

Program Transcripts

September 2026



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

September 2026

Topics subject to change without notice

SEPTEMBER 6 – HOW GOD SPEAKS TODAY

Where do you turn for spiritual truth? Many people think the Holy Spirit speaks to them personally through their thoughts and feelings. Is this true? Today we will explore how God speaks to us today.

SEPTEMBER 13 – CAN WE KNOW THE TRUTH?

Some people think we cannot know anything for certain. In a world filled with a lot of religious noise and uncertainty, can we know the truth? The Lord Jesus made promises about the truth, and we can count on His word.

SEPTEMBER 20 – WALKING BY FAITH

Walking by faith is one of the wonderful opportunities of life, but many misunderstand what faith is. Faith is more than merely believing; it is a way of life filled with hope and good things. Learn what it means to walk in faith.

SEPTEMBER 27 – BEING FORGIVEN

Of all our blessings none is greater than the grace and forgiveness the Lord gives to us through His sacrifice on the cross. There is a great difference between being lost and being saved, between being unforgiven and being forgiven.

How God Speaks Today

Today marks the 47th anniversary of In Search of the Lord's Way. Mack Lyon spoke on the first program on September first, 1980. On behalf of those who work at SEARCH, we say thank you to all who watch this program and pray for us. We're here as servants of the Lord and of His church, and our task is to sow the seed and bring people to the Lord and His church. We love the church that belongs to Christ, the church He purchased with His own blood.

And for nearly half a century Mack Lyon and I have focused on preaching the gospel of Christ with love. We've concentrated on what the Bible says about salvation and how to follow the Lord Jesus. And no other source than the bible can accurately reveal what God teaches. 1 Corinthians 1:21 says, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." The message they preached and recorded in Scripture in the first century is God's message today. And we trust no other message.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Matthew chapter 7 verses 24 to 27 and there the completing verses of the sermon on the mount.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.

That's an important lesson for all of us. To listen and to do what God says. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have taught us through Your word. Help us Heavenly Father to be good listeners, to love You and to serve You and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

"If you listen to religious radio or TV, you've probably heard someone say, "The Lord spoke to me and said...." or "let God speak to your heart....," suggesting that God speaks directly to people today. Other people think their feelings are evidence of God's will for their lives. Well we're asking, how does God speak to us today? Is it through voices, through feelings, or through councils and creeds? The Bible is God's revelation of truth to us today. The Word of God says that, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world" (Hebrews 1 verses 1 and 2).

Now because God speaks through His Son, we need to recognize the Lord Jesus as the authority in all religious matters. He has more authority than anyone, any group, or any church. Paul said that God "raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:20 to 23). Now the church is subject to Jesus, not to any denominational headquarters.

Jesus said before He ascended into heaven that, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). Jesus does not need a representative on earth, because He himself is the head of His church on earth. John 3:35 to 36 says that, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life,

but the wrath of God abides on him.” Now God has given all things into His hand. Jesus is Lord of all, and we need to listen to Him very closely.

We will be judged one day by the words of Jesus. Jesus said in John 12:48 to 49 that, “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For (Jesus says,) I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.” We will not be judged by opinion polls, by the creeds of men, or by some denominational belief. We’ll be judged by the words of Jesus found in the New Testament, so we truly need to know what the Bible says.

Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, gave to His apostles the Word that His Father had given to Him. In John 14:26, Jesus told the apostles that, “the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” Now God determined that the words that He had given Jesus would be taught by the Spirit to the apostles for their time and for all time. The words of Jesus were not merely for the first century but for every century as long as this world stands. God “in these last days has spoken to us by His Son.” And God is speaking to us in the Bible!

Jesus promised His apostles in John 16:12 to 15, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. Now all things that the Father has are Mine; therefore (Jesus says,) I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.” The apostles knew the truth of God—the whole truth of God. They were the spokesman for God in their own day and for all time.

Jude wrote in Jude 3, “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” Now Jude who wrote sometime between 65 and 80 AD was already speaking of “the faith,” that body of doctrine, which was “once for all time” handed down to the saints. What the Word said in the first century, it also says and means today. Jude wanted Christians not only to believe that faith but also to “contend” for it, to uphold it and to keep handing it down.

Paul told Timothy, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2 verse 2). Now Paul wanted the truth to be passed down from generation to generation. And this is why Paul said in Ephesians 4:4 to 6, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” There is indeed just one faith, and we are to contend for it. When people get away from the one faith, they abandon the revealed will of God.

Now the writers of the New Testament spoke with the authority of God. In 1 Corinthians 2:12 to 13, Paul said, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.” Paul said what he taught did not come from men but from the Holy Spirit. God was behind his teachings and his writings. And this is why we can say Paul said it or at the same time, say that God said it, because both statements are true. God moved Paul to say what he did.

Now Paul later deals with women publicly speaking in church. And Paul said, “The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the

Law also says...it is improper for a woman to speak in church. Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only? If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandments. But if anyone doesn't recognize this, he is not recognized" (1 Corinthians 14 verses 34 to 38). Now Paul had spoken the Lord's commandment.

On another occasion Paul defends himself by explaining where he got his gospel. Paul said, "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1 verses 11 and 12). Now it was because of this that he could be so sure about his gospel—that his gospel was true and right! It was actually the gospel of God! In fact, the apostle Paul warns everyone to stay with his gospel and not change it. And anyone who changes the gospel he preached risks losing his soul and the souls of those he teaches.

Galatians 1:6 to 10 says, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? (He said,) if I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."

God's written Word is sacred and unchangeable. And when you get away from the Bible, you also leave God! In 1 Thessalonians 2 and verse 13 says in that passage, Paul spoke well of the Thessalonians because of their faith and obedience. And he said, "For this reason we also thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe." Now God's Word can work in our lives, when we're willing to listen to it and apply it to our lives. And unless we humbly obey God's message, we cannot, cannot receive its blessings.

With so many voices, so many denominations, and so many non-denominational groups teaching so many different things, they can't all speak for God, can they? When they contradict each other, are they really from God? The only sure foundation of the truth is found in the recorded, written words of our Lord Jesus and His apostles and prophets in the New Testament.

The Lord Jesus Himself distinguishes people by whether they listen and follow His Word. He said in John 8:31 to 32 that, "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." Now to continue in Jesus' word means to remain, abide, or stay there. "True" disciples do that. Some say they are disciples, but they follow teachings that never came from Jesus. Others believe they hear God directly. Some trust in their feelings, some merely follow whatever is popular and "happening." Sadly, when they get away from the Word, they leave God too.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 to 23 that, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" Speaking religious language or doing religious things doesn't make us right with God. A true Christian is one that hears and does the will of the Father who is in heaven.

These people pretended to be religious; but Jesus rejected them because they didn't follow what God commanded. They stepped outside the will of God; they were lawless. They did what they wanted or what was popular. God isn't subject to the cultural whims of anyone or any culture.

If the "true" disciples remain in the Word, how do you rate the church where you attend? Does your church stay with the Bible or does it vary from the Bible? Now we'll all be judged by the words of Jesus, not by our feelings about things. The only reliable standard is the Word of God, found in the Bible. Let's stay with what is true and right. We lose our blessing, when we substitute our ways for the Word of God. The "lawless" aren't listening to God. And aren't doing the will of God.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help us to be devoted to Your will. To love You with a full heart and soul. To give ourselves freely and only to You. And Father help us to listen, listen to every word that You say and to be obedient in everything. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

The best thing we can do is read God's Word everyday and see whether or not the things that we're hearing and practicing are so and right with God. Now don't be fooled by religious people who are not giving you God's word but their own opinions. Stay with the Bible, and stay with God! Acts 17:11 speaks of the noble Bereans: "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." Now if you are one day going to be judged by the words of the Lord Jesus, shouldn't you examine them for yourself?

Don't guess and don't presume when it comes to salvation. Feelings can deceive and men can be wrong, but God's Word has stood true for centuries. It says today what it said from the beginning. And you can trust it. Feelings come and go. Religious groups that change to meet the times are uncertain and unsafe. The truth of God's word doesn't change and isn't fickle.

Why not trust the gospel found in the written Word and become a Christian? And you do that by trusting and loving the Lord, turning away from sin in repentance, by confessing Jesus as the Son of God before all, and by repenting and being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. That's what the apostle taught in the first gospel sermon in Acts 2 and verse 38. And when you're baptized in water, God will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16) He'll give you newness of life (Romans 6:3 to 7). So keep studying and growing in the Word every day of your life. Do you have a close, loving, peaceful relationship with God? Your greatest need is to know God and to draw close to Him by listening and obeying His Word.

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Walking By Faith

The Scriptures intertwine faith with knowledge. The design and order that we can observe in this world, in the universe, and in our own bodies help's us to believe in an all-powerful and supremely wise designer. That designer could only be God, our Creator. While we have never seen God Himself, He left a lot of evidence pointing to His eternal power and divine nature. What we know leads us to believe in Him, and believing in Him and the truth allows us to speak and to know what He had said. And to have greater knowledge.

Now walking by faith isn't a leap in the dark. We believe what we believe because there's evidence. Some evidence is empirical, some is historical, and some is from ourselves. Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." John explained why he wrote the fourth gospel account in John 20:30 to 31, "Therefore many other signs (that is miracles) Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." The Lord wants us to believe and to be saved.

Our scripture reading today comes from the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians chapter 5 verses 6 to 10. And there he talks about life with and walking by faith.

Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

That's the words that Paul wanted the Corinthians to know. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so thankful that we can walk by faith and be able to live with You when the time comes for us to leave this body. Help us Heavenly Father to love You to serve You and to not only just believe but to walk by our faith. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Faith in God is not merely a belief; it's a way of thinking and a way of life. The Scriptures help us understand the kind of faith that God wants from His followers. It's an active, working faith not a dead one. One of my professors, Hugo McCord, described faith in Scripture as a "package word," that included many elements beyond mere belief. Paul said in Romans 1 and verse 5 that, "we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake."

Luke described how the church was growing in Acts 6 and verse 7: "The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith." They didn't just believe what was taught they obeyed it and they lived it out in their lives. James 2:14 asks, "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" The answer he gives to that question is no.

He later says in verses 17 to 20, "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.' You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?" Faith that doesn't act is dead and useless. And our faith is demonstrated by living what we believe. We must walk the walk, not merely say we believe. Are you a practicing Christian?

The Scriptures must define our faith and hope. When we believe we seek to please the Lord and by His grace we live with Him eternally once this life is over. 2 Corinthians 5:1 to 3 says, "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked." We want to enjoy the inheritance that He's preparing for us in heaven.

And so our faith encourages us to live with courage and to look to the future. 2 Corinthians 5:6 to 8 says, "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." Now while we have never seen the Lord or our Father in heaven, we know that He has promised that we can be Him once this life is over. And that changes how we think and how we conduct our lives.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:9 to 10, "Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." We want to please God, because we know a day of judgment is coming, and how we behave will determine our destiny.

Our faith, our faith, is not a leap in the dark. What we know by faith comes from the promises that God kept, from answers to our prayers, from His providence, and from the truthfulness of His word. God doesn't lie, and He's not afraid to challenge us to do His will. John 7:14 to 17 says: But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and (He) began to teach. The Jews then were astonished, saying, "(well) How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." Now we can know whether God's word is true by following it. The more we study and practice it, the more it proves itself.

In his final letter to Timothy, Paul was suffering and didn't know how long he would live. He wrote about why He served God in 2 Timothy 1:12 to 13. He said: "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. (so) Retain the standard of sound words (healthy words) which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." Though he suffered greatly, God had proven Himself to Paul. Can you say, "I know whom I have believed"? Now life isn't always easy, but God remains close to us even when things are challenging and tough.

Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." God sees and knows everything that happens. Now not everything is good, but God can use even the worst things to bring about good. Psalm 46:1 to 3 says that, "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; Though its waters roar and foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride."

In spite of the persecution Christians faced in the first century, Paul declared in Romans 8:35 to 39: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; (and) we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more (more) than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor

things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The book of Hebrews discusses the need for Christians to remain faithful to God, even when life is uncertain and difficult. When faith in God proves reliable, it teaches us to trust the things that God says. Hebrews 11:1 to 3 says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. (and) By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible." Faith in what we can see gives us the understanding to trust in the things that we cannot see.

Hebrews 11:6 says clearly, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." The design of creation, the fulfilled prophecies, the historical evidence concerning Christ. Hebrews 11 provides numerous examples of how faith leads people to obey. They had a living faith.

Hebrews 11:8 to 10 says: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." Hebrews 11:17 says, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son."

Hebrews 11:24 to 26 says, "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward." Hebrews 11:30 to 31 says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace."

Doing what is right presents, yes, its own challenges, and a sinful world will always try our faith. We can, however, see how our struggles can help us grow spiritually James 1:2 to 4 reminds us, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." The tests of our faith make us stronger and more mature. We can count them a joy.

Jesus is coming again one day, and we can rejoice over our salvation on the last day. Keeping faith now matters. 1 Peter 1:6 to 9 says: "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, (that) 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; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."

Faith is indeed "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." By our faith and love devoted in obedience to the Lord, we'll one day enjoy all the things that God has promised and all the things that we've hoped for. 1 John 3:1 to 3 says, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called (the) children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. And we know that when He appears, that we will be like Him, because we will see

Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." Faith, hope, and love moves us to prepare for the day when we meet Jesus.

John said to faithful Christians in 1 John 5:19 to 20, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." Faith comes from hearing the word of God, and the more we study the deeper our faith will become. The deeper our faith becomes the more we want to serve the living God and to persuade others to believe and obey the Lord too. Do you believe and practice your faith? Are you walking with the Lord?

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have revealed Yourself. That we can be saved and that we can truth. Help us to walk by faith and to practice our faith with love for You and for ours. And help us to reach out and win those who need to know you. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Faith is indeed a walk, a way of life, not merely an opinion or an ideology. When we receive the gospel message, we take our stand upon it and hold firmly to it. 1 Corinthians 15:1 to 2 reminds us that our faith is a received message. He said "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain." To receive a message is to welcome and embrace it as true and life-changing.

To walk by faith means that I must deny myself, take up my cross daily, and follow the Lord Jesus. To believe in Jesus means I not only believe in Him as the Lord and Christ but I also believe that what He teaches is true and right. Believing Jesus means listening closely to Him without reading my opinions into what He says. True faith, true faith hears and obeys. Now when faith has questions, faith goes to the source of all the truth, the Scriptures, for answers. God doesn't need an editor to rewrite the gospel or anything else that He teaches.

We want the authentic gospel that is found in Scripture. To receive and stand in the gospel means accepting the truth on God's terms. It takes faith, love, repentance or life change, confessing Christ, and being baptized into Christ to accept and respond to the gospel. When we respond to the gospel, we're saved by it. In baptism we're crucified, buried, and raised with Christ so that we can be freed from sin and walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3 to 7). Baptism in water is for the forgiveness or remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Now this is Scripture, not human tradition.

Date: _____

What is the title and main subject of this lesson?

What scriptures are referenced within the lesson?

If this lesson includes any main Bible characters, who are they and what are some of their traits?

Why is this message important?

Are there specific things discussed in this lesson that you would like to work on in your personal life?

How would you share this message with others and with whom would you like to share it?

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Being Forgiven

The one thing that stands between man and God, the one thing that can keep a person out of heaven, is sin. There's only one way, as we attempted to show this morning, by which we can get rid of sin, and that is by the forgiveness of it. When Israel worshiped the gold calf while Moses was getting the Ten Commandments, Moses interceded. Exodus 32:33 says: Then Moses returned to the LORD, and said, "Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!" The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book." Unresolved sin will still cause people to lose eternal life.

Forgiveness is the release, on the part of the creditor or offended party, of any expectation that a debt will be repaid or that an offender will receive punishment for a sin. Removal of an offensive sin doesn't condone the behavior or suggest approval for sin. Habbakuk 1:13 says that God's eyes are too pure to approve of sin. Forgiveness without a change of heart or repentance cannot happen. Forgiveness cannot happen apart from the obedience of faith in response to the gospel.

Our reading today comes from Hebrews chapter 8 verses 10 to 12 and described the new covenant that we brought to us by the blood of Jesus Christ and is found in the New Testament. "FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. "AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,' FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM. "FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE."

What a great, great promise that God will not remember our sins. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for all Your love all Your compassion, for Your willingness to receive us to Yourself and to forgive our sins. Help us Heavenly Father to devote ourselves to You and to give glory to Your name by the way that we live and by how we treat others. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

There are several words used by God to describe what He does with our sins when He forgives us. In Mark 1:4 and Luke 3 and verse 3 John the Baptizer proclaimed a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Well, the word often translated here as forgiveness describes the act of freeing or liberating one from guilt or punishment of sin; it pardons or cancels the guilt or punishment for sin. Romans 6:23 reminds us that the "wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Forgiveness releases one from eternal death and provides eternal life.

When Jesus was laying the foundation for the Lord's Supper, He spoke of the importance of the fruit of the vine. Matthew 26:27 to 28 says: And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." The Lord Jesus suffered torture and death, shedding His blood so that we might be forgiven.

Now the forgiveness that we have through the blood of Jesus gave us a new life in Christ's kingdom and liberated us from a domain of darkness. Colossians 1:13 to 14 says, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Now being in the kingdom of Christ, the church, and being redeemed and forgiven take place at the same time. Rescuing us, redeeming us, and forgiving us came from God as a

gift and on His terms. Now thinking that we should be redeemed and forgiven on our terms or the terms we develop reveals an arrogant and ungrateful attitude for what the Lord Jesus did for us. We can't be saved our own way; we must let Jesus be both Lord and Savior.

Now Paul describes how God works in our lives when we are baptized in Colossians 2:12 to 13. It says: "having been buried with him 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."

Another valuable term is the term "blot out." Peter said in Acts 3:19, "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out." Now the idea is that sins will be wiped away or erased. The Lord God 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." Now when God forgives sins, they're not only removed, they are blotted out. The last trace of them is gone forever.

David facing his guilt over the adultery with Bathsheba in Psalm 51:1 to 3 says, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." David wanted freedom from his sins, for which he was deeply ashamed. And God's steadfast love has abundant mercy.

The Lord God told Israel in Isaiah 44:22, "I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud And your sins like a heavy mist." The fog may be heavy in the morning, but it doesn't last. When God forgives, the record of our transgressions they don't last, that record. When Judah returned from exile in Babylon, the Lord God promised in Jeremiah 33:8, "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." Jeremiah 50 verse 20 gives more promises: "In those days and at that time,' declares the LORD, 'search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found; for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.'

The people sang in Psalm 85:1 to 3, "O LORD, You showed favor to Your land; You restored the captivity of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin. You withdrew all Your fury; You turned away from Your burning anger." God's forgiveness means He's no longer angry at us or wanting to punish us for our transgressions. God is interested in our reconciliation, in befriending us once again.

The Scriptures also speak of washing away sin. David cried to God in Psalm 51:1 and 2, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. (and then) Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!" Repentance is a washing of the heart from evil thoughts. Repentance is necessary for anyone who desires salvation. Jeremiah 4:14 warned Jerusalem, "Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, That you may be saved. How long will your wicked thoughts Lodge within you?" The grace of God never works apart from repentance.

True repentance, the washing of the heart, leads to a change of life. Isaiah 55:6 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." Time doesn't matter. We must forsake our evil thoughts

and evil ways. And thankfully, we can say with David in Psalm 51:17 that, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

Sent by God, Ananias told Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16, "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." Now washing is essential to enter heaven. Revelation 22:14 says, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates." How are our robes washed? Well Revelation 7:14 says, "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Yes, we are washed by the blood of the Lamb. When does that happen? Well it happens when we come into contact with Jesus who shed His blood.

Romans 6:3 to 4 says, "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." Now baptism in water is baptism into Christ; baptism into Christ is baptism into His blood. And Romans 6:6 explains that, "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." Baptism is when God remits, removes, erases, and washes away our sins. Baptism is when He rescues us, redeems us and sets us free from the guilt and punishment of sin.

Baptism is the time when God saves us, but baptism is also a way of calling on the name of the Lord according to Acts 22:16. Well, how does that happen? Well 1 Peter 3:21 explains, "Baptism, which corresponds to this, 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." Baptism appeals from a corrupt conscience to gain a good conscience. And God causes the old man of sin to be crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, and raised with Christ so that one can walk in newness of life, freed from sin. Saved. David cried out in Psalm 51:7, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice."

Repentance comes from godly sorrow, but salvation leads one to rejoice in God's grace and mercy. One of the best things you can do today is to give thanks for God's compassionate mercy that forgives sin and leads to eternal life. David sang in Psalm 103:1 to 5, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, (Bless the Lord and) and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

In this psalm David especially speaks of our forgiveness. Psalm 103:8 to 13 says: 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. (and) 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.

J. W McGarvey, a great Bible scholar, many years ago wrote about the remission or forgiveness of sins as part of the new covenant that we have with Christ. And he said: One of the terms of the new covenant that God makes with Israel in these days under Christ, is this, "their sins and their iniquities, I will remember no more" (Heb. 8 verse 12). (Now that's a very surprising thing he says), an astonishing statement. (He says) I do not know how God makes out to forget them. We can't forget them: I don't

know how He does. I don't know exactly what He means when He says, "their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more;" unless it means, I will never bring them up against you anymore. They are gone. I have thrown them away; they are blotted out.

Brethren, after having lived and groaned under sin, with a conscience that has ground us and tormented us for a long time, how blessed the relief—how unspeakably blissful the state, to know that they are blotted out—that they are thrown away—that they will never be brought up by the great God against us in all eternity—that in the day of judgment no mention will be made of them! That is the happy condition of the man who is redeemed by the blood of Christ, and has obtained the remission of sins." McGarvey's right. I don't know about you, but I feel very much like brother McGarvey in gratitude for the forgiveness of sins.

I have a couple of scars on my chin and another on my side. I received both scars from my brother more than 60 years ago. Today they make no difference to me, because I love my brother. Loving my brother is more important than counting scars. Forgiveness is an act of God. He blots the record of our sins out of the book that He keeps. God throws them away. God is merciful to our iniquities and remembers our sins no more forever. 2 Corinthians 5:19 says that, "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them." He forgives so that He can still be close to us and reconcile.

Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful for Your great wisdom. For Your great compassion and love which gives us hope and the forgiveness of sins. And Father we pray that as we are forgiven that we'll live a life that honors and glorifies You with our love for You and for others. And by our changing our ways to please You. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Peter concluded his sermon in Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified." Now in verse 37, the people reacted to discovering their great sin of crucifying Jesus. Verse 37 says, "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" Peter said to them 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." That was God's answer in the first gospel sermon. And it's still God's answer for us today.

In Acts 2:38 both repentance and being baptized take place before one receives the forgiveness of sins. A recent paraphrase explains, "Repent and return to God, and each one of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus, the Anointed One, to have your sins removed." We are not baptized because our sins are already removed; we are baptized to have our sins removed. That is forgiveness.

God wants to redeem and reconcile you to Himself so that you can live with Him forever and ever. One day you will either say, "I loved the Lord and followed Him" or, "I waited too long and missed my opportunity." Hebrews 9:27 says, "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment." God wants every person to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2 and verse 4). What do you want? If you ignore God or don't care about God, God notices with a broken heart. And if you humbly and lovingly obey Him, He will not refuse you.

Date: _____

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