

2018

# BIBLE STUDY

The Importance of  
Godly Habits

Labour of Love Ministries

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# The Importance of Godly Habits

January 26<sup>th</sup> 2018

## Scripture Text:

2 Peter Chapter 1 Verses 1-10

### Definition of a Habit

A habit is a pattern of behavior that is customary and regular or repeated often. Often times the individual is not even aware of a particular habit or pattern of behavior whether it's a good or bad habit.

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ urged his readers to grow to spiritual maturity by adding to their faith (not getting more faith) by practicing and developing seven **Godly Habits** listed below:

1. **Virtue:** Is Moral Excellence
2. **Knowledge:** Is Spiritual Truth
3. **Temperance:** Is Self- Control
4. **Patience:** Is Endurance
5. **Godliness:** Is Godlikeness
6. **Brotherly Kindness:** Is Brotherly/Sisterly Love
7. **Charity:** Is Freewill, Unforced, Voluntary Love

### God's Word Reveals the Plan

Like a good coach, God has given us through His Son Jesus Christ everything we need for "life and godliness."

*"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" 2 Peter 1:3*

We need to discipline ourselves in our thinking (Romans 12:2) and in our actions (John 13:17 & James 1:25). We need diligently grow in our faith (2 Peter 1:5-10). God has given us the capacity of habit to be used for His glory and the good of others and ourselves. Our habits are ultimately our choice. If we don't plan to "do Christianity," it won't be done!

### 5 Godly Habits to Practice

1. **Die to Self** (Luke 9:23, 1 Corinthians 15:31, Galatians 2:20)
2. **Ask For Wisdom** (Proverbs 2, Proverbs 3, James 1:5-8)
3. **Intimacy with God First** (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Matthew 22:27-38)
4. **Love Others** (Matthew 22:29-40, John 13:35, 1 John 2:9-11)
5. **Yield to God's Word & Holy Spirit** (Psalm 119:24 & 133, John 8:31-32, Ephesians 5:17-18)

As you submit to Christ's rule in your life, you will want to obey him. The Holy Spirit will work in you to produce godly habits. You need to listen to His voice and obey.

**Question: What is a godly habit that God is calling you to develop right now?**

# The Importance of Godly Habits

February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018

## “Thinking Correctly”

### Scripture Text:

Ephesians Chapter 6:10-20

### Definitions

**Thinking Correctly:** To have a conscious mind that can reason, remember, and make decisions. To use one’s mind in a reasoning way; to make a decision about a given situation; to consider a possible action or plan.

**Stronghold:** A stronghold is an incorrect thinking pattern that has formed itself into our way of thinking. These strongholds have the capability to affect our feelings, how we respond to various situations in life, and they play a large role in our spiritual freedom. A stronghold is an area of darkness within our mind or personality that causes ongoing spiritual, emotional and/or behavioral problems. We can be genuinely born-again, and sincere in our faith, but have an ongoing struggle with thoughts, emotions, and habits that wage war against our relationship with Christ. We pray, we study, and we attempt to discipline ourselves, but often find our “problem” is resistant to real change.

**Armor:** Any covering that serves as a defense or protection against weapons.

In the book of Ephesians Chapter 6 verses 10-20. The Apostle Paul provides his readers the foundation of “Thinking Correctly” or Godly Habits by explaining to them that you must “put on the whole armor of God” every day as would the Roman Soldiers wear his armor. However, our armor is made up entirely of spiritual weapons: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer. By learning to wear and apply (in our minds) these powerful weapons, we can resist the carefully laid plans of the devil, and when the fight is over, still be able to stand.

The whole armor of God consists of **six pieces:** (combat gear) Two were considered *offensive weapons:* (shoes and sword) Three were considered *defensive weapons:* (breastplate, shield, and helmet) One was considered *neutral:* (belt)

1. **Truth:** is a knowledge of the truth of God’s Word. The ancient soldier’s **loins** (“waist”) were **girt about** with a very wide leather belt which held most of the other pieces of his armor in place. Similarly, the other pieces of the Christian’s armor depend on, and are held in place by, his spiritual “belt” or his knowledge of the “truth” of the Scripture.
2. **The breastplate of righteousness:** may be read “the breastplate which is righteousness.” It represents a holy character and moral conduct. Obedience to the “truth” known produces a godly life “righteousness”
3. **Preparation of the gospel of peace:** means “eagerness that comes from the gospel of peace” That is, as the Roman soldier wore special shoes called *caligae* (had spikes on the soles) on his feet, enabling him to advance against his enemy, so the Christian must have on his feet (possess) a sense of “eagerness” or “willingness” to advance against the Devil and take the fight to him in the spirit of his or her mind. Such “eagerness” to contend with Satan “comes from the gospel of peace.” The gospel gives peace to the believer, freeing him from anxiety though he advances against such a powerful opponent.
4. **The shield of (which is) faith:** means taking God at his word by believing His promises. Such trust will protect one from doubts induced by Satan or from your old nature.
5. **The helmet of salvation:** since the readers are already Christians they are not here urged to be saved. First Thessalonians 5:8 describes this helmet as “the hope of salvation” that is, the certainty (assurance) of salvation.

The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: **The Greek term rendered “word” is not *logos* (meaning the whole Bible) but *rhema*, referring to certain portions or selected verses of Scripture**

# The Importance of Godly Habits

March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018

## *“Renewing the Mind”*

### Scripture Text:

Romans Chapter 12:1-2

### Definitions

**Renew:** To restore something to its former state. To rebuild or to repair. To make or become new again. To bring back to its original condition.

**Conform:** To act in accord with the predominant standards, attitudes, practices, etc., of society or a group. Being poured into a mold of the present thinking, value systems, and conduct of this world.

**Transform:** The word *Trans* come from Latin and is attached to verb roots that refer to movement or carrying from one place to another, it means “across.” Also means “complete change” Hence transform means to change completely the appearance or character of something or someone.

### The Mind Consist of Four Entity’s (Things)

**Will:** is a part of the mind that has the ability to make choices and decisions regarding anything that is known. However it is influence and relies on the intellect, emotions, and desire to make decisions.

**Intellect:** is as part of the mind that reasons every information and provides it to the will. It thinks/reasons day and night (wisdom and knowledge are stored here)

**Emotions:** is a part of the mind that expresses any feelings of joy, sorrow, fear, hate, love etc....

**Desire:** is a part of the mind that provides the will any kind of craving, want, longing etc....

### How Do I Start the Process of Renewing My Mind?

First, you must accept responsibility for renewing your mind. After all, it is your mind! So what does it mean to renew your mind? We need to learn to think like God thinks. We need to get rid of our sinful attitudes, our negative, critical ways of thinking, and our selfish thoughts. Renewing your mind should not be confused with thoughts that come into your mind. Many times we cannot stop certain thoughts from entering our mind. But what we do with that thought the instant we recognize that thought-that's where our response clearly shows whether or not we are renewing our mind. See 2 Corinthians 10:4-6. Much of what we think about is directly connected to what we are feeding into our mind.

Secondly, if I am going to renew my mind, I must fill my mind with His truth. I need to read the Bible daily- I need to memorize scriptures. But it is not enough to have this information in my head-I must "put it into action!" That's the conclusion Paul gives in Philippians 4:8-9 A renewed mind should lead to changed behavior. If a thought fails the test of being true, or noble, or right, or pure, then stop going down that path in your mind. Turn your thoughts toward God and His word. We need to put off our old way of thinking and develop a new way of thinking.

Lastly, if you are going to renew your mind, self-discipline is absolutely essential. The call to Christian maturity is to discipline your thoughts and your emotions-to find the balance that Jesus had in His life. "Right thinking" leads to "right actions," which leads to "right feelings." This priority is critical. "Right thinking" guides us in responding with "right actions." Right feelings may not come immediately, but they will come eventually. Accept the challenge that emotions/feelings may not be the top priority. Right thinking is based on seeing each situation from God's point of view, and then right actions-what would Jesus do?

# **The Religious Terrorists**

*April 27<sup>th</sup> 2018*

## **Scripture Text:**

Acts Chapter 8:1-4 & 9:1-18

### **Definitions**

**Religious:** The service and worship of God or the supernatural. A personal set or institutionalized system of religious beliefs, attitudes and practices.

**Terrorists:** A person that use violence and threats to frighten and force one's will on another. To intimidate; to in force fear.

**Extreme:** Going beyond the ordinary or average; exceedingly great in degree or intensity. Radical, intense, beyond normal limits.

### **Who was this religious terrorists mentioned in the Book of Acts?**

His name was Saul also known as Paul. He was born in the city of Tarsus in Cilicia (in modern-day Turkey). He was born to Jewish parents who possessed Roman citizenship, a coveted privilege that their son would also possess. In about AD 20, Saul's family moved to Jerusalem. Sometime after that Saul began his studies of the Hebrew Scriptures in the city of Jerusalem under Rabbi Gamaliel. It was under Gamaliel that Saul would begin an in-depth study of the Law with the famous rabbi. His education would continue for five or six years as Saul learned such things as dissecting Scripture (Acts 22:3). It was during this time that he developed a question-and-answer style of teaching known in ancient times as "diatribe." This method of articulation helped rabbis debate the finer points of Jewish law to either defend or prosecute those who broke the law.

Saul went on to become a lawyer, and all signs pointed to his becoming a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court of 71 men who ruled over Jewish life and religion. Saul was zealous for his faith, and this faith did not allow for compromise. It is this zeal that led Saul down the path of becoming a "religious terrorists". Saul became determined to eradicate Christians, ruthless in his pursuit as he believed he was acting in the name of God. Arguably, there is no one more frightening or more vicious than a religious terrorist, especially when he believes he is doing the will of the Lord by killing innocent people. This is exactly what Saul of Tarsus was: a religious terrorist. Acts 8:3 states, "He began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison."

### **What can we learn from the life of Saul?**

We learn that God can save anyone. The remarkable story of Saul/Paul repeats itself every day as sinful, broken people all over the world are transformed by God's saving grace in Jesus Christ. Some of these people have done despicable things to other human beings, while some just try to live a moral life thinking that God will smile upon them on the Day of Judgment. When we read the story of Paul, we are amazed that God would allow into heaven a religious extremist who murdered innocent women and children. Today, we might see terrorists or other criminals as unworthy of redemption because their crimes against humanity are just too great.

The story of Paul is a story that can be told today—he isn't worthy in our eyes of a second chance, yet God granted him mercy. The truth is that every person matters to God, from the "good, decent," average person to the "wicked, evil," degenerate one. Jesus still saves! We learn from the life of Paul that anyone can be a humble, powerful witness for Jesus Christ. Arguably, no other human figure in the Bible demonstrated more humility while sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ as Paul. Acts 20:19 tells us that he "served the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to [him] through the plots of the Jews." In Acts 28:31, Paul shares the good news of Jesus Christ: "Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul was not afraid to tell others what the Lord had done for him. Paul spent all his days, from conversion to martyrdom, working tirelessly for the kingdom of God.

# To Be, Or Not To Be

May 25th 2018

## Scripture Text:

Galatians Chapter 2:11-21

### Definition of Hypocrisy

The Greek word for hypocrisy used in the New Testament is “hypokrisis” and means “the acting on a stage” and it is from the use of having more than one face that the same actor portrayed. In other words, they are actors in the Greek theatres who would usually play more than one role. They would go off stage and pick up and use a different mask for each character and sometimes wouldn’t even leave the stage as they sometimes carried two faces or masks (from which we get “two faced”). Sometimes they played more than one character and so these actors were portraying someone other than their real self and thus they were being hypocrites; acting on a stage and pretending to be someone who they really weren’t. The Bible calls hypocrisy a sin. There are two forms hypocrisy can take: that of professing belief in something and then acting in a manner contrary to that belief, and that of looking down on others when we ourselves are flawed.

### Who was this well-known “stage actor” in Galatians chapter 2?

This well-known person is actually the apostle Peter. Paul tells the story to the Galatians how Peter when he came to the city of Antioch (where Jewish & Gentiles believers lived) basically was a hypocrite. Old Testament laws did not require Jews to eat separately from Gentiles, but Jewish custom did (see [Acts 11:3](#)). Peter knew that this custom was not biblical, so he ignored it. However, when representatives of the Jerusalem church arrived, he changed his behavior. It was a change of behavior based on a desire to please people. However, this separation implied that the Gentiles were second-class citizens, that they would not be fully acceptable unless they conformed to Jewish laws. Paul saw this as a violation of the gospel. If God was willing to live in these people, then the Jewish believers ought to be willing to eat with them. Other people followed Peter’s example:

“The rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy” (2:13). The change in behavior was not consistent with their beliefs, and was not consistent with the gospel, so Paul spoke to them all by addressing Peter, who had set the example: “But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, ‘If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?’” (2:14). Peter had been living like a Gentile, and he should not pretend that he didn’t. He had been ignoring the rules that separated Jews from Gentiles, but his change in behavior implied it was wrong to be a Gentile. Peter is in effect requiring the Gentile converts at Antioch to adopt a higher standard of Old Testament observance than he himself would normally follow. Social discrimination violates the truth of the gospel.

### Are there Christian “stage actors” in the world today?

Christians **will often compromise core principles in order to fit in** and be liked, gain promotions or earn access. They will also hide their faith, playing the role of a secular up-to-date person in order to win approval. Some will act deceitfully to please a boss, others will gossip or engage in any number of sinful behaviors to get themselves into a group or certain status in society. Hence, because the believer is trying to please both man and God the audience changes, and that person must change with it. So, to one group he/she will say “yes” and to another group he/she will say “no.”

Since the goal of the hypocrite (actor) is to be seen and win approval, the answer must change if the group does. Hereafter, he will change, hide his true thoughts or outright lie to gain the approval. Unity in the church does not require that everyone follow the strictest opinions. God did not require Gentiles to live like Jews — and he did not require Jews to do it, either! So Christians today must understand that we all come from different backgrounds and had many different experiences in life, and that the only thing that matter now is that we that we love one another as Jesus Christ has loved us!

# **Demon like Faith**

*June 22nd 2018*

## **Scripture Text:**

James Chapter 2:14-26

### **What does the Bible say about demons?**

Demons are fallen angels, as Revelation 12:9 indicates: “The great dragon was flung down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was thrown to the earth, and his angels with him.” Satan’s fall from heaven is described in Isaiah 14:12–15 and Ezekiel 28:12–15. When he fell, Satan took some of the angels with him—one third of them, according to Revelation 12:4. So, biblically, demons are fallen angels who, along with Satan, chose to rebel against God.

Some of the demons are already locked “in darkness, bound with everlasting chains” (Jude 1:6) for their sin. Others are free to roam and are referred to as “the powers of this dark world and . . . the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” in Ephesians 6:12 (cf. Colossians 2:15). The demons still follow Satan as their leader and do battle with the holy angels in an attempt to stop God’s plan and hinder God’s people (Daniel 10:13).

Demons, as spirit beings, have the ability to take possession of a physical body. Demonic possession occurs when a person’s body (through their mind) is completely controlled by a demon. This cannot and should not happen to a child of God, since the Holy Spirit resides in the heart/mind of the believer in Christ (1 John 4:4).

### **What is “demon like faith”?**

In the book of James chapter 2. James (one of Jesus half-brothers) begins the chapter with an argument against “Christians” who claim to have faith in Jesus, yet favor certain people over others... Later in the chapter James moves to the discussion of faith without works (action) is dead. That it’s not enough just to say that you have faith and your life does not reflect a change (saved). He also goes on to say that the demons believe in God even Jesus. However, their allegiance still belongs Satan.

The demons know more than we do about the awesome power of God. They watched Jesus Christ come to earth, live as a man, and then be crucified. They trembled in horror as the God-Man rose from the dead and walked out of the tomb. They saw Him ascend back into heaven, and they believe that Jesus is the Son of God. But demons do not have “saving faith” and neither do we if that is where our faith ends.

The difference between the demon’s faith and saving faith is a question of lordship. Who is the boss of my life? To whom have I entrusted my life and my future? Who has the final say on my lifestyle decisions? Demons have already made their choice to follow Satan (Revelation 12:3–9). For our faith to be of a different variety, we must surrender our lives to God’s control. We must forsake all lesser loves in order to put Him first in our hearts/minds. Jesus said plainly that, if we love anything or anyone more than Him, we are not worthy of Him (Matthew 10:37–38).

It’s not enough to believe in God. The demons believe in God, but they do not love God. They believe that Jesus is God’s Son and that He died on the cross for the sins of humanity, but they do not care. They know He rose from the dead, but that fact does not affect their allegiance. Many people are in the same category, not realizing that what they call “faith” is nothing more than what the demons possess. Perhaps they prayed a prayer, got baptized, or went to church, but the direction of their lives never changed. Jesus told us what it costs to become His followers: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). That cross we must carry represents death to the right to direct our own lives. Without that cross-carrying, we are no better than the demons in having “demon like faith”.

# What are you asking God for?

July 27th 2018

## Scripture Text:

Mark 11:12-14 & 20-26. Matthew 7:7-11. John 14:12-14.

### Definition of the word things

In the Bible there are various meanings/definition to the word “things” In Greek (which the New Testament was written) there are three different words/definition that define the meaning of “things”. First is **Pragma**: matters, affairs business, to do. “How are things?” “I have some things I need to take care of” also mean stuff, material, natural objects that we can see, touch, smell, taste, and hear. Second is **Rhema**: an utterance, spoken words, it means the word of God spoken, it is not the whole bible, but the individual scripture. “The words (or things) that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). Third is **Logos**: the Word. Rhema means individual words spoken, but Logos is the whole thing (or word of God) it’s everything it’s the beginning. Rhema and Pragma proceed out or from Logos. Logos also mean the expression of thought not the name of an object, but a conception or idea and lastly it means **questions/concerns**. “Therefore I say unto you, what things (questions/concerns) soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them”. Mark 11:24.

### What is prayer?

Both Jesus (Luke 18:1) and Paul (1 Timothy 2:1) emphasized the importance of prayer, noting that people ought always to pray. Prayer includes asking and getting answers from God. But it is more than asking; it is confession, adoration, thanksgiving, and fellowship with God. By its nature, prayer is talking with God. It is essential and the basis of the successful Christian life, and so important that praying is considered a sin (first Samuel 12:22-25) When we pray, we should follow the model prayer Jesus gave His disciples and address it to our heavenly Father; beginning with adoration, including thanksgiving and confession of sins, making reconciliation with others, praying for our needs and the needs of others, and concluding in Jesus name.

### The Lord’s Prayer or the disciple’s prayer?

Often called the “Lord’s Prayer,” is in reality a disciple’s prayer. The question came about after the disciples heard Jesus praying in Luke 11:1 “And it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” The Lord’s Prayer should be understood as an example, a pattern, of how to pray. It gives us the “ingredients” that should go into prayer. Here is how it breaks down. “Our Father in heaven” is teaching us whom to address our prayers to-the Father. “Hallowed be your name” is telling us to worship God, and to praise Him for who He is. The phrase “your kingdom come, your will be done in earth as it is in heaven” is a reminder to us that we are to pray for God’s plan in our lives and the world, not our own plan.

We are to pray for God’s will to be done, not for our desires. We are encouraged to ask God for the **things** we need in “give us today our daily bread.” “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” reminds us to confess our sins to God and to turn from them, and also to forgive others as God has forgiven us. The conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” is a plea for help in achieving victory over sin and a request for protection from the attacks of the devil.

So, again, the Lord’s Prayer is not a prayer we are to memorize and recite back to God. It is only an example of how we should be praying. Is there anything wrong with memorizing the Lord’s Prayer? Of course not! Is there anything wrong with praying the Lord’s Prayer back to God? Not if your heart is in it and you truly mean the words you say. Remember, in prayer, God is far more interested in our communicating with Him and speaking from our hearts than He is in the specific words we use. Prayer is not an attempt to change the will of God. Prayer is not conquering God’s unwillingness to answer, but laying a hold of His willingness to help us. Prayer in the life of a true believer is an act of total confidence and assurance (faith) in the plan and purpose of God.

# **The Struggle Within**

*August 24th 2018*

## **Scripture Text:**

Romans Chapter 7:14-25

### **Definition of the word struggle**

To make strenuous efforts against opposition. To proceed with difficulty or with great effort. To make forceful or violent efforts to get free of restraint or constriction. To strive to achieve or attain something in the face of difficulty or resistance. To fight or battle.

### **Romans Chapter 7:14-25 New Living Translation (NLT)**

<sup>14</sup> So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. <sup>15</sup> I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. <sup>16</sup> But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

<sup>18</sup> And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. <sup>19</sup> I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. <sup>20</sup> But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

<sup>21</sup> I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I without doubt do what is wrong. <sup>22</sup> I love God's law with all my heart. <sup>23</sup> But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. <sup>24</sup> Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? <sup>25</sup> Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

### **Why can't I stop sinning?**

Every believer has, at one time or another, lamented his or her inability to stop sinning. While we tend to think the problem stems from weakness in ourselves, the inability to stop sinning usually indicates a lack in our understanding of God's strength. When we do not understand His power to save, forgive, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9), we can get caught in a destructive cycle of sin, guilt, and fear, which leads to a lack of joy in our salvation, which leads to more sin.

In Psalm 51:12, David pleads with God, "Restore to me the joy of my salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit." He wrote this after he had fallen into the grievous sins of adultery and murder. It is interesting to notice that he asks God for a return of the joy of his salvation. Joy is key in our victory over sin. It is also important that we understand that God sustains us "with a willing spirit." God takes joy in saving us, and we take joy in being saved.

God has saved us willingly, to display His grace, love, and strength. Our salvation does not depend on how much or how little we sin, how much or how little we evangelize or repent or do good works, how loving or unloving we are, or anything else about us. Our salvation is entirely a product of God's grace, love, and purpose (Ephesians 2:8-9). This is important to understand, because (ironically) believing that we are responsible to keep the law leads certainly to the inability to stop sinning.

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So, the way to stop sinning is *not* to add more rules and regulations. God knew this. In fact, He gave us the law so that we would be aware of our sin and turn to Him (Romans 3:19-20; Galatians 3:23-26). The law is good. It is a reflection of God's nature and His perfection. But it was not given to us for our salvation. Christ fulfills the law for us (Matthew 5:17).

When we disagree with God and hang onto the idea that we must fulfill the law, we lose our joy in salvation and set ourselves up for failure. We labor under a terrible burden. We feel pressured to do something to secure salvation, but, at the same time, our sin nature renders us unable to obey the law. The more we focus on the law, the more our sin nature rebels. The more our sin nature rebels, the more frightened we become that we are not saved. The more frightened and joyless we become, the more tempting sin's promise of happiness is.

The only way to break the cycle and stop sinning is to accept the fact that we cannot stop sinning. This may seem contradictory, but if a person does not stop trying to save himself, he will never rest in the knowledge that God has saved him. The joy of salvation comes from accepting the fact that God's grace covers us, that He will change us and conform us to the image of Christ, and that it is His work, not ours (Romans 8:29; Philippians 1:6; Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 13:20-21).

Once this reality is truly grasped, sin loses its power. We no longer feel the impulse to turn to sin as a means of temporary relief from anxiety, because the anxiety and pressure has been relieved once for all by Christ (Hebrews 10:10, 14). Then, the good works we accomplish in faith are done because of love and joy rather than out of fear or duty.

“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your **“Labour of Love”** is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:56-58).

# **Do You Believe?**

*October 4th 2018*

## **Scripture Text:**

Matthew Chapter 9:1-8, 20-22, 27-31

### **Definition of the word believe**

To have confidence in the truth, the existence, or the trustworthiness of someone or something, although without proof. Not knowing exactly how or why something will be done. It also mean to have faith and trust.

### **What does it mean to believe in Jesus?**

“Do you believe in Jesus?” seems like a strange question. It sounds like the same question as “Do you believe in Santa Claus?” or “Do you believe in aliens?” But the question “Do you believe in Jesus?” is asking far more than “Do you believe that Jesus Christ existed/exists?” The true meaning of the question is “Do you believe Jesus Christ is who the Bible says He is, and are you trusting Him as your Savior?”

Do you believe that Jesus is God in human form (John 1:1, 14)? Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins (1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21), for which you deserve eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23)? Do you believe that the sacrifice of Jesus, God incarnate, is the only acceptable payment for your sins (1 John 2:2; John 14:6; Acts 4:12)? Do you believe these things? If so, great, but believing the facts about Jesus is only part of the equation. Biblical faith/belief is far more than believing certain things to be true. Biblical saving faith is also trusting/relying on those facts.

Our trust in Jesus grows through experience (2 Corinthians 1:10) as we see God working all things in our lives—both the good and bad—for His purpose (Romans 8:28). Jesus wants us to live by faith in Him (2 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 2:20), and so the Christian life becomes a testing and training ground in trust: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).

Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me” (John 14:1). We may know that Jesus loves us and promises always to be with us (Matthew 28:20), but we can’t see Him, and, during times of trouble, doubt and fear can creep in and make it difficult to apply that knowledge. Even though we can’t see Jesus with our physical eyes, the Holy Spirit enables us to see Jesus with the eyes of our hearts (Ephesians 1:18–20). Ultimately, our inability to see Jesus physically makes our trust in Him even more secure. That is why Jesus said, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

When Jesus said to certain people, “Your faith has made you well,” He was saying that their faith (their confidence in Him) had been the means of their restoration. The power of Christ was what effected the cure, but His power was applied in connection with their faith. Just as the faith of some enabled them to receive healing, so healing was sometimes hindered by a lack of faith (see Matthew 13:58). In the same way, salvation comes to a sinner through faith. Everyone who is saved must believe, but it is the power of Christ that saves, not the power of faith. Faith is only the instrument, not the power itself.

In other words, the value of one’s faith does not come from the one who expresses it but from the object in which it rests (Jesus). Ultimately, healing is not depending upon the quality of one’s faith, but upon the Healer. It was through Christ that the woman in Matthew 9:22 was able to receive a bodily peace as well as a spiritual peace. “Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole”.

# **Pray Your Day**

*October 26th 2018*

## **Scripture Text:**

Isaiah 43:25-26 & Hebrews 4:12-16 & Ephesians 3:12-21

### **What is the New Covenant?**

The New Covenant (or New Testament) is the promise that God makes with humanity that He will forgive sin and restore fellowship with those whose hearts are turned toward Him. Jesus Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant, and His death on the cross is the basis of the promise. The New Covenant was predicted while the Old Covenant was still in effect—the prophets Moses and Jeremiah made reference to the New Covenant.

The Old Covenant that God had established with His people required strict obedience to the Mosaic Law. Because the wages of sin is death the Law required that Israel perform daily sacrifices in order to atone for sin. But Moses, through whom God established the Old Covenant, also anticipated the New Covenant. In one of his final addresses to the nation of Israel, Moses looks forward to a time when Israel would be given “a heart to understand” (Deuteronomy 29:4, ESV). Moses predicts that Israel would fail in keeping the Old Covenant but he then sees a time of restoration. At that time, Moses says, “The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live” The New Covenant involves a total change of heart so that God’s people are naturally pleasing to Him.

The prophet Jeremiah also predicted the New Covenant. “The day will come,’ says the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah...But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day,’ says the Lord. ‘I will put my law in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31, 33). Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law of Moses and to establish the New Covenant between God and His people. The Old Covenant was written in stone, but the New Covenant is written on our hearts. Entering the New Covenant is made possible only by faith in Christ, who shed His blood to take away the sins of the world.

We are no longer under the Law but under grace. The Old Covenant has served its purpose, and it has been replaced by “a better covenant”. In fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises under the New Covenant, we are given the opportunity to receive salvation as a free gift. Our responsibility is to exercise faith in Christ, the One who fulfilled the Law on our behalf and brought an end to the Law’s sacrifices through His own sacrificial death. Through the life-giving Holy Spirit who lives in all believers, we share in the inheritance of Christ and enjoy a permanent, unbroken relationship with God.

### ***My Covenant Confession***

*My covenant confession is that I comprehend, that is, get a spiritual perception by faith in my inner man creating in me an unshakable confidence that causes me to move with full assurance in the things of God, knowing that Jesus Christ has given me access and insight through the operation of the Holy Spirit unto the supernatural things of that place called “unity” so that I might seize them, lay hold of them, and take possession of my covenant rights and benefits, making them my own through the effectual working of Jesus Christ my Lord.*

# Finish

*November 16th 2018*

## Scripture Text:

Hebrews 12:1-4 & Genesis 2:1-3 & Luke 14:28-30

### Definition of the word finish

To bring a task or activity to completion; to bring something to a state of excellence. To complete a work or process so that it will continue to be productive and functional long after you have left this earth.

### How can we as Christians effectively finish?

The original audience of the book of Hebrews seems to have been Jews who had professed faith in Christ but who were now facing persecution from the unbelieving Jews. They were tempted to turn back, to renounce Christ and to go back to the temple and the sacrificial system. Believers who read the book of Hebrews today are faced with a similar temptation: the world and what we have left behind are always calling to us, wanting us to go back—if not to permanently return, at least to go back for visits as often as possible. But we are running a race. There is not time to backtrack or dillydally. The race we are running is probably more like a military-style obstacle course than a nice and neat Olympic race. There are real dangers along the way, but we must keep moving forward. We have the examples of past saints to follow, but our supreme example is Jesus Himself, the one who blazed the way, finished the race, paid for our sins, and is now seated in the place of highest honor and authority. We look to Him, not only as our example but as our source of strength.

The author of Hebrews says that in order to “run” effectively, believers need to get rid of sin and other entanglements. People who are serious about running races do not carry extra baggage—you have never seen an Olympic runner carrying a suitcase or talking on a cell phone during the race. Everything that is not absolutely essential is left behind. And to win the race, the runner must finish. The athlete must not give up before finishing. Perseverance is required. The “race,” then, is the Christian life. It’s a marathon, not a sprint, and we are called to stay the course and remain faithful to the end. Paul used this same imagery near the end of his life: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

The steadfastness of the Old Testament “witnesses” speaks to believers today of the rewards of staying in the race, of never giving up. A marathon is a strenuous test of fitness and endurance. The race set before us requires faith, stamina, commitment, and discipline in order to live faithfully. The race is “set before us”; we did not select the course, for it is God who established it. This race we run for Christ. We stay the course in spite of trials and persecutions. As we run, we must “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith”. Because He perfectly finished His race, He is the focus of our lives. We look away from all distractions because He is already at the finish line.

The race demands that we do away with “everything that hinders”—sin and whatever else threatens our relationship with God. Anything that will slow us down or trip up us must be cast off. The apostle Paul says “to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22–24). With the encouragement of those who have gone on before, we rid ourselves of thoughts, attitudes, and habits that hinder our progress. Seeing that the race God set out for us is a lifelong marathon, we must commit ourselves to run to the very end. A daily routine of prayer, worship, reading God’s Word and examining our lives for hindrances will help. We will persevere by maintaining a Christ like attitude even in the midst of trials. No matter how long the race may be, we keep our eyes on Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith”.

# The Perfect Gift

*December 21st 2018*

## Scripture Text:

Matthew 2:1-12

### **What does the Bible say about the wise men (Magi)?**

We assume that there were three wise men because of the three gifts that were given: gold, incense, and myrrh. However, the Bible does not say there were only three wise men. There could have been many more. It is a common misconception that the wise men visited Jesus at the stable on the night of His birth. In fact, the wise men came days, months, or possibly even years later. That is why Matthew 2:11 says the wise men visited and worshiped Jesus in a house, not at the stable.

We know that the magi were wise men from "the East," most likely Persia, or modern-day Iran. This means the wise men traveled 800 to 900 miles to see the Christ child. Most likely, the magi knew of the writings of the prophet Daniel, who in time past had been the chief of the court seers in Persia. Daniel 9:24-27 includes a prophecy which gives a timeline for the birth of the Messiah. Also, the magi may have been aware of the prophecy of Balaam (Numbers 24:17). Balaam's prophecy specifically mentions a "star coming out of Jacob."

The wise men were guided to look for the King of the Jews by a miraculous stellar event, the "Star of Bethlehem," which they called "His star". They came to Jerusalem and asked concerning the birth of Christ, and they were directed to Bethlehem. They followed God's guidance joyfully. When they arrived in Bethlehem, they gave costly gifts to Jesus and worshiped Him. God warned them in a dream against returning to Herod, so, in defiance of the king, they left Judea by another route.

### **Why did the Magi bring gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Jesus?**

**Gold** is a precious metal and as such was a very valuable commodity. Its value could very well have financed Joseph and Mary's trip to Egypt. The Bible does not tell us any other significance to these three gifts; however, tradition has it that there is a deeper meaning for each of the three. Gold is a symbol of divinity and is mentioned throughout the Bible. The gift of gold to the Christ child was symbolic of His divinity—God in flesh.

**Frankincense** is a white resin or gum. It is obtained from a tree by making incisions in the bark and allowing the gum to flow out. It is highly fragrant when burned and was therefore used in worship, where it was burned as a pleasant offering to God. Frankincense is a symbol of holiness and righteousness. The gift of frankincense to the Christ child was symbolic of His willingness to become a sacrifice, wholly giving Himself up, similar to a burnt offering.

**Myrrh** was also a product of Arabia, and was obtained from a tree in the same manner as frankincense. It was a spice and was used in embalming. It was also sometimes mingled with wine to form an article of drink. Such a drink was given to our Savior when He was about to be crucified, as a staggering potion (but he refused it). Myrrh symbolizes bitterness, suffering, and affliction. The baby Jesus would grow to suffer greatly as a man and would pay the ultimate price when He gave His life on the cross for all who would believe in Him.

### **Should we give gifts at Christmas?**

Many people take the idea of gift giving at Christmas back to the scripture in Matthew 2:10-11 which talks about the Magi (wise men) giving gifts to Jesus at his home. The Bible gives a wonderful story about the gift God gave us—Jesus Christ—and we can use it as an opportunity to present the gospel and to show love. So, can gift giving become the focus of Christmas instead of thanking the Lord for the gift of His Son Absolutely! Does giving gifts have to take away from the true meaning of Christmas? No, it does not. If we focus on the wonderful gift of salvation the Lord has given us (His only begotten Son). The key is our focus. Is your focus on the gift or on the ultimate gift-giver, our gracious Heavenly Father?

