



FIRMLY *Rooted*

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This work has been made with the hope that together we can search the scripture and develop a greater understanding of it. Hopefully, it will make your study of this topic more edifying, more profitable, and more enjoyable. It is not intended to take the place of your responsibility to prepare for the studies. Please devote adequate time to the material before our study, taking the time to fill in the blanks after looking up the references.

All verse references are taken from the New American Standard Bible 1995 unless otherwise noted.

This book belongs to:

Authority

Why does understanding Bible authority matter?

Many people look around and see all the different churches around us and wonder why there are so many. It seems that there is a different church on every street in town. If there is one God and one Bible, why are there so many different churches? The answer comes down to one word, “authority”. Different understandings about the authority of God, the authority of the Bible in our lives, and how to determine that authority is the reason for different churches. Understanding what authority is and how to determine it properly will help us all serve God in unity.

What is authority?

Jesus made the following statement at Matthew 28:18 before He ascended back into Heaven: “All _____ has been given to Me in heaven and on _____.”

Authority is such an important topic that Jesus used some of His final moments with the apostles to speak of it. Authority at its most basic is defined as “power”. Jesus is telling the apostles that He has all power, the right to give commands to all creation. Jesus tells us through this statement that there are commands for us to follow that He gave. It is by virtue of the facts that He is God and that He purchased us that He has authority over us.

“Behold, the virgin shall be with _____ and shall bear a _____, and they shall call His name _____,” which translated means, “_____.” (Matthew 1:23)

“...you were not redeemed with perishable things like _____ or _____ from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious _____, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of _____.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Authority

How is Christ's authority made known today?

God has spoken to us in different ways throughout time. In Old Testament times He spoke to us through patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and through prophets like Isaiah and Elijah. However, today He speaks to us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the _____ in many portions and in _____, in these last days has spoken to us in _____, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.” (Hebrews 1:1-2)

How then do we get the words of Christ today? It is not through any kind of supernatural revelation. Christ is not speaking words into our ears or minds. Jesus speaks to us today through His word, the Bible.

“If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I _____ to you are the Lord's _____.” (I Corinthians 14:37)

The Bible tells us what God wants us to do. God revealed His wishes to Jesus, who sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles. The apostles then wrote what the Spirit told them to write, forming our New Testament.

How serious is God about His commands in the Bible?

While most people today that respect the Bible think the Bible is the word of God, their respect for its seriousness differs. Our thoughts about the serious nature of the Bible are really irrelevant. What matters is how God views His commands. The Bible makes clear that God takes His commands and our failure to obey them as serious.

“Anyone who goes too far and does not _____ in the _____ of Christ, _____; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.” (II John 9)

We see from this verse that if we do not abide by the commands that are found in our Bible, then we do not have God! Having God and keeping commands are linked.

Authority

God shows us through a number of examples that He expects commands He has given to be obeyed. In all of the following examples God has given a command and subsequently punished people that disobeyed. Consider these examples:

1. Adam and Eve had to leave the garden after eating the fruit. (Genesis 2-3)
2. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire and were killed. (Leviticus 10:1-2)
3. Moses struck the rock and could not enter Canaan land. (Numbers 20:7-12)

Can we even understand the Bible?

It is common for people to think that it is impossible for the average person to understand the Bible. This faulty thinking has been perpetuated by denominations. However, the men in the New Testament expected that people could read what they wrote and do as they were expected to do.

“By referring to this, when you _____ you _____ my insight into the mystery of Christ.” (Ephesians 3:4)

Do you think God, who loves us enough to send His Son to die so we could have the forgiveness of our sins, would give us a book that is too difficult to understand and then condemn us for not doing so? _____

What are some false authorities that people look to religiously?

While Jesus makes clear that the only religious authority for us is the Bible, sometimes people look to other standards of authority. Here are a few examples of false standards and the problem with trying to use them.

People’s Wisdom - The main problem with this is that men can be wrong and often are. Some people trust in their own wisdom while others trust in the wisdom of other people. Consider the following examples that outline the problem with trusting in people’s wisdom, even our own.

“There is a way which _____ right to a man, But its end is the way of _____.” (Proverbs 14:12)

Authority

“so that your faith would not rest on the _____ of _____, but on the _____ of _____.” (1 Corinthians 2:5)

This would include the majority and even our parents. Just because most people think it is right or even our parents think it is right, it is not necessarily right.

God's Wisdom - It is even possible to misuse the Bible as a false standard of authority. Some misapply passages while others use old covenants as authority. While the Old Testament is in our Bibles, it is not our standard of authority today. Galatians 3:19 tells us that the Old Testament was only in effect “until the _____ would come to whom the promise had been made.” What does Galatians 3:16 identify as “the seed”? _____

How does the Bible tell us to use itself?

The Bible actually tells us how we are to understand it. When we are trying to determine if an activity is approved by God, there are three ways to find authority.

1. Is there a *direct statement*? This is when God explicitly states what He wants us to do. What direct statement do you find at Mark 16:15-16?

2. Is there an *approved example*? This is when God shows us what He wants us to do through an example approved by the apostles. What example do you find at Acts 20:7?

3. Is there a *necessary implication*? This is when God implies what He expects of us. What is necessary to infer from “coming up out of the water” at Mark 1:10?

It is also important to note that the silence of scripture is not freedom to do as we want. Silence prohibits. Hebrews 7:14 makes clear that Jesus could not be a priest because He was from the tribe of Judah. The Law did not have to say priests could not come from Judah. All it had to say was they come from Levi, excluding the rest.

These are not special Bible rules. They are simply the way we communicate with one another and God with us. We must establish authority for all we do.

The Covenants

Why is it important to differentiate between covenants?

Paul told Timothy at II Timothy 2:15 to “_____ to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, _____ the word of truth.” Other translations translate “be diligent” simply as “study”. Timothy was to diligently study so that he could correctly handle, or rightly divide as it is also translated, God’s word.

As we saw in the last lesson, denominations arise because of differing views on the topic of authority. Another big reason why there are differing denominations is due to misunderstanding the covenants and what applies to us today and in what way. If we are not careful with the covenants we will end up with a different gospel as was happening in the Galatian churches. There were people who were trying to bind Jewish traditions from the Old Covenant on the Gentile Christians. Paul warns them at Galatians 1:6-8.

“I am amazed that you are so quickly _____ Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a _____; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to _____ the _____ of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel _____ to what we have preached to you, he is to be _____!”

Handling the covenants accurately is important!

What are the covenants?

God spoke directly to the patriarchs and would sometimes set up a covenant with one of the patriarchs.

“I establish My _____ with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.” (Genesis 9:11)

The Covenants

God has delivered Noah and his family from the flood by the ark. After Noah exits onto dry land he offers a sacrifice to the Lord and the Lord makes a covenant with him for mankind that another flood like this would never happen. This type of covenant making continued until the time of the Exodus.

At the time of the Exodus a nation existed and left Egyptian bondage. When they reached Sinai as led by the Lord, Moses went to the top of the mountain and received a new covenant. It was a covenant between God and the Israelites. We know this covenant today as the Old Testament or the Old Covenant.

“Then the Lord said to Moses, “_____ down these _____, for in accordance with these words I have made a _____ with you and with Israel.” (Exodus 34:27)

This covenant was to establish a law and relationship between Israel and Jehovah. It was designed to keep the nation intact until the Messiah, Jesus, would come from that nation. Paul is explaining this to the Galatians at 3:19. The Law was only to remain in effect until the “seed” came.

“Why the _____ then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, _____ the _____ would come to whom the promise had been made.” (Galatians 3:19)

Who is this seed? As we saw in the last lesson from Galatians 3:16, the seed is Jesus Christ. Thus we learn from this passage that the Old Covenant was only designed to remain in effect until Christ came. At that time a new covenant would be created and put into place.

The New Covenant was then put into place by Jesus Christ and goes from that time forward. It is the covenant that we are under today. This New Covenant was intended by God and is thus prophesied in the Old Testament.

“Behold, days are _____,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a _____ with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”. (Jeremiah 31:31)

Jesus made clear when He was here on earth that He was here to establish a new covenant. It was a covenant that would be paid for by His own blood. In Luke 22

The Covenants

Jesus is celebrating the Passover. In the setting of this feast He enacts what we call “the Lord’s Supper”. Consider His words.

“And in the same way He took the _____ after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the _____ in My _____.” (Luke 22:20)

The apostles also realized that they were here to work as servants of a new covenant.

“Our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as _____ of a _____, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” (II Corinthians 3:5-6)

What happened to the Old Covenant?

We must consider what the word covenant means to properly answer this question. Webster’s dictionary defines “covenant” as “a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action”. Thus a covenant is essentially a contract. It is when two parties agree that each will do something for the other. The Old Covenant was an agreement entered into by Israel and Jehovah. Israel was to keep His commands and Jehovah would give them the promised land and bring forth the Messiah. When a contract is fulfilled, it is no longer in effect. Consider the following words of Jesus:

“Do not think that I came to _____ the _____ or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to _____.” (Matthew 5:17)

Thus when Jesus fulfilled the Law, it was no longer in effect as the contract was completed. The Hebrew writer words it as follows:

“When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the _____ . But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is _____ .” (Hebrews 8:13)

We then see that the Old Covenant has been completed, is obsolete, and has disappeared.

The Covenants

What is the Old Covenant good for now?

Someone may well wonder, “Why even study the Old Covenant? What good is it to us now if it has disappeared?” While it is true that we are no longer under the Old Covenant and that it is no longer law to us today, it is still of great value.

It Leads Us to Christ - “Therefore the _____ has become our _____ to lead us to Christ, so that we may be _____ by _____.” (Galatians 3:24)

It Instructs Us - “For whatever was _____ in _____ was written for our _____, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have _____.” (Romans 15:4)

The Old Covenant explains many of God’s qualities to us and how He interacts with His people. It helps us to understand why Jesus came to this earth and did what He did. Without the Old Covenant to shed light on the New Covenant, we would not understand many things.

Why did God replace the Old Covenant?

The Old Covenant was inadequate. It was based on the sacrifices of animals. Since animals are not equivalent to people, those sacrifices were not sufficient to take away sin. Consider the following words from Hebrews 10:4:

“For it is _____ for the _____ of _____ and _____ to take away sins.”

These animal sacrifices were simply placeholders. They were a temporary fix until Jesus could come to shed His blood, offering the adequate sacrifice.

“For this reason He is the mediator of a _____, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were _____ the _____, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” (Hebrews 9:15)

The New Covenant was needed because it is superior and the Old was inadequate. The blood of Jesus forgave the sins under the Old Covenant and paid the price for the New Covenant, washing away our sins also!

Three Promises

A Covenant with a Patriarch

Beginning in Genesis 12 we are introduced to a man by the name of Abram. Abram was a godly man that had a wife named Sarai and a nephew named Lot. The command to Abram was simple.

“Go _____ from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, _____ the _____ which I will show you”. (Genesis 12:1)

Abram then acted as we would expect a godly man to do.

“So Abram _____ as the LORD had _____ to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was _____ - _____ years old when he departed from Haran.” (Genesis 12:4)

Abram was led to the promised land, that is the land of Canaan, by the Lord along with his family. Upon his arrival God made a covenant with Abram.

“On that day the LORD made a _____ with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have _____ this _____”. (Genesis 15:18)

In our last lesson we examined the Old and the New Covenants. We mentioned that these covenants were contracts between God and His people. Here in Genesis 15 we find God making a contract with Abram. If he would do as God commanded, then God would give to him the land that was promised.

When God makes a covenant, it is certain to come to pass. God is always faithful and follows through with His word. This covenant was so sure to be fulfilled that God actually changed the name of Abram to Abraham. Thus his name went from “exalted father” to “father of a multitude”. Abraham was going to become the father of a nation that would be housed right in this land into which the Lord had directed Abraham. Even Sarai received a new name. She became “Sarah”.

Three Promises

The Three Promises of the Abrahamic Covenant

This covenant of Genesis 15 was actually stated previously in Genesis 12 when Abraham was first called.

“Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the _____ which I will show you; And I will make you a _____, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And _____ all the families of the earth will be _____.”

Thus we find in this passage three promises that were made to Abraham. Those promises are as follows: (wait until we meet to fill out the following three blanks)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

These three promises are vitally important. They are essentially the framework of the plan of redemption. These promises are how the Bible is organized.

Promise One: The Land Promise

The first promise made to Abraham was that the Lord was going to take him to a new land. He had to be willing to leave his country and venture out in faith that the Lord would take him to the land that had been promised. This is indeed a hard scenario to imagine. Today we would not want to journey anywhere with at least a map, preferably a GPS. However, Jehovah commands Abraham to leave his home and go to an undisclosed location! Abraham had no idea where the Lord was leading him. Yet, as a man of faith he did as God told him.

“Then he _____ in the LORD; and He _____ it to him as _____.” (Genesis 15:6)

Three Promises

This land was exceedingly important. It would be the home of the Israelites. If the other promises were to take place, there would have to be a place to nurture that coming nation from which the blessing for all nations would come. Thus today we speak of the promised land. It was a wonderful land that is described in the following way:

“Hence I have said to you, “You are to possess their land, and I Myself will give it to you to _____ it, a land _____ with _____ and _____.” I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples.” (Leviticus 20:24)

This would not just be a place to survive, but a place where they could thrive.

Promise Two: The Nation Promise

God also told Abraham that He would make of him a “great nation”. This had to be a rather unbelievable promise to Abraham due to the condition of his wife, Sarah. According to Genesis 11:30, what was her condition? _____

God’s ability to give her children may not have been so unbelievable except for the fact that she was already 65 years old when the promise was made! According to Genesis 17:17, how old was Sarah when she conceived her first child? _____

Yet, from this we see that God is able to do whatever He wills. Here is a man who is 100 years old and has never had a child with his 90 year old wife, but God was able to bring a child forth from her. This child’s name would be Isaac, the child of promise.

This was a meager beginning, but in time this small family grew to be a great nation. Abraham had Isaac, Isaac had Jacob, and Jacob had twelve sons. One of these sons was Joseph. Joseph ended up in Pharaoh’s house through circumstances and was able to become a man of power that saved his family from famine and moved them to Egypt where they could be cared for. In Egypt their number grew.

“The sons of Israel were _____ and _____, and _____, and became _____, so that the land was _____ with them.” (Exodus 1:7)

Three Promises

Promise Three: The Seed Promise

Genesis 22:18 states the last promise in this way, “In your _____ all the nations of the earth shall be blessed”. The descendants of Abraham would bring forth something that would bless all mankind. As we have already seen from Galatians 3, that seed that would come that blessed all mankind was none other than Jesus Christ. Abraham is promised that the Messiah would come from him!

The Old Covenant was put into place to govern the great nation of Israel in the promised land of Canaan until such time that Jesus Christ could come. The Old Covenant was God’s revelation to the Jewish people. Thus it excluded the outside nations that in the Bible are called “Gentiles”. However, when the time was right and Jesus was able to come to this earth to pay the price to enact a new and better covenant, it was going to be for all mankind. Everyone would be blessed by this seed and the New Covenant He enacted.

“Opening his mouth, Peter said: “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show _____, but in _____ the man who _____ Him and _____ what is right is _____ to Him.” (Acts 10:34-35)

The Promise that Stands

We note that the great nation of Israel that is described in our Bible no longer exists. God removed that nation in AD 70 using the Romans to destroy it. The land now belongs mostly to others. Much of it was lost to the Assyrians in 722 BC and the rest was lost to the Romans in AD 70. The reality is that those promises were only important so far as they made the seed promise possible. The seed promise is what will stand forever. Through it Abraham is the father of us all!

“For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the _____ of _____, who is the _____ of _____.” (Romans 4:16)

Indeed the plan of redemption and God’s word centers on these three promises. The land and nation promise that made the everlasting seed promise possible!

The Church

What is it?

The word “church” as found in our bible means “an assembly.” Context must determine what type of assembly is meant. Regarding the Christian faith the word can be used in two ways; the universal church or the local church. In this study we will explore some of the bible passages that reveal these two meanings and seek to gain an understanding from the Lord concerning His will for the church.

The church of the Firstborn.

Jesus spoke of His mission to build a new group of people before His death. Upon hearing Peter’s confession that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” Matthew records our Lord’s response:

“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will _____
My _____; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” (Matthew 16:18)

Jesus purposed to build a church, a group of His disciples who would live and teach under His authority. That is the mission He sent the disciples forth to accomplish after the resurrection. (Read Matthew 28:18-20)

Fill in the following blanks:

“And He [God] put all things in subjection under His [Jesus’] feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the _____, which is His _____, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22-23)

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave _____ up for her, so that He might _____ her, having cleansed her by the washing of _____ with the _____, that He might _____ to Himself the church in all her glory, having no _____ or _____ or any such thing; but that she would be _____ and _____.” (Ephesians 5:25-27)

The Church

No one on earth can add us to the body of Christ. Jesus Himself is responsible for those who are put in and taken out.

“So then, those who had received his word were _____; and that day there were added about three thousand souls... they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, _____ God and having favor with all the people. And the _____ was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:41, 46-47)

“For He rescued us from the domain of _____, and transferred us to the _____ of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13)

“So because you are _____, and neither _____ nor _____, I will _____ you out of My _____.” (Revelation 3:16)

“He who _____ will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not _____ his name from the book of life, and I will _____ his name before My Father and before His angels.” (Revelation 3:5)

Faithful Christians all over the world make up the Lord’s church on earth. Spiritually speaking, we are all assembled together before the Lord as his people. He sees us all at once as His own: the church on earth. This scene is described with power in Hebrews 12:22-24:

“But you have come to _____ and to the _____ of the living God, the _____ Jerusalem, and myriads of _____, to the general _____ and _____ of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the _____ of all, and to the _____ of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the _____ of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled _____, which speaks better things than the blood of Abel.”

It is a great blessing to be counted as one in the church of the firstborn! No outside power can remove us from His body; not death, sword, or Satan himself. With such assurance in mind, we should heed Paul’s advice; “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; _____!” (II Corinthians 13:5)

The Church

The local church.

“Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the _____ of _____ greet you.” (Romans 16:16)

Jesus is head over the universal church (or “general assembly”), but He is also head over local churches. The plan for and design of the local church was purposed by the Lord and delivered to the apostles.

“And He [Jesus] gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as _____, and some as _____ and _____, for the equipping of the _____ for the work of _____, to the building up of the body of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-12)

This passage shows us that Jesus designed the local church and did so with a purpose in mind to build up the body of Christ. Local churches spread the gospel in their community, encourage one another, and equip one another to be able to serve in the Lord’s vineyard. Consider some of the roles found in Christ’s local churches.

Pastors/Elders

Several words are used to describe the group of shepherds Jesus has placed over local bodies. Their qualifications are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Their work is described by the apostle Paul in Acts 20:28:

“Be on guard for _____ and for all the _____, among which the Holy Spirit has made you _____, to _____ the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Evangelists/Preachers

Evangelists are purposed to study and preach the word of God, set the congregation into biblical order, and especially to spread the gospel to the lost. They work to equip the members in their efforts to teach the gospel as well.

“But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an _____, fulfill your _____.” (II Timothy 4:5)

The Church

Deacons

Deacons are purposed to handle the material tasks of the church. Their qualifications are found in I Timothy 3:7-13. Their work is essential to the continued operation of local churches.

“For those who have served well as _____ obtain for themselves a _____ standing and great _____ in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.” (I Timothy 3:13)

General membership

Being identified with a local church is a necessary implication of the New Testament. The elders must know who is in their “flock” and it would be impossible to “put away” a person if they were not identified with the group. All of the positions in the church are intended to aid the faith and walk of the membership.

Local church membership is predicated upon faithfulness to God.

While no man can read hearts, local churches are to have spiritual standards for membership in the congregation. Not only must one be a Christian to be in the local church, they must continue in faithfulness.

“Now we _____ you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep _____ from every _____ who leads an _____ life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.” (II Thessalonians 3:6)

“If anyone does not _____ our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not _____ with him, so that he will be put to _____. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but _____ him as a brother.” (II Thessalonians 3:14-15)

While putting one out of the membership is a last resort to restoring their faith, it is done with love in an attempt to bring them back to the faith. (I Corinthians 5:1-13)

The Lord has established the church just as He desires it to be. Let us always seek to follow His word and do all things “in the name of the Lord”! (Colossians 3:17)

Repentance

What is it?

Repentance means, “to feel such sorrow for sin or fault as to be disposed to change one's life for the better.” We became Christians because we realized the power of sin to condemn our souls and eternally separate us from our perfect Heavenly Father. Having now been made pure through the blood of Christ, can we return to the sin we formerly lived in?

In this lesson we will study what the word of God teaches concerning the change of life we are to have after obeying the gospel and the warnings from the Lord if we fail to fully give ourselves to His will.

Is a change commanded?

Many today are led to believe that God is not concerned with the lifestyle of Christians. Others have taught that there is no such thing as sin for Christians at all! The apostle Paul had dealings with false teachers who preached the same types of things to early Christians and wrote extensively to combat their views. One example of this is in Romans chapter 6. In this chapter, Paul seeks to answer a thought some brethren might have: ‘If forgiving sin glorifies Jesus, then we should sin much more and He can forgive that as well!’

Fill in the blanks with Paul's words:

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? _____! How shall we who _____ to sin still _____?” (Romans 6:1-2)

Paul goes on to remind the Christians what they did in order to be put “into Christ.” Read verses 3-7 of Romans 6.

When did we die to sin?

Repentance

In the rest of the chapter Paul goes on to show Christians the truth about how they should consider sin as children of God. Fill in the blanks by reading the verses specified.

“Therefore do not let _____ reign in your mortal body so that you obey its _____, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to _____ as instruments of _____; but present yourselves to _____ as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of _____ to God.” (6:12-13)

“Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now _____? For the outcome of those things is _____.” (6:21)

“For the wages of _____ is _____, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (6:23)

The apostle Paul makes a similar argument to the brethren in Ephesus. Read Ephesians 4:17-24.

Leaving sin behind.

True repentance is difficult. After we have lived our lives according to a set of guidelines that we received from culture, family, or ourselves it can be challenging to choose to be led by the Spirit’s word instead. All Christians have experienced these struggles, but the task is far from impossible! We must not allow temptations to pull us away from the good hope we have found. Consider the words given to the Corinthian brethren:

“Or do you not know that the _____ will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor the _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were _____; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

Repentance

Although these brethren formerly walked in all manner of sins, they overcame their struggles and were now seeking to serve the Lord! With dedication, prayer, patience, study of the Scriptures, and encouragement from our brethren we can conquer any sin that is holding us back.

Our attitude towards sin.

If leaving our sinful practices behind is difficult then even more so is changing the way we think about sin. God does not just want the dedication of our hands but also the dedication of our hearts and minds. Consider the words of Romans 12:1-2:

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your _____ a living and holy _____, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual [logical] service of _____. And do not be conformed to this _____, but be _____ by the renewing of your _____, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is _____ and _____ and _____.”

We have been so influenced by the sinful practices of the world that we need to retrain our minds to see things as God sees them. Sin is not wrong without cause. God has instructed us in these things so that we will know the truth and walk in holiness. (1 Peter 1:14-16)

Moving in the other direction.

Repentance is more than ceasing from doing evil, it is a change of direction altogether. Note the change the Christians are taught in Ephesians 4:25-32:

“Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak _____ each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.” (4:25)

“He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must _____, performing with his own hands what is _____, so that he will have something to _____ with one who has need.” (4:28)

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for _____ according to the need of the moment, so that it will give _____ to those who hear.” (4:29)

Repentance

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be _____ to one another, _____ - _____, _____ each other, just as God in Christ also has _____ you.” (4:31-32)

We see that Christians do not just abstain from sin, but we also are to do good in its place. One of the reasons we assemble with our brethren is to remind one another of this fact. The author of Hebrews says, “let us consider how to stimulate one another to _____ and _____.” (Hebrews 10:24)

Remain committed.

Jesus urged those who would be His disciples to remain committed to faithfulness. Knowing that some would not, He says, “Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is _____ either for the soil of for the manure pile; it is _____. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Luke 14:34-35)

Jesus is teaching an important lesson about faithfulness and holding fast to our repentance. We are the salt. If we lose our “saltiness” then we are no longer good for the Lord. We will be “thrown out” of the Lord’s house. The promise of our eternal salvation is contingent upon our continued faithfulness to our Lord. As Jesus says, “Be faithful _____, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10)

It is comforting to know, though, that the Lord will aid us in our walk with Him. We are told, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been _____ in all things as we are, yet without _____. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive _____ and find grace to _____ in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15-16)

And again, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to _____; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be _____ beyond what you are able, but with the _____ will make the way of _____ also, so that you will be able to _____ it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

There are many temptations the evil one uses to try and pull us from the truth. Let us resolve to leave our dead works behind and devote ourselves to the will of God!

The Christian Walk

A Joyful Life!

The life of a Christian is a joyful one regardless of the circumstances we may face because our joy is set deep within our hearts. We know that this world will come to an end but our eternal home is secure in Christ. In this lesson we will seek to consider a few of the things that Christians do, according to the Scriptures, in order to maintain our faithful standing and confident, as well as to honor God and encourage one another.

Study of the Word.

It was the knowledge of Christ given through the inspired word of God that pricked our hearts to become children of God. We must continue to reflect upon the truths found in this word.

“like _____ babes, desire the pure _____ of the word, so that by it you may _____ in respect to salvation, if you have _____ the kindness of the Lord.” (1 Peter 2:2-3)

God’s faithful people have always relied upon the word to guide their thoughts into holiness. Note a couple of the ways David describes it:

“O how I love your _____! It is my _____ all the day.” (Psalm 119:97)

“How _____ are Your _____ to my taste! Yes, sweeter than _____ to my mouth! From your _____ I get _____; Therefore I _____ every false way.” (Psalm 119:103-104)

“Your _____ is a _____ to my feet and a _____ to my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

“The law of the Lord is _____, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is _____, making _____ the simple.” (Psalm 19:7)

Regular study of God’s word is essential to the life of a Christian. If we do not put His word into our minds then it will not be in our hearts!

The Christian Walk

Loving our brothers and sisters.

The gift we have in Christ of new brothers and sisters in faith is not something to take lightly. The apostle John speaks extensively about our love for one another. Consider these verses:

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from _____; and everyone who loves is _____ of God and _____ God. The one who does not love does not _____ God, for God is _____.” (1 John 4:7-8)

“If someone says, ‘I love _____,’ and _____ his brother, he is a _____; for the one who does not _____ his brother whom he has _____, cannot love _____ whom he has not _____.” (1 John 4:20)

Love of our brethren is not something to be done in word only, but also in deed. Read these verses discussing the actions brethren are to do for one another.

“Do nothing from _____ or empty _____, but with humility of mind regard one another as more _____ than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own _____, but also for the _____ of others.” (Philippians 2:3-4)

The love we show to our fellow Christians does not limit itself to physical needs. There are also spiritual needs that may arise. In the following verses note the responsibility placed on the shoulders of all faithful Christians.

“But _____ one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be _____ through the _____ of sin.” (Hebrews 3:13)

“My brethren, if any among you _____ from the truth and one _____ him back, let him know that he who _____ a sinner from the _____ of his way will _____ his soul from _____ and will cover a multitude of _____.” (James 5:19-20)

No one else in the world can fully understand the spiritual fellowship Christians enjoy with fellow believers. May our actions reveal our bond in Christ!

The Christian Walk

Assembling with the saints.

Worshiping the Lord together is an important aspect of the Christian walk. It is woven into the core of the faith revealed by Christ.

“and let us consider how to _____ one another to _____ and good _____, not _____ our own _____ together, as is the _____ of some, but _____ one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Consider a few of the activities Christians are to do in their assemblies, particularly on the first day of the week.

Sing Together

“speaking to one another in _____ and _____ and spiritual _____, _____ and making _____ with your _____ to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:19)

Partake of the Lord’s supper

“For as often as you _____ this _____ and _____ this _____, you proclaim the Lord’s _____ until He comes.” (I Corinthians 11:26)

Exhortation

“On the _____ day of the week, when we were gathered _____ to break bread, Paul began _____ to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his _____ until midnight.” (Acts 20:7)

Prayer

“First of all, then, I urge that _____ and _____, _____ and _____, be made on behalf of all men,” (I Timothy 2:1)

Financial offering

“Each one must do just as he has _____ in his _____, not _____ or under _____, for God loves a _____ giver.” (II Corinthians 9:7)

The Christian Walk

Being a light to the world.

The Christian walk is not only about our brethren; it is also about influencing the world around us through our godly example. Jesus envisioned the world seeing His people as a reason to glorify God.

“You are the _____ of the _____. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before _____ in such a way that they may see your _____ and glorify your _____ who is in _____.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have _____ for one another.” (John 13:35)

Our example means a great deal to the Lord; it should mean a great deal to us as well! The apostles entreated the Christians to pay attention to their examples.

“Conduct yourselves with _____ towards _____, making the most of the opportunity. Let your _____ always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should _____ to each person.” (Colossians 4:5-6)

One of the qualifications for elders even concerns how they have behaved before unbelievers.

“And he must have a _____ with those _____ the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” (1 Timothy 3:7)

Ultimately our goal is to lead as many others to the truth in Christ as is possible. We will assist the cause of Christ if we show ourselves to be servants of the Most High God at every opportunity!

The Christian walk of life is a joyous journey. Although temptations and trials will come against us, study of the word, loving our brothers and sisters, assembling with the saints, and striving to be a light to the world will help equip us to overcome this life and excel within it! May all the glory be to God and Christ!