!

Our reading today is from John chapter 3 verses 3 to 7 and here we have Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews coming to Jesus and telling Him that he realizes that He is a teacher from God because of the signs that He does. Then verse 3 says that,

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?’ Jesus answered, ‘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 be amazed that I said to you, “You must be born again.””

That's a reading from God's holy word and it tells us that we must be born again. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so grateful for Your love. We're so grateful that You have given us a way that we can be new and have a new life in Christ. And we're thankful Father for all the love You give us. For the joy that we have in Christ and for the grace that's shown to us. Help us to always do Your will. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new (creature or) creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” Whether or not we are in Christ matters greatly. We want what Christ Jesus offers—a new and better life filled with love and the favor of God! When you have the new life in Christ, God's grace shines on you. He hears your prayers and protects you as His child.

In Philippians 3:4 to 11 Paul describes the change in his life from Pharisaism to Christianity: he said, “Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks (that) he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”

Now all the humanly praiseworthy things as a Pharisee don't even touch what it means to Paul to know Christ Jesus as his Lord. Whatever human gains he had were just rubbish, compared to knowing Jesus and the power of his resurrection. Pharisaism led to developing your own righteousness apart from Christ. And it didn't work. You can't earn righteousness or salvation. You must have the blood of Jesus and faith in what He's done for us on the cross.

Paul continues in Philippians 3:12 to 14 saying, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Paul put his focus on the Lord, and he strains forward to serve the Lord and he forgets what lies behind. He won't let anything keep him from the prize of going to heaven to be with the Father and the Son.

2 Corinthians 5:14 to 15 says, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died. And He died for all, so that they who live would no longer live for themselves, (no) but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." When I have this new life, Jesus Christ is not only my Savior, He's also my Lord. He is my Master to whom I have given myself and for whom I live. Newness of life means one denies himself and takes up his cross daily to follow the Lord. And it's a lifelong commitment. We learn that we don't belong to ourselves.

And this applies to every aspect of our lives. Our time, our money, our pursuits in life, and our morals should reveal to all that we belong to Christ. The Corinthians, as a people, were sexually immoral, but when Corinthians became Christians they were to leave sexual immorality behind. Paul said to them in 1 Corinthians 6:18 to 20, "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

Many of the books of the New Testament were written to people who had lived in idolatry as pagans at one time. The Corinthians and Ephesians were Gentiles who did not know the Lord or His ways. You see they lived in selfish, fleshly pursuits because they were ignorant of God and of His ways. Ephesians 4:17 to 19 describes their lifestyle, "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity." And I think, what a sad condition! They were living with futile minds, darkened in understanding, alienated from God, ignorant, hard-hearted, and callous. But God still loved them and wanted them to know the blessings that were found in Christ. And that there's a better way.

Paul contrasts that Gentile lifestyle in the next verses, Ephesians 4:20 to 24. He says, "But that is not the way (that) you learned Christ! — assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

By the grace of God, Christians put off the old self and put on the new person. They become godly and want to be like God. God grants us repentance, which is a change of heart that leads to a change of ways. The old life was selfish and corrupted through deceitful desires, but the new life pursues true righteousness and holiness. Are you following the ways of the old man of sin or the new ways of righteousness?



The Lord offers us a way to leave the old behind and begin a new life in Christ. And we should take advantage of this great blessing. Colossians 2:12 to 13 says, "having been buried with him (that is Christ) in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses." Now our forgiveness and unity with Christ takes place when we are baptized. This comes from the powerful working of God. He saved us. 1 Peter 3:21 explains that, "Baptism, which corresponds to this (that is, God saving Noah on the ark), now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Colossians 3:1 to 4 recalls our resurrection with Christ in baptism. It says "Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you died and your life has been hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory." The person who raised up with Christ has a new mindset of seeking things above, being able to live with Christ in glory forever. They realize they will share the glory of Christ when He comes again. Setting your heart on the Lord will replace setting your heart on the things of this life that are going to perish. A focus on the cross and the resurrection will take your focus off of fleshly things.

Peter also talks about a Christian's change in life in 2 Peter 1:3 to 11: he says that, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly (kindness or) affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he's blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Now Christianity is a faith built upon the knowledge of Christ who has called us by the gospel to His own glory and excellence. And when we study and obey the gospel, we become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world. Now God expects His people to grow and to become more like Him each day. For this reason, we must make every effort to add to our faith several important qualities.

We must add virtue or moral excellence and become people who others respect. We must add knowledge, knowledge of God and the truth. We must add self-control as people who exercise control over our desires. We must add perseverance, the capacity to bear up under difficult circumstances. We must add godliness, being people who have appropriate beliefs and practice our faith. We must add brotherly kindness, affection and compassion for our fellow believers. And last but foremost, we must add love, the willingness to sacrifice ourselves for the benefit of others.

Now notice that at the end of this list is an “if.” We are to be “all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election.” And if we do so, we won't be unfruitful or ineffective. If we practice these qualities, we will never fall and be able to enter the eternal kingdom of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. However, if we fail to persevere in these qualities and turn our back on God, we can't count on receiving the promises of God. We must be all the more diligent to confirm our calling and election. The idea that we can quit growing spiritually and serving the Lord but still be called faithful is never contemplated in Scripture. The idea of “once-saved, always saved” is not in the New Testament. No one believed it until the 1500s. It's a human doctrine.

You may be in the middle of deciding if you wish to follow the world or if you wish to follow the Lord Jesus. Becoming a Christian is a lifelong commitment; there is no retirement plan in this life. And when you become a Christian and remain faithful, however, you will enjoy a lifelong blessing of salvation and joy. You'll have the love and grace of the Lord Jesus. And you can have the peace that passes understanding. You can have a forever future with the Lord in heaven.

When you've been redeemed from sin, made a child of God, become a Christian, and when you have repented, you can have a good conscience. You can say, “I'm not all I ought to be; I'm not all I want to be; I'm not all I'm going to be; but thank God by His mercy and grace I'm not what I used to be.” Oh you can live in hope and promise. Do you have newness of life? Have you been born again in the waters of baptism? If not I hope you'll do that today.

Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for Your love and for Your kindness. For the grace that we have to able to have newness of life. And Father help us every day our whole lives through to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

The grace of God opens the door by the cross of Christ for us to have newness of life. When we obey the Lord, we aren't earning our salvation, we're acting by faith in the working of God (according to Colossians 2:12 to 13). You see, God causes us to have newness of life, just as He caused Jesus to have newness of life. Jesus had to die before He could be raised, and we have to be crucified and buried with Christ in baptism before we can have a new life too. God is active in baptism, and we are passive.

Paul said to Christians in Romans 6:3 to 7, “Do you not know that all of us who have 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. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.”

Faith, repentance, and baptism by immersion, all bathed in love, are necessary for newness of life and salvation. Now make no mistake: you must obey the Lord in the way that He teaches. He is the true Lord and He's the one that determines what one does to obey the gospel. No church council or preacher can change the Lord's commands. And many deceive themselves, thinking the Lord will accept us however we act. Well, that's not true. Love obeys; it doesn't substitute a human path and then call it obedience.

## I Can Know the Answer

Now this month we're focusing on the theme, "When I Have Christ." And this week we're exploring about "When I have Christ, we can know the answer." The world is full of crazy notions and outrageous proposals, but most of human philosophy still has no answer to the basic questions:

How did I get here? Who am I? How did I become conscious? Why am I here? Or, what will happen to me when I die? People can assume all kinds of answers, but without Christ there is nothing but futile guessing.

I believe in God and in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And my faith is no leap in the dark; it's built upon careful study of Christian evidences over the last half century. I have hundreds of books on God's existence and the resurrection and have spent countless hours studying if what the Scripture says is true. I found it to be true, and you can weigh the evidence for yourself as well. There is more available on Christian evidences today than at any time in history.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Colossians chapter 2 verses 1 through 6.

"For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for (all) those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ. Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,"

And yes we need today to walk in Him. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have given us Your word that helps us to know all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And Father help us to continue to walk in Christ and to do Your will out of love. In Jesus name, Amen.

We frequently hear people repeat the idea that, "There are no absolute truths. That all truths are relative!" Well we wonder how they know that. If all truths are relative and there are no absolutes, then the statement "there are no absolute truths" is not absolute either! And of course this is a self-contradictory and a self-contradictory statement. There are some absolute truths. Oh yes. You can't fly into the sun and not burn up. And your body can't go without oxygen for a long time and still survive. Yes that's absolute.

Now others that say we can't know the truth. They suggest all recorded history is biased by the author and only suggests partially the truth. But history can be tested by numerous means. And one can test the trustworthiness of the author, one can test the trustworthiness of what is recorded by looking at the facts revealed. As for Jesus, we know there was a Jerusalem, we know the Romans crucified people in the first century, we know the way they buried people, and we know about the Jewish Sanhedrin. We know from many sources the disciples believed in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. We know the church started on the day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus.

The religious historian, Gary Habermas in his book, *The Historical Jesus*, said that he had examined 45 ancient sources outside the New Testament for the life of Jesus and found "129 reported facts concerning the life, person, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus, plus the disciples' earliest message" (he says this on page 250). And he explains on page 251, "While some believe that we know almost nothing about Jesus from ancient, non-New Testament sources, this is plainly not the case. Not only are there many such sources, but Jesus is one of the persons of ancient history concerning whom we

have a significant amount of quality data. He is one of the most mentioned and most substantiated lives in ancient times". Historians of the first century almost unanimously recognize Jesus was a real person living at that time.

The four gospel accounts, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, plus the book of Acts all agree that Jesus arose bodily from the dead. Biblical writers Peter and Paul write about this as an indisputable fact substantiated by eyewitnesses. Now these men were in the best place to examine the facts of the matter. They proclaimed their reason for faith in Jesus publicly and suffered for their message. They never took it back. They died for preaching the gospel, which includes God raised up Jesus from the dead.

Now interestingly, the first written record of the resurrection of Jesus came not from the twelve but from a former enemy, Saul of Tarsus, who became the apostle Paul. Now if Paul had not truly witnessed the resurrection, he would never have left his zealous commitment to Judaism to become a Christian. He candidly wrote about converting to Christ and preaching the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1 to 4: he says, "Now I would remind you, brothers, (and sisters) of the gospel (that) I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."

Now early Christians believed in Christ and received the gospel they were taught at great cost to themselves. They had to take a stand on their faith against a pagan world that mocked and persecuted them. Many were imprisoned and lost their lives for their faith, because they believed eyewitness testimony.

Lee Strobel, interviewing Gary Habermas, put the number of witnesses to the resurrection appearances into perspective in his book, *The Case for Christ*. And Habermas said, "Without question, the amount of testimony and corroboration of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances is staggering. To put it into perspective, if you were to call each one of the (more than 500) witnesses into a court of law to be cross-examined for just fifteen minutes each, and you went around the clock without a break, it would take you from breakfast on Monday until dinner on Friday to hear them all. After listening to 129 straight hours of eyewitness testimony, who could possibly walk away unconvinced?"

These eyewitnesses would wonder how anyone could doubt the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 15:6 how Jesus "appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep." Now his statement implies one could ask one of these more than 500 eyewitnesses if Jesus arose. He had no doubt what they witnessed, and what he witnessed, was true. He gladly suffered for a lifetime to preach Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead.

Now if Jesus died on the cross, and if God raised Him up from the dead, then Jesus fulfilled not only the Old Testament prophecies but also His own prophecies. Now the fulfillment of these prophecies is another evidence of the deity of Jesus. One doesn't fulfill exactly a prophecy hundreds of years old, unless God makes it happen. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 speak of the suffering servant Jesus, and how He died on the cross for our sins. Acts 2:24 and 2 verse 31 refer to the prophecy found in Psalm 16:10, "For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption." Though dead, Jesus' body did not decay before He came up from the grave. And His Spirit was in the place where departed spirits go, but it did not stay there. God put His spirit into a healed physical body, which would later be glorified.

The Lord Jesus prophesied some amazing things to His disciples before He died. He said in Matthew 20:18 to 19, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock

and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up.” Jesus knew exactly what would happen to Him when He went to Jerusalem. He also prophesied that He would be raised on the third day! Now apparently, the chief priests and scribes took His prophecy seriously enough to ask Pilate to guard the tomb until the third day. That's found in Matthew 27:62 to 66. They even sealed the stone covering the tomb. Well, that didn't stop Jesus! The empty tomb, the moved stone, the grave clothes inside, the bold confidence of the disciples all point to Jesus' bodily resurrection!

Now if Jesus fulfilled prophecy, died on the cross, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day, then we can believe God's declaration with power by the resurrection that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. He is Christ and Lord. And if He is Lord, then we should believe in Him and believe what He says is true. We can take Him at His word. If what He says is true, then we would do well to listen to Him.

For this reason, we can learn many things from the Lord Himself. He is divine and He knows things that we cannot discover apart from Him. He lived, died, and was resurrected from the grave. And the gospel tells us much about ourselves, where we came from, why we are here and what will happen to us after we pass from this life.

Now we're alive because He created us. John 1 verses 1 to 3 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” Colossians 1:15 and 16 tells us even more that, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.” I tell you were not made for you yourself, and I wasn't made for me. I was made for Him. We're all created through Jesus and for Him.

And if we ask why we exist and what our purpose is, we can find answers in the words of Christ Jesus. We begin with the challenge to love God. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 22:37 to 40 that, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Love is indeed the highest good in life. Paul by inspiration proclaimed in 1 Corinthians 13:1 to 3 that, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” Without love for God and others in our hearts and souls, we are nothing in God's eyes.

Love is a verb and reveals what we were made to do in life. 1 John 3:16 to 18 says, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” Galatians 6:10 reminds us, “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Now notice here Paul says “we”; well, this could mean individuals or churches. After all, the book of Galatians was written to the churches of Galatia.

Because Jesus taught us about the afterlife in Luke 16:19 to 31, we know there's a place of comfort and a place of torment. If we have listened to God's word, the angels will take us to a place of comfort. If we have rejected God's word, then we'll find ourselves separated from the place of comfort and find ourselves in torment. Luke 16:19 to 31 is not a parable, though it's often called one. Rather it's a story

about the afterlife spoken to those who loved money and justified themselves but did not obey God. You know what only Jesus could have known these matters found in Luke 16:19 to 31. The places of comfort and torment are temporary and will last until the second coming.

When Jesus comes again, He will judge everyone who has lived from the beginning of time. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." Revelation 20:11 to 12 describes the scene. "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done."

I tell ya how we live and whether we serve God matters! And those who love and serve the Lord Jesus will enter their reward in heaven, but those who disbelieved and rebelled against Him will face the wrath of God for an eternity. Please deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Him.

Let's pray together. Oh Father we pray that You will help us all to deny ourselves. To take up our cross daily and to follow Your Son Jesus and to do this will out of love and faith in Him. And we can know that He teaches the truth. This is our pray in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen

If you wish to have Jesus as your Savior, you must also acknowledge Him as your Lord. Hebrews 5:8 to 9 says, "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." Now salvation comes through Christ. And it comes when we obey Him. Faith without obedience is a dead faith that can accomplish nothing.

Sadly, many imagine Jesus will save them no matter what they believe or how they behave. This, of course, is a fantasy. We can't exalt Jesus as Savior and ignore Him as our Lord. We can't expect His mercy and then reject His commandments. The Lord Jesus wants our faith and our obedience. He said in John 8 verse 24, "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." Well faith is necessary for our salvation. But the Lord Jesus also said in John 8:51, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."

Well, Paul said in his last book before he died, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." You see he's confidence of knowing what will happen should urge us to love, believe, and obey the Lord by repenting of our sins and being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. Let's lovingly do the will of God from our hearts.

## I Have Hope for Heaven

Our hope for heaven comes from believing the promises of God found in Scripture and knowing that they're true. Jesus promised in John 14:1 to 3, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." What could be better than spending an eternity in the house of God with our Lord Jesus?

Romans 8:17 reminds us that if we're children of God then, "we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ." We should all want our names to be written in book of life, so that we may have a home in heaven. In Christ we have a living hope for an inheritance with Christ, and nothing we possess on earth is as valuable as a home with Him.

Our reading today comes from the first letter of Peter chapter 1 verses 3 to 7. And talks about our home in heaven.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;"

Oh what a wonder promise of a living hope. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You give us hope. And Father we're thankful we it in Christ Jesus who loved us, died for our sins and rose again. And Father we pray that we may always do Your will and love You and love others. This is our pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Our inheritance in heaven is reserved especially for us by the power of God. God will reveal that inheritance to us at the last day when the Lord Jesus returns to take us home with Him. Now heaven is an eternal, blessed, pure, place filled with joy and love. And God will welcome us to that home He prepared for us in the most lavish and wonderful way. Heaven! We have a living hope!

Jesus is eagerly waiting for the day that He brings us home! And God longs for His children to come home and live with Him forever. Glorious and marvelous describe the day when God's children come home to heaven. The Lord Jesus said shortly before His death in John 14:1 to 3 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms (or dwelling places). If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

Jesus is now preparing your place. It's greater and grander than anything you've known in this life. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:4 to 7, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." We cannot conceive the joy, love, and peace being in heaven will bring to us. We can't afford to miss heaven.

Matt 19:16 to 22 says: And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

My friend, you can be moral and still not please God. Good morals by themselves won't save you. This young man wrongly put his money in front of God and allowed it to keep Him from following Jesus. You'll remember the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:24 that, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [that is money]." If you let anything come between you and God, you have chosen to separate yourself from God.

Someone else will likely say to the Lord, "well, I'm a Christian; my parents grandparents were Christians. We went to church every Sunday," or "my father was a preacher," or "my mother was a Sunday school teacher." You know some people think because they are kin to a deeply religious person, that this is enough to save them. Well a pedigree might impress some people, but a pedigree is not enough to guarantee entrance into heaven.

The apostle Paul once spoke of his religious background, which was most impressive to some. But he realized that having a good background didn't make one right with God. You remember the inspired apostle said in Philippians 3:7 to 8, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ." You see there was something better than his Jewish heritage and that something was Jesus Christ himself. He'd give it all up to know Jesus.

And some will look at the works and assume their works should lead to their salvation. In Luke 18:9 to 14 the Lord told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: that, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' Well, you might notice that even Jesus got tired of hearing this man read his resume about how good he was.

And then the Lord speaks about another man. But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' (and then Jesus said) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Now appealing to all our good works doesn't work with God, because our good works don't cancel out our sins. Did you hear that? God doesn't use a balance to weigh the good with the bad. Good works do not atone for sin and cannot earn you a place in heaven.

God's grace gives us the opportunity to go to heaven. God's grace does what we by ourselves cannot do. The tax-collector of Luke 18 said, "God be merciful to me, (and the New American Standard says,) the sinner." Any appeal for salvation must ultimately rest on the grace and mercy of God. It recognizes the gracious Father must tell us how to have access to His grace. We can't access it by ourselves. We



must act by faith in what God teaches. If God saves us, we must pay close attention to what He desires of us.

Can anyone ever do enough for salvation? For heaven? For all our blessings? For eternal life? For eternal joy, eternal fellowship, eternal health, and an eternal inheritance? No. My friend, if you could live a hundred lives of a hundred years and fill each one with constant service, you couldn't do enough to earn a place in heaven. No one is good enough. The Bible says in Romans 3 verse 10 that, "There is none righteous, no, not one." I can't live good enough on my own to please God. And nobody can. We're helpless and we need the grace of God.

The word 'grace' refers to a gift, and gifts are not earned. They are freely given. Our forgiveness, our salvation, our relationship with God is a gift. And we possess this gift because of the blood of Jesus Christ. Now gifts are free but they're not cheap—and they should never be cheapened by being taken for granted. Wives are a wonderful gift to their husbands, but they're not cheap or frivolous. Children are gifts from God according to Psalm 127 verse 3, but they must not be taken for granted. Children are a great responsibility. And just because something is a gift does not mean that it is cheap or trivial.

Some people cheapen grace by thinking the grace of God means they have no responsibility at all. I'm amazed at the common belief that people think that they will go to heaven regardless of how they have lived. People imagine they don't need to change their moral lives. Or they think they don't have to serve the Lord daily. But the Bible teaches exactly the opposite. We are saved to be different. Oh I know the song "Just as I Am." We all come to God as sinners needing the grace of God; but grace won't excuse immoral behavior. It expects our lives to change, to be like Christ. Listen to what the Bible says in Titus 2 verses 11 to 14: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." We're saved to be changed people. So don't cheapen the gift of grace by living a worldly life. Salvation ought to make a difference in how you live.

Now if God's grace is what saves us, then we need to know how God makes His grace available to us. If He gives forgiveness and He gives this forgiveness and eternal life as a gift, then we should want it for ourselves. And we should want it for everyone that we know. If someone is going to give me a priceless gift, I'm going to do whatever, whatever he asks. I'm not going to substitute my own way; I'm going to listen to Him and do just what He desires. I'm going to make it my aim to please Him. I won't try to change anything but simply believe and obey Him according to His terms. Why? Because I love Him.

To enjoy God's blessing, I must trust God and His Word. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:6 that, "without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." Now trusting God means trusting that His ways are better than mine. Now I know that God knows more than I do about spiritual matters. It means I'm going to listen to God and do what He says.

So, when God asks me to repent of my sins, I'm going to repent. The Bible says in Acts 17:30 to 31, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." You see repentance is necessary to have eternal life.

And, when the Lord commands me to be baptized, I won't question it. Being baptized is really not something that we do; it is actually something done to us. Physically a baptizer immerses us in water,

but spiritually God acts upon us. The notion that baptism is a work of man ignores what the Bible says about baptism. Colossians 2:12 to 13 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 (Jesus) from the dead. And you being dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him, having graciously forgiven us all our transgressions."

You see being baptized is an act of faith in what God did by raising Jesus from the dead. In baptism God unites us with the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. And in baptism God raises us up from spiritual death and forgives all our transgressions. God is the active one in our being baptized, and we are passive. In baptism God works on us. He causes our new birth and makes us His child in baptism. He adds us to the church when we're baptized. And we're united with Christ in baptism, and He has given us the living hope of heaven.

Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful that You had a plan for our lives. Help us to be obedient and loving toward that plan and to do whatever You ask us to do. And to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

Don't let anything keep you from a heavenly inheritance with Jesus Christ. You can be a fellow heir with Christ. And don't let anger and hatred keep you from heaven. You remember the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:14 to 15, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."

Don't let a lack of faith keep you from heaven. Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who draws near to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." You can build your faith by studying the Scriptures. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10 and verse 17). Don't let failing to repent keep you from heaven. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 13:3, "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

And don't let people deceive you about baptism. You must let God do His work on you when you're baptized. You must be baptized to be saved and free from sin (1 Peter 3 and verse 21). You must be baptized to be born again and have newness of life (John 3 and verse 5 and Romans 6 verses 3 to 7). Saul of Tarsus prayed and fasted for three days and nights before Ananias came to him and said, "Now why do you delay? Rise up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name" (Acts 22 verse 16). Now Saul of Tarsus still had a dirty soul that needed to be washed in the blood of Jesus, and you see, prayer alone will not do that. The Scriptures have no example of what some call the sinners' prayer. What we do find is the necessity of being baptized.