

# Program Transcripts

July 2024



IN  
**SEARCH**  
OF THE LORD'S WAY®

# **SEARCH PROGRAMS**

**July 2024**

*Topics subject to change without notice*

## **JULY 7 – ONE ANOTHER**

Christians have many obligations toward one another in addition to gathering and worshiping at the church building. We must love and serve one another! We must help each other to remain faithful to our calling.

## **JULY 14 – IS GOD ACTIVE TODAY?**

Some think God must be asleep today or has forgotten us, but God is still very active in our world today. God is watching over His people, caring for them, and providing for their needs. Are you allowing God to work in your life?

## **JULY 21 – THE NEW COVENANT**

According to the promise in Jeremiah 31, the old covenant with Israel has now been replaced with a new covenant in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 8:6-12). This new covenant is established by the blood of Jesus Christ.

## **JULY 28 – ARE YOU PERSUADED?**

Paul's preaching in the book of Acts revealed his determination to persuade the Gentiles to believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. People today also need to be persuaded in their hearts and minds.

## One Another

When I became a Christian, the Lord Himself forgave my sins and added me to His family, His household, the church. Acts 2:41 says, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." The people who were baptized were the ones given the promise found in Acts 2:38 to 39: "Peter said to them, '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. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.'"

The Lord adds His saved people to His family, because every person needs a healthy, biblical church home. And we hope you're worshiping regularly with such a congregation. We need a church family.

Our reading today comes from Acts chapter 2, verses 42 to 47, and talk about the beginning of the church.

"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

That's a reading from God's holy word.

Let's pray together. "Father we're thankful that the early church was comprised by people who loved each other and who were devoted to serving You. Help us to love each other, and to be devoted to serving You as well. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen!"

God has made you as a Christian to be different from the world—and to be a shining light as a child of God! Matthew 5:43 to 48 says, "You have heard that it was said, 'That you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." God holds His people to a higher standard in how they treat others.

The Lord also holds Christians to a higher standard in how they treat one another. The Lord said in John 13:34 to 35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. And by this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." 1 John 3:16 to 18 describes this farther, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." God demands an authentic, genuine love.

Acts 2:42 to 47 describes the early church at Jerusalem and how "they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of breaking of bread, (that is the Lord's Supper) and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs

were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together they had all things in common; they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” Well who wouldn't want to be part of such a church—a praying church, an active church, a sharing church, a teaching church, a fellowshiping church?

No wonder people came into it every day!

Romans 12 and verse 10 says to Christians, “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.” Rom. 12:15-16 says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.” Romans 14:19 reminds us, “So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”

Galatians 5 and verse 13 teaches us that “through love (we are) to serve one another.” Paul continues to exhort Christians to take care of each other's needs. Galatians 6:9 to 10 says, Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” Now we should help one another every way that we're able.

We should look out for one another's souls. Galatians 6:1 and 2 says, “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.” Now God expects His people to feel a kinship and responsibility for each other. Hebrews 3:13 to 14 says, “But exhort one another every day, as long as it's called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.” We're to watch out for each other's souls and to help each other overcome the struggles of sin.

God wants His people to believe and practice the truth and to live in peace with each other.

Ephesians 4:1 through 3 says, “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you've been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Now some Christians betray their calling by thinking that their job is to slander or degrade their brothers. James 4:11 to 12 warns, “Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you're not a doer of the law but a judge. There's only one lawgiver and judge, He who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?” Now, we will all come before the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus, who will judge fairly. He will judge us in the way that we judge others (Matthew 7:1 to 5). And the church is no place for unfair judging. The Lord Jesus said in John 7:24, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” Many spend their time accusing rather than asking to find if the rumors are true.

We must be honest with each other. Ephesians 4:25 says, “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.” I tell you, we must be kind to each other. Ephesians 4:31 to 32 says, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor

and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Being a Christian leaves no place for arrogance or selfishness. Philippians 2:3-4 says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." Again, Colossians 3:12 to 14 says, "And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity."

1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 11 says, "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another up, just as you are doing." One way Christians build up one another is by worshiping together in prayer, song, and the Lord's Supper. Colossians 3:16 shows the twofold nature of our singing, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Our assembling together is for more than merely worshiping. We also touch each others' lives and hearts. Hebrews 10:23 to 25 says, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and to good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some is, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near." To consider someone is to give value to that person, to focus your mind on him/her. It means trying to see as the other person sees, feel as the other person feels. Be thoughtful of others and encourage them.

More than that, we must learn to trust each other and to pray for each other. We have all sinned and stand in the need of the grace of God. James 5:16 says, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." Now once God forgives a brother or sister of sin, let's also forgive them and be reconciled.

1 Peter 4:8 to 11 says, "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, and since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." When we serve others, we glorify God. God made you so that you could serve Him by serving the body of Christ, the church. When I withhold myself from serving, I'm robbing my brethren and I'm robbing God.

The Lord Jesus is serious about our loving and serving one another. He said in Matthew 25:31 to 40, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then He'll sit on his glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And He will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly,

I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you also did it to me.” When we serve our brothers and sisters in Christ, we are indeed serving the Lord Himself.

Now, I owe my brothers and sisters in the Lord my love, because the Lord built the church in local congregations and works through local congregations. Loving my brothers and sisters shows how I love the Lord. I owe my faithful brothers and sisters, my loyalty, my prayers, my financial support, my talents, my faithful attendance, and my heart.

Having served churches for more than a half century, I realize local congregations are filled with fallible and flawed human beings. Not all churches follow the Lord as they should. And when a local church ceases to follow the Lord, we should seek one that does follow Jesus. We don't want anyone to follow those congregations who hold to error and the commandments of men. “Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit” (Matthew 15 and verse 14).

Let's think about these things, and pray with me. Heavenly Father, we're thankful to be members of Your church, the body of Christ. We're thankful that we can be of your household and be sons and daughters of Yours. Help us Heavenly Father to love others who are sons and daughters of Yours, and to love You with all our heart, our soul, and mind and strength. And help us to be faithful in our service to You, and obey Your will. In Jesus name, we pray, Amen!”

When we get involved and support the Lord's church, we're showing our love and support for the Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20 and verse 28). And surely, He wouldn't have made such a great sacrifice if the church didn't matter. To Jesus, the church is not an option. Jesus relates to the church as a head does to a body (Ephesians 1:22 to 23) and as a husband does to his wife (Ephesians 5 and verse 25). As Christians we must love the church Jesus built, the one He died for, and purchased with His own blood.

When people are baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, the Lord adds them to the number of His people, the church (Acts 2:41 to 47). Now we're baptized into the body of Christ, the church (1 Corinthians 12 verse 13). Salvation and church membership are connected. Jesus is the Savior of the body, the church (Ephesians 5:23). Now if you forsake the church, you're forsaking the Lord Jesus and your forsaking your salvation. By forsaking the church, you're turning away from God and falling away from Christ.

For this reason, I'm calling for every member of the church who's out-of-duty and fallen away to return, to start assembling with the Lord's church and be a part of it. Like the prodigal son, it's time for you to come home to your Father and to your Savior. It's time to get right with God.

Now becoming a Christian means you become a member of the church. To become a Christian, believe in the Lord Jesus, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism is an immersion in water. And when we're baptized into Christ, we're baptized into His death; and His blood was shed when He died, and that frees us from sin. Please come to Christ!

## Is God Active Today?

Some think God is absent in our world today; and others say that God is dead. Is God alive and active in the world today and working for our good? We want to know all we can about God, the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ; and the way to know God is through a study of His Word, the Bible. So we go again and again to the Scriptures.

How we view God matters greatly in how we view life and how we understand our purpose and role in this world. An atheist doesn't believe God exists at all. An agnostic says he doesn't know whether God exists, because he thinks God is unknowable. Some believe God got the world going and then just abandoned it. Others have the belief in God that He was relevant in ancient times, but now God is dead. They say we no longer need God.

Several years ago in graduate school, I spent a couple of semesters studying skeptics and atheists. One thing I found was that skepticism and atheism grew more out of an attitude than it did out of the evidence. Atheists and skeptics tended to focus on the disorder and the ugly in life. They seemed to ignore the intelligent order, the beauty, the grandeur, and the wisdom that's so evident in our universe. They were intelligent, but they missed the intelligent design. I'm amazed at how easily people can slip into a very narrow view of life and of God. Some folks choose to close their eyes and their minds to the beauty of God and see only the evil. God is good and actively blesses us every day. Thankfully, we can know Him and what He has done for us to bless us and to give us eternal life.

Our scripture reading today comes from the book of Proverbs 3:5-8. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones." That's a great encouragement to trust in the Lord. Let's pray together. O, Father, may we always trust in You and not lean on our own understanding. May we always acknowledge Your existence and Your presence in our lives. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Paul said in Ephesians 1:18-19, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." God wants our hearts to be open to His power. God's power towards us who believe is greater than we think!

Have you ever had an "aha!" experience—awakening to some great truth that had eluded you up until that time? That's what Paul wanted for the Ephesians. He wanted them to understand what God causes to happen—God is at work! God has great power—and His power works in the lives of His people.

You might ask how God is at work. He is working in a variety of ways. First, God works in the universe. As a prophet of God, King David said, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:1). One can hardly look at the beauty, the order, and the wisdom of our universe and not see how wise and powerful God is. The God who makes the sun shine and flowers bloom, the God who regulates times and seasons has such great power and wisdom that it is truly beyond our understanding. Paul proclaimed: "And in the generations gone by He permitted all the

nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:16-17). All that we have, all of our blessings come from God!

Jesus is not only our Creator, He is also the one who keeps this world together. The Bible says, "And He (speaking about Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:15-17). God's power and wisdom cause our seasons, cause the earth to rotate every 24 hours making night and day, cause the moon to revolve around the earth every 28 days and controlling the tides of the ocean, and cause the earth to go around the sun every 365 and one fourth days determining our year and our seasons. This couldn't just happen on its own; God has been in control.

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). We're blessed to have food to eat each day, food that God provides. Have you ever thought about the power of one seed planted in the ground? One kernel of corn planted in the ground, watered, and fertilized can produce an ear of corn with sixteen rows and 800 kernels. Many cornstalks will have more than one ear! God created that kernel of corn with the information and the ability to reproduce itself in that marvelous way.

God is indeed powerful and wise! The Lord Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he doesn't know how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come" (Mark 4:27-29). God has been taking care of us in marvelous ways for a very long time.

Second, God is at work in our salvation. God sent His only Son to die on the cross; God through the Holy Spirit inspired men to write the Bible including the gospel, which has the power to save; and Christ built His church, who are the saved. From the beginning, God has been working toward our salvation. The apostle Paul by inspiration said, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (Ephesians 2:4-9).

The salvation that we enjoy through Christ was expensive. It's the gift of God, and for that we are thankful. Great gifts are never cheap, and our redemption came at a price greater than silver or gold. God sacrificed his Son Jesus, and Jesus sacrificed His body on the cross. We must not take our salvation for granted or treat it lightly as if it were trivial. People who mock the Lord, ignore the cross, and criticize the church are usually people who are unthankful for what God has done to save them. They don't realize what He sacrificed to give them eternal life. The Bible is the message of that life. Without the message of the Bible, we would all be in great peril—without hope and without God in this present world.



The Bible teaches us how to come to Christ, and how the blood of Christ cleanses us, and how we can have new life with Christ. The Bible says, "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions" (Colossians 2:12-13). It is God who is "at work" in baptism.

In baptism, God unites us with Christ, and washes away our sins, takes away that old man of sin, buries us with Christ, and raises us up from spiritual death to life. In baptism, God adds us to the church and makes us His children. God is very busy working on us in baptism. For this reason, I cannot quite understand why anyone would say baptism is unnecessary for our salvation. Read what the scripture says. Baptism is when God works on us.

God doesn't forget us once we are saved as Christians, once we've been baptized. Every Christian still has weaknesses and still sins. Christians wish they could keep from sinning; they hate it when they sin and they want to stop it afterward. God knows that we're weak but He has provided for our weaknesses. The Bible says, "Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). That's what Jesus is doing right now for us. He is interceding with the Father on our behalf, asking the Father to forgive us and to continue blessing us, even when we have sinned. I am so thankful for the Lord who loves me enough to pray for me.

Third, God is at work answering prayer. The Bible says, "It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24). God wants to hear your prayers. He invites you to pray to Him. The Bible says, "Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow" (James 1:17). God loves us enough to hear our prayers and to help us when we need Him. The apostle Paul reminds us, "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Fourth, God is busy shaping our lives. He works in us. The Bible says, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). God prepares His people to do His work, so we may live for an eternity in heaven with Him. What God is doing in us now prepares us for the life to come. The Bible says, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13). God is shaping our hearts, our attitudes, our will, and our lives to conform to His will, so that we might live with Him always.

God also saved us so that we might be His servants, doing good works and impacting the world for love and righteousness. The Bible says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). So much good is being done in the world; because of the love of God and the teaching of the Bible, Christians feed the hungry, take care of widows and orphans, help unwed mothers, provide help to the lonely and homeless, and point sinners to righteousness. Oh, yes! God is at work through the church.

I saw a book the other day written by a skeptic, called, The God Problem. His subtitle suggested that God never addresses the problem of evil in the Bible. I wondered which Bible he was reading, because it's not the Bible that I've spent my life studying. God knows about our suffering, and the cross of Christ demonstrates God's willingness to suffer for us. 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 doesn't stop every event of suffering, but He uses even suffering to work for our good. We don't always understand what God is doing or why; but we know that God loves us and will use every circumstance in our lives, good or bad, pleasing or painful, to work for good in some way. We can trust God!

David, who was inspired of God, said, "Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities; Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit; Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle" (Psalm 103:1-5).

God has been working in our lives a very long time. He isn't hidden or dead; and the Bible reminds us of all the good that God is doing for us and in us. The apostle Paul said, "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). God's Word is far from being harmful. It is the source of love and life and good and righteousness. We need the Bible every single day to help us grow spiritually and in character, and to live like God intended. Pray with me. O, Father, we're thankful that You have been so active in our lives through the world You created, through Your answer to prayer, through the things written in Your Word, and through the providence we enjoy. Father, bless us and help us to love You more each day, to be good servant, and to do Your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I join Paul in His prayer: "and I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Ephesians 1:18-19). God can work in your life, IF you let Him. He won't twist your arm; He won't force you to do anything. But if you out of love and obedience, put your life into His hands, God can do amazing things. It's not the power of God that's lacking. It's not the willingness of God to work in our lives that's lacking. What is lacking is our willingness to let God into our lives and into our hearts.

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." You must trust Him and let Him work in you. God desires that we believe in Jesus Christ enough to obey Him and trust His promises. Do you?

That starts by trusting Him enough to repent of your sins and confess the name of Christ before others. Christ doesn't want a secret disciple. He wants you to confess with your mouth that He is your Lord and that you believe He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. After you've repented and made that confession, God wants you to be baptized into Christ where God cleanses you with the blood of Jesus and makes you into one of His own children. Won't you do that today? Won't you obey the gospel and put the Lord Jesus Christ first? Will you let God work in your life?

## The New Covenant

Through the centuries the Lord God has maintained His relationship with His people through covenants. Sometimes God's covenants were one-sided, where God made promises to His people without thought of their response. For instance, the Lord God told Noah in Genesis 9:12 to 15, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, (to) for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh."

Other covenants, however, were two-sided. Now covenants are legal, binding, and permanent relationships. They are far more than contracts. Marriage, for instance, is called a covenant in Malachi 2 verse 14. Now God as a ruler made just such a covenant with Israel at Sinai. The New Testament calls this covenant at Sinai the old or first covenant. But God promised to bless His people to care for His people, and Israel promised to love and to serve Him exclusively. Now today God invites you to enter into a new covenant with Him in Christ.

Our reading today comes from 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verses 23 to 26 and discuss the new covenant that we observe when we partake of the Lord's supper.

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

That's an important reading from the word of God. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that we can remember each Lord's day the Lord's supper. That is the eating of the bread and the drinking of the fruit of the vine. We pray that we'll remember the body and blood each Lord's day and that we will love You for what You have done for us. And serve You always. In Jesus name, Amen.

When you open your Bible to the table of contents, you'll notice that there are two testaments. The Old Testament has 39 books and the New Testament has 27. The word "testament" usually brings to mind a last will and testament, but the word "testament" as it is used to refer to sections of the Bible is better translated as "covenant." The Old Testament contains God's covenant uniquely made with Israel, while the New Testament contains God's covenant with all men through Christ.

Now some people view what the Old Testament says to Christians in extreme ways. First, some think the Old Testament binds every one of its laws on Christians with as much force as the New Testament; and then there's the second, the second in that group, some say that we have no practical need for the Old Testament at all. Well the truth is that while God gave the covenant laws of the Old Testament specifically to Israel, God gave Christians the Old Testament for our learning and instruction. While God does not expect Christians to obey the laws that He gave to Israel, there are inspired truths and principles in the Old Testament that help us to draw near to God.

God gave the Law of Moses in the form of a covenant that a Ruler would establish with His people. The Law detailed God's promises and Israel's obligations. The individual laws are details of the covenant, rules that govern the relationship. Now this Law spoke to those who were in the covenant and under the law of the covenant. Romans 3:19 says, "Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law." Specifically, the Old Testament was addressed only to the nation of

Israel or the Jews. The Ten Commandments are found in Exodus, chapter 20. The first two verses clearly show the Ten Commandments, in Deuteronomy 5, were given specifically to Israel. "And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

Now in Exodus 34:27 to 28 the LORD said to Moses, "Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments." And Moses said in Deuteronomy 4 and verse 13, "And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone." Again, in Deuteronomy 9:11 Moses said, "And at the end of forty days and forty nights the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant." The Ten Commandments were certainly part of the covenant God made with Israel on Sinai. According to Deuteronomy 5 and verse 3 the Lord's covenant with Israel began with those at Mt. Sinai and was not binding earlier than that.

Sadly, Israel didn't remain faithful to the Lord. They didn't continue in the covenant with God. Consequently, the Lord made promised in Jeremiah 31:31 to 34: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant (He says) that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

The book of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31 and identifies the new covenant as the better covenant made by Jesus Christ. Hebrews 8:6 to 7 says, "But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second." Now since Israel broke the first covenant, as Jeremiah said, there was a need for a second covenant, a new covenant that was different from the first. Hebrews 8 and verse 13 says, "In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." God determined to make a new covenant with His people, a covenant established by the blood of Jesus Christ. Now this covenant was for all people, Jew and Gentile alike.

Unlike the first covenant, all the people in the new covenant would know the Lord. People came under the first covenant by being born as an Israelite; and they had to be taught from birth to know the Lord. But the new covenant is not that way; people first learn about the Lord and then by faith choose to follow the Lord. The Lord Jesus said in John 6:44 to 45 that, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me." Now, this is why preaching always preceded baptism in the New Testament. People first had to believe the truth before they could be united with Christ in baptism.

Paul asked in Galatians 3:19, "What, then, was the purpose of the law? (well) It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come." In the following verses Paul described the Law as a schoolmaster or guardian that watched over the Jewish people until faith in Christ was to come. Verse 24 says, "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified

by faith. Now faith has come, and we're no longer under the supervision of the law." Just as children need a guardian when they are young, so Israel needed the Law; but when a child grows up, he no longer needs a guardian. When faith in Christ came, Israel no longer needed the supervision of the Law. They had Christ!

The Old Testament Law did not offer a complete salvation from sins. Hebrews 10 and verse 1 reveals that the "law is only a shadow of the good things that are to come." Paul told the Jews in Antioch in Acts 13:38 to 39, "Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man (that is Christ) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses." Hebrews 10 and verse 4 says, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." It was necessary for Jesus to die on the cross to take away our sins.

Romans 10 and verse 4 says "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Now in Christ there is something better than the Law. Paul explained in Ephesians 2:13 to 16, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off (you Gentiles) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, (between Jew and Gentile) and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility." Now as long as the Law was in force, there would be hostility between Jew and Gentile, but now in Christ's new covenant, there is peace.

Paul wrote in Romans 7:4 to 6, "Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code."

Now we should not think that because we do not live under the covenant found in the Old Testament that the Old Testament has no value. The Old Testament is God's Word and valuable to us as Christians. Paul wrote in Romans 15 verse 4, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Now you can see Paul saw the great value of the Old Testament. On another occasion Paul recalled a number of events as Israel wandered in the wilderness in 1 Corinthians 10 verse 11 and he said this, "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come." We must know these important lessons from God are real, by studying the Old Testament.

The Old Testament contains God's promise to redeem mankind by sending the Messiah into the world. Peter said about the death of Jesus in Acts 3:18, "this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer." Now these prophecies provide a foundation for our faith in Christ. And only God could predict the future, and the Old Testament contains these faith-building predictions. We know Christ to be the Messiah because He alone fulfills these prophecies of His birth, His life, His death, and the prophecies of His resurrection.

Now many important truths revealed in the New Testament are based upon events recorded in the Old Testament. Without a knowledge of the Old Testament we couldn't understand many things written in the New Testament. When Jesus speaks of "Solomon in all his glory," we know that He is speaking, what He's speaking about because His glory is described in passages like 1 Kings, chapter ten. When Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife," in Luke 17:32, we wouldn't understand unless we had read in

Genesis 19 how God turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt when she disobeyed the Lord. Were it not for Genesis chapters 1 and 2, we would not know the details of the creation; and were it not for chapter three, we would not know about Adam and Eve's sin.

While the laws of the Old Testament, and details of the covenant, are now obsolete, that doesn't mean the truths of the Old Testament are any less true. We must surely believe many principles taught in the Old Testament such as the infinite nature of God, the creation of the universe, the accountability of man to God, and the prophecies of the Messiah, that is the Christ. We need the Old Testament to help us understand the New.

Now why is this important? Because we must handle God's Word correctly. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." Now we today live under the new covenant, not the old. We draw near to God through the blood of Christ keeping His commandments not through keeping the Law of Moses.

Let's keep this in mind. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for Your love and we're thankful for the covenant that we have that we ratified by the blood of Jesus. And Father we're thankful that we can live in this new covenant and be Your children. And Father help us to be obedient to Your will that we might show You our love. In Jesus name, Amen.

Each Lord's day Christians take the Lord's supper remembering how Jesus shed His blood to make our covenant with God. Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 11:23 to 26, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

When we become Christians, we enter a covenant relationship with God through the blood of Christ. The church is His bride. God's promise in Christ is this: "For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." Hebrews 8:12. The Lord has made great promises to us in Christ, and we're obligated serve and to love Him. We no longer belong to ourselves but we belong to Him. We're redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. And redemption touches our thoughts, our decisions, our morals, and every aspect of our lives. It's our greatest treasure and blessing to be in a covenant with God.

Now to enter the new covenant with Christ, we must place our trust in Christ. We must turn from sin in repentance and follow in His steps by living righteous lives. To become a Christian we must confess Jesus as the Christ and be united with Him in baptism. We're baptized into Christ and into His death. According to Romans 6:3-7 we are crucified and raised with Him in baptism, so that our body of sin might be done away with.

## Are You Persuaded?

When Paul wanted to persuade King Agrippa about faith in Jesus and the resurrection, Agrippa was a little surprised. Paul said in Acts 26:25 to 29, “For the king (that is Agrippa) knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.” Agrippa replied to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.” And Paul said, “I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.”

Oh yes, it matters whether we accept the gospel. Some have imagined that preaching is unimportant, but hearing and receiving the gospel is essential to knowing the Lord and being saved. You can't follow the Lord unless you know Him and what He says. The gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1 verse 16). And if you want to be saved, then turn to the gospel found in the New Testament. Have you read the book of Acts?

Our reading today comes from Proverbs chapter 4 verses 10 to 13. And it has a father who is trying to persuade his son to accept his teaching.

Hear, my son, and accept my sayings  
And the years of your life will be many.  
I have directed you in the way of wisdom;  
I have led you in upright paths.  
When you walk, your steps will not be impeded;  
And if you run, you will not stumble.  
Take hold of instruction; do not let go.  
Guard her, for she is your life.

And yes, our faith in Christ Jesus, our belief in the gospel of Christ, is our life too. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You've given us Your good news about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Help us to hold fast all of our days to the things You've taught us and to be persuaded. This is our pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Persuasion is the process of convincing someone to change their beliefs and behavior. Persuasion works through moral or logical arguments; it doesn't try to manipulate or force people. A persuaded person acts because they have come to believe that it is the right thing to do or the best thing to do. We preach Christ and we want those who hear to act willingly, even gladly. We don't want them to act grudgingly, because they felt forced to do something against their will. The New Testament provides examples of some who were persuaded. For instance, John 1:11 to 12 says that, “(Jesus) He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Acts 2 and verse 41 says, “So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”

Now the gospel is a good news message of grace and salvation. It tells us what we need to know about the Lord Jesus, but it requires a response. It has details that must be received. Paul described the gospel 1 Corinthians 15:1 to 5. 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. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.”

Now Paul preached the gospel, and it was received by the Corinthians. Now to receive a message is to accept it, to welcome it, and believe it as true. They believed it so strongly that they would take their stand upon it. Now this couldn't have been easy in a pagan world with many gods to hold to just one God that demands a strict morality. They would be rejected by others, yes. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:26 to 29, "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." Being a Christian is not easy today. Any more than it was in those days.

Now to be a Christian we must hold fast to what we have been taught. If we don't we would believe in vain. You see our faith would do us no good, if we deserted the Lord at the first sign of problems; we wouldn't be saved. God's way is the right way and the only way to heaven. We must believe Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures. His suffering on the cross for our sins was real. 1 Peter 3 and verse 18 says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit." Now we were lost in sin, but the Lord's death atoned for our sins. And this atonement meant that we could be forgiven and come to God. Atonement opens the door for reconciliation, that is, friendship with God, and eternal life.

Christ was buried and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. Romans 10 verse 10 reminds us that we must confess with our mouths Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, if we wish to be saved. There are some Christian beliefs that are necessary and essential. Believing in the death, burial, and resurrection is necessary. We must accept this really happened and matters in our lives. We must hold fast to the truth of the gospel, unless we have believed in vain. Now we're only saved if we hold fast.

Hearing the gospel of our salvation is soul-stirring. It stirs us to recall how much the Lord Jesus love us, since He was willing to die on the cross for our sins. We can't overstate the love of the Father and of Jesus Christ. I'm a Christian today, because of that love. 1 John 4:19 simply says that, "We love, because He first loved us." The proof of that love comes from His willingness to suffer for us. I tell ya, no one will ever love you like Jesus loves you. He died on that agonizing cross for you, to atone for your sins. No one else ever did that, and no one could.

The Lord Jesus said in John 12:32, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." What more could Jesus have done for you than to bear a scourging and a crucifixion for you. "By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2 and verse 24). Your healing from sin allows you to draw close to God. And God doesn't want you to be lost. 1 Timothy 2:3 to 4 says, "This is good, and it is pleasing (or acceptable) in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Yes both of those things.

Now this love motivates us to serve the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:14 to 15 says, "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, (and) therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." Do you love the Lord? Does that love motivate you to serve Him? I don't want you to be partially persuaded. I want you to be fully devoted to the Lord Jesus.

Paul said in Romans 12:1 and 2 in the New King James version, he said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." I



tell you, God wants your whole heart and soul and body to be sacrificed to Him. He wants you to stop conforming to the foolish standards of the world and to live in a way that proves God's will is good and acceptable and perfect.

Now the gospel of love teaches us how badly we need the Lord right now. There should be a sense of urgency in our thinking about salvation. Paul could say to the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 6 verses 1 and 2, "Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, 'In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

I tell you, there's a reason why in Acts 2:41 the people gladly received Peter's preaching and were baptized that very day. The people at Pentecost in Acts 2 and verse 37 were "pierced to the heart," when they heard that they were guilty of crucifying the Lord and Christ. They knew they had sinned against God and did not stand in His favor or grace. They saw the seriousness of their lost condition. The seriousness of their sin. They were grieved and heartbroken over what they had done to the Christ and the position that they put themselves into. Now we can easily understand why they cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" They knew that they needed to be saved from sin; they were guilty and they were grieving their sin and its consequences.

Do you grieve about your sins? Do you realize that sin will cause you to be lost? Do you understand that lost people will suffer the wrath of God? Those of us who preach the gospel don't say these things because we think that we're superior to you. We say them because we know both the bitterness and disaster of being lost in sin and also the grace and loving mercy of being saved. We needed salvation just as all people do. Romans 3 and verse 23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." John knew in 1 John 1 and verse 8 that, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." He also says in 1 John 1:10, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him (Jesus) a liar and His word is not in us." My friend, you too have to turn to the Lord Jesus to deal with your sins.

In the book of Acts, people looked at salvation as an urgent matter. Do you? There is a reason in Acts 8 and verse 12 why the people in Samaria who believed Philip's preaching were baptized that very day. The Ethiopian Eunuch of Acts 8:35 to 39 wanted to be baptized as soon as he learned the gospel of Jesus. In Acts 22:16 Ananias urged Saul of Tarsus, "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." In Acts 16:30 to 33, the Philippian jailor and his family who learned about Jesus and salvation were baptized at once that same hour in the middle of the night. In Acts 19 the twelve people who learned the whole truth about Jesus were baptized at that time.

Now since we don't have the promise of tomorrow, we need to act today as if today were all we have. We are all people who are physically perishing. And I want to preach as a person who is recognizing God. And recognizing that we all die. I want to preach to dyeing people. Realizing that I too will die one day. You see there's an urgency to the message of Jesus Christ. And just as you need forgiveness of sins, so do I. It's an urgent matter. And Jesus Himself is calling us to follow Him, believe in Him, come to Him, to take up your cross and forsake all you that we have for Him. Luke 9:24 reminds us that, "For whoever wishes to save his life (that is to do his own thing) will lose it, but whoever loses his life for sake of Jesus, he is the one who will save it." Now there is an urgency and an immediacy yet with a strong note of warning to count the cost in the preaching of Jesus.

The gospel is the good news that gives hope when we see the bad news about our being lost in sin. By its very nature, the gospel tells us our condition before God which should disturb us. Taking thought of our sinning and being lost causes us to grieve and to be ashamed of what we did and what we were. Sadly many people don't realize their sinful condition or feel like it matters. The gospel must recognize

sin as a reality. Thankfully it gives us hope and teaches us what we can become. This moving of hearts leads us to want to repent of our sins and to be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

Now preachers of the gospel are like doctors. They have no pleasure in telling people bad news about sin. They have to be honest enough to tell us the truth about sin and salvation, so we can take the right steps for spiritual healing. Can you imagine a doctor who always tells you what is right about your health but never tells you what is wrong, so you can be healed? How can you be cured of some disease when you didn't even know what is wrong? How can you appreciate and obey the Lord Jesus when you don't know how desperately you need His salvation? King Agrippa didn't see enough to be persuaded. Friend I hope that you will be persuaded by the love of Jesus Christ who died for you.

Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful for the gospel. That wonderful story of the death burial and resurrection of Jesus. And Father we pray that we'll take His death on the cross seriously. His death for our sins and repent of them. And Father we pray that we'll always do Your will. To come to follow You. To obey Your will by trusting in You out of love. Turning from sin. Confessing. And Father by being baptized. Yes that's necessary. We pray Father that You will help us to do the right thing. In Jesus name, Amen.

Many today follow our religiously confused society that is unpersuaded about anything. Many say there are no absolute truths. They don't think there are any absolute moral teaching and they think that things God calls sinful really aren't sinful. But, Galatians 5:19 to 21 says that those who commit works of the flesh, "will not inherit the kingdom of God." Others think that all religions will lead to heaven, and nobody will be lost. And they aren't persuaded that Jesus is the only way to go to the Father; but Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. (and) No one comes to the Father except through me." To say that you believe in Jesus but reject what He teaches is to admit that you don't really believe Him. God's word speaks the truth.

Now many talk about their faith in Jesus but they fail to accept what He teaches and they don't act upon it. He is Lord, and He will judge us one day. And the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 that, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." If we want to enter heaven, we must listen to the Lord and obey Him. You cannot please God by doubting Christ or doubting the truth that He teaches. God will not accept substitutes for truth or substitutes for obedience.

Are you persuaded? Have you accepted what He says is true and welcome it? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of your sins and live righteously, confess the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Now this is what the people at Pentecost did when they learned they had crucified the Lord, and this is what you too must do to obey the Lord.