

Back to the Basics on Bible Principles

Glen Rock Church of Christ

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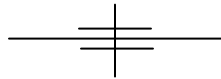


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Sin

As we instruct children from birth we see and understand they do not have a concept of right and wrong. A baby simply does not understand the difference between good and bad. As the child becomes older, we teach them about things they should not do, like run out into the street. We teach them that doing such a thing is bad because you can get hit by a car. With that teaching they see and understand the bad consequence of running out into the street. But when we teach them about something like lying we are teaching them more on the concept of right and wrong. Why? Because they may not see any immediate bad consequence of lying. In fact, it may be more appealing not to tell the truth because they see it will keep them out of trouble or help a friend or what ever.

When most people come to obedience in Christ they see the bad consequence of not obeying Him, going to hell. Like running out into the street, we can see why going to hell is not good. Having this understanding is not bad, we do need to understand how terrible going to hell is. But as we grow in the knowledge of the gospel, we also need to grow in the understanding of right and wrong...good and evil. We try and stop doing bad things because we don't want to go to hell, not fully understanding the "flip side" of that is that doing the good things brings us closer to God! We don't just "not want to go to hell", but we also want to grow closer to God. The issue with sin is not just "doing bad things", like lying, stealing, cheating, etc. Such actions are sinful and can result in us going to hell, but we need to understand the real punishment in hell and the real consequence of sin is that it keep us away from God. This is the real issue with sin, separation from God.

This understanding brings more light to **John 1:29**, when John the Baptist said "behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". Jesus doesn't just take away bad things, He bridges the divide between us and God. The word for sin in the Greek is "*amartia*" and means "to be without a share in, to miss the mark". The definition is also inclusive of wandering from the law of God, doing wrong, or committing an offence. But, ultimately, the real issue is that sin is us being without God.

Gen. 2:8-9, 15-17 – God plants a garden and places man in it. In the garden was "every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food". There are two special trees mentioned, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The command from God in **vrs. 16-17**, was that man could eat from any tree, including the tree of life, but he could not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is the first instruction given to man and the only rule, do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Notice the tree is not called the tree of good and evil but is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The implication is that man did not have any knowledge of good and evil. A concept we simply can not imagine. Every aspect of our lives has influence of good and bad. Try and imagine making a decision and not having a "down" side. Try and comprehend not having the influence or consequence of sin in your life. We simply cannot fathom it but what an amazing thought.

While they did have a rule not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were free to eat of the tree of life. Adam and Eve were created with the ability to live forever. They lived in a place where God walked among them, **Gen. 3:8**. How would have this worked? What would it have been like? Living forever in the presence of God, we don't know. What we do know is that once they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they had the knowledge of good and evil. Satan's lie in **Gen. 3:3-4**, contained some truth. They would be like God in knowing good and evil. Little did they know great repercussion of their actions. Now with the knowledge of good and evil, God could not permit them to live forever and took away the tree of life, **Gen. 3:22**. The tree of life now exist in the Paradise of God, **Rev. 2:7**. It is in Christ that the separation that sin brings is removed and we again gain access to the tree of life. The tree of life is again mentioned in **Rev. 22: 2, 14, 19**.

Rom. 3:19-23 – In his discussion on the Law of Moses, Paul points out that the law makes us accountable to God by bringing us the knowledge of sin, **vr. 20**. The purpose of the Law of Moses was to show man just how separated from God he is because of sin. The written law makes the world “accountable to God”, **vr. 19**, because all have sinned, **vr. 23**. The law shows sin and sin brings death (separation from God), but Christ brings eternal life, **Rom. 5:20-21**. In Christ, sin is removed and we are no longer separated from God, **II Cor. 5:21, Heb. 9:28, I Peter 2:24**.

Hear

To have effective communication two things need to be happening, one is sending the other is receiving. If someone is talking they are the sender if someone is hearing, they are the receiver. There may be break downs with the sending and the receiving, some one may not be good at expressing what they mean or some one may not be a good listener, what ever the case we get the concept. If we speak to someone, we want them to hear what we are saying. We sometimes express this by saying “you heard me but you weren’t listening”. What we mean is you weren’t paying attention or comprehending what I was saying. This is conveyed in the definition of the word “hear” in the Greek. The Greek word is “*akouo*” and means “to be endowed with the faculty of hearing, not deaf; to hear; to attend to, consider what is or has been said; to understand, perceive the sense of what is said”.

Mt. 13:13-16 – Jesus answers a question from the disciples, **vr. 10**, on why he speaks in parables. Jesus explains that it is “because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand”. Quoting from Isaiah, He goes on to explain that this is a result of the heart becoming dull. It is one thing to be distracted by something when trying to listen to someone, it is another thing to not want to hear what they are saying. When our heart becomes dull we have turned ourselves away from hearing what God is saying to us. Satan will work to distract us but we need to stay focused on hearing God.

Jesus stresses the importance of hearing Him when He uses the phrase, “He who has ears, let him hear” or such similar language. This phrase is written eight time in the Gospels, **Mt. 11:15; 13:9, Mk. 4:9, 23; 7:16, Lk 8:8; 14:35**. What is Jesus saying when He says this? Obviously, we have ears, so we need to listen to what He is saying. We heard the gospel and paid attention to it enough to become obedient to God, we need to continue hearing it so that we can faithfully follow.

Mt. 13:17-23 – Continuing with the text in Matthew, Jesus tells the parable of the sower, illustrating different things that happen after one hears the word of God.

vr. 17-18, Many prophets and righteous men before us longed to see the gospel revealed and did not get the opportunity, **Heb. 11:39-40, I Peter 1:10-12**. We should count ourselves blessed that we get to hear the gospel message. In light of this, Jesus stresses the importance of His lesson by telling His audience to **hear** what He is about to tell them. They were getting to see what many others did not see and getting to hear what others did not get to hear. They needed to pay attention, as do we.

vr. 19, If we hear the word and don’t understand, Satan will snatch it away. This is not to stress us out, thinking that if we don’t understand what we’ve read or what we’ve been taught right away, that Satan will cause us to never understand. Sometimes we have to dwell on things before we truly comprehend them. There are even some things we will not ever understand, at least not in this life time. The point is, if we don’t make an effort to apply the knowledge of what we’ve been given well loose it.

The word in the Greek for “understand” is the word “*suniem*” and means “to set or bring together; to set or join together in the mind”. It the word used in **verses 13,14,15,19,23 & 51**. Notice Jesus said the word does get sown in the heart and that it gets snatched from there. It’s not that the individual doesn’t “get it at all”, but that they do not apply what they have been given. There needs to be effort on our part! We need to focus our mind on the things we hear from God’s word.

vr. 20-21, In this instance not only is the word heard and received, it is received with joy. But “he has no firm root in himself”. This points back to us being responsible to apply what we have heard. Hearing God’s word is the first step in being prepared for what evil may come our way. We then need to understand and be rooted in that understanding. God does not promise us that we will not have any affliction as His children. As a matter of fact, Jesus points out here, that affliction and persecution come because of the word. It is important to be rooted in Christ so that we are not deceived by things we may hear from men, **Col. 2:6-8**.

vr. 22, Upon hearing God’s word we need to concentrate on what He tells us. That is the understanding talked about earlier. When we have our mind set on Him, firmly rooted in Him, worry and deceitfulness won’t choke it out. But we need to keep hearing and we need to keep doing. Jesus says when the word gets choked it becomes unfruitful. The implication is that something is being produced in us, the fruit of the Spirit for example, **Gal. 5:22-25**. When we are focused on God’s word we produce such fruit: love, joy, peace, etc. When it gets choked those traits stop being produced. As Paul mentions in **Gal. 5:25**, if we live by the Spirit, we need to walk by the Spirit. The point being we need to be doers of the word, not merely hearers, **James 1:22**.

vr. 23, Finally the “good soil” person is the one who hears, understands and bears fruit. It is interesting that some produce more than others. I believe what Jesus is pointing out here is that how much you produce is not the concern, but that you do produce.

Hearing alone does not produce anything, whether it be understanding, fruit or salvation. Action needs to be taken on our part. But hearing is the first step. We’ll never know what God wants of us if we don’t hear Him. While we’ve heard the message and we’ve come to obey, that does not mean we stop hearing. It is a continual process. Whether it is listening to someone preaching or teaching or whether it is our own study and reading, it is still hearing. We need to put forth such effort, we need to keep hearing the word of God.

Believe/Faith

After understanding what it means to hear, the next thing to understand is faith. “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”, **Rom. 10:17**.

Faith is the foundation of our existence. What we believe in is what sustains, preserves and carries us through life. What we believe in is what defines who we are and what we do, in all aspects of life. Specifically, our faith in Christ is the core of our being. It gives us hope and meaning. If we are wrong then we are a pitiful bunch of people, **1 Cor. 15:19**. But if we are right, then we understand the great blessings we have and the blessings to come.

To understand the importance of our faith, what it is we believe in, consider our faith and the faith of an atheist. You say “but the atheist has no faith”. Oh, but he does. His faith though, is not like ours. His faith is that, “there is no God”. That is what he believes in. Now to discuss the scripture with him is pointless, because he does not believe in the scripture. His faith is “on a different field”. Common ground needs to be found to even begin to discuss each faith. Evidence is given from both sides; scientific, historical, archeological, and other arguments are made according to how each one believes. Ultimately though, it is our personal conviction on the evidence and arguments of such a debate that determine what our faith is.

Do you, or do you not, believe there is a God? Do you believe the Bible is how He has revealed Himself to us? We go on with such questions building on the foundation our faith. Yes, I believe there is a God. Yes, I believe the Bible is His inspired word, and so on. We convict our self on the answers to these questions and it shapes who we are. Hopefully then, we see the importance of what it is we believe.

Rom. 1:17, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith". Paul's statement here is very interesting as he explains how the righteousness of God is revealed. He says that it is revealed, or shown, from "faith to faith". Why does he say it that way? Are there two faiths? So that God's righteousness is seen going from one to the other? Actually, the scripture does talk about two faiths. One faith is thee faith, meaning the gospel message of Jesus Christ. The "it" here in **verse 17** is referring to the gospel, mentioned in **verse 16**. The second faith is our individual faith, what we believe. This makes sense then, that Paul talks about God's righteousness being revealed from faith, the gospel of Jesus Christ; to faith, our belief in that gospel. Here are some scripture that illustrate the "two faiths".

The Faith

Acts 3:16 - "the name of Jesus...and the faith which comes through Him"
Acts 6:7 - "a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith"
Acts 13:8 - "seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith"
Acts 14:22 - "encouraging them to continue in the faith"
Acts 16:5 - "So the churches were being strengthened in the faith"
1Cor. 16:13 - "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith"
2Cor. 13:5 - "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith"
Gal. 1:23 - "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith"
Gal. 3:23 - "But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law"
Gal. 3:25 - "But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor"
Gal. 6:10 - "let us do good...especially to those who are of the household of the faith"
Eph. 1:15 - "having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus"
Eph. 4:5 - "one Lord, one faith, one baptism"
Eph. 4:13 - "until we all attain to the unity of the faith"
Ph. 1:27 - "striving together for the faith of the gospel"
Col. 1:23 - "continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast"
1Tim. 1:14 - "with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus"
1Tim. 3:9 - "holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience"
1Tim. 4:1 - "some will fall away from the faith"
1Tim. 4:6 - "nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine"
1Tim. 6:10 - "wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs"
1Tim. 6:21 - "gone astray from the faith"
2Tim. 1:13 - "in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus"
2Tim. 4:7 - "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith"
Titus 1:1 - "for the faith of those chosen of God"
Titus 1:13 - "that they may be sound in the faith"
Heb. 12:2 - "Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith"
Jude 1:3 - "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints"

Your Faith

Mt. 9:22 "your faith has made you well"
Mt. 9:29 "It shall be done to you according to your faith"
Mr. 2:5 "Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"
Rom. 1:8 "because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world"
Rom. 1:12 "encouraged together...each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine"
Rom. 11:20 - "but you stand by your faith"
Rom. 12:6 - "according to the proportion of his faith"
1Cor. 2:5 - "so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God"
1Cor. 15:17 - "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless"
2Cor. 1:24 - "Not that we lord it over your faith...for in your faith you are standing firm"
2Cor. 10:15 - "with the hope that as your faith grows"
Ph. 2:17- "the sacrifice and service of your faith"
Col. 1:4- "since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus"
Col. 2:5- "rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ"
Col. 2:7- "firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith"
1Th. 3:5- "I also sent to find out about your faith"
1Th. 3:6- "Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith"
1Th. 3:7- "we were comforted about you through your faith"

2Th. 1:3- "because your faith is greatly enlarged"
1Tim. 1:19- "which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith"
2Tim. 1:5 - "For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you"
Heb. 11:39 - "having gained approval through their faith"
Jas. 1:3- "knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance"
Jas. 2:18 - "...I will show you my faith by my works"
1Pe. 1:9- "obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls"
1Pe. 5:9- "But resist him, firm in your faith"
2 Pe. 1:5- "in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge"
1Jn. 5:4- "this is the victory that has overcome the world --our faith"

These are not all of the scriptures that mention "the faith" or "your faith", but certainly enough that we get the point. Here are some scriptures concerning individuals have little or great faith:

Mt. 6:30 - "...will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!"
Mt. 8:26 - "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?"
Mt. 14:31 - "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"
Mt. 15:28 - "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish."
Mt. 16:8 - "But Jesus, aware of this, said, 'You men of little faith'"
Mt. 17:20 - "And He said to them, 'Because of the littleness of your faith'"
Mt. 21:21 - "if you have faith and do not doubt"
Lu. 7:9 - "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith."

John 6:64-69. The context for this is in the preceding **verses, 48-63**. Jesus teaches that those following Him must be willing to eat His flesh and drink His blood. This was a difficult thing for them to grasp and understand, **vr. 60**. This challenged their belief in Him and caused some to withdraw from Him. Jesus challenges the 12 on their belief in the things He was saying, asking them if they were going to leave Him too. Peter answers that it is Jesus who has the words of eternal life and they have "believed and come to know" that He was the Holy One of God, **vr. 69**. Notice the affirmation of faith! They not only believed, but know.

Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen". Sometimes our definition of belief carries a hint of doubt. We say "I believe"...meaning I'm pretty sure, but not totally. In **John 6:69**, the apostle's belief meant they knew. The Hebrew writer does not define faith with words that leave room for doubt. They are translated for us accordingly: "assurance, conviction" (NAS, RSV), "substance, evidence" (KJV, NKJ), "sure, certain" (NIV).

Mark 9:17-24, Jesus is asked by a man to heal his possessed son. Jesus says all things are possible to those who believe. The man replies, "I do believe; help my unbelief". What a humbling statement. Too often we don't want to acknowledge that we may lack faith. We pray for our faith to increase but the real issue is we need our unbelief to go away. The apostles said to Jesus in **Lk. 17:5-6**, "Increase our faith!". Jesus goes on to explain that if they have the faith of a mustard seed they can tell the mulberry tree to be uprooted and planted in the sea and it would obey them. Often times it's not the size of our faith that is the issue, it's the size of our unbelief. Our faith can be small and we can still do great things. When we doubt we are hindered, **Mt. 21:21**, **James 1:5-7**. Truly, it is our unbelief that we need to get rid of.

Confess

Jesus said "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.", **Mt. 10:32-33**. Unless we want Jesus to deny us before His Father, confession is obviously very important. What then, does it mean to confess? Is it simply the statement we may have made when baptized, that we believe Jesus is the son of God? Is it confessing our sins to another person?

The word in the Greek for “confesses” is “*homologeō*” and means “not to refuse; not to deny; declare; to admit or declare one’s self guilty of what one is accused of; to profess; to declare openly, speak out freely; to profess one’s self the worshipper of one”. There is nothing special concerning the definition, it is as one would expect.

Confession, then, isn’t just a simple statement made one time. It is a continuing action. We are to declare, admit, profess, openly speak about Jesus. We are to confess to others we know Him. Jesus said the confession is to “men”, plural, not just one time to one person. Could we not parallel confession with evangelism? Is not evangelism declaring, professing and speaking openly about Jesus Christ? Sure it is. Evangelism isn’t just standing behind a pulpit and preaching or going out on a door knocking campaign. It is that everyday confession of our faith in Jesus Christ.

We are all familiar with the passage in **Mt. 28:19-20**, known as the “great commission”. We know, from this passage, the apostles were commissioned to go to all the nations “baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”. So were the apostles the only ones commissioned? If not, then who? The answer is “everyone”.

Notice the commission doesn’t end in **vr. 19**, with the baptism. The apostles’ were also commissioned to *teach* those who were baptized. They were to teach those baptized to observe all the things Jesus commanded. Those the apostles’ taught, would then be under the same commission. To convert and teach others. Those, would then be under the same commission, to convert and teach others and so on and so on. We often miss, that part of the commission is to teach! All that have been converted and taught are under the same commission. If you have been taught, you are to teach. All of us are to confess Jesus to others.

In **Mt. 5:13-16**, Jesus talks about how important our influence is on others. We are the salt of the earth. Salt is a preserver. How is the world to know the message of salvation if we don’t tell them? If we become tasteless, what good are we? We need to confess our faith to one another and to the world. We are the “light of the world”. Notice the language that Jesus uses. He did not say we are to be the light of the world He said we are! Notice the point that a city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Likewise a lamp is not lit and put under a basket. It is set on a stand to light the whole house. God has placed us in a position to shine! If we, as His children, refuse to shine our good news, then like the salt, we have become tasteless and not good for anything. As children of God we are “required” to shine. Lest we misunderstand exactly what Jesus is saying, He gives it to us as an emphatic command: “Let your light shine before men”.

Our light shining before men does two things:

- 1) It produce good works. Are we to just “tell” people about Jesus? No. Jesus said we are to shine so that they can see our good works. We are to have action and conviction so that others can see Christ in our life. Consider the simple actions mentioned in **Mt. 25:34-40**, that produce eternal life.
- 2) Our shining before men brings glory to God. We are to bring glory to God in all things that we do, **1 Peter 4:11**. Our actions bring others to see Him and glorify Him as well.

Rom. 10:14, also shows us a connection between confession and evangelism. How is anyone to call on Jesus if they don’t believe in Jesus? How are they to believe if they don’t hear? How are they to hear if no one tells them? We heard about Jesus because someone confessed Him to us. We are to share the good news with others. Confession and faith lead us to salvation, **Rom. 10:8-13**. Notice that what is in the heart comes into play as well. This relates to what we just looked at in **Mt. 5:13-16**. Who we are on the inside is what will be reflected on the outside.

It is important to note that confession is not all that is required. As some have proclaimed from **Rom. 10:13**, that all anyone needs to do is “call on the name” to be saved, showing no inclusion of baptism (or anything else for that matter). We can easily see Paul is preaching from the Old Testament, build on the understanding that salvation comes from God when you call on Him, **I Kings 18:24, II Kings 5:11, Zeph. 3:9**. The passage is actually a quote from **Joel 2:28-32**, and is also quoted by Peter in **Acts 2:17-21**. When Peter uses the passage he is preaching to Jews who have not yet obeyed the gospel. The response of many who heard Peter’s sermon was baptism, **Acts 2:38,41**. When Paul uses the passage in **Rom. 10**, he is preaching to people who have already been baptized, **Rom. 6:3-4**.

Confession of our faith in Jesus isn’t to be the only “type” of confession we do. We need to confess our sins to each other, **James 5:16**. This is very difficult for us because it is such an invasion of our personal being. I don’t want to confess my sins to you because I don’t want you to know where I am weak. But, such confession of sin is what brings us the cleansing of those very sins, **I John 1:9**. Confession is much more than a simple statement we may have made when baptized. It is the sharing of our faith in Jesus and the acknowledgement of our sin before God. It is a continual action that brings us closer to God and cleanses us before Him.

Repent

In **Acts 2:37-38**, the Jews were moved to ask what to do to be right before God. Peter’s answer was, first, they needed to repent and second, they needed to be baptized. We will look at baptism in the next lesson, now we want to look at what it means to repent. The word for repent in the Greek is the word “*metanoeo*” and means “to change one’s mind or purpose”. We often define it as a “turning away” from sin. When you repent of something, you don’t do it anymore. But what sparks such discipline in that kind of action is the setting of our mind, which is how repentance is defined. When we repent, we change our mindset in an effort to not commit the sin any longer. The change in mindset then, should be reflected in our actions. That is not to say that we just all of the sudden stop sinning, but an on going effort is made to stop sinning. As a parent can see in their child that they are truly trying, we can see such effort in each other. We can “fool each” other sometimes, making others think we are truly repentant, but we cannot fool God. He knows our mindset and whether or not we are truly trying.

Jesus taught repentance in **Mk. 1:15**. John the Baptist preached it in **Mt. 3:7-11**, to the Pharisees and Sadducees. John told them they needed to produce fruit in keeping with repentance. If not, the consequence would be that they would be thrown into the fire, as the one after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. Here fruit is a change in mind set, being reflected in outward action. One of the actions here, seems to include baptism, that is what they came out to John for. But he points out they needed to change the mind set. They needed to change their ways and accept Christ in order to have “fruit worthy of repentance”. Repentance for as well, is a change in our mindset, **Rom. 8:6**.

Peter gives his explanation to some Jewish brethren in **Acts 11:2-4**, concerning the gospel being preached to the Gentiles. Peter states that he remembered Jesus teaching them that John the Baptist baptized with water but that they (the apostles) would baptize with the Holy Spirit. If God had given the Gentiles the same gifts they had, then how could Peter stand in God’s way of having the Gentiles be baptized in the name of Jesus? The Jews he was speaking too, understanding the gospel was for the Gentiles as well said “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.”, **Acts 11:18**. Paul also taught such repentance in Christ, **Acts 19:4; 20:21**. The repentance part for Jews was turning from the Old law. For the Gentiles it was turning from their pagan practices. The outward action would be to stop doing the things they practiced in the past and to start practicing the teachings of Christ, **Lk. 24:46-47**.

In **Acts 26:19-20**, Paul makes some interesting statements in his comments to King Agrippa. First he says that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Paul's repentance was true repentance. Why? Because he did not go back to his previous actions of persecuting the church. He remained faithful to Christ, not just in word but in deed as well. Secondly, he says that he taught the Jews and the Gentiles, that they should be "performing deeds appropriate to repentance". What does that mean? The word "performing" in the Greek is "*prasso*" which is a primary verb meaning "to 'practice', that is, perform repeatedly or habitually; by implication to execute, accomplish, etc.; commit, deeds, do, exact, keep". Paul's point being that repentance is a continual action. Something we do repeatedly, a habitual action. We fall short sometimes but that doesn't mean we stop trying. Sorrowful for the sins we commit, we continue the practice of facing toward Jesus. Sorrow and guilt, can be a good thing. We can use such feelings to turn ourselves to God, and repent without any regret, clearing our conscience. This is the repentance we want to produce. This is the repentance that leads to salvation, **II Cor. 7:9-10**.

I John 3:8, John shows the seriousness of sin, that if you abide in sin you are of the devil. John uses the Greek word "*poieo*" for "practices" and it means "acted; acting; acts; commit; commits; committed". Carrying the idea of a "continuing" in sin. In light of **I John 3:6**, this person is not in Christ. We all fall short but those who don't repent, or turn to face Christ, continue in sin. John also uses the illustration of light and darkness, **I John 1:6-7**. If we walk in the light, we have fellowship and are cleansed. The walk is a continual action. The difference between us and the world is where we are walking. If I walk in darkness my mind is set on the things of the world and flesh, influenced by Satan. If I walk in the light, I may commit an act of sin, but my mind is set on the Spirit and I am following the things of God. That continued walking in light, the constant turning from darkness is repentance. It keeps me in the blood of Jesus, cleansed of sin.

Baptism

Acts 2:38, is arguably the most quoted verse on baptism. While Peter was preaching the Jews were moved to ask "what shall we do?". Peter's answer was that they needed to repent and be baptized. Baptism is the Greek word "*baptizo*" and means "to make whelmed (that is, fully wet)". In other words an emersion into water. They needed to move away from the law and accept that Jesus was the Son of God and be immersed into Him. We too must accept that He is the Son of God and be baptized. The baptism answers how to "call on His name", mentioned in **vr. 21**, and **22:16**. The word "for" is the Greek word '*eis*' and is widely understood and translated as "for" or "unto". Meaning baptism is needed to get the remission of sins.

As Peter tells them to be baptized in **Acts 2:38**, we see the salvation coming after the action. Three thousand are baptized, **Acts 2:41**. Having been saved, it is those who are added to the church, **Acts. 2:47**. Where is baptism in relationship to the mentioning of being saved? In this context, as well as other passages we'll look at in Acts, the mention of baptism comes before the mention of being saved. This points to the necessity of baptism for salvation.

In addition to understanding the definition of baptism, think about what we see going on. If baptism wasn't necessary then why go through the logistics of baptizing 3,000 people? This would have been an amazing amount of trouble to go through, if they didn't have too.

Why would the eunuch be baptized, **Acts 8:36-39**, if he didn't have too? The eunuch must have understood the urgency and importance of baptism. Why stop and get wet in the middle of his trip if it wasn't necessary? The eunuch also understood it to mean immersion. Why else did the eunuch want to stop at the water? Why else would they come "up out of the water", if they hadn't been down in the water?

The jailer in **Acts 16:31-34**, risked, not just his job but his life taking Paul and Silas into his house in the middle of the night to learn about Jesus. Salvation starts with Jesus. If you don't believe in Him then there is no opportunity to proceed. Paul told the jailer, if you believe in Him you "shall", (future tense) be saved. He spoke the word of the Lord to him and his household. The jailer now is sharing this experience with his family. Paul teaches him and his family more concerning Jesus.

While he does teach him some more it is not a long drawn out process. Very little knowledge and understanding is needed to obey the gospel. Obviously the ability to believe, and a belief in Jesus is needed. That "very hour" the jailer and his family are baptized, "having" (past tense) believed in God. The future and past tense shows that salvation came through baptism. If baptism wasn't necessary why go through the trouble, right then, in the middle of the night? The conclusion is, it was necessary and the jailer understood that so he and his household were baptized that night.

We become sons of God through baptism into Him. Showing that baptism is not simply an outward act but that something happens spiritually, **Jn. 3:3-6, Rom. 6:3-7; 8:16-17, Gal. 3:26-27**.

In **Rom. 6:3-4**, we read that those who have been baptized have been buried with Him into His death. Christ was crucified, put in a grave and then resurrected. Like Him, we die to sin, we are put in a watery grave and resurrected to a new life. The way to get "out of sin" is through baptism into Christ. The Romans must have understood what baptism was and its importance or none of what Paul is talking about would make any sense to them. The "therefore we have been buried" tells us they had been baptized. Baptized into what? Just the water? While water is part of the action there is great spiritual significance. We are baptized into Christ's death. We no longer live for ourselves following sin. But Christ lives in us. The life that we once lived according to flesh we now live by faith in Christ, **Gal. 2:20; 3:27**.



Paul goes on to explain in **Rom. 6:5-11, 16-18, 22-23**, that when baptized into Christ we are called to be slaves to righteousness, no longer slaves to sin. A slave does not serve two masters. Our service is no longer to be to the world but to God and God only. Our "wage" as a slave to sin is death, but to righteousness it is eternal life. Christ overcame the enemy, death, once and for all. He did not live to sin but lived to God. So we too must die to sin and live to God having no reason to fear death. Amen!

The Church – Part I

After man's sin in the garden God handed out punishments to the man, woman and serpent (who is the devil, **Rev. 12:9; 20:2**). God told the serpent "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.", **Gen. 3:15**. The seed of the woman, we understand to be Christ as he was born of woman and the Spirit, not of the seed of man. We understand the bruise to the head is more of a devastating blow than the bruise to the heel. We can see in the garden, that God was going to take care of bringing man back to Him because of the sin that had entered the world.

A "plan" is set by God for a Messiah to come and a kingdom to be set up. The execution of this plan would result in man's salvation from sin. The plan was kept a mystery from man, **Eph. 1:9, 3:4 & 9**. The mystery is revealed and the plan carried out in Christ and the church, **Eph. 5:32, Col. 1:25-27**. Such a plan was kept hidden because if Satan knew crucifying Jesus was going to result in his defeat, he would not have crucified Him, **I Cor. 2: 6-8**.

The plan begins as God promises Abraham that through his descendents the earth would be blessed. The promise continues through Isaac and Jacob with none of them having any idea of the great implications of what was being given to them. Through the "hindsight" of the scripture we see the plan unfold. It is understood by Jewish rabbis and scholars alike that the following passages have Messianic implications.

Gen. 12:1-2, God's promise to Abraham very significant to the Jews and to us.

Gen. 17:21, God tells Abraham that Isaac is the son of promise, not Ishmael.

Gen. 28:14, God's promise with Isaac: "in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed".

Gen. 49:10, Jacob tells his sons that the scepter will be in Judah and "Shiloh" will come.

As God promises a Messiah He also promises a kingdom. This covenant, or promise, is made to David and will come through David and his descendants. The prophecy made to David's house and the nation of Israel that a kingdom will be set up that will last forever.

II Sam. 7:12-17, The Messiah and kingdom will be through David, "your throne shall be established forever". Solomon will build the temple, Christ will build the church.

Ps. 89:3-4, "I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations."

Ps. 132:11-12, "Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne... Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever."

Isa. 9:6-7 – "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us... On the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this."

Jer. 23:5-6 – "I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.'"

Daniel 2:44 – "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever."

Daniel 4:3 – "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion is from generation to generation."

Daniel 6:26 – "I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and His dominion will be forever."

Daniel 7:14 – "And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed."

Matthew and Luke trace the genealogy of Christ for us. These passages, which so many just “read over” become very significant in light of the passages looked at above. Christ is the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and David.

Matthew traces the genealogy:

Mt. 1:1-2, starting with Abraham

Mt. 1:6 - to David,

Mt. 1:16 - to Jesus

Luke traces the genealogy starting with Jesus:

Lk. 3:31 - tracing back through David

Lk. 3:34 - and Abraham

Lk. 3:38 - continuing on to Adam

Gal. 3:26-29, Having become sons of God through baptism there is no Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or master in Christ. Meaning, our focus is not on these fleshly things but our focus is on living according to the Spirit, **Rom. 8:5-8**. Christ breaks down the dividing wall of sin between man and God. We are all reconciled to God in Him, **Eph. 2:11-22**. Ultimately the promise is eternal life, **I Jn. 2:25**, and it has been revealed through the gospel of Christ, **I Cor. 15:1-4**. Paul is now reaching the awesome conclusion to what he began discussing in **Gal. 3:7**, that those who are of faith are the sons of Abraham. Paul has established that Abraham’s seed is in Christ. If we are in Christ, we are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise. As a baptized believer in the body of Christ we are descendants of Abraham and inherit the promise of righteousness! Abraham has multiple descendants and has become a great nation, just as God had promised.

Acts 2:29-36, It is not a coincidence that Peter mentions David in his sermon, even quoting him from **Ps. 110:11**. The Jews were well aware that the Messiah was going to be a descendant of their great king. Christ brings up the issue to the Pharisees in **Mt. 22:41-46**. Peter points out that the Jews knew where David was buried and that his body was still there but they were all witnesses that Christ was resurrected “exalted to the right hand of God”. God does establish a kingdom: the church and a descendant of David, Christ, sits on the throne to rule forever, just as God had promised.

The Church - Part II

The Kingdom

In **Acts 15:13-18**, after Peter speaks, James quotes from **Amos 9:11-12**. James’ point to those at the “Jerusalem conference” is that David’s dynasty and the restoration of the tabernacle, are fulfilled in Christ. Passages such as these show the fulfillment of God’s plan. As we study the following passages we’ll see that the church is the body of Christ, the new dwelling of God, a spiritual Israel and how awesome it is.

As Christ ministry begins so begins the kingdom of God. Notice the present or future tense of it being established.

Mt. 3:1-2 – “John the Baptist came...saying ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

Mt. 4:17 – “Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

Mt. 6:10 – “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.”

Lk. 4:43 – Christ’s’ purpose was to preach the kingdom of God.

Jn. 3:5 – Jesus preaches on entrance to the kingdom.

After Christ’s’ death and resurrection the kingdom is spoken of in the tense that it has been established.

I Cor. 15:50 – “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”.

Col. 1:13 – “Transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved son”.

I Thess. 2:12 – “God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

II Tim. 4:1 – “Who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom”.

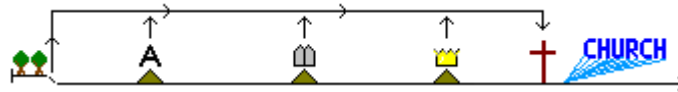
Heb. 12:28 – “We receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken”.

Rev. 1:6 – “He has made us to be a kingdom”.

Rev. 12:10 – “The kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come”.

Predestined In Christ

Eph 1:3-7, God set forth a plan in **Gen. 3:15**, to bring us back to Him. Paul says from “before the foundation of the world” He chose us. The word for foundation is “*katabole*” and means “a deposition, that is, founding; figuratively conception: - conceive, foundation”. Which comes from the root word “*kataballo*” which means “to throw down: cast down, lay”. It is interesting to consider which “foundation of the world” Paul is talking about. While it appears Paul is talking about the foundation laid in **Gen. 1**, a world without sin, it could also be the foundation of the world that we know, a world with sin, which starts in **Gen. 3:22-24**. When sin enters and man is removed from the tree of life, everything changed. Either way you view the foundation of the world, it doesn’t change the understanding of what Paul is writing to the Ephesians.



Continuing our look at the text in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, his point is that God’s plan of salvation in Christ is what was predetermined.

Eph. 1:3 – “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places *in* Christ”.

Eph. 1:4 – “He chose us *in* Him”.

Eph. 1:5 – “He predestined us to adoption as sons *through* Jesus Christ”.

Eph. 1:6 – “His grace, which He freely bestowed on us *in* the Beloved”.

Eph. 1:7 – “*In* Him we have redemption through His blood”.

Eph. 2:10 – “created *in* Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand”.

God told the children of Israel that He was going to give them a Messiah and establish His kingdom. What God gave, what God predestined, the fulfillment of the plan, the revelation of the mystery, the salvation from sin, the summing up of everything...is all done in Christ, **Eph. 1:7-11; 19-21!** God foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified us “to the image of His Son”, **Rom. 8:29-30**. We are “adopted sons of God”, **Rom. 8:1,14-15, Gal. 4:4-5**, when we are in Christ and are led by the Spirit. Salvation then comes through the church, corporately, not individually.

The Church - Christ Body

The word for church in the Greek is “*ekklesia*” and means “a calling out; assembly”. It’s root word, “*ek*” means “denoting origin, from, out, to call”.

Christ’s body is the church, **Eph. 1:22-23, Col. 1:18 & 24**, and we are individual members of the body, **Rom. 12:4-5, I Cor. 12:12-14; 20; 27**.

As we studied in **Gal. 3:26-29**, we become the seed of Abraham in Christ. We also become many other things in Him:

Rom. 2:28-29 – “a Jew...circumcision is that which is of the heart”

Gal. 6:16 (w/ 3:7, 29) – “Israel of God”

I Peter 2:4-5 - “a spiritual house”

I Peter 2:9 – “a holy nation”

Eph. 2:19-22 – “a dwelling of God”

Col 4:11 – “workers for the kingdom”

Heb. 3:6 – We are Christ’s house

The Church - Sanctified & Holy

I Cor. 1:2 – The church of God sanctified and called.

II Cor. 5:18-21 – In Christ we are reconciled and become the righteousness of God.

II Cor. 6:16-17 – We are the temple of God, “called out from their midst and be separate”.

Eph. 5:23-30 – Christ is the head of the body, the church which He made holy and blameless.

Col. 1:18-24 – Christ body, the church, made holy and blameless.

I Tim. 3:15 – The church of God, the household of God.

Prayer

In the N.T. the word for “pray” in the Greek is “*proseuchomai*” (pros-yoo'-khom-ahee) and means “to pray to God, that is, supplicate, worship: - pray earnestly, for, make prayer”. The word comes from two root words “*pros*” and “*euchomai*” (yoo'-khom-ahee).

Pros means “a preposition of direction; forward to, that is, toward; namely, motion towards, accession to, or nearness at”.

Euchomai, which is a primary verb, means “to wish; by implication to pray to God; will, wish”.

With the understanding of the root words we get the idea that prayer is turning toward God and telling Him our wishes. It is like looking at someone when talking to them. When someone looks at you while you are talking you know they are paying attention. Prayer focuses our mindset on God. It makes us pay attention to Him. Our wishes then, aren't “oh I wish for a million dollars”, rather, our wishes or will, are in relationship to Him and His will. Not that we can't ask Him for things in our everyday life, of course we can, but we understand that the focus of our mind, and therefore the motivation of our prayers are spiritual, not worldly, **Rom. 8:6**. Prayer is continual action as we “pray without ceasing”, **I Thess. 5:17**. It is our mind being focused on the spiritual things of God.

Mt. 6:5-13 – Jesus' lesson on prayer

vr 5, He says “not to be like the hypocrites”. The Greek word for “hypocrites” is “*hupokrites*” and means “an actor under an assumed character”. We understand a hypocrite to be someone who says one thing and does another. In this case, the person prays on the “street corners” so people can see them. This would give the impression of following God, but the implication being made by Jesus is that they are not following Him, thus “they have their reward in full”.

vr 6, Jesus tells us to “go into your inner room, close your door and pray”. This certainly conveys that God wants our undivided attention, 1) because He deserves it and 2) because we need to focus on Him. We get so distracted with life, we're so busy and we move so fast. We need to slow down and put things in perspective, to focus ourselves on the most important relationship we have...us and Him. We pray in our assembly, we pray at meals, we pray in our cars and while doing other things. All of that is fine and good but how often do we go into our inner room and pray? How often do we separate ourselves from the distractions of life and give God our undivided attention when talking to Him? Jesus told us to do so.

Before resurrecting a girl who had died in **Acts 9:40-43**, Peter takes the time to pray alone. Peter had seen Jesus remove himself from people on a number of occasions to take time to pray, **Mt. 14:23, 26:36, Lk. 5:16; 6:12, 9:28, 22:41**. Peter followed Jesus' example and teaching, we should do so as well.

vr 7, We are told not to “use meaningless repetition” so that we are heard for our many words. It's not that we can't use the same words over again in different prayers but that our words have meaning. We shouldn't recite words, phrases and “prayers” from memory or in vain. We need to have our mind set on what we are praying.

vr 8, Still continuing His point on “meaningless repetition”, Jesus says that the Father knows what we need before we ask. The right words aren't necessary, the Spirit actually interprets our groans, **Rom. 8:26**. God doesn't “need” the words, He desires our attention, our focus. He wants us to come to Him and ask, **Mt. 7:7,11; 21:22, James 1:5, I Jn. 5:14-15**.

vr 9, "Pray, then, in this way" here is our instruction. 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name'. "Hallowed" is the Greek word "*hagiazo*" (hag-ee-ad'-zo) and means "to make holy, that is, (ceremonially) purify or consecrate; (mentally) to venerate: - hallow, be holy, sanctify". God is holy, even His name is holy. To go before Him should be done with due respect and reverence.

vr 10, As we have studied, the kingdom has come, at the time Jesus is praying this though it hadn't come yet. God's will is always to be considered in our request. In light of Paul foretelling he would be bound in Jerusalem in **Acts 21:14**, those he is with use the phrase "the will of the Lord be done". When we use this phrase we need to be ready to accept what ever comes. Jesus is the ultimate example of accepting the Father's will. He prayed accordingly, **Mt. 26:42**, and accepted the will of the Father over His own desire.

vr 11, We can and should pray for our everyday needs. Later in this chapter Jesus says that we should not worry about things in life. God will take care of us. We are to seek Him first and all the other things will be added, **Mt. 6:25-34**.

vr 12-13, Jesus will comment more on forgiveness in **verses 14-15**. Our relationships with others are very important and they are something we should pray about. We should also pray about our warfare against evil. For our warfare isn't against people or "flesh and blood", **Eph. 6:12**, but against the forces of wickedness.

The "Be's" of Prayer

I. Be Bold

Joshua 10:12-14, Joshua asked God to make the sun stand still.

I Kings 17:1 (mentioned in **James 5:17**), Elijah prays that there be no rain. **I Kings 18:1**, God tells him to present himself to Ahab and He'll send rain.

II Be Specific

Judges 6:36-40, Gideon and the fleece on the ground (fleece wet then dry).

I Sam. 1:11, Hannah's request for a child. (**vr. 20**, asked for him from the Lord).

Eph. 1:16 & 18; 6:19, Paul prayed for the Ephesians and asks them to pray on his behalf.

III. Be Done

II Sam 12:22-23, after the death of his 1st born, David moves on.

Phi. 3:13-14, Paul said "forgetting what lies behind...I press on toward the goal".

IV. Be Accepting

James 4:13-15, in the context of asking properly, being separated from the world (**vrs. 2-3**) we need to ask everything according to the will of God.

II Cor. 12:7-10, Paul asked three times that the thorn in his flesh be removed. When told that grace was sufficient, Paul was "well content" with his weakness.

The greatest example of all of these points is epitomized in Christ when He prayed before His crucifixion in **Mt. 26:38-46**. Jesus boldly and specifically stated "let this cup pass from Me". He prayed this three times in subjection to the will of the Father. He then got up and moved on to be crucified, accepting what was in store.

The Answers To Prayer

Sometimes the answer we want is not the answer we get. As Jesus prayed in the garden for the cup to pass, the answer was "no". We can see God's answer here, while very uncomfortable at the time, was for a bigger good. The "big picture" was that Jesus had to be crucified for man to be saved. We see this big picture because the scripture has revealed it to us. However, we don't so clearly see the big picture in relation to our lives. So an answer to prayer that seemingly is a "no" is hard for us to accept and deal with. If God told His son "no", then who do I think I am that God should always answer me "yes"? We need to remember and keep in mind that there still is a "big

picture". While we can't see it and we don't understand all that happens in life, it doesn't mean that God has forsaken taking care of us. What we can see in relation to the big picture for us is to remain faithful to Him, whatever the circumstance, so that we can be with Him forever.

Daniel 10 gives some interesting insight into the spiritual warfare that takes place around us when we pray. In **Daniel 10:1-3**, Daniel fast, putting himself in a "prayful" mindset, on understanding the message from God. An angelic being visits Daniel and tells him from the first day he set his mind on understanding he was sent, **10:12**. But he was opposed for 21 days, **10:13** and then received help from Michael. Then it took another 3 days to get to Daniel, since the angel arrived on the 24th day, **Dan. 10:2 & 4**. In light of this passage, when we pray and think that God is intentionally making us wait on an answer, maybe an answer has been sent but is being opposed by evil forces. Not to "muddy the waters" on our understanding of prayer, but we need to be reminded that we are in a war. Pray is important because it sustains us in this war. It keeps our focus on the winning team.

Acts 2:4, Those baptized were devoted to prayer (among other things). The apostles also devoted themselves to prayer! In, **Acts 6:1-4**, there were issues concerning the caring of widows. The apostles wanted men to deal with the logistics so that they could devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

Acts 12:5-12, The church was praying fervently for Peter. The word "fervently" is the Greek word "ektenos" and means "earnestly, intensely". The only other times it is used is in **Lk. 22:44 & I Pt. 1:22**. An angel comes and awakes Peter leading him out of prison. Peter was thinking it was a dream or vision. Peter realizes that it was not a dream but that he, in fact had been lead by an angel. He goes to Mary's house where he knew everyone would be gathered. What assurance to know fellow saints are praying for you and that God does dispatch His angelic army to help us.

Acts 16:23-25, Even in this trying circumstance Paul and Silas are praying and singing. A joyous and positive mind set because that is "who they were". They are teaching by their example, with the prayers and songs. After the earthquake, none of the prisoners escaped. I believe the influence of Paul and Silas is as big a reason why the prisoners stayed.

I John 3:22 – God may grant our request when:

- 1) We are faithful at keeping His commandments
- 2) We continually do things that are pleasing in His sight.

All verbs in John are in the present tense, which means we keep on praying and keep on keeping His commandments, **I Thess. 5:16-18, Col. 3:1-2**. We can have confidence in knowing God will hear our request, **I John 5:14-15**.

Phil. 1:18-20, Regardless of the motive Paul was joyous the gospel was being preached. Paul knew that he would be taken care of through the prayers of the Philippians and the provision of the spirit. Paul knew how to be content in whatever circumstance, **4:11**. He encouraged prayer among the brethren and asked for it on his behalf, **Eph. 6:18-19, I Thess. 5:17,25**. If the great apostle Paul was willing to ask for prayer on his behalf shouldn't we? James says we need to confess our sins with one another and pray for one another, **James 5:16**. The word "provision" is the Greek word "epichoregia" and is only used elsewhere in **Eph. 4:16**, translated as "supplies" there. As we pray, God supplies us strength.

Phil 4:6, Pray and let your request be know! **Mt. 6:5-5; 7:7; 24:22, Lk 18:1, I Thess. 5:17, I Peter 3:12**. Supplication is the Greek word "deesis" and means "need, indigence, want, privation, penury; a seeking, asking, entreating". What we do with the stresses of life is give them to God, "in everything by prayer and supplication" we are to give our request to God. Our faith in Christ allows us access to the great power of God, **Eph. 3:20**. When making our request with undoubting faith God takes care of us according to His will, **Mt. 21:21-22, Jn. 14:13-14**. Notice we are to make our request with "thankfulness". The Greek word used here, "eucharistia" is also translated as "gratitude", **Col. 2:7, 4:2**.

The Day of Judgment

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

vr 13, Paul's mention of sleep is obviously a reference to death. We do not have to grieve as those who have no hope. Why? As he will go on to explain, because we have the assurance of going home with Christ.

vr 14, Christ death and resurrection is what overcame the power of death. Having been resurrected, He is the "first fruits" of everyone who has died in Him, **I Cor. 15:18, 20**. The context here is a positive one as Paul reassures those who have died in Christ. Those who have died not obeying Christ will also be resurrected; **Mt. 25:31-46**, but it is not good news for them. Paul brings this point out in **II Thess. 1:7-9**.

vr 15, The phrase "by the word of the Lord" is in reference to Paul and the apostles being inspired by God. These words are from our Lord the same as the words in **Mt. 24 & 25**. The word "coming" is the same Greek word used in **Mt. 24:3, 27, 37, and 39**. Paul is specific in who is coming...our Lord. Those who are alive and the Lord's coming will not go to receive their reward before those who have already died.

vr 16, This will be a mighty and glorious coming.

These things will happen:

- 1) the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout (consider **Acts 1:10-11**)
- 2) the voice of the archangel will be heard
- 3) the trumpet of God will be heard
- 4) the dead in Christ will rise first
(as Paul has already mentioned, those alive will not precede those already dead)

vr 17, Continuing the thought:

- 5) those who are alive will go meet the Lord in the air

Paul says those having died in Christ will go on to be with Him. There is a resurrection of righteous and wicked, **Acts 24:14-15**. Remember Paul is being positive and reassuring here so this is a description of the "good side of the picture". We have viewed the negative side in **II Thess. 1:7-9**, and the whole picture is viewed in **Mt. 25:31-46**.

vr 18, Affirms the positive message. The children of God have no reason to fear the day of judgment. As a matter of fact we can look forward to it and are to comfort one another with the thought of the Lord's return!

I Corinthians 15:51-58

The real point of this chapter is that there will be a resurrection of the dead. **Verse 1-11** is that there were witnesses to Christ resurrection. If Christ was not resurrected then the belief that we will be resurrected is in vain and we are still in our sins, **verses 12-17**. In **verses 18-50** Paul, inspired by God, teaches us concerning the resurrection. Our focus is on **verses 51-58** concerning when this will happen.

vr 51-52, compare the similarities to **I Thess 4:13-18**

- 1) we will not all sleep – some will be alive when He comes
- 2) the trumpet will sound
- 3) the dead will be raised
- 4) we will be changed

vr 53-54, Our “changing” is that our perishable will put on imperishable and our mortality will put on immortality. Perishable (*phthartos*) means “corruptible, perishing”. Mortal (*thnetos*) means “liable to death, mortal”. Imperishable (*aphtharsia*) means “incorruption, perpetuity”. Immortality (*athanasia*) means “undying, immortality, everlasting”. Jesus said in **Mt. 22:30** that we would be made like the angels. While we don’t know what we will be “made into”, it is obvious we will be changed. Our physical body, which we are familiar with and which houses our spirit, will become a “different being” as we are “prepared” to exist forever.

vr 54-58, At the time Jesus comes again and we are changed, death will also be defeated. Satan holds the power of death, **Heb. 2:14**. So it makes sense that when he is put away, as described in **Mt. 25:41**, death too is destroyed. Victory over death is achieved only through Jesus, who overcame the power of death by His resurrection.

II Peter 3

vr 1-3, Peter points out in **verse 2**, that the things he is about to go over have been spoken about through the prophets, and by Jesus through the apostles.

vr 4, Peter mentions the promise of his coming, similar to the language Paul uses in **I Thess 4:13-15**.

vr 5-7, In these verses Peter is talking about the whole earth in relation to the event of the coming of the Lord. In other words, the Lord’s coming will be a “global event”, not a local one, including all who have ever existed. This fits in with the passage we’ve studied in **Mt.25, I Thess 4** and **I Cor. 15**.

vr 8-9, We are so conformed to time, we measure our daily activities and even our existence by it. But, time is a created thing. Created by God. His existence and movement is not measured by it. Far be it from us to accuse God of “moving slow”. Peter points out that we should understand that God is being patient.

vr 10, Peter uses the same analogy that Jesus used in **Mt. 24:43** by likening Jesus’ coming to that of a thief in the night. Paul also uses such language in **I Thess. 5:2**. Peter says this coming will bring the destruction of the heavens and earth; burned up with intense heat.

vr 11-13, Peter continues the thought with these verses. We need to be on our guard and live as righteous children, longing for His coming. Peter is clear in stating that the current heavens and earth will be destroyed.

vr 14-18, As Peter closes this chapter he mentions that Paul has written things that are hard for some to understand and that some distort to fit their own teachings. Peter encourages those he is writing too to be on their guard and steadfast so they are not carried away by false doctrine. In light of the context, it seems he is referring to false teachings concerning Christ coming again. Paul taught concerning Christ resurrection and His coming again in **I Corinthians 15**. Peter is certainly referencing his teachings.

Passages on the resurrection of the dead:

As Paul points out in **I Cor. 15: 14 & 19**, if Christ wasn’t raised from the dead then our faith is in vain and we are to be “most pitied” for believing such a thing. Christ’s resurrection is the foundation of our faith. It is through Jesus overcoming death, that we overcome death and have the hope of eternal life. If there is no resurrection of Christ there certainly is no resurrection for us. In the first century, the apostles had to deal with people teaching that Christ was not resurrected. This, of course, would “discount” the apostles and their teaching, it would mean the Law of Moses was still in place, and it would mean that there was no resurrection for us. The following scripture shows how the apostles dealt with that opposition:

Acts 4:1-2; 6:14; 17:18-32; 23:6-8; 24:14-15; 26:6-8, Romans 4:17, I Cor. 15:12-57, II Cor. 4:14, Phil 3:10, 11 & 21, II Tim 2:18, Heb. 6:1-2; 11:35.

Without a detailed study of these passages we can see that the apostles taught

- 1) that God has the power to resurrect the dead,
- 2) that Jesus was resurrected from the dead and
- 3) that we will be resurrected.

Luke 16:19-31

While this passage does lead to questions we simply can not answer it does answer some questions we may have. Like, if we are still waiting for the Lord to come again, where do we go in the mean time when we die? The answer is, to the realm of Hades.

For those who do not want to acknowledge a place or realm for the dead, until the final judgment, this passage has been “explained away” by saying it is a parable. Even if it were a parable, parables are based on experiences, circumstances, and events in life that we can understand and are obviously based on “truths”. But this story isn’t described as a parable (contrasted with stories that are described as parables: **Mt. 13:18, 24, 31, 33, 34, 36; 31:33; 24:32**)

Another thing to consider is that Jesus doesn’t use names in parables. In this passage He mentions Lazarus and Abraham. It seems that those He was speaking to were familiar with the realm of Hades.

Here are some things we can understand from this passage:

- Good and bad people go to Hades – **vr. 22**.
- There is a good side and bad side (Abraham’s bosom & torment) **vr. 22-23**.
- The torment side can see the good side, **vr. 23**.
- The rich man talks to Abraham, **vr. 24**, so some communication is allowed. It is interesting to note that it is Abraham he talks to and not Lazarus.
- Lazarus was being comforted, the rich man in agony **vr. 25**.
- There is a great chasm, that none can cross that separate the sides, **vr. 26**.
- The rich man pleads that Lazarus may return from the good side to save his brothers, understanding that upon their death, they would be with him in torment, **vr. 27-31**.

Hades and Hell

The word “hades” is the actual transliterated word from the Greek. It means “1) name hades or Pluto, the god of the lower regions; 2) Orcus, the nether world, the realm of the dead”. It is used 10 times in the New Testament, including this passage. The other passages are: **Mt. 11:23; 16:18; Lk 10:15; Acts 2:27 & 31; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14**.

The word for “hell” in the Greek is (gehenna or geenna). It is used 13 times in the new testament and its meaning carries the idea of “fire” or “place of fire” for future punishment. John mentions that death and Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire at the final judgment, **Rev. 20:10-15**.

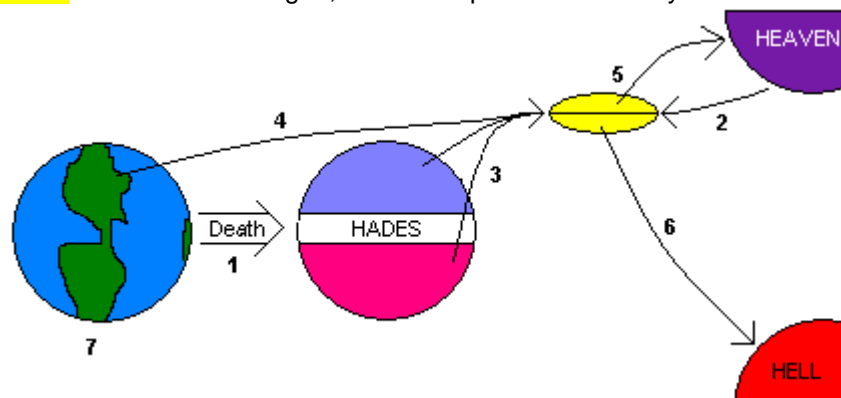
Some translations (the KJV for example) translate “hell” whether the word is “hades” or “gehenna”. This is important to note because it can change what we understand the passage to mean. In **Acts 2:25-31**, Peter uses the phrase “abandoned my soul to hades”, **vs. 27 & 31**. The word translated in the NAS and New KJV is “hades”. It is translated “grave” in the NIV and it is translated “hell” in the Old KJV. The Greek word is “*hades*” and means “unseen; place (or state) of the departed souls”. To translate the word “hell” here doesn’t make sense. Do we believe Christ went to hell while his body was in the grave? Of course not, while on the cross he told the thief that “today you shall be with me in paradise”, **Lk 23:43**. The word in the Greek for paradise is “*paradeisos*” where one of the definitions was understood to be the abode of the souls until the resurrection. (The other definitions carry the idea of the abode of heaven as paradise). We understand then that the thief, upon death, would go to the good side or paradise side of the realm of Hades. The side referred to in **Lk. 16:19-26** as Abraham’s bosom. Peter’s explanation in **Acts 2** is that Christ didn’t stay in the realm of hades, but that He came back.

On a “tangent” note, in **II Peter 2:4**, the Greek word “*tartarous*” (or *tartaroo*) is translated “hell”. The only time this Greek word is used is in this passage. This is similar language to that used in **Jude 6** but Jude reads “eternal bonds under darkness”. This appears to be a different realm all together.

The Second Coming Illustrated

Note - The numbers depict an order but it seems some events will happen simultaneously.

- 1) Upon death we leave the earth and go to Hades.
Lk. 16:23 – Hades; 2 sides - torment & Abraham’s bosom (paradise).
Lk. 16:26 – A great chasm, that no one can cross.
- 2) **I Thess. 4:16, I Cor. 15:52** – Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout; the voice of the archangel; and trumpet. This will happen in a “moment, in the twinkling of an eye”.
- 3) **I Thess. 4:16** – The dead will rise first.
- 4) **I Thess. 4:17** – Those who are alive will ascend, where all will meet in the air.
I Cor. 15:51-53 – We will be changed, mortal will put on immortality.



- 5) **Mt. 25:31-33** – All are gathered and separated.
Mt. 25:46 – Unrighteous to eternal punishment; Righteous to eternal life.
- 6) **Mt. 25:41** – The devil and his angels will go to the eternal fire.
- 7) **II Peter 3:10 & 12** – The heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire.

Worship Part - Part I

Defining Worship

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for “worship” is the word “*shachah*” and means “to bow down; to depress (fig); prostrate (lay face down on the ground) oneself; before superior in homage”. It is first used in **Gen. 18:2**, where it is translated, as “bowed”. It is also translated as “bow”, “worship” (and such forms “worships”, “worshipped” and “worshipping”), “bowed low and worshipped”, “bowed down in homage” and “bowed in worship”. So you get the idea.

When we come to the New Testament the Greek word for worship is “*proskuneo*” and means “to kiss the hand to one (or towards) one, in token of reverence”. It conveys the idea of falling to ones knees to touch the ground with their forehead as an expression of profound reverence. It is translated as “bow down”, “prostrated himself before”, “bowing down”, “bowed down”, “bowing before” and “worship” (and such forms “worshipped”, “worshippers”, “worshipping” and “worships”).

In light of these definitions, we gain a better understanding of worship and understanding our place in worship...prostrate before a superior being! Looking toward Him we “kiss the hand” of our Master. He is the focus of our mind and the recipient of our affection. In accordance with His wishes and His desires we approach Him. With all respect, reverence, humility and adoration we worship our God.

Our Approach to Worship

In **Genesis 4:3-7**, Cain and Abel bring offerings before the Lord. While the word “worship” is not used in the text, the concept is there, bringing an offering before God. We don’t know the specifics of what was required, but we do know that God regarded Abel’s offering and not Cain’s. We need to understand that just because we offer something to God does not mean that it will be accepted. It must be what He wants, not simply what we want to give. Jesus applies the point in **Mt. 7:21-29**. Even though people cry “Lord, Lord” and do “religious things”, like prophesy, cast out demons and perform miracles, they will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus says He will say to them “depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness”. He then compares those who act on His words as a wise man who built his house on a rock. Those who hear and don’t act are like a foolish man who builds on the sand. The point being that God requires action on our part. The action performed is according to His desire, not ours.

In **1 Samuel 15** Saul was to destroy Amalek and all that he had. Saul did not. His sin hindered him from worshipping, **vrs. 25 – 31**. Saul certainly felt he needed to worship after realizing he sinned. The sin was that Saul did not do exactly as God commanded. Just because we do something that seems OK, as Saul did, it does not mean it is right.

We have expediencies in our worship, means by which we carry out our worship, but we need to be conscience off whether or not our offering is what He has requested. Remember, God did not regard Cain’s offering. To take a lesson from the Athenians, **Acts 17: 23, 30** worshipping in ignorance is not acceptable. We need to know what God expects of us and then do it.

Thee Presence of God

Man’s worship of God has changed as man’s relationship with God has changed. When God created man, there was an intimate relationship. Man was in the presence of God as He walked with Adam and Eve in the garden. When man sinned he hid from the presence of God, **Gen. 3:8**. The word for “presence” in **Gen. 3:8** is the word “countenance” used in **Gen. 4:5-6**. It’s the Hebrew word “*paniyim*” and means “face; presence; in front of; before”. It’s root word “*panah*” means “to turn toward or away from”.

Worship is us facing God, turning away from sin. The devil will do all he can to keep us turned toward him, away from God. Cain was warned that sin was at his door desiring him, **Gen. 4:7**. Worship is more than doing certain acts or performing certain works. While it includes those things it is a way of life, a spiritual mindset, a turning to God, to “face” Him. As we face Him we become refreshed and are lifted up to overcome sin, **Acts 3:19, James 4:10, Jude 1:24**.

At the core of our worship, both corporate and daily living, we need to have an understanding of what it means to stand in His presence. Such an understanding puts us in our place, if you will. He is the potter, we are the clay. He is the Father, we are the child. He is the Creator we are the created. We present ourselves before Him, He does not present Himself before us. To be in His presence is a privilege, not a right. It is a gift from Him, an extension of His grace and a manifestation of His love. He has allowed us in, He has made the sacrifice, He has made the atonement. How humbling, wonderful and awesome it is to be in thee presence of God!

Exodus 19

While we face God, putting ourselves in His presence, we still are not in thee presence of God. Being in the presence of God can be a sobering and even frightening experience. In **Exodus 19**, as God was preparing to give His commandments to the children of Israel, He told Moses that He would come to Moses in a thick cloud so they would hear Him when He spoke and believe, **Ex. 19:9**. But before Moses went into the presence of God preparations needed to be made. The people needed to consecrate themselves, wash their garments, not go near a woman and be ready on the third day. They were required to purify themselves mentally (consecrate) and physically (wash garments). God requires man be purified before coming into His presence, **Isa. 1:16-18, Heb. 10:22**. The mention of not going near a woman shows how intense the mental preparation was. Consider, **I Cor. 7:5, 8, 32**, the marriage relationship distracts from our relationship from God. Not that marriage is bad of course, but we are reminded that God is to be first in our life. As the children of Israel prepared for the gathering, God did not want even the demands of the marriage relationship to distract them from their preparations. Even with such preparation the people were still not allowed to be in God's presence. A boundary was set around the mountain and they were warned not to "go up the mountain or touch the border" or they would be put to death by stoning, **Ex. 19:10-15**.

"So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.", **Ex. 19:16**. Moses brings them to the foot of the mountain as the Lord descends on it in fire. Heavy smoke rises from the mountain and it shakes violently. The trumpet sound grows louder and when Moses speaks God answers him with thunder, **Ex. 19:17-19**. Imagine all of this, the presence of God being manifested with such mighty forces of nature...thunder, lightning, fire, smoke and earthquake! The Israelites trembled at what they were beholding and did not approach casually. They were actually kept at a distance. We should be grateful that God does not have us approach Him the same way being kept at such a distance.

In **Hebrews 12:18-21**, the Hebrew writer references the event in **Exodus 19**. But the writer goes on to explain that we have not come to the same mountain, **Heb. 12:22-29**. We have come to Mount Zion, the church of the first born. Lest we forget that He is the same powerful God, we are warned that where He once shook the mountain, He will not only shake the earth but heaven also. As the Israelites received God's commandments from a mountain that shook, we receive a kingdom that can not be shaken. We now have Jesus as a mediator who allows us to get closer to God. Our gratitude for such a privilege is motivation for our "acceptable service with reverence and awe". The words "reverence and awe" in the Greek is the word "*eulabeia*" and means "caution, discretion, reverence, piety, fear anxiety, dread". While we have the privilege of a more intimate relationship with God, we need to be reminded that He is a "consuming fire". We have come to know His love through Jesus but we still need to have a fearful respect of Him as our Father. Such fear keeps us motivated to do His will. Not that we need to walk around every day trembling, but also, not that we get so comfortable in our relationship with God that we think we are "buddies". Paul tells us to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling", **Phil. 2:12**. He is our God, our Creator, our Father. It is with great reverence and awe we approach and worship Him.

The Holy of Holies

God instructed Moses on the building of a sanctuary so that He may dwell among the Israelites. The first instructions given were on the furniture and the first piece of furniture was the Ark of the Covenant. The mercy seat, the top part of the ark that was removable, is where God would meet them and speak, **Ex. 25:8-22**. The next piece of furniture mentioned is the table of showbread or "the bread of the Presence", **Ex. 25:23-30**. The word "presence" is the Hebrew word "*paniyim*" that we looked at earlier, translated as "countenance" in **Gen. 3:8; 4:5-6**. Instructions for the bread and the eating of it are given in **Lev. 24:5-9**. A large veil separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies. The table with the bread of Presence, along with the lampstand (and altar of Incense), were placed in the Holy Place outside the veil of the Holy of Holies, **Ex. 26:30-34, II Chron. 3:14, Heb. 9:1-9**.

The people were permitted to enter the court of the tabernacle and make their offering at the door, **Ex. 40:28-29 Lev, 1:1-3**. They had to be careful how they approached the tabernacle, since only those in the tribe of Levi were allowed to handle the tabernacle and the furniture in it. If a layman came near it he would be killed, **Lev. 1:1-17, Num. 1:50-51**. The priests were allowed to enter the Holy Place, but only the high priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies, and then only once a year on the day of Atonement. If they would enter any other time they would die, **Ex. 30:10, Lev. 16 (2,12) Heb. 9:6-7**.

Man was kept at a distance in his worship to God. Any approach to Him was very "tedious", as we can see from **Lev. 16**. Jesus brings us closer to the presence of God. At Jesus' death, the veil of the temple is torn in two, **Mt. 27:51, Mk. 15:38, Lk. 23:45**. It is through Jesus' body, the veil, that we now enter the Holy of Holies, **Heb. 10:19-25**.

Isaiah 6:1-8

In Isaiah's "vision" he gives insight into what it is like to be in the presence of God in the "spiritual realm". God sits in a lofty and exalted position. Seraphim stand above Him and call out concerning the Lord's holiness. The "temple" Isaiah was in shook at His voice and filled with smoke. Isaiah recognized he was not worthy to be in the Lord's presence for he was unclean. A seraphim "anoints" him with a burning coal to cleanse him.

This passage paints such an interesting picture of what it is like to be in the presence of God in the spirit. We are physical creatures. Confined by flesh, all we know and understand is according to flesh. Words can't begin to describe what it is like to stand before God in the spirit. We really have no idea. But with such insight we stand before Him in the physical realm. Again we are reminded of our place, prostrate before Him.

Worship - Part II

God Governs Worship

"Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah who have come to worship in the Lord's house all the words that I have commanded you to speak to them. Do not omit a word!" **Jer 26:2**.

Specific instructions were given concerning worship before God. Nadab and Abihu offered "strange fire" before the Lord. In similarity to Cain's offering, we're not told why it was not acceptable. We are told that it was not what God had commanded them, **Lev. 10:1, Num. 3:4**. Their punishment was death, **Lev. 16:1, Num. 26:61**. Blessings from God were contingent on Israel following His commands, **Deut. 11:16-23, 30:15-20**. As we've looked at previously, just because we offer something to God, or do something in His name, does not mean that it will be accepted by Him. Jesus points out that many will have done religious things in His name but He will not know them. A wise man acts on the words of God, **Mt. 7:21-27**.

Mt. 15:9, Our worship is based on human doctrines we worship in vain.

Gal. 1:8-9, If we teach anything other than the gospel, we are accursed.

Col. 2:20-23, Be sure what we are following is not "self made religion".

2 John 9, If we do not abide in the teaching of Jesus, we do not have God.

Prayer

Acts 2:42, Continued devoting themselves to prayer.

Acts 4:31; 12:5 & 12; 20:36, I Cor. 14:15, prayer done in a public setting (worship assembly).

Eph. 5:20, Give thanks "always" for all things.

I Thess. 5:17-18, Pray "without ceasing", and in everything give thanks.

I Tim. 2:8, Men praying in "every place", leading prayer in public.

Lord's Supper

Mt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-25; Lk. 22:19-20, I Cor. 11:24-25, Jesus institutes the Lord's supper, done "in remembrance of me".

Acts 2:42, Those converted were continuing in "the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer". The implication is that the breaking of bread here is the Lord's Supper because it's in the context of other spiritual acts of worship. The verse doesn't mention when the Supper was observed but we see it was observed.

Acts 20:7, The context for being together was to "break bread" implying they were together for the Lord's supper. Luke tells us they were doing it on the first day of the week.

I Cor. 11:17-20 & 16:1-2, Paul is sorting out issues the Corinthians had with properly observing the Lord's Supper in **chapter 11**. In **16:1-2**, when he mentions the first day of the week for the collection, the implication is because they were getting together then already for the Lord's Supper.

I Cor. 11:24-34, Paul explains to the Corinthians what is involved with the taking of the Lord's Supper. We should take notice to the spiritual mindset and involvement of the body (the church).

Giving

Tithing is a word often used in the context of giving and simply means giving a tenth. It is interesting to point out that giving to God is something that is done in all biblical dispensations.

Gen. 14: 20, Heb. 7: 2 & 6, Abram gave a tenth of his riches to Melchizedek.

Gen. 28: 22, Jacob gives a tenth to God.

Lev. 27: 30-33, Tithing seed, fruit & livestock under the Law of Moses.

Deut. 14:22-27; 18: 3-5; 26:12-14, Tithing done to support the priest.

Mk. 12: 41-44, Jesus observes the widow with two coins. With this we see a change in what God requires of us when giving. It's not the amount He wants, it's the heart.

Acts 4:36-37, Barnabas gives money to the apostles.

Acts 5:1-11, Ananias and Sapphira also give money to the apostles but lie in the process.

I Cor. 16:1-2, On the first day of the week, put aside and save.

II Cor. 8:1-5, The churches in Macedonia gave to support Paul and the work of the church.

II Cor. 9:6-7, Sow bountifully, reap bountifully, God loves a cheerful giver.

Singing

Mt. 26:30; Mk, 14:26, After instituting the Lord's supper Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn.

Acts 16:25, In prison, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God.

Rom. 15:9, Prophets had predicted that (in the gospel age) Gentiles would glorify God for His mercy and sing to His name.

1 Cor. 14:15, I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding.

Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16, Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Heb. 2:12, In the midst of the congregation I will sing praise to You.

Heb. 13:15, Praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips.

James 5:13, Is any cheerful, let him sing psalms.

Eph. 5:18-21, Paralleled with **Col. 3:16-17**

psalm – '*psalmos*' - a striking, twanging (of a striking the chords of a musical instrument; of a pious song, a psalm)

hymns – '*humnos*' - a song in tithe praise of gods, heroes, conquerors; a sacred song, hymn

spiritual – '*pneumatikos*' - relating to the human spirit, or rational soul, as part of the man which is akin to God and serves as his instrument or organ (that which possesses the nature of the rational soul); belonging to a spirit, or a being higher than man but inferior to God; belonging to the Divine Spirit; pertaining to the wind or breath; windy, exposed to the wind, blowing.

In light of **Eph. 5:18**, the only way our singing, or any aspect of our worship for that matter, can be acceptable is if our spiritual mindset is right. For example, a physical instrument does nothing to make up what we lack in our spiritual focus. Whether it is singing a song or taking the Lord's supper, if our spiritual mindset is not right, then nothing we do physically makes up for that deficiency. The spiritual focus of our mind is what is most important, while participating in any physical event. Once that is in place, then we can dissect how to correctly participate physically.

John 4:20-24

The woman at the well makes reference to the Samaritans worshiping on the mountain and the Jews emphasizing worship being in Jerusalem. Jesus says "neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father". Jesus tells the woman that true worshipers of God will worship in spirit and in truth. Those who worship in spirit and truth are who God seeks to be His worshipers. God is the object of man's worship and desires our worship. Jesus goes on to say that those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and truth. So we should probably figure out what it means to worship in spirit and truth.

The word in the Greek for "spirit" is "*pneuma*" and means "a current of air, that is, breath (blast) or a breeze; by analogy or figuratively a spirit, that is, (human) the rational soul, (by implication) vital principle, mental disposition, etc., or (superhuman) an angel, daemon, or (divine) God, Christ's spirit, the Holy spirit: - ghost, life, spirit (-ual, -ually), mind". The word for "worship" is "*proskuneo*" and means "to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand); to fawn or crouch to, that is, (literally or figuratively) prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore): - worship".

Our worship, while it consists of physical acts, is spiritually motivated. God doesn't want our bodies to just "go through the motions" but He wants our spiritual mindset focused on Him. Our mind is either focused on the flesh (world) or on the spiritual things from God. We cannot be pleasing to God when our mind is on the flesh, **Rom. 8:5-8, Gal. 5:16-17**. In all aspects of life, we must have our minds set on God. What we do on the outside, our actions, our words, are a reflection of what is on the inside. Certainly when we come together in our corporate worship our mindset needs to be on God so that our worship is in spirit.

To worship in truth is to worship according to the commandments of God. As we've looked at, we must worship the way God wants, not the way we want. Dovetail this into the understanding of worshiping in spirit. To not worship in truth would be to worship according to flesh or according to the world. To do the things that are pleasing and acceptable to man. We must guard ourselves against this, **II Tim. 4:1-4**. To worship in truth is to worship soundly in God's doctrine, in our spirit and in our action.

Romans 12:1

Your "spiritual service of worship" is to present your body as a living and holy sacrifice to God. Our worship isn't just in an assembly on Sunday morning, it is also in the things we do everyday. This means while we live day to day we set ourselves apart from others (living and holy). We don't just worship on Sunday mornings, we worship every day we exist. Paul goes on to explain the point in **verse 2**. We are not to be conformed to the world, but the focus of our minds needs to be conformed to God. It is an on going process, something we work at daily. When we set ourselves apart from the world it will "prove" what the will of God is. You and I are what the world sees. You and I are the light on the hill, **Mt. 5:14**. People are to see Jesus when they see us in our everyday lives. That is worship, that is "good and acceptable and perfect".

Amen

The word “amen” transliterated is “amen”. Used at the beginning of a discourse it means “surely, truly, of truth” or at the end of a discourse it means “so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled”. The custom of saying amen came from the synagogues. When one would read or give a discourse, he would then offer it up as solemn prayer to God, and the assembly responded with “amen”, thus making the prayer or discourse their own. It comes from the Hebrew word “*amam*” which means “sure, truly”. The word has been transliterated from the Hebrew into the Greek of the New Testament and then into Latin and other languages. It is now a universally known word, one of the best know words in human speech.

Faithfulness in Daily Devotion

Adam and Eve went from being in the Presence of God, **Gen. 3:8**, to being cast out of the garden away from the tree of life. With this sin enters the world and great consequences come. We see such consequences right away. As Cain and Abel offer their sacrifices to God, for what ever reason Cain’s is not accepted. God tells Cain to pick himself up because “sin is crouching at the door”, **Gen. 4:4-7**. This is why we need daily devotion in our lives. We need our countenance (attitude, favor, presence) lifted up. If we don’t guard ourselves and remain devoted to God, sin is crouching at the door, ready to over take us as it did Cain.

Heb. 3:12-13, We need to “take care” (NASB) or be cautious so that we will not be “hardened by the deceitfulness of sin”. We are to encourage one another “daily” so we don’t get distracted and fall away from God. Notice the encouragement is daily. Encourage yourself, “pick yourself up” so you can encouragement others. While we can’t be “up” all the time hopefully some will be up to lift others.

Rom. 12:2, We need to renew our minds. No one can do this for us. It is our responsibility to put our mindset onto spiritual things.

Mt. 6:6, We need to go into our “inner room” and pray. We need this quite time with God.

Mt. 14:23 & Mk. 5:46, After feeding 5,000 people, Jesus prayed.

Lk. 6:12, After healing man with withered hand, He prayed.

Lk. 9:28-29, The transfiguration happens while Jesus’ is praying.

Mt. 26: 36-39, Before His crucifixion, He prayed.

If Jesus did it shouldn’t you? Talk to God, formally and informally, we need that devotion.

Mt. 26:55, Everyday Jesus was in the temple teaching so everyday someone was listening.

Acts 17:11, The church in Berea “searched the scripture daily”.

II Tim. 2:15, We need to study to accurately handle the word of truth.

It is easy to get complacent with studying the word. We should do more study than sitting in a pew once or twice a week in class. It is good to be in the word of God everyday. Reading, teaching, contemplating, studying so that our mind is on God’s word.

II Tim. 3:14 – 4:4

vr. 14-17, Timothy was to continue in the things he had learned and was convinced of. “Continue” is the Greek word “*meno*” and means “to remain, abide, in reference to place; to continue to be present; to be held, kept, continually”. “Convinced” is the Greek word “*pistoo*” and means “to make faithful, render trustworthy; to make firm establish; to be firmly persuaded of; to be assured of”.

We are to do the same as Timothy, to firmly abide in the teachings of the gospel. The “sacred writings” that we have learned give us the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ. The sacred writings to Timothy were the Old Testament. To us it is “all scripture”,

vr. 16. As the apostles wrote, their writings were circulated as inspired writings of God and are regarded as such by us today. We need to be into the scripture. To read it, meditate on it and study it. It is the only source for us to know God and to know what He wants from us. The word of God is living and active. It is the sword in our warfare and judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart, **Heb. 4:12.**

4:1-4, The words used by Paul thus far, and especially in **4:2,** are so poignant and powerful, showing us how important it is to safe guard ourselves against false teaching. Paul explains that believers will begin to turn away. This shows that it is important to be in the word, preaching and learning. I call this “inner evangelism”. We are to evangelize to one another to strengthen and build each other up. We are to do this “in season and out of season”. To one another we are to “reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction”. We need to be devoted to the word so we are not easily carried from it.

Phi. 2:12-13, Work our your salvation. Daily devotion to God is how we work out our salvation.

Daily “fellowship” with God prompts us, even when we do bad, to do good. From **Gen. 4:7,** if you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? If you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. That is why reaming faithful in daily devotion is important.