

Program Transcripts

September 2024



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

September 2024

Topics subject to change without notice

SEPTEMBER 1 – SOMEDAY I WILL

We often set our minds to do something, but we never get around to doing it. Procrastination is a problem we all face, but there comes a time when we can no longer put off what we must do to be right with God.

SEPTEMBER 8 – THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Have you ever wondered what the cross means to Christians? We could not enjoy the grace of God were it not for the blood of Jesus that was shed on the cross for our sins. We thank God Jesus was willing to die for us.

SEPTEMBER 15 – GETHSEMANE

Have you ever been so troubled and brokenhearted you wished you could die? That was the heart of Jesus on the night before He suffered. He faced the toughest of times but chose to do the will of the Father.

SEPTEMBER 22 – THE MERCY OF GOD

When our sins finally catch up to us, we realize how much we desperately need the mercy of God. God's mercy and compassion are the reasons He reached out to a world lost in sin and needing forgiveness.

SEPTEMBER 29 – FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Paul said, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free." Some think Christianity is a harsh life, but the Lord set us free from the guilt and consequences of sin. Christians are free to do good, to bless others, and to live eternally.

Someday I Will

Now just like medicine only works when you take it and soap only cleanses when you use it, the gospel message only saves when people act upon it out of faith and love. God's gift of salvation is available to everyone who is willing to accept and hold fast to it. What God freely gives must be accepted according to His will. We must respond to the Lord's Way out of love.

Our reading today comes from Acts chapter 24 verses 24 to 27. And they center around the governor named Felix. Now Felix had learned a little bit about Christianity but not everything. And Paul wants to teach him. Paul the evangelist the persuader. Verse 24.

“But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.” At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him. But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.”

Well Felix never got around to becoming a Christian. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so grateful for Your love and for the gospel which gives us the words of eternal life. And helps us to have the salvation that Jesus died for. We pray Father that we will always give attention to the gospel and not put it off. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, amen.

People are often like Felix and say, “When I find time, I will do this or that,” not realizing that they may never find that time or the desire. We all have books we never finished reading, tasks that we never finished doing, and people we never got around to visiting. We have good intentions but fail to make some necessary tasks our priority. We may not have as much time as we desire. Life is indeed short. Psalm 144:4 says that, “Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow.”

James 4:13 to 17 says, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.’ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

I tell you we aren't guaranteed tomorrow, next week, next month, or next year. And it's arrogant to think that we have all the time in the world to get right with God or to do the right thing. Some of the greatest regrets of our lives come from missing the opportunities we once had. There are sins of commission and sins of omission. We commit sins and know that we shouldn't have done those things. It fills us with regret and we seek repentance and forgiveness. But just as evil are our failures to do the right thing. We could have used our lives for the glory of God and blessed the people we love, but like the prodigal son wasted our lives on the things that lead us away from God.

The Lord Jesus made these points in Matthew 16:24 to 26 that, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?” What difference in eternity will it make if you have a bigger house, a better job, or a larger portfolio for retirement, if you have no relationship with the Lord? If you live for yourself and achieve all your dreams but don't know God, you'll lose it all and lose your soul. C. T. Studd, wrote two lines more than a hundred years ago that

should make us consider our ways: he said, "Only one life, twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last."

Now Solomon spoke directly to a young person in Ecclesiastes 11:9, "Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things."

You see Solomon had the world at his feet when he became king of Israel. He said in Ecclesiastes 2:9 to 11, "So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun."

Solomon understood that this life will soon pass, and he must leave this earth. He said in Ecclesiastes 12 and verse 7, "then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it." One day you'll surrender your spirit to God. Will you surrender it gladly or will you be filled with regret and fear? Solomon ended the book of Ecclesiastes with these words, "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13 to 14).

Because of his faith in God, Moses showed wisdom even when he was young. Hebrews 11:24 to 26 says, "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward." Moses understood living with God eternally is more valuable than anything we have on this earth.

Sinful activities may bring us fleshly pleasures today, but they cannot compare with the inexhaustible joy and pleasure of living with God throughout all eternity. Paul gave up all his accomplishments as a Jew in order to know Christ. He said in Philippians 3:4 to 8, "If anyone else thinks 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 (he says) 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." Following Christ must be our first, our first priority; nothing else will give us eternal life.

People say well, "Someday I will repent." And they forget they will not live forever and their souls are in the balance. You know the very first thing Jesus ever preached according to Matthew 4 and verse 17 was, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The very first words of Peter at Pentecost in Acts 2:38 to those who were guilty of crucifying the Lord Jesus was for them to repent and be baptized. Baptism without repentance is merely getting wet. We must change our hearts and change our ways. Repentance is how we correct the direction of our hearts and lives. Repentance is how with the grace of God heal our souls. We turn from a desire for sin to a hunger for righteousness. And instead of pleasing our flesh, we seek to please God.

The Lord Jesus simply said in Luke 13:3 that, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." There is no grace or salvation for the soul who will not repent. 2 Peter 3 verse 9 says, "The Lord is not slow

about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." Our Father in heaven is patient, but we must understand that His patience comes to an end when people refuse to repent.

Hebrews 10 verses 26 and 27 speaks to Christians who have quit serving the Lord and have given themselves to sin. It says, "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries." We must understand there is a limit to God's patience. When you refuse to repent but deliberately keep on sinning, the blood of Jesus will no longer be applied to your soul. God will stop forgiving.

People think well, "Someday I will discipline myself." Well Peter names self-control as one of the seven virtues in 2 Peter 1:5 to 11. The inspired apostle writes, "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

Paul describes his own self-control in 1 Corinthians 9:24 to 27. He said, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."

People put off becoming a Christian and assume well, "Someday I'll act on faith and obey the gospel." Well the gospel refers to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." When Peter preached the gospel for the first time about Jesus at Pentecost in Acts 2, he told the people guilty of crucifying Jesus how to respond in verse 38, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." You see they needed to be saved from their sins, just as people do today. Oh won't you do what they did, so that your sins will be forgiven.

People think, "Someday I'll start attending worship at church" or "Someday I'll return to the church." I tell you being part of the church that Jesus built means being part of His household, His family. If God is your Father and Jesus your Savior, why wouldn't you draw close to them and with the people of God? Everyone needs a church family to keep his faith and devotion strong.

People imagine well, "Someday I'll get serious about growing spiritually. I'll pray regularly to the Father. I'll seriously study the Bible. I'll love the Lord my God with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind, and all my strength." Oh the Lord never intended His people to remain spiritually immature, ignorant of Scripture, or people who forget to pray. He wants us to be devoted to Him and His church.

People think they have plenty of time and say, "Someday I will love my neighbor," or "Someday I will forgive my brother or sister," or "Someday I will speak to my friend about his soul." I tell ya we have an obligation for our own souls but also for the souls of others. What are you doing to bring others

to Jesus? You can look all over your calendar, and you'll never find "someday." You must act with the day that you have. And folks that's today. All you have is now. No promise of the future. Act today.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful to be Your children. To know that You love us. To know that You have provided a way of salvation. We pray Heavenly Father that we will not put off wanting to be obedient to Your will. To change our hearts and lives and to be baptized in the name of Your son. We pray that You'll be with us and help us every day of our lives to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Lord Jesus said in Luke 12:16 to 20 that, "The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." ' "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'"

My friend, your soul is accountable to God. One day you'll have to give an account for your choices and your actions. The grace of God is broad and wondrous, but the grace of God expects us to repent and commit ourselves to Christ. Titus 2:11 to 12 says, "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." Friend don't take God's grace for granted.

Deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Jesus. Repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. Now baptism into Christ is the immersion in water of a penitent believer for the forgiveness of sins. Now being baptized is the loving, faithful response of someone who wants to obey the Lord. The New Testament has no record of an infant or a small child being baptized; you see little children are not lost and don't need saving from sin. Scripture has no record of a faithful Christian who has not been immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ. Don't put off changing your heart and life. You have no assurance of tomorrow.

The Blood of Christ

We cannot speak about Jesus Christ and ignore His death upon the cross. It's not enough to say that He died an agonizing death, we must realize that He chose to die for us. Now saying Jesus died for us doesn't say all that we need to know. He died for us, because He loved us. His love for us on the cross, however, points to our desperate need for His death. Our sins separate us from God and doom us to the wrath of God. He lovingly died for us, because without His blood we cannot have forgiveness of sins or a relationship with our Father in heaven.

Hebrews 2 and verse 9 says, "But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." My friend, don't think the blood of Jesus Christ is for others but not for you. Jesus died for you, and His blood can forgive your sins, just as it can for everyone who loves and obeys Him.

Our reading today comes from 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 17 to 21. And they tell us to take so very seriously the blood that Jesus shed for us and what it means to atone for our sins.

"If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

Ah, Jesus had done so much for us. Shedding His blood. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that our Lord Jesus was willing to pay the ultimate price of shedding His blood so that we might have the forgiveness of our sins. Father help us to conduct our lives with respect and with fear for what You've done for us. And help us to always love You and serve You. In Jesus name, Amen.

The book of Hebrews reminds us that blood is necessary to atone for sin. Hebrews 9:22 says, "without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." The reason blood is necessary is because our life is in our blood. Leviticus 17 verse 11 says, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement." This is why Jesus had to give His life for us. His sinless and righteous life found in His precious blood. His sacrifice led to our atonement.

We are redeemed by the blood of Christ. Ephesians 1 and verse 7 says that, "In him (that is Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace." Redemption is a big word. It implies the need for a redeemer, someone who could save us from our captivity or enslavement, that is from sin, from which we couldn't save ourselves. Sin does enslave. Without the blood of Christ, there is no chance at redemption. Sin creates a debt greater than we can pay. We need the Lord to redeem us. In Matthew 20:25 to 28 the Lord Jesus called His disciples to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Well, how did Jesus ransom or redeem us? What price did He pay for the sins of the whole world? Well, 1 Peter 1:18 to 19 reminds us, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of

a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.” The redemption we have in Christ was not paid with silver and gold. That would have cost the Lord nothing. The Lord spoke a word and created the world! Silver and gold are nothing compared to that! The Lord could say a word and fill a stadium full of silver and gold, but it wouldn't cost Him anything.

Instead the Lord Jesus redeemed us with His own blood. 1 Peter 2 and verse 24 reminds us, “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.” Jesus sacrificed His righteous and spotless body and His blood to redeem us. And by His wounds we are healed of sin. Jesus suffered many personal wounds. He was unfairly condemned, beaten more than once, and scourged even before He was crucified. They spit on Him and mocked Him. He bore a crown of thorns, stripes on His back and chest from the scourge, nails through His hands and feet, and a spear in His side that brought forth blood and water. Yes, Jesus paid the ultimate price to redeem your soul from sin and save you.

The blood of Jesus cleanses the lost sinner. Paul reminded the Corinthians of their past sins and how the grace of God forgave them in 1 Corinthians 6:9 to 11, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such (he says) were some of you (speaking of the Corinthians); but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” God washes us from our sins by the blood of Christ.

In Revelation 1:5, John spoke of “Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood.” God washes away our sins when we're baptized into Christ. In Acts 22:16, Ananias told the chief of sinners, Saul of Tarsus, “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.”

Now some object to this washing away of sins in baptism, because baptism takes place in water and think this is not the blood. But they miss an important point. Romans 6 and verse 3 helps us understand. The truth is always in the word of God. Romans 6 and verse 3 says, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?” Jesus shed His blood when He was crucified. If baptism in water puts us into Christ, then baptism into His death puts us into contact with the blood too. Verses 6 to 7 say about baptism, “knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin, for he who has died is freed from sin.”

Now to the Christians who sins, the apostle John said in 1 John 1:7, “but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Now walking in the light doesn't mean that we must live perfectly sinless lives, no. If we could be perfectly sinless on our own, we wouldn't need the blood of Jesus. 1 John 1 verse 8 makes it clear that, “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Again verse 10 says, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.”

Living perfectly sinless lives is beyond us all; we need the blood of Jesus. Walking in the light means focusing our hearts and lives on following Jesus. But we still stumble in sin, and when we stumble in sin, what do we do, we repent of our sins and we confess them. 1 John 1 verse 9 says that, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Did you notice the phrases “all sin” in verse seven and “all unrighteousness” in verse nine? When God cleanses us from sin, He cleanses us from all of them, even the worst of them. He doesn't forgive some and then leave others unforgiven. The blood of Christ cleanses or frees us from all sin.

Now the idea of all sins being forgiven is not a new one. God spoke to the Jews who had sinned in Ezekiel 33:14 to 16, "But when I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and he turns from his sin and practices justice and righteousness, if a wicked man restores a pledge, pays back what he has taken by robbery, walks by the statutes which (will) ensure life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him. He has practiced justice and righteousness; he shall surely live." Now God has always wanted people to turn from sin and to live with Him eternally. He wanted us to belong to Him, to love and serve Him. He wanted us to be reconciled to Him.

And we're reconciled by the blood of Christ. When we sinned against God, even the first time, we broke our loving relationship with God. Isaiah 59:1 to 2 says, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so 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 sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." Sin separates us from all of God's blessings and promises.

Now we often lose sight that our God is a holy God, who is sinless and doesn't approve of our sins. Sin is offensive to God. Psalm 5 and verse 4 says, "For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You." James 4 verses 3 and 4 is even stronger: he says to the Christians. He says to them, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

The Lord Jesus said in John 14:23, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." Now God and Jesus make their home with those who love God enough to keep His commandments. Now God will not surround the person who is rebellious and lawless, no. Sin causes for us a desperate need for a Savior to atone for our sins. The word "atone" came from the two old English words, the word "at" and the "one." We aren't one with God as long as we have unresolved sin in our lives.

The purpose of forgiveness and atonement is to reconcile us to God. God doesn't want to be angry at us. He doesn't want anyone to perish. He wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2 verse 4). And reconciliation simply means restoring our broken relationship with God. The apostle Paul explained in 2 Corinthians 5:19 to 21 that, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

God wanted you back as one whom He could love and save, so He sent Jesus to suffer for you. 1 Peter 3 and verse 18 says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, (why) that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit." The One who knew no sin was made to be sin on our behalf, so that we could become righteous. The unrighteous become righteous, because Jesus paid a great price to reconcile us to God. Now when you're God's child in Christ, God will hear your prayers.

Ephesians 2:12 to 13 reminded the people of Ephesus who were Gentiles and far away from God, and you may feel that way sometime, he said, "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus (when you come to Him) you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." We may have once been separated from hope and from God, but now we are God's children because of the blood of Christ.

And God can help us overcome the consequences of sin by the blood of Jesus Christ. When the blood of Jesus is applied to our souls, it ensures our forgiveness, it draws us close to Christ, it makes us children of God, and it opens the door to our heavenly inheritance. When we have life in Christ, it is newness of life, an abundant life, and eternal life. The blood of Christ opens every blessing and promise of God. It is through the grace of God found in the blood of Christ that we become those children of God. My friend, are you washed in the blood?

Let's pray together. Oh Heavenly Father we know that we could not be saved if it were not for Your grace and mercy. That acted through the blood of Jesus and for this forgiveness that comes from Him. Help us Father never to take for granted and to presume upon Your grace. But to turn our hearts from sin and to serve You always. In Jesus name, Amen.

The blood of Christ should have the same hold on our hearts and souls as it does on the heart of God. It should mean everything to us, because shedding His blood at Calvary meant everything to Jesus. Our hearts will never find peace and rest without acknowledging the blood of Christ. You cannot be forgiven and have eternal life without His blood. As Christians, we must live as the redeemed, remembering the price paid for us by the blood of Jesus. We can know God's love and eternal blessing because of the blood of Christ.

Now we can't separate the atoning blood from the Divine Person who sacrificed it. Do you care that the Lord Jesus shed His blood for your sins? Has it made a difference in your thinking or your behavior? When we consider the awful, painful, horrible death that Jesus died for us, how can anyone be apathetic? His shed blood makes Christ's love for us real and meaningful. Has it pierced your heart the way it pierced the hearts of those at Pentecost? Does His death make you think of your sins any differently? Have you ever grieved about your sin?

Now if you're guilty and grieving about your sins, the answer is in the blood of Jesus. Forgiveness can turn a guilty conscience into a clean conscience. Acts 2:38 tells us to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. 1 Peter 3:21 says that, "baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God (for what and appeal to God) for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." You see baptism into Christ and His death where His blood was shed (Romans 6:3) is how we contact the blood of Christ and appeal to God for a good conscience.

Gethsemane

What if you knew you would suffer and die before the day was over? How would you pray? Of all the challenges that Jesus faced, none was greater than what He faced at the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus went there at midnight and spent three hours praying because He needed to talk with His Father in heaven. He predicted His upcoming death, how one would betray Him, how one would deny Him, and how all of them would be scattered. He knew they would be disheartened and would doubt that He would be raised from the dead.

We all face times of great heartache and trouble. Though Jesus was the Son of God, He faced those things at Gethsemane. He walked this earth knowing that He would be despised and rejected. We may not face a cross that will cause our execution; but we too face rejection, failure, and disappointment. Jesus turned to the Father in prayer, and I hope on your darkest night you too will turn to God in prayer. Jesus prayed to do what was right and best for all, and God heard His prayer. If you ask God's help to do what is right, God will hear your prayer too.

Our reading today comes from the book of Hebrews chapter 5 verses 7 to 9. And discusses Jesus' prayers while He is at Gethsemane and what He prayed.

“In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,”

Oh how thankful we should be that Jesus was willing to die for us. To obey His Father. And it encourages us to obey Him. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for the sacrifice of Jesus. Father we're so sorry that He had to endure such pain and suffering. But we're thankful that He loved You Father and that He loved us enough to be willing to die for us. Father just as He obeyed we pray that You will help us to be obedient in all things. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

The Lord Jesus had an extensive prayer life. He loved and needed to remain close to His Father in heaven. Jesus frequently prayed before speaking, acting, through difficult times, or making decisions. Prayer for Jews was a normal practice of everyday life. The Jews had set prayer times and prayers in the synagogue, and the saying of grace before meals, and the saying of personal prayers in the morning, in the afternoon and at the end of the day. And at the time of sacrifice in the Temple. Though much in His day-to-day life is not mentioned in Scripture, the four Gospel accounts say much about the prayer life of Jesus Christ.

As the Son of God, Jesus knew the importance of regular, private prayer. Jesus had been in heaven with the Father from all eternity past. He loved His Father, and He was loved by His Father. Prayer time was holy time with His Father in heaven. And His entire ministry was filled with prayers to the Father, whom He loved. When we love somebody we talk to them. We talk in good times and in bad, because we love and want to share our lives with them. It's by prayer that we share our lives with the Father in heaven.

Now Jesus was going through a very tough time facing the cross. He knew what scourging and crucifixion were. He knew how great the agony of the cross would be.

He knew from Psalm 2 that the Jews and Gentiles would turn against Him. Psalm 2 and verse 2 predicted that, “The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed.”

He knew from Isaiah 53 that He would be despised and rejected. Jesus knew the Lord would lay upon Him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:4 to 6 says “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah’s words.

The Lord Jesus Himself prophesied specifics about His upcoming death. Matthew 20:17 to 19 there Jesus said: “As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, “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 could see the light of His resurrection, but the disciples did not understand it at first.

So when Jesus went to Gethsemane, He worried about His disciples. He said to them in Luke 22:39, “Pray that you do not enter into temptation.” Oh He knew His death would be devastating to them. Matthew 26 verses 36 to 39 there Jesus continues: it says, “Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

Now Jesus was extremely sorrowful and troubled because He knew what was ahead. Hebrews 10:4 to 7 explains why Jesus came to this earth: For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” Now Jesus knew what He had to do to fulfill the Scriptures. Hebrews 10 and verse 7 quotes Psalm 40 verses 7 to 8, which says: Then I said, “Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.” Though Jesus was troubled in heart, His delight was to do the will of God.

And this is the prayer that included loud crying and tears. It came from one dreading what was to come but accepting it nonetheless. Luke describes how difficult this was for Jesus. Luke 22:44 says, “And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Now this passage describes the extreme emotional pain Jesus felt as He thought about what was to happen on the cross.

Some people have imagined Jesus, because He was the Son of God, that He didn’t have much suffering on the cross. And we must not forget, Jesus as the Son of God was also human, and fleshly. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only (begotten) Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Now as a man, he physically suffered hunger, thirst, weariness, pain, and death. He also could hurt emotionally.

Philippians 2:5 to 8 says to us, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” If Jesus didn’t have flesh, He could not have died as an offering for our sins.

Hebrews 2:14 to 15 explains "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." The Lord Jesus through His suffering He could overcome the devil and deliver us from the fear of death.

Jesus prayed all through His suffering. Jesus began, continued, and ended His experience of the cross with prayer. Jesus prayed for those who were crucifying Him when He was being crucified. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. (Luke 23:33 and 34)

Jesus prayed at the ninth hour, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:45 to 46). Now the ninth hour would be 3:00 in the afternoon. Now when I think about, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me," this saying breaks my heart. Jesus suffered doing the will of God for my sins. And it makes me see my sins in a new light. That it was my sins that caused His suffering. It also pricks my conscience and causes my own guilt and shame.

This statement about being forsaken is a quotation of Psalm 22 and verse 1. It's a prayer psalm that begins with a feeling of abandonment but ends with a statement of praise to the Lord the Father in heaven. Now while Jesus felt forsaken, He also knew that His death would glorify the Father and bless us all. Peter reveals that Jesus prayed throughout this painful ordeal actually. 1 Peter 2:21 to 24 says, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.(and listen to this part) When he was reviled, (that is on the cross) he did not revile in return; when he suffered, (that is on the cross) he did not threaten, but (what did He do He) continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."

Jesus prayed just before He breathed His last, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23 verse 46). Now Jesus had been entrusting Himself to the Father all along. Now as He was passing away, He placed His spirit (separated from the body) into the hands of His Father. He knew that after His suffering, He would go to the Father.

And this is why He could pray His ultimate prayer at Gethsemane. And remember Matthew 26:39 says: And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, (and here comes the real prayer) not as I will, but as you will." His fleshly desire was to avoid suffering and death, but His heart and soul's desire was to do the will of the Father. Matthew 26:41 says: Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." Jesus' prayer reflected His understanding that what was best was not being rescued from agony but rescuing us through His agony.

Jesus made His choice before He was betrayed. Revelation 13:8 in New King James Version calls Jesus "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The Lord Jesus could say in John 10:17 to 18, "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father." Later Jesus would say in verse 30 that, "I and the Father are one." On the night Jesus was betrayed Jesus said in John 14 verse 31, "but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here." And of course that's when He went to Gethsemane. Jesus had made up his mind. Jesus understood the Father's will was bigger than His personal comforts.

Hebrews 12:1 to 3 says, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

The joy that was set before Him on the cross, was in the winning the hearts of those who follow Him to heaven. He set His heart on the people who love Him and sacrificed Himself. Jesus did not give up on the cross, because He knew what it meant for Him to die for our sins as an atoning sacrifice. He didn't call for twelve legions of angels to rescue Him from crucifixion. He was willing to suffer to the very end, so that we could be set free from sin and live to righteousness.

Oh is it your prayer today to follow the will of God? Will you sacrifice yourself for the will of Christ? You too may need to pray the hard prayer to do the will of God. Will you put your trust in the Lord? Will you pray, "Thy will be done"?

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father in all things may Your will be done. Help us to live lives that glorify You. And that live in such a way that praise Your name. Father even in the hardest times we pray Your will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

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." Jesus learned obedience the hard way by suffering through the trials, the scourging and the cross. We too must learn obedience in our lives. Doing what is hard in order to do the will of the Lord is where we deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily and follow the Lord Jesus.

Philippians 2:5 to 8 reminds us to, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but (He) emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, (and) He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

The Scriptures make it clear the way of the Lord is how we serve God. There are no substitutes for the way of the Lord, and there are no substitutes for obedience. Just as Jesus had a cross to bear, so we to have a cross. We'll never deny ourselves and take up our cross till we place our faith and love in the Lord Jesus Christ. And this means believing in Him and in what He says. Now denying ourselves means that we must cease living in sin or for our selfish lives and we begin living in righteousness for the Lord's sake. Taking up a cross also means confessing Christ Jesus as the Son of God before others.

We are first crucified with Christ when we die with Him, and are buried with Him, and are raised with Him in baptism (Romans 6:3 to 7). When we're baptized, God gives us newness of life, frees us from sin, and makes us His child. And that's why I urge you to be baptized into Christ.

The Mercy of God

The idea of mercy includes a compassionate desire to provide for others what they need and cannot provide for themselves. I can think of many spiritual blessings that God gives to us, blessings that we can only receive from Him. By God's mercy and grace we are saved, we become His children, and we're given an inheritance in heaven, and we're privileged to spend an eternity in heaven with our Father and the Lord Jesus. God always wants to bless those who love Him and keep His commandments.

God instructed Moses and Aaron in how to bless the people of Israel. He told them to say to the people in Numbers 6:24 to 26, "The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace." Ah we're blessed beyond measure. The Lord is not only merciful; He delights in showing mercy to us. The pagan gods of ancient times were fickle and didn't show the mercy and grace of the God of the Bible. But we're blessed to know the compassion of the true God who created us. We're thankful for all that He's done for us to lead us to everlasting life.

Our reading today comes from the book of Micah chapter 7 verses 18 to 20. Michah is a prophet who recognizes the unchanging love and the unfailing mercy of the God of heaven.

Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity
 And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?
 He does not retain His anger forever,
 Because He delights in unchanging love.
 He will again have compassion on us;
 He will tread our iniquities under foot.
 Yes, You will cast all their sins
 Into the depths of the sea.
 You will give truth to Jacob
 And unchanging love to Abraham,
 Which You swore to our forefathers
 From the days of old.

That's the God we serve. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for Your unchanging love and for Your mercy even when we sin. That You care about us and that You do not keep Your anger forever. Help us Heavenly Father to be penitent of our sins. To love You and to do what is right. In Jesus name, Amen.

We have a compassionate and merciful God, for which we must all be very thankful. We have a God who sees and a God who cares. Psalm 25 verse 10 says, "All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth To those who keep His covenant and His testimonies." God's lovingkindness refers to the mercy and compassion that arises from His covenants with men. God's lovingkindness is part of His loyalty to His people. Psalm 145 verses 8 and 9 say, "The LORD is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works." God truly is merciful in all His ways, and we're grateful that He loves us so much.

Psalm 103 verses 8 to 14 say that, "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt 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 His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Just as a father has compassion

on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.”

Now sin offends the Lord, but the Lord knows all our weaknesses and has compassion on us. When we return to Him, He doesn't remain angry toward us. Mercy means that God treats us kindly even when we don't deserve it. God is kind, not because we're so good, but because He is so good. His love is more than abundant toward those who draw near to Him.

Though the people of Judah sinned against God so grievously that God destroyed Jerusalem, God promised a day of mercy, forgiveness, and joy. Jeremiah 33 verses 8 to 9 say, “I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me. It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it.”

Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations 3:21 to 25, “This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.”

God is always compassionate to those who turn to Him penitently and lovingly. God has compassion for us in this life and wants to bless us in the ages to come. Ephesians 2:4 to verse 7 says, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, 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 ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” God's mercy never ends for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is our Savior and He is in the saving business. He said in Luke 19:10, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Oh yes, Jesus knows all our weaknesses and sins but He loves us anyway and He opens His heart to those who will come to Him lovingly and obediently. John 2:24 to 25 says, “But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.” Oh He knows all about the good and bad about you and me, but He still loves us and He wants us to live with Him forever.

Paul understood all the flaws that people possess, but He also knew what God wanted for them. Titus 3 verses 3 to 5 says, “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.” God's compassion was willing to forgive and wash away sins. God could make a new people out of us.

Titus 2:11 to 14 explains, “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.” He wants you saved and reborn to a new way of life.

Paul understood God's mercy in a very personal way. He said in 1 Timothy 1:12 to 16, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, (and then Paul says) among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life."

Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church, blasphemed Jesus Christ, was violent and insolent, and put people in prison, calling for their deaths. In spite of this, God saw in Saul of Tarsus, who acted ignorantly, a devotion to what he believed. And God wanted that devotion for the cause of Christ not against it. Saul became Paul, the apostle. God rescued him from sin and made a great servant of Christ out of him. God showed him mercy. His grace and love for Saul was more than abundant. God's love for us all is more than abundant, even though we may be the chief of sinners ourselves. If God could show mercy to Saul who didn't deserve it, He can show mercy to us. His perfect patience and grace allows God to save sinners, even you and me.

God's mercy prompts people to repent and to turn to Him. Both Judah and Israel had turned away from God to follow idols, but God still loved them and had an open heart for those who would return to Him. King Hezekiah opened the door for those who wanted to return to God and keep the Passover. Hezekiah's message found in 2 Chronicles 30 verses 6 to 9 says, "The couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the hand of the king and his princes, even according to the command of the king, saying, "O sons of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that He may return to those of you who escaped and are left from the hand of the kings of Assyria. Do not be like your fathers and your brothers, who were unfaithful to the LORD God of their fathers, so that He made them a horror, as you see. Now do not stiffen your neck like your fathers, but yield to the LORD and enter His sanctuary which He has consecrated forever, and serve the LORD your God, that His burning anger may turn away from you. For if you return to the LORD, your brothers and your sons will find compassion before those who led them captive and will return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate, and will not turn His face away from you if you return to Him."

God is compassionate to those who love and follow Him. He loves everyone, but He especially blesses those who love and obey Him. David wrote in Psalm 103:15 to 18, "As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, (it doesn't exist) And its place acknowledges it no longer. But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, To those who keep His covenant And remember His precepts to do them."

God's mercy leads us to be merciful. Proverbs 21:13 says, "He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered." We must learn to treat others with compassion and mercy. Colossians 3:12 to 15 says, "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful."

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 and verse 7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." And when we show mercy to others, we reveal that we're like the Lord. Some people can only find fault with others; they slander and accuse and often ignorantly. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 6:35 to

36, "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." Oh, the more we show mercy to others, the more we become Christ-like. We must remove ourselves from sin, yes; but we must help others to come to Christ by showing them compassion.

James 2:12 to 13 says, "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment." We will be judged by the same standard that we use to judge others. If we fail to be merciful to those who sin against us, we won't enjoy the mercy of God. While we must speak harshly against sin, let's show compassion to the sinner and urge him to repent and obey. We should help people come to the Lord and to remain faithful to the Lord.

Jude 21 to 23 says, "keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh." The merciful want everyone to be right with the God. Does God's mercy work within you? Is it making a difference in your life? And are you merciful to others.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help us to understand how great Your mercy is towards us and to be merciful toward others. Because You have loved us and been merciful. And Father we're thankful for Jesus who died for our sins. Help us always to love You and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; "But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isaiah chapter 1 verses 18 to 20). The people in Isaiah's day strayed, but the Lord was merciful and wanted to turn their hearts back to righteousness. God was willing to forgive; and He said in Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins." God doesn't want to be angry at us. And He takes no pleasure in punishing sinners.

Isaiah 55 verses 6 to 7 says, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. 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 pardon." God's mercy is great for those who seek Him and will repent. God can forgive you of all your sins and iniquities.

And God is waiting for you. Place your trust in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, confess the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. Peter told the guilty souls at Pentecost, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2 and verse 38). Now if you lovingly obey, God will graciously forgive you just as He did them. Why not do what they did? Obey the Lord today!

Freedom in Christ

People long to be free from painful and humiliating restraints. Prisoners tired of walls want their freedom; slaves want to be free of their human masters; addicts want to be free from their enslaving habits; people who are ill or infirmed long to be healthy; and students want to finish school so they can be free to pursue their lives. We love the Lord, and our love for the Lord frees us from the things that harm us and it gives us the opportunity to serve and bless others. The more we know the Lord, the more we want to be like Him. We freely choose to follow Christ because we love Him, and we know that He loves us.

Our reading today is from 1 Peter chapter 2 beginning in verse 13 through verse 17. And there Peter is trying to encourage them to live in the world in which we live but to remember that we belong to Christ and to be free to do good.

“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.”

That’s the word of God. Let’s pray. Father we’re thankful that You have allowed us to be free. To be able to serve You. Bless the lives of others. And Father we pray now that You will give us strength to do Your will and to act as Your children and Your servants. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Galatians 5:1 says, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free.” While Christianity is a commitment to Christ; it is also a means of freedom for the soul. Christ came to this earth to give us an abundant life and eternal life. He came to bless us in the present and in the life to come. Now if you are in Christ, you now have all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. So treasure those blessings.

When we speak of freedom in Christ, we must understand that Christ is the one who sets us free from many things that will harm us. When people decide to follow sin, they inevitably fall into ruin. Problems, problems, problems. They hurt themselves and they usually hurt those that they love. The Lord Jesus said in John 8:34, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” We might call this an addiction or a habit, but it’s really an enslavement. Sin is controlling and makes people do things they don’t want to do. Paul explained in Romans 7:14 to 17, “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.”

When people find pleasure in sin, that pleasure leads to them doing wicked things. And there later on they regret that and it brings them shame inside. It controls their thoughts and actions and it only leads to ruin. Romans 8:5 to 8 says, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Now because a person has sinned, and because Paul himself had sinned he saw himself as wretched and he longed for the freedom that came from Christ! He said in Romans 7:24 to 25, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Now maybe you’ve felt that way, felt trapped by sin and you longed for forgiveness. Paul wanted to live a righteous life that would please God. Now Paul knew sin—not God—was the real enemy that enslaves

us and makes us miserable. The Lord Jesus came to this earth to set us free from sin and the misery that it causes. And to give us peace and hope. He came to show us a better way of life and to give us the opportunity to live it.

Now how sad that some Christians return to the very sins from which they were delivered. And they've forgotten the price that Jesus paid to free them from sin. They have forgotten how sin traps them, shames them, and ruins their lives. And they let their eyes, their flesh, or their pride lead them away from God and back into misery. They put their souls at great risk. 2 Peter 2:20 to 21 says, "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in (that is those defilements) them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them." Dear Christian friend, don't let sin back into your life.

The forgiveness and freedom that we have in Christ does more for us than the Old Testament Law could do. Paul told the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia in Acts 13:38 to 39, "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him (Jesus) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses."

The book of Galatians tells how some Jewish Christians were trying to bind circumcision and the Law of Moses on the new Gentile Christians. Paul wrote in Galatians 2:15 to 16 that, "We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, (that is the laws of Moses) because by works of the law no one will be justified." We find our freedom from sin by faith and obedience to Christ, not by the works of the Law. Galatians 5 and verse 6 says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love."

The freedom that we have in Christ is not merely freedom from the things that hurt us; it's also the freedom to pursue the things that build us up and bless others. Galatians 5:22 to 23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." God is at work in our lives to produce some wonderful qualities, and there's no limit to how much these things we can enjoy and share with others. We're free to pursue these things to our heart's content, knowing they'll not only bless our lives but bless everyone around us.

We have no limit on the amount of God's love that we can show to other people. The more we know of the grace and love of God, the more we rejoice and the more we want to share it. Paul prayed in Ephesians 3:18 to 19 that the Christians "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." The more we know the love of God, the more we're thankful for it! Oh yes.

Christ's love, His love leads us to a joy that is inexpressible and full of glory! There's no limit to the joy we know in Christ. In fact, though he was in prison and fearful of losing his life, Paul urged the church in Philippians 4 and verse 4, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." Life can give us many miseries, but it cannot snatch from us our joy in Christ, the joy of a home in heaven.

As the Spirit works in our lives through the word, we find peace. The Scriptures are filled with the promises of God in black and white. In Christ we can live free from worry, because we know our Father in heaven provides for us, hears our prayers, forgives our sins, protects us from evil, and gives us an inheritance. We can sleep at night with the assurance that God cares for us and is with us.

When we read of Christ's patience in Scripture, it leads us to patience. Patience is the ability to remain emotionally calm and assured in the face of frustration or misfortune and keep from complaining. We see how Christ endured the cross without taking vengeance, and it gives us the inner strength to endure whatever hostilities we may face.

Because God has been so kind to us, we are free to pursue kindness towards others. We're free to help others in times of trouble, to forgive others, and to give freely of our time and energy to bless others. There's no law against kindness. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 6 verse 38, "give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure (that) you use it will be measured back to you."

God's example of generosity leads us to pursue a life of goodness or generosity. We know that we can never out give God. Galatians 6:9 to 10 says, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in (due season or) due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."

The Spirit through the Scriptures also reveals to us the faithfulness of God, which leads us to be faithful. He fought for hours through the pain, the mocking, and the shame of the cross. The Lord Jesus endured the cross to the end and never gave up on us. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 28:20, "I am with you always, to the end of the age (or the end of the world)." We can count on the Lord, and that assurance leads us to be faithful to Him and never give up living the Christian life.

Since God is gentle with us, blessing us even when we don't deserve His blessing, we can learn to be gentle with others. Paul said in Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Our loving Father in heaven is the God of all grace, the God of all comfort, and the God of all hope. Because God treated us gently in saving us, we can forgive others when they trespass against us.

Some people think to be self-controlled is to lack freedom, but the truth is that no one can be free who lacks self-control. When people can't control themselves, their passions enslave them to their desires and lusts. Addictions enslave, but self-control keeps us out of slavery. Self-control allows us to pursue what is good and healthy rather than having to feed some evil habit.

The gospel of Christ frees us from sin and frees us to pursue Christian love and service; but to have this freedom, we must abide in Christ. You see our freedom is in Christ, not outside of Him. The Lord Jesus promised in John 8:31 and 2, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Staying within the words of Christ found in Scripture is how Jesus distinguishes His true disciples from others.

I tell ya a train can't go anywhere unless it's on the tracks! The very tracks that confine it are the very tracks that make it free to travel mile after mile and carry heavy loads. I tell ya we need to hold fast to Christ; and to hold fast to His words, the words of eternal life. When we move away from the teaching of Christ, we move away from God. 2 John 9 says that, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son." Now to have the Father and the Son, we must abide in the teaching. We must hear what Scripture says and follow it.

Why does this matter? Well here's why. The Lord's words teach the truth that keeps us free from false hopes and lies. The words of Christ provide a means to tell right from wrong. It gives us a standard to distinguish what is real from what is imaginary, and it gives us a firm foundation to build our lives on. True freedom comes from staying within the boundaries God gave to us, from abiding in His word. To

go beyond those bounds doesn't free us; it tangles us up in human doctrines. And this is why we must examine ourselves to see if we're abiding in the words of Christ.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help us to be good students of Your word. To always remain in Your word. To love You and to love what You have taught us and to do Your will. This is our fervent prayer in Jesus name, Amen.

The Lord Jesus said in John 8:36, "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." Oh, I'm thankful the Lord sets us free from sin and spiritual death. God gives us hope we can change and become godly people. We don't have to be trapped and enslaved by sin. God gives us something better. Romans 6:16 to 18 says, "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin (you) have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, (you) have become slaves of righteousness." Now lost slaves of sin who obey Jesus, can be set free even though they were slaves of sin, they can become the servants of righteousness.

The Lord frees us to set us on a better pathway to a life of love and service. A pathway to eternal life. You can become a Christian by being united with Christ. To be one with Christ you must put your faith in Him as the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess Him before others, and be baptized into Christ. Galatians 3:26 to 7 says, "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Baptism is that time when those outside of Christ are united and come into Christ, where His forgiveness and blessings are. The Lord will wash away your sins when you're baptized according to Acts 22:16 and unite you with Christ according to Romans 6:4 and 5. Oh come to the Lord today!