

Program Transcripts

March 2024



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

March 2024

Topics subject to change without notice

MARCH 3 – WE NEED GOD AGAIN

When America separated from Great Britain, they realized how desperately they needed God to be with them. In our culture of declining morals, we too must awaken to our desperate need for the God of heaven to be with us.

MARCH 10 – WHAT GOD WANTS FOR ME

As parents Jackie and I wanted to give our children the very best we could, because we loved them. In the same way our Father in Heaven wants to meet our needs and give us the best life possible.

MARCH 17 – SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS

A recent Pew poll revealed that while many Americans (41%) seek to be more spiritual, fewer (24%) seek to be religious. In fact, over time a third of all Americans have become less spiritual. Being spiritual and being right with God are not alike.

MARCH 24 – WALKING WITH THE LORD

How we walk (or live our lives) is important. While many decide to walk their own path, the Lord Jesus wants us to walk with Him. Are you walking in the light or darkness? We hope you are walking in the light.

MARCH 31 – OUR ADVERSARY

We have an adversary who is willing to use any strategy or lie to overcome us spiritually. We should know our enemy and be ready to fight against him. Thankfully we have the Lord who will help us when we are tempted.

We Need God Again

The God who created us, the God who sets times and boundaries, is the One and only God in control of the destiny of America or any country. We need to know the will of God and stand in His favor and grace if we expect to prosper in His sight. For this reason, we're looking into God's Word to see how He sees the nations of this world. We're delighted to be with you and want to hear from you. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

In the 1770s, the thirteen colonies that later formed the United States were a loosely organized group of independent governments seeking freedom from the unfair taxation imposed by Great Britain. At that time Great Britain had the most powerful military in the world, and the colonies only had undisciplined and ill-prepared militias. Because of the political strife, the colonies faced numerous financial struggles and lacked the industrial advantages found in Europe. They knew if they were ever to become their own nation and govern themselves, they must have the favor and the support of Almighty God.

Did you know the very first act on the first day of the first Continental Congress on September 7, 1774, was to read Psalm 35 and pray? Did you know they were kneeling, bowed with reverence, and praying in the name of Jesus Christ? This was not a church service—this was in their hearts. Who was kneeling? Patriots like George Washington, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay. Did you know they began every day with prayer at 9 o'clock? They knew they needed God. And we need God today! Some today are running away from God and following their own desires, and they're filling the land with violence, moral confusion, and sin.

Our reading today is Paul epistle to the Romans chapter 13 verses 1 to 4 and in this he talks about our responsibility to God and to the government under which we live.

“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.”

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that in Your kindness and Your grace You have allowed us to live in a country that remembers You. Father we pray that You will help each one to be devoted to You and to do Your will. To love You and to love one another. This is our pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

The Continental Congress on May 16, 1776, appointed a day of fasting and prayer for the colonies. They said, “The Congress.... Desirous... to have people of all ranks and degrees duly impressed with a solemn sense of God's superintending providence, and of their duty, devoutly to rely... on his aid and direction... Do earnestly recommend Friday, the 17th day of May be observed by the colonies as a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer; that we may, with united hearts, confess and bewail our manifold sins and transgressions, and, by sincere repentance and amendment of life, appease God's righteous displeasure, and, though the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, (through Him) obtain pardon and forgiveness.” Now the Continental Congress knew their blessing came from God and their forgiveness came through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Nations don't stand or fall based on their wealth or might. No! Other nations have been very wealthy and powerful, yet they fell. We must understand. America stands or falls based on its willingness to live

by the principles found in God's Holy Word. God is the true King of our country and every country. He is more powerful than all our weapons. The early Americans knew God was the source of their liberties. They also knew that if they abandoned the will of God found in the Bible, they would lose the favor of God and their liberties.

Now according to the Bible, God gives all nations their right to exist. The Bible says in Acts 17:26, "and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation." The Father in heaven is far more involved in the establishing of nations than we might suppose! The Lord is involved in the bringing down of nations as well.

Our great God said in Jeremiah 18:7 to 10. "If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it."

Romans 13 and verse 1 reminds us, "For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." Whether emperor, king or president, every person in authority is subject to the God of heaven. God's holiness, justice and mercy do not change, but God does adapt how He deals with mankind as people and as nations change. America is not the nation it once was. Our citizens don't know the Word of God as they once did and doesn't allow the voice of God to speak as it once did.

Have you heard of the Aitken Bible? The war with Britain cut off the supply of Bibles to the United States with the result that on Sept. 11, 1777, Congress instructed its Committee of Commerce to import 20,000 Bibles from "Scotland, Holland or elsewhere." On January 21, 1781, Philadelphia printer Robert Aitken asked Congress to officially sanction a publication of the Old and New Testament which he was preparing at his own expense. Congress "highly approved the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aitken, as subservient to the interest of religion . . . in this country, and . . . they recommend this edition of the bible to the inhabitants of the United States."

Benjamin Franklin said in the Constitutional Convention of 1787, "God governs in the affairs of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured in the Sacred Writings (he says) that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it [Psalm 127 verse 1]. (And then he said) I firmly believe this. I also believe that, without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel."

During his inauguration as the first president of the United States on April 30, 1789, George Washington took the oath as prescribed by the Constitution but added several faith-based components to that official ceremony. Before taking his oath of office, he summoned a Bible on which to take the oath, added the words "So help me God!" to the end of the oath, then leaned over and kissed the Bible.

When Solomon became king over Israel he prayed for God's blessing on the nation. God answered Solomon's prayer with these words found in 2 Chronicles 7:13 to 14, "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." But what if a country stops listening to God, stops seeking His face, and will not humble themselves before Him? Can they expect His blessing?

Solomon knew being right with God matters for any nation. By inspiration he wrote in Proverbs 14:34 that, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Solomon also wrote in Psalm 127 verse 1 that, "Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain."

Arnold Toynbee who wrote the acclaimed 12- volume *A Study of History*, once declared, "Of the 22 civilizations that have appeared in history, 19 of them collapsed when they reached the moral state America is in today." Toynbee died in 1975 before seeing our current moral decline. One must wonder how long God will tolerate the sins of America before He punishes us.

America has begun rejecting God and allowing godless ideology to become its master. America no longer fears God. It's filled with lust, materialism, violence, and selfishness. It's lost sight of the sanctity of life, the sanctity of marriage, and the value of holiness.

According to the National Center for Family & Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University, in 2022 more than 20 million couples were living together without marriage. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 40 percent of all childbirths were to unmarried women. According to the Pew Research Center, about 30 percent of U.S. adults are now religiously unaffiliated, describing themselves as atheists, agnostics, or "nothing in particular." The Pew Research Center also found in 2020 that 57 percent of American Christians say that sex between unmarried adults in a committed relationship is sometimes or always acceptable.

The concept of sin is vanishing in the eyes of many people. According to a 2015 Pew Research poll 22 percent of Americans reject the concept of sin or that some actions are offensive to God. Many are now saying many things the Bible regards as sin are no longer a moral issue. A 2023 Gallup poll said that 83 percent of Americans believe the overall state of our morals are getting worse. A 2018 Gallup poll found that 43 percent believed pornography was morally acceptable. People may deny what God says, but that doesn't mean God won't hold them accountable for their sins.

Almost no one thinks he'll be lost in hell, and many are denying hell exists. The Pew Research Center in 2021 found that 26 percent of U.S. adults do not believe in heaven or hell. The Cultural Research Center of Arizona Christian University found in 2020 that only two percent of Americans believe they will go to hell.

Now this loss of respect for God has affected the church as well. Lifeway Research found that while two-thirds of American adults believe the biblical accounts of the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is accurate, a 2022 Barna poll found that only 33 percent of teenagers believe Jesus rose again. According to 2022 Gallup poll, only 20 percent of Americans now say the Bible is the literal word of God, while 29 percent say the Bible is a collection of "fables. Legends, history and moral precepts recorded by man."

According to The American Worldview Inventory of 2020, 44 percent of Americans say that Jesus Christ committed sins. This loss of faith in God, His Word, and His church has caused people to reject religion or to reinvent the church. Some think the church should be like the world. Of course, the churches that become like the world lose their purpose and they cannot please God.

I ask again how long will God tolerate the sins of America? I wonder how long before He punishes this country. God is not evil; He takes no pleasure in punishing people. The Bible says in Ezekiel 33:11, "Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'" We might as easily say to ourselves in this country, "turn back, turn back from your evil ways!"

We need to repent and turn to God. Galatians 5:19 to 21 says, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." The apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 2:11 to 12 he said, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul." If our Christianity doesn't lead to righteous living, then we are a disgrace to God. We must glorify Him by our words, our attitudes, and our behavior.

God saved us so that we might bless those around us. The Bible says in Titus 2:11 to 14, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." God did not give us His grace so that we might continue in sin!

We must provide examples for our children. Ephesians 6 and verse 4 says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." We must teach and show them how pleasing God is the best life we can live. We must teach our children to be holy and pure. We must teach them how God created them and gave them life. We must teach them to revere God and His Word. We must teach them to love the Lord, love the Truth, and love others. We must teach them to be honest, full of integrity and honor. We must never let a day pass without God, without the Bible, and without prayer.

The Scriptures are the only sure source of truth and morality. Some trust their instincts, their feelings, or their experiences; but none of these things meet the standard of holiness found in the words of Jesus Christ. And since Jesus is Lord and Judge, let's listen to Him.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help us to turn back, to turn back, to turn back from our evil ways. And to live for You. May Your will be done and our love for You grow. In Jesus name, Amen.

When Ezra returned to Israel after the period of exile in Babylon, he sought to strengthen the people's faith. He knew the people of Israel needed God. Ezra 7:10 says that, "Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel." When Ezra learned the children of Israel had sinned by intermarrying with the pagan nations, Ezra mourned. Ezra 9:3 says, "When I heard about this matter, I tore my garment and my robe, and pulled some of the hair from my head and my beard, and sat down appalled."

Ezra said, "O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to You, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads and our guilt has grown even to the heavens." Ezra 10 verse 1 says that, "While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men, women, and children, gathered to him out of Israel, for the people wept bitterly." He spent the night, neither eating bread nor drinking water, for he was mourning over the faithlessness of the exiles.

Because of Ezra's teaching, the people repented. Instead of saying there is no sin, they gave up their sins. We too must place our faith in God and in Christ Jesus. We must humble ourselves, mourn our sins, and turn from them. We must commit ourselves to the Lord by being baptized into Jesus Christ. In baptism the blood of Christ will cleanse us from sin and give us newness of life (Romans 6 verses 3 to 7). Today is a good day to leave sin and to start a new life in Christ. And God wants to save you and give you hope.

What God Wants for Me

When God, your Father, created you, He created you with love in His heart. God said to the nation of Israel in Jeremiah 29:11, “‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’” God has a plan for our lives too! He wants to bless our lives and to meet our needs. The Bible says in James 1:17 that, “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”

All the physical blessings we enjoy, however, won't make up for what our spirits need. We're spiritual beings with souls, and the physical things of this life will not provide for the things that we need inside our hearts. We need the love of God in our lives. He's the difference between wisdom and foolishness. He's the difference between existing and abundant living. He's the difference between chasing after wind and living with meaning and purpose. God knows what is best for us and He wants to provide the things we need most for our souls.

Our reading today comes from Romans chapter 8 verses 31 to 39.

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written,

**‘FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG;
WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.’**

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What a wonderful passage. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that nothing can separate us from Your love. And we pray that we will always live in love for You and for others. This is our prayer in Jesus name, Amen

God is our Father, and like any good parent He wants what is best for us spiritually, because He loves us and knows spiritual well-being is vital to us. In this lesson I want us to explore seven things God wants for our lives. I am so thankful for the Bible, because it's the Bible that helps us understand the heart of God. The more we know God, the more we'll love Him and want to follow Jesus Christ. Here are some things God wants for our lives.

First, God wants you to be saved. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 2:3 to 4, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” There's nothing in this world worse than being lost in sin. God says in Ezekiel 18:4 that the soul that sins will die. He's not here speaking of physical death but spiritual death, which is far worse.

Sin ruins our lives and souls. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in

hell.” Sin will separate you from God’s love and His blessing. But God has a plan to save us from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, when we believe in Him and obey His commandments.

Some people think God made up His mind long ago who would be saved and who would be lost, but this simply isn’t true. God gave us the truth, which teaches us how to be saved; and He gave us free will, which allows us to choose to follow Him or reject Him. God, however, wants us to choose Jesus and to be saved. He doesn’t want anyone to be lost.

The Bible says in Ezekiel 18:30 to 32, “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct,” declares the Lord GOD. “Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,” declares the Lord GOD. “Therefore, repent and live.”

Second, God wants you to come to know the truth and to be free. The Lord Jesus promised those Jews who had believed Him, “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” (John 8:31 and 32). God gave us His Son Jesus so that we might come to know and understand His love for us. The Bible says in John 1:17 to 18, “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” This is from the New American Standard Bible.

Some say they believe there is a God in heaven, but they don’t know anything about Him. But we can and we do know something about Him. We can know God through looking at Jesus. The Lord Jesus once said to the apostles, “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (That’s John 14:7 to 9,) Yes we know the Father by knowing the Son!

Third, God offers us the privilege of prayer. In fact, God wants to hear from us. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:7 to 11, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”

We don’t have to beg God to let us pray to Him; the Lord invites us and wants us to bring our requests to Him. Just as a father loves his children, so our Father in heaven loves us. He wants to hear from us and to have a relationship with us. The Bible is how God speaks to us, and prayer is how we speak to God. God loves us enough to hear our words and our hearts. He will always answer with what is best for us, not always with what we want but always with what we need.

Fourth, God wants us to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in this present age. The Bible says in Titus 2:11 to 14, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, (and) instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”

God wants only what is best for us. Living sensibly, righteously, and godly blesses our lives and blesses those who surround us. God's grace and forgiveness opens an opportunity for us to leave a sinful and destructive lifestyle for one that is godly and productive. The gospel of Christ transforms lives from selfish to loving, from hurtful to helpful, from dishonest to devoted, and from troubled to trustworthy. God's grace works through the Word to teach us that to hate what is wrong and to love what is right.

Fifth, God wants you to have an abundant life. The Lord Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Now everybody wants to be happy, but "the abundant life" is far greater than merely being happy. It has real, inner joy, real life. It's a complete life; it's life "to the full." Christianity is a way of life that does not lack any worthy thing that we need.

Sinful pleasures may satisfy for a moment, but they cannot give you the lasting joy of the Christian life. Sinful pleasures are deceptive; they promise much but destroy those who pursue them. Sinful pleasures are addictive, enslaving, and destructive. God wants something better for His children than slavery to sin. And so He offers the spiritual, which is so much better than the fleshly. God's word says in Ephesians 1 verse 3 that the Father "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

In Christ we have God's amazing grace to sustain us, God's abundant love to comfort us, God's hope of heaven to give us endurance, and God's Word of wisdom to guide us. In Christ we have become God's holy and beloved children. And being God's child is the greatest privilege of all. Nothing else compares.

As part of the abundant life, God gives us the church as our family. As part of the local church we have brothers and sisters who know us and love us, who encourage us and watch for our souls. As part of a local church, we have a place to worship and to grow as children of God. God gave us the church to bless our lives and to help us keep strong in our faith and love for Him. Living as part of God's family, the church, and serving Christ gives us a great sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Sixth, God wants you to find peace. The Bible says in Philippians 4:6 to 7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." God knows that we often come upon tough times. And just like any Father who loves His children, He puts His arm around us and says, "Let me handle it."

When we put ourselves into God's hands, He sets a guard around our hearts and minds and protects us from doubts and fears. He replaces all our worries and uncertainties with His perfect peace. Isaiah 26:3 to 4 says, "The steadfast of mind You (that is God) will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts (that is that the person trusts in God) in You. Trust in the LORD forever, For in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock."

In Philippians 4:8 to 9 God's Word says, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things (that) you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." When people think good thoughts and live righteous lives, they can go to sleep at night with a clear conscience, knowing that they're right with the living God. The peace that passes understanding is truly a blessing.

Seventh, God wants you to come home to live with Him forever. The Lord Jesus said in John 14 verses 1 to 3, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for

you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

The Lord has prepared and reserved a place with your name on it. God intends to bless us in ways beyond our understanding. In Ephesians 2:4 to 7, the Bible says, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” God wants to give you a marvelous, amazing home forever in His house as part of His family.

Well, these are only seven things that God wants for you. There are many. To enjoy them God wants your heart and your life. You can't please God and remain on the fence or apathetic. You have to come to that point where you make a commitment to God from this day forward and forever. The Bible says in 2 Peter 3 and verse 9 that, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all (every one of us) to come to repentance.” God wants you to find His love by changing your life. You must leave the old way of sinful pleasures and follow Him to an abundant life. Today is the best day to get started on a new and better life! Won't you start with Him, won't you pray every day and let your heart be known to Him. Won't you read His word and find out the blessing that He has in store for you and the commandment that keep you safe and keep you going in the right direction. And keep you from the pitfalls of life. Won't you be the kind of person that says I know that I need God in my life and put Him first in everything, to love Him with all your heart. Oh I'm praying that you'll make a difference in your life today. And give yourself to Him.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so very grateful for Your love. For all of the blessing that You give to us, for the abundant life, for Your word and for prayer. And we pray that You'll bless us and help us to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

The most important thing we can do to respond to God is to love Him with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength. One who loves God will act upon the love by believing in Christ (John 8:24), repenting of every sin (Acts 2:38), confessing Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Matthew 10:32 to 33), and by being baptized (that is immersed) in water for the forgiveness of sins. When a penitent, believing person is baptized, the Lord washes away his sins (Acts 22:16), and adds him to His church (Acts 2:47), counts him as His child (Galatians 3:26), and saves him (1 Peter 3 verse 21).

Now God wants you to live with Him forever. The way to live in His house forever is to come into His family in this life. The church is God's family (1 Tim. 3 and verse 15). And as His child, you will want to be with other members of God's family, by attending church regularly and worshipping. God has designed the church to meet your spiritual needs and to provide the loving family that you desire.

God's arms are open wide longing for you to come home to Him and to be a part of the family that He has on the earth. Now no one will ever love or bless you the way God loves you and blesses you as one of His people. No one else can provide a home in heaven. No one else can give you a godly, loving family like Christ does. Won't you come to Him, serve Him and live with Him? Now if you're looking for a close, loving, personal relationship with God, why not visit one of the churches of Christ near you? They are loving group of brothers and sisters who want to help you go to heaven. You'll never regret doing what is right, but you'll forever regret passing up the gifts of God.

Spiritual and Religious

The truth of God's Word matters because on the last day the Lord Jesus will judge us all based on the Word of God. We'll not be judged by opinion polls or human creeds or councils. The Lord Jesus is the head of His church and the Judge of all mankind. He doesn't need to ask our opinion about His commandments or get our approval for His decisions. What He said in the first century will stand till the end of time. 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.

According to a 2023 Pew Research Center poll, 41 percent of Americans say that they have become more spiritual over time, but only 24 percent say that they've become more religious. The same poll found that 33 percent of Americans say that they've become less religious over time. According to Pew, a spiritual person is someone who believes there is a spiritual realm beyond this world. A religious person is someone who belongs to a religious group and practices what it teaches. More than 80 percent of Americans say that they have a soul or spirit, and more than 80 percent say that there's something spiritual beyond this natural world, even if we cannot see it.

Being spiritual and being religious have value, but one can be both spiritual and religious yet not be righteous. Being righteous means being right with God; it means one has been saved by grace through faith. It means that what we believe matters. It means we've left sin behind and taken to heart and life the will of God. It means we're practicing our faith, denying ourselves, and taking up our crosses to follow Jesus.

Our reading today comes from the book of Acts chapter 17 verses 16 to 21 and discuss the events of Paul at Athens.

“Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, ‘What would this idle babbler wish to say?’ Others, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,’—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, ‘May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.’ (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)”

That's the way it was at Athens. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that we can understand people who may not understand You. Help us Father to bring them to You. To love them and to help them to see Your love for them. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Athenians were open to every new thing and only wanted to hear Paul because he brought something strange to their ears. Paul had been preaching Jesus and the resurrection. “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter’” (Acts 17:32). A spiritual person knows there's something beyond this world, but he or she is often not settled on what they believe. They may acknowledge God, but they're often open to whatever comes along. For them, spirituality is like a salad bar where people choose what they like. They determine for themselves what they hold to be true and really don't care what others think.

Paul warned the church at Colossae about listening to whatever came along. Colossae was on a highly traveled road, and strangers and travelers brought in all kinds of ideas. Paul warned them in Colossians

2 verse 8, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ."

There are many ideas in this world, but not every spiritual notion is true. As in every age, people deceive and are being deceived. They often believe what they've been told without question. Interestingly, because people wanted to know the truth, they have questioned whether Jesus Christ is the Messiah and arose from the dead. Christianity, unlike other religions, can be tested in history. The New Testament contains the most attested documents in ancient literature. No ancient book has been examined or translated more. The facts found in the New Testament have been corroborated by archaeology, by ancient history, and by the existence of the early church. According to history, the eyewitness accounts of the resurrection of Jesus Christ found in the New Testament have never been disproved by the theories of men.

This is why God lovingly gave us the Scriptures so that we might know the truth. The gospel author Luke said in Luke 1:1 to 4, "Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed."

I tell you, Jesus really is everything He claimed to be! He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies and He rose from the dead. And we can have confidence in Him; we can have our questions answered. We don't have to live in confusion, never knowing the truth. No one, no one compares to Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Now this is why Paul said in Colossians 2:6 to 7, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving."

Some say they are more than spiritual; they are religious. And being religious is not a bad thing in and of itself. Sadly, some people who call themselves religious don't realize that their religion doesn't make them righteous. Paul explained about some Jews who had rejected Christ and had established their own way. He said in Romans 10:1 to 3, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God." Now these people had developed their own laws and depended on the Law of the Old Testament.

Paul had to rebuke some Jewish Christians for twisting the gospel. He wrote in Galatians 1:6 to 9, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." One can't change the gospel of Christ and can't change the rules found in the teaching of Jesus.

Jesus too had to deal with religious people who would not follow His commandments but lived lawless lives. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 to 23 that, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" Now these folks were active in their religion but they weren't

following the teaching of the Lord. The Lord Jesus expects His followers to keep His commandments, not make up their own religion.

And many today, like the Jews in the days of Jesus, call themselves religious but follow the commandments of men. They follow human traditions or the ruling of church councils, while they set aside the clear teaching of Scripture. The Lord Jesus said to the Jews who followed oral traditions in Matthew 15:7 to 9, "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain (do) they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" Those who claim to be close to Jesus but follow human traditions written by councils also worship in vain.

Many others today call themselves Christians, but they're non-practicing. They say they believe in Jesus Christ but are not practicing their faith or worshiping with the church any more. Many have quit going to church because they've seen their denominational church leave the truth and follow the culture. The many social and moral changes among liberal denominations have caused conscientious people to feel confused and abandoned. Some today are seeking a true church that wants to follow the Scriptures and remain true to the morals of Christ. Now if you're in that category, I invite you to investigate the church of Christ.

Please don't be fooled by thinking quitting the Lord is acceptable. Do you remember the one-talent man? The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 25:14 to 30, "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

"Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

The Lord Jesus made a clear distinction between those who serve Him and those who don't. One may presume they can quit the Lord and His church and still be saved on the last day, but that's a fantasy. The Lord will judge His people; and it matters whether they serve Him. It's not enough to become a Christian by obeying the gospel. Christianity is a lifelong commitment; it has no retirement plan in this life. Hebrews 10:25 reminds us, "not forsaking our own assembling (that is gathering) together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." When

you forsake attending worship altogether, you're not only forsaking the act of assembling; you are also forsaking the Lord Himself.

Now I'm not speaking here to those of you who have become homebound because of age or illness. I'm speaking here to those who can attend worship but have stopped worshiping the Lord with the church. You have abandoned assembling with God's people; and you're hurting your spiritual life and hurting the church. A non-practicing Christian may think he is spiritual; he may even think he is still religious; but the Lord Jesus regards that person as having abandoned the faith. Hebrews 10:26 and 27 says, "For if we go on sinning (willfully or) deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries."

The promises of God goes to those who remain faithful and committed. James 1:22 to 25 says, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing." True faith always lives out what it believes.

If we plan on living with the Lord in heaven, we need to be committed to the Lord during our stay upon this earth. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Are you committed to the Lord? Are you worshiping regularly with the Lord's people? Are you living for the Lord Jesus? Are you worshipping regularly and pray and reading your bible daily. Are you really close to God.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You love us and have blessed us in so many ways. Help us to be committed to You to do Your will always. And to stand fast in our love from our heart soul and minds and to love others. In Jesus name, Amen.

If you decide to become a Christian, Jesus expects a total commitment. The Lord said in Matthew 10:37 to 39 that, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it." We must not let anything or anyone come before our commitment to the Lord.

Paul wrote in Romans 12:1 to 2, "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." Now Paul could say in Galatians 2 and verse 20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." A total commitment means the Lord Jesus comes first.

To make a loving commitment to the Lord, one must believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God. One must repent of sin and follow the Lord. With love, faith, and repentance, one must be baptized into Christ so that one's sins may be forgiven (Acts 2 and verse 38). And today, today is the best day to make that life commitment. Romans 6:3 to 7 teaches one is united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection when one is baptized. He has newness of life and is freed from sin.

Walking With God

How we live matters to the Lord, because one day He will judge us according to our deeds whether good or bad. The Scriptures teach us what ways are acceptable and what ways deserve judgment. Because we love God and want to please Him, we listen to what He says. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

The word "walk" is used over 400 times in the Bible. On many occasions Scripture uses the word in its literal sense of someone traveling on foot from one place to another. But the word "walk" is also used figuratively referring to how a person thinks and behaves. God through Moses told Israel in Deuteronomy 5:32 to 33, "You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess."

God's prophet Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 10 and verse 23, "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." People often fool themselves in thinking their own ways are acceptable to God. But Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." Please don't fool yourself thinking God will accept you no matter what. The Bible never teaches that. God distinguishes those who love and obey Him from those who don't. Christianity isn't unconditional.

Our reading today comes from the six verses of Psalm 1. This is the beginning of the Psalms and really is something about life and how we should live.

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
 Nor stand in the path of sinners,
 Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
 And in His law he meditates day and night.
 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
 Which yields its fruit in its season
 And its leaf does not wither;
 And in whatever he does, he prospers.
 The wicked are not so,
 But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
 But the way of the wicked will perish.

That's the will of God. Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful that we have Your word that we can meditate upon it day and night. Help us to be like that tree firmly planted the streams of water that we may prosper and glorify Your name. May Your will be done always. And we love You Father. In Jesus name, Amen.

Psalm 84:11 says, "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly."

We walk by faith. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:6 to 8, "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight— we are of good courage and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home

with the Lord.” Now some people think walking by faith is a leap in the dark, but walking by faith means believing what God promises, because of the evidence that He’s already given us.

In 1 John 1:5 to 7 the bible says, “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. (Now) If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” I tell ya there is a critical difference between walking in darkness and walking in the light. The world doesn’t like making distinctions; but the world won’t judge us on the last day—God will.

John continues in 1 John 2:3 to 6, “Now by this we know that we know Him (that is have a relationship with Him), if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” Now God wishes for us to imitate Christ and to walk just as He walked, think as He thought, act as He acted, love as He loved, and remain pure as He is pure.

Now walking in darkness is a tragedy. Ephesians 2:1 to 3 says, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” Sin causes spiritual death; and it is your greatest enemy and problem.

Walking in darkness causes people to ruin their lives and not know it. Ephesians 4:17 to 19 says, “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”

Now each day we’re choosing how we walk or live. Galatians 5:16 to 17 reminds us, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things (that)you want to do.” Now these choices that we make matter. Who we walk with also matters. Proverbs 13 and verse 20 says that, “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” Again 1 Corinthians 15:34 says: Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”

I sometimes talk to people who don’t like what the Lord teaches. Many today have rejected Christ and Christianity because they don’t approve of their worldly ways. Well this is not new. Even in the New Testament, people rejected Jesus when they were offended by something He taught. John 6:66 to 69 says: From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

As Christians we must walk in love because God is love. 1 John 4:7 to 8 says, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” Now walking with God means that we must love everyone, even our enemies. Loving someone doesn’t mean we approve of sin. God demonstrated His love toward us even while we were sinners, but God never approves of our sin.

According to Scripture, loving means confronting sin. Do you know what the first thing our loving Lord Jesus preached? After He was tempted in the wilderness, He began preaching. Matthew 4 verse 17 says: From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Telling people to repent is not hateful. Repentance is how we correct our lives and how we heal from the destructive nature of sin. Sin tears people apart; the love and grace allows them to heal by two things, repentance and forgiveness.

Love brings about peace and unity. Hate divides. Ephesians 4:1 to 3 says, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have 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." You see love puts others first. Love means regarding others as more important than yourself, not merely looking out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others (Philippians chapter 2 verses 3 to 4).

Now this means that one will have compassion on others. Ephesians 4:31 to 5 verse 2 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice (that is the old will). Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." Christ Jesus is the ultimate example of what it means to love. To walk with God, we must imitate the love of Christ.

We should love those outside Christ and even our enemies. Colossians 4 verses 5 to 6 says, "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."

We must walk in the light. And the Lord Jesus said in John 8 verse 12, "I am the light of the world. (and) He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life." When you're in the light you can see clearly, but you may stumble in the dark. Christians left darkness to come to the light. Ephesians 5:8 to 10 says, "for you were formerly darkness, but now (in Christ) you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." Light, goodness, righteousness, and truth teaches us how to love and please the Lord.

Now love and light walk hand in hand. 1 John 2 verses 9 to 11 says that, "He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." When people ignore the love and truth of God, they end up with selfish ways and heartaches. So many of the social and political problems of our time come from selfish desires, prejudice, and selfish ambition. Because the truth matters, we must walk in truth. Psalm 86 verse 11 says, "Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name." We must recognize what the Lord says is what is true. And His truth is the ultimate truth, the final truth, and the only spiritual truth. It will one day decide our eternal destiny. Oh we may think that we can believe anything we wish, but where do you find that in the Bible? God said plain in Leviticus 18:3 to 4, "You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. You shall follow my rules (He says) and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God."

Now just because a crowd believes something doesn't make it true. Just because our culture holds a concept doesn't mean that it meets God's standards. Colossians 2:6 to 7 says, "Therefore, as you received

Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” Walking with God means that we follow His teaching, His commandments, and His ways. It doesn't that mean we rebel against Him and follow our own selfish desires. We must not presume that we know better than God.

Psalm 19 verses 10 to 13 speak of the ways and commandments of God, “They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.”

Now the devil will try to convince you he has something better than God. He is God's enemy and yours too. 2 John verse 6 to 9 says, “And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who don't acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God (does not have God); the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.” When we start adding, subtracting, or changing the teaching of Christ, we lose our relationship with God.

Now if we love the Lord, we need to walk worthy of Him. Paul prayed for the church at Colossae in Colossians 1 verses 9 to 10, “And so, from the day (that) we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Oh my friend, are you walking with God?

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that Your word helps to understand how You would have a to live and to think and what to be. And Father helps us to please You in all things. May Your will be done. And help us to love You every day. In Jesus name, Amen.

Ephesians 5:15 to 17 says, “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” God's will gives us the wisdom to walk on the path of righteousness rather than walking on a path that leads to destruction. Proverbs 28:26 says that, “Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.”

The Lord Jesus made it clear in Matthew 7:13 to 14, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” We must love the Lord with all our heart. We must deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Him if we wish to live with Him forever.

To become a Christian, you must recognize Jesus as Lord. Place your faith in Jesus Christ, turn from sin and live according to the ways of Jesus, confess your faith in Him as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. To walk with Christ means uniting with Christ. Romans 6:4 to 6 says, “Therefore we were 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 man was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with.” Unite with Christ today! Today.

Our Adversary

Did you know that you have an enemy who is only interested in seeing you lost eternally? Yes, the devil schemes continually to find ways to separate you from God.

We're living in spiritually challenging times. There are struggles in every aspect of our lives. And we need the truth of God's word to teach us and to protect us from the schemes of the devil. We're fighting a strong adversary who wants to separate us from God for an eternity, and we must put on the armor of God to protect ourselves. Thanks for taking time with us today. We would love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

Ephesians 6:10 to 12 both encourages and warns us, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." Our adversary, the devil, wants to get us involved with the evil that he practices and promotes. And he is a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

Now we're fighting our adversary for our souls and the souls over whom we have influence. If we lose to him, to the adversary, others may lose also. We're fighting for our children and our grandchildren. If we give up on God, the devil can win. Whether we fight for our faith or give in to the adversary, the devil, is the difference between eternity with God or eternity without God. We're going to explore how the devil schemes and works against us, and we'll also see what we can do to fight him and win. We have the Lord Jesus on our side; we can conquer our adversary.

Our reading today comes from 1 Peter chapter 5 verses 8 to 10 and they are a bit of a warning but they're also a bit of encouragement toward the end.

"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

Oh what a wonderful promise. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You love us and watch over us and can help us even in the toughest of times. Help us Father to stand strong against our adversary. And to do Your will and to love You always. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Scriptures teach much about the schemes of the devil, and we need to know those schemes! When Paul wrote to 2 Corinthians the book of 2 Corinthians, he noted that he forgave a sinful man in the presence of Christ, "so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes." I find many people fall to the schemes of the devil. They believe a lie and don't know the devil has lied to them. They justify some hindrance that keeps them from growing spiritually. They fall for an enticing temptation, not realizing how damaging sin is. They may even fall prey to the adversary's wicked ways.

First, we need to know the devil is a liar. The Lord Jesus explained to those who opposed him in John 8:44 that, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." We often follow what we want to hear rather than follow the truth that we need to hear. The Lord Jesus told this same

group that, "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

The Lord Jesus told those who believed in Him in John 8:31 and 2 that, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." When you stay in the Scriptures, you'll know the truth that sets you free. If you change the Scriptures, listen to men, buy into human traditions, or follow worldly culture, you will surely believe a lie that will cost you your soul. In John 18:37 the Lord Jesus told Pilate, "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. (and) Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." When you listen to the Lord first, foremost, and last about everything, you can be sure you will know the truth. And so don't settle for anything less, and don't buy into anything more. Listen to the Lord Jesus and to His apostles.

2 Corinthians 4 and verse 4 says that, "the god of this world (that is Satan) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Surely there are many false gospels today, and the naïve who do not study the word can easily fall for popular falsehoods. The noble-minded Bereans "received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

You see they learned the truth by careful study, evaluating what they heard, and judging whether it was true! They searched for truth. Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding." I tell you it costs to know the truth, and that means that one must be a disciple, a learner, or student of the word of God. Paul admonished Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 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."

The Lord Jesus wants you to come to the knowledge of the truth, but the devil wants you to buy into a lie. Now people who don't know the Lord are alienated from Him. Ephesians 2 and verse 12 describes people before they come to Christ this way: "remember that you were at that time without Christ, alienated from the citizenship of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Oh I tell you, this is a very sad condition; it's without hope and without God.

Now second the devil is the tempter. He will make you think giving in to his schemes is the very best thing for you. It never is. You remember Matthew 4:1 to 4 says: Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He (that is Jesus) answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" You see the Lord Jesus knew how to answer the devil. He used the word of God. And we must follow His example.

Now the devil often uses our emotions to draw us away from the things that God has taught. People are often deceived into thinking that if something feels right, that it must be right to do. That's such a lie. The serpent tempted Eve into eating the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3 by appealing to the beauty of the fruit, that it was good for food, and how it would make her wise. And she let her emotions, her feelings, get in the way of obedience to God. She even led her husband into sin. We have all had to face the consequences of sin, because of what Adam and Eve did in the beginning. Eve following her feelings. Sadly, we fall for the same emotional appeals and we lose sight of what God commands.

1 John 2:15 to 17 says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing

away, and also its lusts, but the one who does the will of God abides forever.” I tell you if you follow your feelings after worldly things, you’re following something that will perish. Look to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father in heaven! Doing the will of the Father is the only way to eternal life. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, “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.” And that’s still true, my friend. Don’t let your feelings overrule your judgment! Do the will of God.

Third, the devil loves to hinder our spiritual growth and service. Oh, he’ll do everything He can to get in the way of our serving the Lord. The apostle Paul describes the devil’s behavior in 1 Thessalonians 2:17 to 18, “But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us.”

The devil loves to distract us from the things that lead to spiritual growth. The devil doesn’t want us to read Scripture or to know the truth. He spreads many lies about the Bible. He’ll tell you the Bible isn’t inspired but the work of men. And if he fails at that, he’ll claim the Bible is full of errors and mistakes, but that claim is also very much false. He will claim the Bible is full of myths and legends; but I tell ya the more you know about the Bible, the more you will see how historically accurate the word of God truly is. Archaeology and ancient literature have repeatedly shown that many of the people referred to in Scripture lived where and when the Bible says. The 27th chapter of the book of Acts tells of Paul’s journey from Caesarea to Rome. Did you know that this recorded voyage is the most accurate maritime journey ever recorded in ancient literature. Yes.

Now if you wish to be spiritually strong, read the Bible. If you wish to know the truth, read the Bible. If you wish to know how to be a better person, read the Bible. If you want to know how to avoid the pitfalls of life, read the Bible. No other book will give you what the Bible can give you. And don’t let the distractions of life keep you from the precious book divine. Psalm 19:10 and 11 says of the Scriptures that, “They are more desirable than gold, even more than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your slave is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.”

The devil would like to keep you from praying just like the bible stated; your adversary doesn’t want you to rely on God. The Lord Jesus warned His disciples of being caught off guard in Luke 21:34 to 36. He said, “But be on guard, so that your hearts will not be overcome with dissipation (that’s a big word that means unrestrained behavior. You be careful that you’re not filled with that dissipation) and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; (you know cause you’ve been distracted you won’t be watching for it) for it will come upon all those who inhabit the face of all the earth. But (you) keep on the alert at all times, praying earnestly that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” Oh I tell you it’s easy to let anything and everything interfere with serving the Lord, prayer and building a strong relationship with Him.

Fourth, the devil will oppose the people of God. Revelation 12 is an interesting chapter. When the devil failed to overcome the Messiah, the birth of the Messiah, he went off “to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12 and verse 17). While this apocalyptic passage is difficult to understand, the fact the devil opposes Christianity is not hard to understand! He hates Christians, he persecutes them, and causes the people who follow him to imprison and kill Christians. Revelation 12 and verse 10 reminds us, “And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses

them day and night before our God.” I tell you the devil wants to tell you all the things he thinks are wrong with the church, but remember: the devil is a liar!

When the apostles in the first century said they were eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, yes they faced persecutions from the Jews and the Romans. They suffered imprisonment, exile, and death. The stories of martyrs facing terrible torture is not a myth. The Roman historian, Tacitus, says this in his Annals chapter 15 or book 15.44 about the persecution: he said that they were “Covered with the skins of beasts, [that is the Christians] were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.” Yes according to Tacitus, Nero blamed Christians for the fire in Rome in July, 64 AD that destroyed much of the city. The accuser of the people of God caused this terrible pain on many innocent souls. I tell ya the devil is your adversary too.

Don't imagine if you follow Christ that the devil is your friend. He never has been and never will be. He will accuse and oppose you at every step, because you follow Christ. He will lie about you, persecute you, cause others to hate you, call you names, and hinder your efforts. Oh take heart! Because Peter encourages us in 1 Peter 5:8 to 10, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” Oh what a promise, what a blessing.

Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that Your love continues with us even when our adversary tries to torture and oppose us and persecute us in many ways. Help us to stand firm in our faith. To love You always and to do Your will. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Ephesians 6:13 to 18 says, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.”

When we wear the armor of God and take on the strength God gives us, we can win in our fight against the adversary. Sadly some try to fight the devil on their own strength and without the armor of God, and they lose. You don't have to lose. You can be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of His might, when you deny yourself and take up your cross daily to follow Him. You have the armor of God!

Now to have access, to have access to that armor, you must totally commit yourself to the Lord. You cannot stand unless you have given your all! To become a follower of Christ, you must believe in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ, that is immersed in water, for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism according to the Scriptures is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ. And in baptism we're crucified, buried, and raised with Christ to walk in newness of life and freed from sin according to Romans 6:3 to 7. Won't you come to Lord humbly, lovingly and obediently? Do it today!