

Program Transcripts

March 2023



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

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Topics subject to change without notice

MARCH 5 – AT YOUR WORD

Does God speak seriously? Does He mean what He says? We live in a culture where speaking seems more important than listening. We must learn to listen to God rather than pursue our own ways.

MARCH 12 – CHRISTIAN BAPTISM 1

In this first lesson we will explore what the Bible teaches about baptism found in the gospel accounts and in the book of Acts. Our task in this series is to learn and to practice the will of God in baptism.

MARCH 19 – CHRISTIAN BAPTISM 2

In this lesson we will explore what the Bible teaches about baptism in the epistles. We will see how the grace of God works through baptism, an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins.

MARCH 26 – THE ANATOMY OF SIN

While many people think sin is obsolete or no big deal, the Scriptures tell us that sin is our enemy. Sin matters because the wages of sin is still death. We are going to look at the ways that sin and temptation work.

At Your Word

Does God speak seriously? Does He mean what He says? In this lesson we're going to compare God's way with human reasoning.

The Lord Jesus promised His disciples 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." We want the truth; we don't want to be deceived by speculation or human tradition. We want the truth that makes us free, and the Lord Jesus is the trusted source. He never misleads with half-truths or false promises. He doesn't play games or change the rules. You can trust Him to speak straight and lead you to righteousness.

The great question of life is not whether God created the world in six days, whether Jesus really lived, or whether there is life after death. No, the great question of life is whether we will listen when God speaks. Will we believe Him or trust our own judgment? If we listen to God, He will answer the other questions for us. If we're unwilling to listen to God, we'll live in uncertainty, blindly searching for a clear conscience and eternal life yet missing the path. Wouldn't it be sad to you and your opportunity to know the truth? Just to miss it. Don't let that opportunity slip away. Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding."

When it comes to eternal life, ignorance is not bliss. To ignore the way of the Lord is to lose His grace, His favor, and His blessing. To ignore the way of the Lord is to abandon hope for heaven and living with God eternally. Don't miss the blessing of God; open your heart and your ears to hear God's teaching.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according Luke chapter 5 verses 1 to 6.

"Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered and said, 'Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets.' When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break;"

Oh the word of God is true. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for these stories of old that help us to understand that You always know the truth and that You always speak it. Help us to be believers in Your word and in You. In Jesus name, Amen.

This event in the life of Jesus took place on the Lake of Gennesaret, sometimes known as the Sea of Tiberias, the Sea of Galilee, or the Sea of Chinneroth. Two empty boats were standing by the shore. The owners had returned from a night of fishing; they had caught nothing and were washing their nets. Jesus entered one of the boats, and Simon pushed the boat off the land a little. Jesus sat down and began teaching the people, using the boat for his pulpit.

After teaching, Jesus said, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets down for a catch." Well, you can imagine how they must have felt after a long night's work with nothing to show for it. But Simon Peter answered well, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." Even though they didn't feel like it, even though Jesus wasn't a professional fisherman like they were, and even though they were ready to quit, they did what Jesus said. They put out their nets and enclosed a great number of fish, to the point their nets were breaking and they needed help to draw in the

fish. Both boats were so full of fish that they began to sink. Astonished, Peter fell down at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Peter, by trusting in his own experience and judgment, listened to Jesus with doubts and questions. He had to see for himself what God could do. When Jesus' words proved true beyond any expectations, Simon Peter recognized his sin in failing to trust the Lord. Luke, guided by the Holy Spirit, recorded this true story for our learning and our profit. We would do well to learn from this story.

First, we need to know that God's instructions do not arise from human philosophy or reason. The time for fishing had passed. To continue casting their nets now that it was sunny was foolish to the idea of a human standpoint. I'm sure they could have made some informed arguments against following the Lord's instructions. This is not the first time the Lord commanded something that defies human reason.

Do you recall the Lord's admonition through Moses that the children of Israel sprinkle blood on their doorposts to avoid the tenth plague? From a human standpoint, one may ask what one has to do with the other.

Do you recall Moses stretching out his rod over the waters to bring about the parting of the Red Sea? Do you recall God's command to Moses to strike the rock to bring about water?

Do you recall God's telling Moses to put a bronze serpent upon a pole, which could cure everyone who looks upon it? Human philosophy would never connect the command with the promise.

Do you recall Joshua and Israel marching around Jericho for seven days in order to see the walls of Jericho fall? Surely, this was not a military plan that humans would design!

Do you recall Naaman the leper dipping himself seven times in the Jordan River to cure his leprosy? When Elisha told him to do this, Naaman got angry. He thought Elisha would call upon the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Dipping in a muddy river was offensive to his human pride and wisdom.

In the wisdom of this world the cross is foolishness. 1 Corinthians 1:18 to 29 says, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.'" Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God, in the the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom didn't come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

"For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (And then he says,) For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God."

God is the source of all spiritual truth; it's His place alone to say what His conditions are in order to receive the blessing His promises. Human philosophy may help us understand some things, but listening to God is necessary. God didn't ask the counsel of the wisest men but has at all times revealed His divine wisdom in dealing with people. Romans 11:33 to 36 says, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has

known the mind of the LORD, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

Second, we need to remember that human experience does not measure up to Divine wisdom. Many today reject anything and everything that doesn't correspond to their own experience. But our Lord's power and wisdom cannot be measured by human experience. We can't reject something simply because we don't understand it. Many can't accept the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection because they can't understand how these things could happen. They say such things are against nature. They've never seen a man raised from the dead, so they don't believe it can happen. However, the believer accepts whatever the Word of God says, even though he's never experienced such things. He realizes that truth can come from more sources than his five senses.

Some refuse to obey the commandments of the Lord, because they think these commandments are foolish or because they go against the social grain of our day. Frankly, we need the attitude Peter showed. He said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets.” (Luke 5 verse 5). Peter sacrificed his own practical knowledge and skill as a fisherman to listen to the authoritative word of Jesus. We too need to say, “I will do as You say....”

When we truly love the Lord and believe in Him, we want to know what His will is for our lives. We're happy to ask, “Lord, what will you have me to do?” We're ready and eager to do the will of the Lord, because we know that His wisdom and power work with what He teaches and instructs us to do. When the Lord teaches us His will, we don't consult with others. We listen to the One who bore the cross, the One who forgives! We don't want other voices to confuse and mislead us.

Third, we need to see the difference between listening to the Lord and refusing to listen. The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed God's Word when Israel refused to hear. He said in Jeremiah 6 and verse 10, “To whom shall I speak and give warning That they may hear? Behold, their ears are closed And they cannot listen. Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reproach to them; They have no delight in it.” You see, their refusal to listen to God led them to follow idolatry and to be enslaved to sin.

Jeremiah wept over how far the children of Israel had fallen away. They became greedy and cheated one another; they worshiped other gods and scorned the word of God. Jeremiah asked in chapter six and verse 15, “Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time that I punish them, They shall be cast down,” says the LORD.

Though the Lord wanted to give them every opportunity to repent, the people refused. Jeremiah said in chapter 6, verse 16: Thus says the LORD, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’” They were a stubborn and rebellious people. Jeremiah's prophecy that Babylon would come in and destroy them came to be true. The Jews suffered greatly because they wouldn't do what the Lord says.

When the Lord teaches us what to do to be saved, how the church is to meet, how to worship, how to live pure lives, and how to serve others, are we listening? When the Scriptures teach that we are no longer under the old covenant but are under the new covenant, are we listening? When the Lord teaches us about the sanctity of life and marriage, are we listening? When the Lord teaches us that some behavior is sinful, are we going to debate with Him? Are we going to treat the Lord as if He doesn't understand our culture, as if He were naïve and has no right to govern our lives?

When it comes to our salvation, instead of debating with the Lord who created us, shouldn't we say, "I will do as you say"? If the Lord commands us as penitent believers to be baptized in His name, immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins, why should we argue with Him?

When it comes to how we worship, shouldn't we take into account what pleases the Lord? You can't entertain people to the point they will deny themselves and take up a cross. No, conversion to Christ requires more than pop psychology preaching and an entertainment form of worship. You can't get people to repent of their sins, if you never preach against sin. Sadly, some preaching has become so weak and ineffective that many don't even know their behavior is sinful. In some cases they've never been taught the Word of God; they've been deceived with a blend of selective spirituality and cultural dogma! Teachers have led them to believe that they will face no consequences to their sins. The wisdom of men sounds reasonable, but it's not the Lord's way. It's a broad way that leads to destruction; it's a house built on sand.

If we intend to enjoy the promises and blessings of God, then let's listen to His instructions. When God makes a promise with a condition to be met, He never grants the blessing until the condition is met. The blessings of God come after obedience, not before. God cleansed Naaman after he dipped seven times; God healed the Israelites of their serpent bites after they looked upon the bronze serpent; God gave Israel water after Moses struck the rock; and God saves us after we obey His teaching. We are to be repentant and to be people who are baptized immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. Have you obeyed? Has God washed away your sins.

Let's pray together. Father we are thankful for Your love and Your grace. And Father help us to be good listeners and not only to hear what You say but to believe it and to obey it. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

When we obey the Lord, the Lord blesses us far beyond our expectations. When Peter let down the net, "they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break." Peter never imagined they would catch so many fish. They had to get their partners to come help! They filled up both boats, so that the boats were beginning to sink! Our God is "able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (Ephesians 3 and verse 20). When we obey the Lord in repentance and baptism, God grants us the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). But He gives us far more than forgiveness. He causes us to be born again (John 3 and verse 5). He adds us to the number that's in His church (Acts 2 and verse 47). God makes us His children (Galatians 3:26 and 7). He saves us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3 and verse 5).

Someone says "Well, I don't understand how being immersed in water saves us; I thought the blood of Christ saves us." Folks, the cleansing blood washes away our sins when we are baptized in water. God does the cleansing. 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?" Baptism unites us with Christ in His death. Baptism is the time when our souls come into contact with the death of Christ. Romans 6 and verse 6 says, "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." Now this takes place when we're baptized. We have buried and raised with Him in baptism, and that's when we begin to walk in newness of life. My friend the blessing follows the obedience. Won't you obey the Lord today?

Christian Baptism 1

The Bible never speaks of a believer in Christ who has not been baptized. Let us explore what the Bible teaches about baptism.

God desires that we believe and obey Him. And we want to please God, because we love Him. The apostle Paul said in Galatians 1 verse 10, "If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ." That's why we ask what God says about every moral or spiritual matter. We're involved in a search for the truth, for the Lord's will. We want nothing more and nothing less.

Several years ago, a man far from God asked me to study the Bible with him. When he was a young teenager, he was baptized in a denominational church. But years later he learned what he did as a youth and what the Bible teaches about baptism were different. This left him confused, and he wanted to know what the Word of God said. He desperately wanted to be right with God. He was in poor health; and the doctor told him that if didn't change his ways, his heart would give out and he would die. And he remembered promises he had made many years before and wanted to do what was right.

I met with him, and we studied from Scripture what the Bible says about Christian baptism. That is baptism into Christ. I wanted to share with you what we studied that day. So today and next week we'll study what the Bible says about baptism.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Matthew chapter 3 verses 13 to 17 which talks about the baptism of Jesus Christ.

"Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?' But Jesus answering said to him, 'Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he permitted Him. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.'"

God was pleased when Jesus was baptized because Jesus wanted to fulfill all righteousness. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help us always to do Your will to love You and to do things as You would want them to be done. Help us to build our houses upon the rock and not upon sand. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

For centuries people have discussed baptism. And we're focusing on what the New Testament teaches about baptism into Christ. We want to know how baptism fits with our conversion to Jesus Christ and becoming a Christian. And so we're going to study through the New Testament. We'll move fast and only make the most important points.

In Matthew 3:15 to 17, Jesus considered it important to be baptized. He left his home in Nazareth and walked many miles to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. John was surprised at Jesus' coming for baptism and objected to it, since John's baptism was according to Mark 1 verse 4 and Luke 3 verse 3 a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Well, Jesus has never sinned and didn't need forgiveness. But Jesus said, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

Well, Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness, and it's also the right thing for us to do. Luke 7:29 to 30 says that anyone who rejected the baptism of John was rejecting the purpose of God. Well, if this is true of John's baptism, it is even more true of the our baptism into Jesus Christ.

Matthew 3:16 to 17 says, "And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'" God approved of this baptism. Notice that after baptism, Jesus went up from the river, from the water. The water baptism of Jesus took place down in the river. John 3 and verse 23 says that, "John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized."

In His last words recorded in Matthew, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18 to 20).

The apostles made disciples by teaching and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and second, by teaching them all that Jesus commanded them. The idea of a non-baptized disciple or Christian is never contemplated in the New Testament.

The Lord said in Mark 16:15 to 16, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Now two things are necessary to respond to the gospel and to be saved: faith and baptism. It's not right to say one is necessary but the other is optional. The Lord included both.

In John 3 and verse 3 Jesus told Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered in verse 5, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Now what we need to know is that all the early church fathers agreed that the new birth of water and the Spirit in John 3:5 is baptism in water. In fact, no one said otherwise until the 1500s. The idea of a person being born again before he is baptized is simply not found in Scripture.

On the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 Peter and the apostles preached the first gospel sermon. Peter's sermon convicted the people. "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Acts 2:37 to 39 says: Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

Now these guilty people asked what they should do about their sin of crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ. And Peter said they needed to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus in order to have forgiveness of their sins, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Both repentance and baptism precede God's forgiveness. Some say one ought to be baptized because their sins are already forgiven, but this idea ignores the context. They aren't asking what to do after they're forgiven but what to do to be forgiven.

Remember the phrase "for the forgiveness of sins" was used of John's baptism in Mark 1:4 and Luke 3 and verse 3. It's also found in Matthew 26:28, where the Lord says, "for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Jesus poured out His blood so people might have forgiveness. Peter heard Jesus say this just fifty days before. It's not an accident that he uses this very phrase in reference to repentance and baptism.

Now some recent translations make Acts 2:38 clearer. The New Revised Standard Version says, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven." The International English Bible says, "Change your hearts and each one of you must be immersed by the authority of Jesus the Messiah, so that your sins may be forgiven."

Well, Acts 2:40 to 41 shows this even stronger. It says: And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." Now those who heard this message to save themselves were baptized! Clearly, three thousand people understood this message and gladly did what Peter told them. They understood what to do and why they needed to do it. And they wanted to be saved.

Next we looked at Acts 8 and verse 12. The Bible says, "But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Now they baptized men and women but not infants or small children. They baptized people who were old enough to believe in the name of Jesus Christ and to repent. Acts 5 and verse 14 tells us that believers were added to the Lord, both men and women. Infants aren't old to believe. The words for men and women speak of males and females of full age and stature. They could believe and needed to repent. They could responsibly decide for themselves.

Acts 8 also tells of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home. In his chariot he was reading from the book of Isaiah. The Holy Spirit told Philip to join the eunuch in his chariot. Philip ran to him and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Well the eunuch replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" The place he was reading is Isaiah 53:7 to 8.

Well Acts 8:34 to 38 says that: "The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. "

Now Philip preached the gospel of Jesus to the Eunuch. Apparently, preaching the gospel included preaching baptism, because as soon as Philip finished, the Eunuch asked, "What prevents me from being baptized?" And they both went down into the water. Philip baptized him, and they both came up out of the water. Now whatever baptism is, it happens when people go down into water.

Baptism is a specific word; it points to an immersion in water. Some translations no longer use the English word baptism; instead, they translate the Greek word baptizo as "immerse." Baptism is a dipping, an immersion in water. Baptizo is never used to speak of sprinkling or pouring. Other words in Greek describe those actions. The word for sprinkle is rhantizo, and the word for pour is cheo. Philip immersed, baptized, the Eunuch in water to obey the gospel.

In Acts 9 Saul of Tarsus was on his way to Damascus to take Christians back to Jerusalem as prisoners. A light blinded him, and he encountered the Lord Jesus. Verses 4 to 6 say: he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." Now not one word suggests that Saul was saved on the road. In fact, we know that he isn't saved at this point. He must go to Damascus and be told what he must do.

Verse 9 says that Saul is without sight for three days, and he neither ate nor drank. Saul was in shock. He had been persecuting Jesus who really was the Son of God and risen from the dead. And though he blind, he had his spiritual eyes opened to the truth. He thought he was doing the right thing by persecuting the church, but Saul was wrong. In 1 Timothy 1:15 he calls himself the chief of sinners.

In Acts 9 verse 11, Saul is in Damascus in a house on a street called Straight, praying. Saul prayed more fervently than ever. He was blind, humble, and penitent for all the evil that he had done to the church. This broken man desperately wanted to be healed and to be right with God. But he had to wait to learn what he must do. Fervent prayer didn't wash away his sins. This might shock you, but stay with me on this. Some ask people to say a sinner's prayer with them, and they promise them salvation. But Acts 9 says nothing about a sinner's prayer bringing salvation. In fact, Saul is not yet saved; even though he prayed for three days, and we can know this from the Bible.

In Acts 22:13 Paul tells of Ananias who "came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' Now some say the word "brother" means Saul is a Christian, but Ananias is just referring to him as a fellow Jew. Jews called each other "brother."

Verses 14 to 16 says: And at that very time I looked up at him. "And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'" Ananias told Saul that he must "be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." If Saul was saved on the road or by prayer, he wouldn't need to wash away his sins in baptism. At the Sanders house, we wash dirty clothes. We don't wash the clean ones. The washing of baptism is necessary because our souls need cleansing by the blood of Jesus Christ. And we need to do that.

If you've never been immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins, as a penitent believer, then maybe you need to think about doing so. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that Your word teaches us the right thing to do. And help us Father to do what is right so that we may please You. And show You our love. We're thankful for the grace that's through the blood of Jesus in baptism. This our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Many refer to being baptized as a work. Well, it is indeed a work, but not a work that we do. We're saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2 verse 8). Baptism is not something we do, but something done to us. The command is to be baptized, which means the person being baptized is passive, receiving baptism. The one baptizing does the work; the one being baptized is acted upon. And just as the one baptizing does the physical work, so God does the saving in a spiritual act. Think with me. In baptism God is the One who washes away our sins. God is the One who forgives our sins and causes us to be born again. God is the active One in baptism and we are the passive ones receiving His kindness and grace.

Baptism is never something done all by itself. Without exception, those who were baptized in the New Testament first heard the gospel preached and believed it. Baptism without faith is useless; for this reason, we don't baptize people who don't believe or can't believe (such as infants). In addition to faith, the Lord also expects us turn our lives around in repentance. We must leave sin and give our heart in service to the Lord. When people have repented and confessed their faith before others and, they are ready to be baptized. When they're baptized is the time God washes away their sins by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Christian Baptism 2

God works through baptism? Let us explore how God's grace works in baptism.

We search God's Word for the Lord's Way. We want to please God, because we love Him. We want to do His will and have no other intention. God desires that we believe, love, and obey Him. We're not interested in the traditions or opinions of men; we want to know what God teaches in Scripture. When the Bible teaches it, we know it comes from God and not man. We can trust the Scriptures.

This lesson is a second in a series of two on baptism into Christ. In the first lesson we focused on baptism in the four gospel accounts and the book of Acts. In this lesson our focus will be on the epistles.

Ephesians 5:25 to 27 says that, "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless." Now here Christ cleanses the church through the washing of water by the word. Earlier in Ephesians 1:7 the Bible speaks of how we have "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."

Well, how are we cleansed? Is it through the blood of Christ or through the washing of water by the word? The answer is both! In the physical sense, we are baptized in water; but in the spiritual sense, God washes and redeems us through the blood of Jesus Christ at the time of baptism. Well, we're going to explore this farther in a few moments.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Romans chapter 6 verses 3 to 7. And in this passage he reminds them of what happened whenever they were baptized so that they would learn to live moral and good spiritual lives.

"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 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."

Yes, in baptism that's when we are freed from sin by the blood of Jesus. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for these letters of Paul and other letters in the bible that help us to understand more about our conversion and our salvation. Help us to put our faith and trust in You and to be obedient to Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

What can we learn from Romans 6:3 to 7? First, when we're baptized into Christ Jesus, we enter a relationship with the Lord that we didn't have before. Baptism is the time of uniting us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. We're baptized into His death; and that's when we come into contact with His blood. His blood is applied to our souls at the time of baptism. And that's why Ananias told Saul in Acts 22:16 to be baptized and wash away his sins. Because in baptism we die with Him; we're buried with Him; and we're raised with Him. In baptism we go down into that watery grave, and we're raised up with Him to walk in newness of life.

Second, I've heard people complain about baptism. But John 3 and verse 5 says it's a new birth, and Romans 6 says it's a death. Well, which is it? Well, it's both. Before you can be born again, you have to be crucified with Christ and die to sin. Before you're baptized, you're dead in your trespasses and sins. But in baptism you die to sin. And when you're raised up with Christ in baptism, you have newness of

life—free from sin. Born again. When you're baptized, the old man of sin is dead, and you can now have a new life devoted to righteousness. Just as Jesus didn't have newness of life until He was raised from the physical grave, so you won't have new life until you're raised with Him in baptism from a watery grave.

Third, when we're united with Him in baptism, our old man of sin is crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away and that we should no longer be slaves to sin. Now this passage never describes baptism as some outward sign. That concept came from men who deny the necessity of baptism to salvation. Instead, baptism is the means by which God's grace unites us with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. And this is how God gets rid of the old man so that the new man can live freed from sin.

Fourth, the Bible here likens baptism to a burial. Now to bury a person, you must cover or enclose that person up in a grave. Baptism, as we've seen, means to dip or to immerse a person in water. The act of immersion in water is different than sprinkling or pouring water. One can readily see how immersion is like a burial, but sprinkling and pouring doesn't resemble a burial. The people who were baptized, people you can read about in the New Testament, were all immersed. The practice of sprinkling or pouring for baptism cannot be found in the New Testament. It was an innovation of men that was first practiced in later centuries. Immersion in water fits Romans 6 and verse 4 and the first century, while sprinkling and pouring that came many years later does not.

When we speak of the necessity of baptism to salvation, some usually quote 1 Corinthians 1 verse 17, where Paul said, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void." Some say baptism isn't necessary to salvation because of what Paul said, but remember what the Lord Jesus said of baptism in John 3:5, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot (he cannot) enter the kingdom of God." You see, without the new birth, (and that takes place in baptism) you can't enter God's kingdom.

John 4 and verse 2 says that Jesus didn't baptize, but his disciples were baptizing. Paul saw his role as one who taught the gospel rather than one who does the immersing. This doesn't mean that he thought baptism is unnecessary to salvation; it simply means that he had a different function. And this situation is like the apostles who felt the feeding of the Grecian widows was necessary in Acts 6 but selected seven other men to do it, while they devoted themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Paul merely devoted himself to preaching, while others did the baptizing.

The next passage for us to consider is Galatians 3:26 to 27 which 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." Now in baptism we not only enter Christ, we also clothe ourselves with Christ. We put Him on like a garment. When God looks at us as His children by faith, He sees Christ surrounding us. We're clothed in Him. Well, the only way you can put on Christ is to be baptized into Him. Faith and repentance are essential to our salvation, but baptism is when we put on Christ—and not before.

Next, let's consider Colossians 2:12 to 13: "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." Now baptism is a response to God's powerful working in forgiving our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus and raising Jesus from the dead. God is the active one in baptism as we noticed last week, and we are the passive ones. God works in baptism, and we receive His blessing.

When I hear people say baptism is a work, I agree with them. Baptism is a work that saves; but it's God's work not ours. Baptism is God working on us. God is the active One, and we are passive. The command, "be baptized," is a passive imperative. An active imperative means you must do something. A passive imperative means you must let someone else do something to you, and in this case it is God who acts upon us. In baptism we respond to God's love and submit to His will so that He works on our souls and in our lives.

In baptism God forgives our sins. In baptism God causes us to be born again. In baptism God adds us to His church. In baptism God washes away our sins, God puts us into the death of Christ, God buries us with Christ, and God raises us up with Christ. In baptism God saves us. When people say, "You don't have to be baptized to be saved," they're showing that they really don't understand God's work in baptism. You see, when you exclude baptism from God's saving grace, you're interfering with what God is doing to us and for us. We don't see baptism as some great work that we do to earn our salvation but as a great work that God does!

Titus 3 and verse 3 says, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Oh, what a terrible condition it is to be lost in sin and filled with unrighteousness. We were all like that before we came to Christ, and He showed His compassion on the cross.

Titus 3:4 to 7 continues, "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, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Now God acts on us by His mercy and grace in the washing of regeneration (that is the washing that causes us to be born again) and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The early church fathers unanimously understood the washing of regeneration to be baptism. And nobody doubted it until 1500 AD, when men began saying the grace of God excluded baptism. God's grace doesn't exclude baptism; it works through baptism. He saved us by the washing of regeneration. Titus 3 and verse 5 says that "we are justified by His grace when He saves us in the washing of regeneration.

Now next, we consider 1 Peter 3:21, "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 corresponded to Noah's ark, when water cleansed the world by removing the sinful, ancient world. Baptism saves like that by putting to death or crucifying our old man of sin and allowing us to walk in newness of life.

Now baptism doesn't remove dirt from the body. Instead, baptism is "an appeal for a good conscience." That is what Ananias was talking about when he told Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16 to "arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." In baptism we call on God to wash away our sins and to give us a good conscience. When God washes away our sins in baptism, we can see ourselves as different people. That we're right in God's sight. God put away from us all the sin of our past and has saved us with the blood of Jesus Christ. We're free from sin, guilt, and fear.

When we respond to God in love and faith by repenting of our sins and are baptized, God saves us and washes our soul clean. No longer are we separated from God. Before salvation we have no hope and no relationship with God, but God saves us through the blood of Christ and that's applied in baptism. And this opens up a way for us to be justified and reconciled through Christ.

A defiled conscience robs us of confidence before God. God said in Isaiah 59:1 to 2, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." While we're in sin, we can't have a clear or good conscience; but when God saves us at baptism, He grants to us the good conscience.

Now, someone asks, "Phil, don't you know about the household baptisms?" Yes, the Bible mentions the households of Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian jailer, and Crispus being baptized in the book of Acts. Paul says he baptized the household of Stephanas in 1 Corinthians 1:16. Some say, "Surely, there must have been some infants or small children among those households." Friend, it's risky to assume children too small to act responsibly were being baptized.

In Acts 10:44 to 48, Cornelius and his family heard the word before they were baptized. They knew what they were doing. The same is true of Lydia in Acts 16:14. In Acts 16:34 the household of the Philippian jailer believed and rejoiced at their obedience. In Acts 18:8 "Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized." 1 Corinthians 16 and verse 15 says about the household of Stephanas that they "devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints." So, when you look closely at these examples of conversion, they speak of people able to listen, to believe, and to obey the Lord—not infants.

Now according to early church historian Everett Ferguson, Tertullian made the first explicit mention of infant baptism in his essay *On Baptism* in the second century. He opposed it as an innovation, mentioning first the innocence of the infants, who did not need the forgiveness of their sins. Ferguson noted that Tertullian was expressing the common belief of the early church.

Let's pray together. Father help us to do Your will the way You want it to be done. And not to read into Your word things that were never there. Father help us to be obedient. To do it out of love. In Jesus name, Amen.

Why become a Christian? Because you love the Lord, and you want to serve and obey Him, you want to live as close to God as possible, and because you want eternal life. Being in Heaven with the Lord is the greatest blessing of all. To become a Christian, you must believe and obey the gospel.

Now believing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, means confessing your faith before others. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 16:15 to 16, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." You can't be saved apart from faith in Christ Jesus. We must be willing to confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and treat Him as Lord. It's hypocritical to say Jesus is Lord but treat His teaching as if it were trivial or optional.

True trust in and love for the Lord Jesus means a change of heart. We will leave the way of sin to follow the Lord wherever He leads. We'll deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily and follow Him. Love, faith, repentance, and confession are necessary prerequisites to baptism. People who aren't committed aren't ready for baptism. We must come out of a corrupt world and live in God's love and truth.

When we come to be baptized with love and a penitent faith, our hearts are thankful for the Lord's sacrifice on the cross. Now after we're baptized, we come out of that water free from sin, united with Christ in his burial and resurrection, children of God, born again, and added to the Lord's church. We'll have eternal life, and nothing we'll ever do is as important as becoming a Christian.

The Anatomy of Sin

While many people think sin is obsolete or no big deal, the Scriptures tell us that sin is our enemy. Let's explore how temptation and sin work.

The Lord Jesus said in a prayer to the Father in John 17:17, "Your word is truth." We believe God's word is the truth and are committed to searching the Scriptures and sharing what they say. The Scripture is the one hope of mankind for life in Christ. One hope for abundant life, and eternal life. There is no other way to the Father in heaven but through Jesus (John 14 verse 6). Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

We often lie to ourselves about our sins! Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:9 to 10, "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." Paul wrote in Galatians 6:7 to 8, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." In our hearts we know that sin is wrong, but some would rather believe a lie than face the truth about sin.

1 John 1 and verse 8 says that, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." In verse ten John writes, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." Sin matters, because the wages of sin is still death (Romans 6 and verse 23). We cannot enter heaven with unresolved sin.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Luke chapter 22 verses 1 to 6. And here we read about the arrangement that Judas Iscariot made with the chief priest to betray Jesus.

"Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching. The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death; for they were afraid of the people. And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve. And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. They were glad and agreed to give him money. So he consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd."

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray. Father we're thankful that You have loved us so much. But we're sorry Father that sin enters into our lives. Help us to say no to temptation and no to sin and to live with love towards You. In Jesus name, Amen.

John 11:57 says, "Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him." Now apparently, Judas Iscariot found out about this. Luke 22:3 to 6 reveals that Satan entered Judas, and Judas decided to go and discuss with the chief priests how he might betray Jesus. They were glad Judas wanted to betray Jesus and agreed to give him money. Matthew 26:14 to 16 tells us more: "Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?' And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus." Yes, Judas "consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd."

The Scriptures consistently suggest that Judas' desire for money was at the heart of his sin. Judas held the money bag and used to help himself to what was put into it according to John 12 and verse 6. Jesus knew that he was a thief. And his greed became a habit to the point that he criticized Mary for not

selling the fragrant perfume, so that the three hundred denarii could be given to the poor (John 12:4 to 5). Jesus defended Mary, which would have irritated Judas, who likely wanted to get his hands on those denarii. Perhaps his disappointment over losing Mary's extravagant gift to Jesus led him to agree to take the thirty pieces of silver.

John 13 and verse 2 follows up with the story that, "During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him." Well Jesus knew what was happening. Matthew tells us Matthew 26:21 to 26 that: As they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me." Now being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?" And He answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. "The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself."

When John asked Jesus who would betray Him, Jesus answered in John 13:26 to 27, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." John 13:30 says, "So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night." Just as the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, so the devil tempted the heart of Judas Iscariot to sin.

James 1:13 to 16 helps us see how temptation leads to sin. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren."

Sin will deceive! Jesus said the devil has been a liar from the beginning in John 8:44. We must study the word of God so that we don't buy into a lie. Hebrews 3:12 to 14 says, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end." Now Satan will promise you many pleasures, but they won't last. In the end they'll become destructive to your conscience, to your faith, to your home, and possibly to society.

Sin will not only deceive you, it'll also enslave you. The Lord Jesus said in John 8:34, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." Now no one likes to think of himself as a slave, but sin is addictive, it's enslaving. Paul explains in Romans 6 and verse 16, "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?" Sin is your enemy and will cause you to do evil, things that you never thought you could or would do. Then it fills your soul with guilt and shame; and it makes you small in your own eyes.

Peter describes the Christian who becomes entangled in sin and is overcome as being in a worse condition than they were before they became a Christian. And he said, "For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2 verses 21 and 2).

Sin does enslave those who commit it. Paul speaks of the consequences of greed in 1 Timothy 6 verses 9 and 10, "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." The love of money enslaves people to do things they would never have done otherwise. When the love of the world, including the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life dominates one's heart, the love of the Father vanishes (1 John 2 verses 5 to 17). Now Judas obviously loved having thirty pieces of silver more than the life of the One who had been his friend.

Sin corrupts us spiritually and physically. Titus 1:15 to 16 says that, "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed." Sin warps our hearts and defiles our consciences. Galatians 6:7 to 8 speaks of the physical corruption. Paul wrote, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption." Well many sins destroy our health and shorten our life. God in His wisdom tells us to avoid such sins because He knows their harm.

Sin also hardens the heart. 1 Timothy 4 verses 1 to 2 says, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron." Callous hearts, pretending to be righteous, admitting no sin, having no shame, and telling lies, exist today. Some who fall away from God get so hardened of heart it's impossible to renew them to repentance. They no longer care about the Lord Jesus or the cross He bore for their sins; they love their sinful ways more than they love the Lord.

Sin brings spiritual death. And God's inspired word says in Ephesians 2:1 to 2 says, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." When people follow the ways of the world in sin, they're spiritually dead. Romans 6:23 is clear: "The wages of sin is death." Nothing has changed. We can fool ourselves into thinking that our sins don't matter, but they matter to God. Remember, we have sinned against God. The one sinned against looks at sin differently than the one who sins.

Sometimes people lie to themselves and think their sins aren't so bad as to deserve the wrath of God. We're hearing religious leaders to placate culture and trying to overrule God by proclaiming that sinful practices won't bring about the wrath of God, but they're mistaken and presumptuous. Ephesians 5:5 to 6 says, "For this you know with certainty, that no [sexually] immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." Human leaders given to the times and the culture, they're not gonna change God's will.

All the schemes of the Jewish leaders to silence Jesus Christ failed. Jesus arose from the dead, and the Lord established His church. All the pagan emperors of Rome couldn't stop Christianity. Oh, they burned Bibles and tore down churches, but the Truth prevailed, and Christianity survives. The teaching of the Holy Scriptures are still true and they'll last forever. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 24:35 that, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."

Spiritual death means that we are separated from God; we do not stand in His grace or favor.

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." When people are separated from God by their sins, God no longer hears their prayers or comes to their rescue. We must take our sins seriously.

Sometimes people ignore their responsibility for sin. Judas used to steal from the moneybox. And when the opportunity came to turn Jesus in to the chief priests, you remember that Judas "went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd" (Luke 22:4 to 5). Now Satan tempted Judas Iscariot, and Judas chose to betray Jesus. He wanted the money that the chief priests offered.

Now Judas regretted his deeds. Matthew 27:3 to 4 says, "Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.'" Now Judas didn't blame others; he felt such guilt and shame that he took his own life.

Now Jesus didn't excuse the wicked choices that Judas made to steal and betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. Jesus pronounced a "woe" on Judas. "But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table. For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" (Luke 22:21 to 22). When Christians sin and betray their Lord, they must face their guilt and shame. And unless they repent and are forgiven, they can separate themselves from God forever.

Let's pray. Father help us to love You and to serve You and never to betray You and give in to the sins and the temptations of this world. Help us Heavenly Father always to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

An ancient philosopher said "Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; and sow a character, reap a destiny. The Lord Jesus knew that sin begins in the heart. He said in Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders." For this reason, Proverbs 4 and verse 23 reminds us of the wisdom of Solomon given to his son, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life."

We should not think that our thoughts don't matter, Jeremiah 17:9 to 10 says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds." Where is your heart? Is your mind and heart continually thinking about sinful things or the things of God? You know if you let your thoughts become a habit and continually sin, it can lead you to do things that you despise. Romans 6:21 asks, "Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death."

Change your heart and your ways. Come to the Lord for forgiveness. You can leave the old ways behind and be born again. You can be saved by grace through faith. Believing in Jesus and in His word; repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. With God's help you can change and become the godly person that you desire. Don't let anything keep you from leaving sin and becoming a Christian.