

# OVERCOME



JUNE 2021

## ADULT CONNECT CLASS CURRICULUM

DONALD J. WILLS  
SENIOR PASTOR



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to ***introduce*** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, ***instruct*** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, ***inspire*** them to serve for God's kingdom, and ***incorporate*** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

## *A Note From Our Pastor*

Dear FBC family and friends,

It is hard to believe that summer is here! This is the sixth month we have been studying our theme “Overcome” 2021. By now, I hope you understand that the entirety of the Christian life involves applying these different aspects and characteristics of a believer through the lens of Scripture. God, in His Word, has given us all the ingredients for the recipe to Overcome in every dimension of life. The problem that often occurs is we become selective in the admonitions and counsel that suits us rather than taking on the whole of what Scripture tells us. However, God desires for us not to walk according to this world but Overcome through the relationship we have in Jesus (Eph. 2:1-10).

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

This month’s lessons once again remind us of the essential elements we must exhibit to Overcome as believers. For some, these lessons are simply a reminder that confirm our walk and for others they challenge us as well as illuminate areas that need to change in our lives. We can accomplish all that is taught in the Scriptures through obedience to God’s Word empowered by the Holy Spirit. Take it in, apply it, and Overcome!

-Blessings

Pastor Don



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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# KAZ Summer Fun

Bring your Friends!



VBS 2021



**AUGUST 1-5 • 6:00-8:30pm**

for children 3 Years Old (potty-trained)  
through completed 6th Grade

**Free Dinner Every Night!**

**Crafts • Drama/Video Time • Rec Time  
Bible Story Time • Incredible Song Time**

Pre-Teen Camp  
July 15-17

3rd-6th Grade\*  
\*grade completed

Regular Price \$250/kid\*

\*Register with \$50 deposit to book your spot

- Six Flags •
- Eagle Mountain Lake •
- Hawaiian Falls •

*INVITE FRIENDS TO JOIN YOU!*

FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY INFORMATION & REGISTRATION GO TO  
[KAZ.FBCFW.ORG](http://KAZ.FBCFW.ORG)

# KAZ E.L.I.T.E.

Wednesdays • 6:30-8:00 pm

**== GRADES 1-6 ==**

Activities are available for younger children whose parents or grandparents participate or volunteer on Wednesdays.

[kaz.fbcfw.org](http://kaz.fbcfw.org) > click on Wednesdays

# WEDNESDAY ACTIVITIES

— 6:30-8:00 PM —

*Join us in-person on Wednesdays!*

KAZ E.L.I.T.E. • STUDENT WORSHIP • ADULT BIBLE STUDY • CHOIR REHEARSAL

TO VIEW ALL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES GO ONLINE TO  
[OPPORTUNITIES.FBCFW.ORG](http://OPPORTUNITIES.FBCFW.ORG)

## TUESDAY TOPICS

EVERY 2ND TUESDAY FOLLOWING FIRST WORSHIP!

*A Biblical Perspective for a Confused World*

JOIN US IN THE GYM AFTER SERVICES ON 2ND TUESDAYS

THE DEADLINE TO ORDER YOUR BOXED LUNCH IS  
*THE FIRST TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH, COST IS \$8 PER MEAL*

ORDER MEALS @ THE INFO CENTERS

OR ONLINE AT [RSVP.FBCFW.ORG](http://RSVP.FBCFW.ORG)

SUBMIT QUESTIONS TO [QUESTIONS.FBCFW.ORG](http://QUESTIONS.FBCFW.ORG)

*June 6, 2021*



# *Overcome by Communicating*

## *Romans 10:1-15*

Focal Verse:

“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?”

Romans 10:14

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## Introduce

In 1830, Josiah A. Campbell set out on a long, westward journey that would take him to the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains in what would eventually become the state of Colorado. Escaping the overcrowded, rapidly industrializing cities of the East, Josiah sought new opportunities to make a better life and provide for his family. Having left the vast grasslands of the Plains, he came upon a recently founded town where about 100 people in ten families had settled. The town was nestled in a small valley less than



a mile wide and five miles long. Surrounded on all sides by towering mountains, the area was idyllic with beautiful Aspen trees dotting the slopes, mountain streams that fed lakes and ponds, and plenty of room for fields and pastures. As he entered town, he found that most of the residents had constructed their homes against a towering peak that jutted into the sky just shy of 14,000 feet.

As he continued driving his covered wagon down the narrow path into the community, he found the residents very polite and welcoming. So, he stopped, hitched his oxen to a nearby tree, and ventured to begin a conversation with some of the people who had gathered there to do some trading. Through his conversations, he began to realize that this is the place he should make his home. After inquiring about land, one of the men took him to an unclaimed area which he could settle and develop into his homestead. The townspeople didn't waste any time pitching in to help. They gathered to clear the trees from the densely wooded area which they would then use to construct a cabin on the land which they had opened. The work went quickly. The townspeople continued to offer Josiah help so that he could have everything he needed for the long Rocky Mountain Winter. They cleared land for two fields and a pasture. They even helped him construct a barn and chicken coop. Within only a few weeks, Josiah and his family had everything they needed.

As time advanced, Josiah and his family made a deep connection with the townspeople. They loved them deeply and would have done anything for them.

## Introduce

Several years later, during an especially hard Winter, Josiah recognized a particular danger in the way they had built much of their town. The southwest-facing slopes of the mountains posed a grave danger of avalanche that put the entire town at risk. The town had installed some stone barriers that they believed would protect them in case of an avalanche. But Josiah recognized that the heavy, wet snow that had already fallen wouldn't even slow down as it toppled these walls. The only way to prevent a catastrophic avalanche would have been to conduct controlled slides throughout the Winter as the snow fell. Still, Josiah remained silent and told no one of the danger. One night a thunderous sound shook the ground of the entire valley. A torrent of snow tore through the town, sweeping the cabins off their foundations and enveloping the townspeople who had little time to react. Many people perished that night; only a handful miraculously survived—Josiah and his family being among them. They had built their cabin behind a small crest in the foothills which stopped the avalanche. Seeing all the carnage and death, Josiah wailed, "Why? Why didn't I warn them?" He felt responsible for their deaths. Even though he loved them deeply, he had remained silent; he failed to communicate the danger of their situation and urge them to act. The Apostle Paul also loved his people—the nation of Israel. He recognized that they had placed themselves in grave danger because they trusted in their own righteousness rather than in the Messiah who forgives sin and instills life. Fortunately, his compassion compelled him not to remain silent. He communicated the truth of Scripture and urged them to repent by surrendering their lives to Christ. As believers, we too ought to have such compassion for the world around us. If we have a relationship with Jesus, we know the truth and we ought to warn those headed for destruction. As a church and individuals, let us not remain silent, but let us overcome by communicating the gospel and telling people how they can have life through Christ!

Key  
Question

Upon whom do you need to have compassion and tell about Jesus Christ?

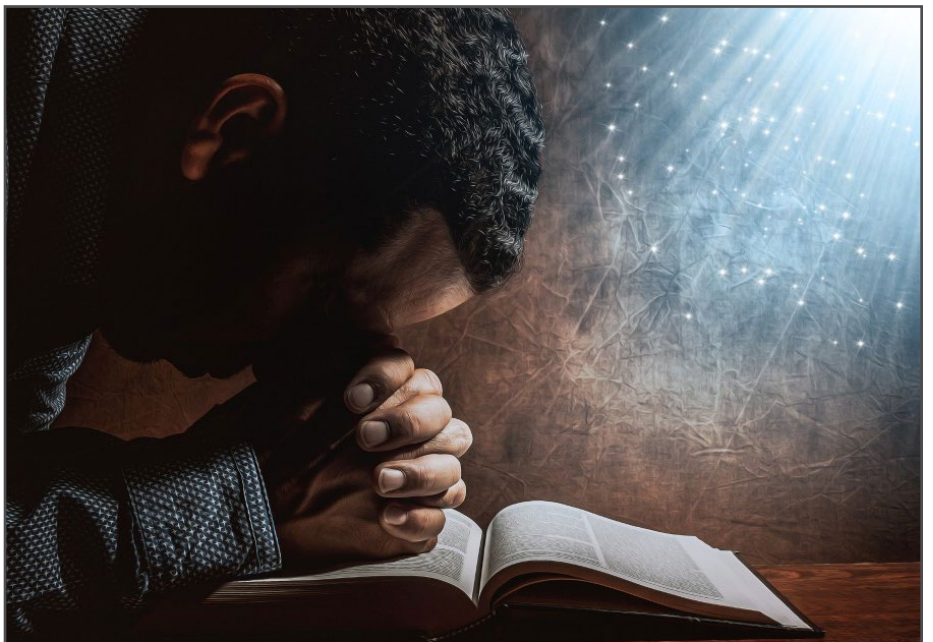
### Romans 10:1-4

#### ***THE COMPASSION IN SHARING:***

In chapter 9, Paul demonstrates the error in Israel's thinking that they could attain favor with the Lord through their own good works which he calls the "works of the law." Israel, however, stands at odds with God because they have rejected the grace He extended through His Son the Messiah. Rather than respond "by faith" to what Christ did for them on the cross, they pursued salvation by means of what they could do through their own "works" ([Rom 9:30-32](#)). No amount of good "works" could ever earn salvation. Our "works" will always fall woefully short of God's expectations which only Christ could fulfill on our behalf. Therefore, God offers salvation freely through His grace to anyone who will submit to His plan and believe upon His Son! But Israel, like so many people today, failed to understand this.

However, Paul didn't berate or condemn them. He had compassion upon them. He had a deep **desire** to see his fellow countrymen come to the knowledge of salvation in Christ (v. 1). This burden for his people compelled him to pray for their salvation as well as to communicate the truth to them through whatever avenues and opportunities

God would grant. Beginning with prayer put Paul in the right frame of mind to witness. Like Paul, we too should have such compassion for those who do not have a relationship with Christ. Our compassion should compel us to pray for them in three ways. First, we should pray in general for our nation, as well as specifically for people by name as God



leads, that **they may be saved**. Second, we should pray for opportunities to share the gospel. But we must be faithful to share when God inevitably gives us those opportunities! Third, we should pray that God would give us wisdom and insight about the people to whom He has sent us to witness, discernment about how we should

## Instruct

present the gospel, and clarity so the timeless message of the gospel can easily be comprehended.

How often do you pray for the lost? What have your prayers motivated you to do?

Question  
# 1

With this right frame of mind achieved through prayer, Paul doesn't put Israel down or speak to them in a condescending and critical way. Instead, he compliments them on their devotion to the Lord. He can attest first-hand that **they have zeal for the Lord** (v. 2). By pointing out their good qualities and what they have done well before highlighting their failures, he doesn't put them on the defensive which automatically sets up a confrontation where people feel they must protect their honor. At the same time, however, he doesn't compromise the truth. He doesn't change the gospel to fit their errant beliefs. Although Israel desires to do the right thing, they are misguided in their understanding of God's plan. And Paul wants his fellow countrymen to know the truth about salvation.

For this reason, Paul characterizes Israel as **ignorant of God's righteousness** (v. 3). The term **ignorant** often undeservedly carries with it a negative connotation today frequently used as an insult. Paul, conversely, isn't calling them "stupid" or insulting them in any way; he is simply portraying them as lacking the proper knowledge. Because they lack this proper understanding, they wrongly believe that they can **establish their own righteousness** apart from submitting to the plan of God in Christ. In other words, they believe that they attain **righteousness** on their own, without any help from Christ, through the good works they do. Quite oppositely, we can only be made righteous through Christ when we surrender to Him by repenting of our sins ([2 Cor 5:21](#)).

Similarly, Paul employs this same approach among the Gentiles, particularly in Athens, when he notes their sincerity as very religious people who even have an altar dedicated to an unknown god ([Acts 17:22-23](#)). People can be sincere and well-intentioned in their beliefs, but they can also be sincerely wrong. Far from mocking these highly educated people, Paul used this as an opportunity to begin a conversation with them and correct their misguided beliefs to reveal the identity of this unknown God (i.e., Jesus) to them. Many, but not all, listened and believed in Christ while others questioned and ridiculed. We can expect such widely divergent responses today as well because God has given

mankind freewill. However, we should never intentionally be offensive in the way we present the gospel which can distract others from hearing it. In contrast, we should try to disarm people by presenting the message in a non-combative way. Yet, we should never under any circumstances water down the content of the gospel in an attempt to make it more appealing to individuals.



What techniques can we use to present the gospel in a compassionate way? Why are debates and combative responses to the gospel not always avoidable?

Question  
# 2

We should also emulate Paul's approach in displaying compassion when we share the gospel. We should first attempt to find commonality by building rapport with a person and even identify some of the good habits they may exhibit. This will often lead to a fruitful dialogue rather than a debate which can quickly devolve into something unproductive. A dialogue requires that we listen to them and then speak the truth of the gospel in love to correct any misinformation they have. Love should always be our motivation. And people can typically tell when we are insincere—feigning love and compassion. Consequently, a dialogue with a person will accomplish two primary things. First, it establishes mutual respect through which presenting the gospel becomes more natural since we have first taken the time to hear their views. Second, it affords us with the opportunity to hear their beliefs so that we can know their position and point them to the truth in Scripture which can transform their errant views. Generally, this type of approach will work in a society in which sane, rational people treat others respectfully. However, we must realize that more than a few in our own society react based on emotion and refuse to participate in a civil dialogue. This should never stop us from sharing the gospel and trying to educate misinformed people through Scripture. It didn't stop Paul when he faced opposition! When we engage in a dialogue with others, however, we must take great care not to compromise the

## Instruct

Word of God, agree with or affirm something unbiblical they believe, or accept sinful behavior and thoughts in a spirit of tolerance. We should never compromise the gospel according to cultural standards and we should never soften what the Bible clearly identifies as sin. Although we should never speak in a condescending or self-righteous manner, we should never shy away from boldly speaking the truth in love.

How should you respond to someone who says they have never sinned or that the lifestyle they live is not sinful when it clearly contradicts Scripture?

Question  
# 3

Our job in the discussion is always to point others to Christ and His Word. Indeed, Paul concludes this section with a powerful declaration that **Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes** (v. 4). This means that Christ is the only source or way of salvation! The meaning of the word translated **end** has important implications for correctly understanding this verse. Christ hasn't come to annul, cancel, abolish, or invalidate **the law** in the sense of putting an "**end**" to it,

**That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

**Romans 8:4**

making it useless or unnecessary. On the contrary, Jesus fulfills its righteous requirements; He is the "goal" or "objective" of **the law** in the sense that He becomes the pattern for us to follow. Thus, Christ is the goal of **the law** and offers His **righteousness** to those who believe. We cannot achieve this **righteousness** on our own through our own good works.

Rather, Christ gives us His **righteousness** when we repent so that we might live by the principles of **the law** which reflect the character of God ([Rom 8:2-5](#)). Therefore, we don't follow **the law** in a legalistic sense for what we can get; we follow the Spirit who enables us to fulfill the full intent of **the law** at a higher level because we have the very Spirit of God living within us and guiding us.

Above all, our compassion for those who do not have a relationship with Jesus should motivate us to act. Even though we should pray for the lost, that shouldn't be all we do.

We shouldn't just pray that God would send someone else. We should answer the call to go just as Isaiah did when he exclaimed, "Here am I; send me" (Isa 6:8). We must make ourselves available daily. We must continually study God's Word to prepare ourselves to communicate His truth. We must stop making excuses and go. We cannot afford to maintain a *laissez-faire* attitude when people are disillusioned and bound for hell. We must exhibit sincere compassion and love, remembering how God graciously saved us from our destructive choices. That same grace He bestowed upon us is also available for anyone else who would accept it.

How often do you share the gospel? What does that say about your burden for the lost?

Question  
# 4

## Romans 10:5-10

### THE CONFESSION THAT SAVES:

Paul now addresses Israel's misconception that one can attain life through good works by pointing to the Old Testament passages they have misinterpreted. Through these passages, he will show that life results from God's grace alone. Good works are an indication or evidence that a person has life. But good works don't bring about life! First, Paul appeals to [Leviticus 18:5](#) where Moses tells an assembly of the people, "**The man who does those things** [i.e., keeps God's commands] **shall live by them**" (v. 5). Because Israel has already received **the law** and God has graciously established His covenant with them based upon grace, they will receive blessing from God by obeying His commands. Moses, however, is not saying that their life or salvation depends upon the perfect fulfillment of these commands, but rather that their obedience stems from their relationship with God which will result in blessing. As a result, salvation, and its subsequent blessings through obedience, has always stemmed from the grace of God which Israel bears out through their good works. As in the New Testament, Israel performs these good works because they are saved not because they make them saved!

Through Leviticus 18:5, Paul then demonstrates the impossibility of being saved through our own **righteousness** whereby we can perfectly keep the entire **the law** (v. 5). No one can perfectly fulfill all the righteous requirements of God's **law**; we all have broken at least one commandment ([Jas 2:10](#)). Even the most ardent and faithful Jew must realize the need for God's grace based upon his inability to keep all **the law**. Therefore, **the law** always looked forward to Christ and His work to put us in

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

-----> Ephesians 2:8-10

right standing with the Father despite our deficiencies. As such, the law pointed to our iniquities and indiscretions to highlight the gracious forgiveness of God for those who repent and place their **faith** in Him ([Rom 7](#)). **The law**, on its own, could never bring life because no one other than Christ could perfectly fulfill it.

Quoting from [Deuteronomy 30:12-14](#), Paul once again proves salvation is a gift of God's grace. To keep Israel from developing a spirit of arrogance and pride, Moses demands that they **not say in their heart, "Who will ascend into heaven"** (v. 6)? Ultimately, both the ascending and descending in these two verses refer to God coming to Moses on Mount Sinai to give **the law**. But Paul uses "ascending" to draw the same implications about the incarnation. God came to us through Jesus; we did not ascend to Him! Just as one can never say his **righteousness** got him into **heaven** no one can say that he brought Jesus to the earth in human form. Only God can say those things! By grace apart from anything that man could have done, God sent His Son to save us! The second quotation follows this same line of thinking: **Who will descend into the abyss** (v. 7)? Paul relates this to the resurrection of Christ **from the dead**. God raised His own Son. Man, on his own, cannot defeat death; he is powerless to escape the grave. Conquering sin and the grave require the gracious act of God as demonstrated through the resurrection of Christ!

How would you help someone understand that salvation is a gift of God's grace?

Question  
# 5

Paul concludes his remarks on the Old Testament by describing our total dependence upon the Lord of which His Word clearly informs us. Thus, both Moses and Paul can say, **"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"** (v. 8). God has made His Word available to all and easily understandable. He Himself brought the Word **near** by specifically detailing His covenant to Moses and now by proclaiming it through the preaching of the gospel of **faith**. We find God's role in the process concisely stated in



Jeremiah 31 which introduces the new covenant through Christ. Hence, God declares, “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” ([Jer 31:33](#)). God takes the initiative. He performs the work within us! But we must respond to His work of grace by accepting it.

We respond, therefore, by making a confession about what we truly believe. In **faith**, we **confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus** and **believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead** (v. 9). To **believe**, in this sense, then means that we accept what

Christ accomplished on the cross and through the resurrection, we declare our dependence upon Him alone for salvation! Thus, this declaration which asserts our dependence upon Him will also highlight the transformation in our lives—that is the good works we now do. Thus, the confession about what we believe will be evident in our outward actions. As a result, it’s not a mere intellectual confession about what we believe. Rather, it’s a declaration about what Christ has



accomplished through us when we have a relationship with Him. Paul captures the essence of this in verse 10 by pointing out that we believe **with the heart** which God has now transformed to produce righteousness when we submit to Him. And we also verbally confess **with the mouth** that God Himself initiated this change and saved us; He is the source of our salvation and transformation.

We have many in our society today who do not understand the way to salvation through Christ. They depend upon their own self-righteousness and good works to earn them eternal life. Apart from a relationship with Christ and the good works that we do to honor Him after He saves us, all the good works people do are truly selfish at heart when we examine their motives even if they don’t immediately appear so to society as a whole. Without a relationship with Christ, our good works are purely for our benefit—the epitome of selfishness! Let’s not fool ourselves into misunderstanding our “good” works before and after we are saved.

For example, people do good works because they make them feel good when they perceive they are helping someone or fighting for a cause. In a sense, even if they

## Instruct

seem selfless externally, they are performing those good works to elicit certain feelings! Furthermore, they do them to look good in the eyes of others in the community, to be noticed and receive accolades, to get ahead by earning favor with people, or even to get in good standing with people whom they want a close relationship. At other times, they do service projects to fulfill a requirement for a civic group with which they are involved. Honestly, these works are self-centered and selfish. Only when we have a relationship with Christ can we truly be selfless in our acts when we do them to honor Christ rather than because of what we receive. Christ will undoubtedly bless us when we do these good works with pure motives, but focusing on receiving blessings for our good works puts us in alignment with the world from which Christ has saved us.

How would you evaluate the good works you do? How would you help someone understand the true selfishness of good works apart from a relationship with Christ?

Question  
# 6

## Romans 10:11-13

### **THE CALL TO THE SAVIOR:**

Paul continues to emphasize Jesus as the only way to salvation by appealing to [Isaiah 28:16](#) which asserts, “**Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame**” (v. 11). The direction of our belief is always toward God and His Son which compels us to surrender our lives in full dependence upon Him. Jesus uses similar language in [Luke 9:26](#) to talk about this complete surrender. After bidding us to take up our cross and die to our old way of life, Jesus contends, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory.” In other words, our relationship with Christ will be expressed through our faithfulness and obedience to His Word. Such a transformation is available to everyone who will **call** upon Him!

Many in the world who have not read Scripture will wrongly criticize following Christ as intolerant, unloving, narrow-minded, and exclusionary. However, following Christ is actually the most inclusive relationship this world could ever know! (Please read this entire paragraph carefully so as to rightly interpret what inclusive means.) Everyone is invited. Salvation is available to all through Christ without **distinction**. Whether **Jew** (Israel) or **Gentile** (all other nations in the world regardless of ethnicity), anyone can be saved through Christ who is **the same Lord over all** and **rich to all who call upon Him**

(v. 12). Thus, following Christ is inclusive because **whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved** (v. 13). Following Christ only becomes exclusionary when people choose to exclude themselves because they refuse to **call** on Christ and repent of their sins. Christ indeed is intolerant of sin, but even so He has given us a way to have a better life through Him if only we would submit. Although there is only one way to salvation, how much more loving, gracious, and inclusive could one be than Christ who has offered life to all who would accept His terms?

Why should the inclusiveness of the gospel to all people not be a call to tolerate sin?

Question  
# 7

## ***Romans 10:14-15***

### ***THE COMPULSION OF THE SENT:***

In verse 14, Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions to emphasize the need for those whom Christ has sent to be a vessel through whom He speaks. When we proclaim the gospel, others should hear Christ speaking through us and His Word! Let's look at

the first two questions to help us understand the context because most of the translations somewhat obscure the meaning. Translated literally, the first question asks, "**How then shall they call on whom they have not believed?**"

In this sense, those who reject Jesus have no one upon whom they call for help; if they do not believe Jesus is the Messiah, then



they cannot call upon Him for salvation. They will remain in their sins until they believe and call upon Him in repentance. The second question translated literally asks, "**And how will they believe whom they have not heard?**" The way the Greek is constructed means they haven't heard or listened to Jesus. It doesn't mean that they haven't heard *about* Jesus, but they haven't heard Jesus Himself speaking through Scripture! They haven't heard Jesus Himself!

When we share the gospel, we must remember that Christ Himself is speaking through us and imparting His message to the person, so we must be sensitive to the leadership

## Instruct

of the Holy Spirit. We cannot convict nor can we save! Only Christ can do these things, so we must point others to Him and allow Him to speak through His Word. Therefore, as much as possible, we need to show people principles in God's Word and allow them to read for themselves. We should serve as guides. Certainly, we must be able to give a reasonable defense for our beliefs through Scripture ([1 Peter 3:15](#)); we must also point people to specific Scriptures which address the root of their problem. So, we must ourselves be prepared through our own studies. But overall, we must allow Christ to speak through His Word and work in the life of the person. Like Philip with the Ethiopian eunuch, we are to serve as a guide to help people understand the Bible and keep them focused on Christ!

How has God called us to serve as guides when we share the gospel? What are some things that we can do so that they focus on Christ and hear Him speak?

Question  
# 8

God has chosen us to be the vessels through whom He disseminates or spreads the gospel. For this reason, Paul continues this series of rhetorical questions by asking, "**How shall they hear without a preacher?**" God has appointed us as His spokesmen and representatives to share the good news of the gospel throughout the world. Every one of us has this responsibility and commission if we have a relationship with Christ. To underscore this aspect, Paul concludes his rhetorical questions by asking, "**How shall they preach unless they are sent**" followed by a quotation emphasizing the good news the gospel brings (v. 15). In a world that is confused and hopelessly lost without Christ, let us overcome through the communication of the gospel. Let us faithfully proclaim the salvation of Christ through His righteousness and help the world to see that they only hope they have in eternal life is through Him. Let's not grow weary, but continue to share the gospel as God gives opportunity and leads.

Josiah A. Campbell was filled with hope and optimism as he ventured West and eventually settled in a small mountain community in the Rockies. He had grown to love his fellow townspeople and developed a close bond with them as one would his own family. Yet, in the end, his joy turned to regret and remorse when tragedy struck because he had noticed the danger that the ever-increasing snow posed, but he never warned them!

As believers who have a relationship with Christ, we know the joy of life we have in Him and understand the danger and destruction from which He saved us. If we had not been warned by others and heard Christ calling us to repentance, we would have faced something far more consequential than an avalanche. We would have faced a second death and eternal separation from Him because we would have died in our sins. Yet, God faithfully sent someone to warn us and point us to the good news in Scripture so that we could have knowledge of this eternal life in Christ. Let us be grateful for those whom God sent to us, but let us also faithfully continue to go to people whom God is sending us daily to warn them about the consequences of sin and point them to Christ. Let us not be filled with remorse and regret as we look back over our lives concerning those whom we should have told. But let us faithfully proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ to anyone who would call upon Him and allow Him to transform them into the people they ought to be.

## ***Incorporate***

What does it mean to have compassion according to Scripture? How has the world distorted God's view of compassion? How should biblical compassion lead us to share the gospel without compromise?

Why is it important to point people to specific passages in Scripture when witnessing and allow them to read for themselves? How do we serve as a guide, like Philip, to help people understand God's Word?

Why is our job simply to make ourselves available to go and share the gospel regardless of the outcome or reception?

## ***Journal: Document God's Work***

*June 13, 2021*

# *Uncompromising Truth*



## *Overcome without Compromise Revelation 2:12-17*

Focal Verse:

"But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality."

Revelation 2:14

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## Introduce

In the twenty years since the First World War had ended in November of 1918, many nations around the globe had become weary of fighting against blatant tyranny and aggression which set the stage for the greatest and deadliest conflict the world has ever seen with an estimated 78 million deaths of soldiers and civilians. Neville Chamberlain, who began serving as British Prime Minister in 1937, desperately sought to keep the British Empire neutral and wanted to avoid any action that would propel his nation



into direct confrontation. Therefore, he, along with many other countries around the world in addition to many in his own governing Conservative Party, ignored Germany's aggressive acts which clearly violated the terms of the Treaty of Versailles which were negotiated at the close of World War I (1919). Although Austria had received its autonomy for self-rule in that treaty, Adolph Hitler coerced their government to surrender to German annexation and the country collapsed under his iron grip (1938). Simply ignoring Germany's hostility didn't placate Hitler as Chamberlain had hoped; it only served to embolden the dictator all the more. Subsequently, Germany then seized the opportunity to position troops in the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia where a large number of German patriots lived. Once again, this show of military force blatantly violated the Treaty of Versailles. At this point, some leaders wanted to challenge Hitler, making war look inevitable. So, a coalition of European countries entered into negotiations in Munich in an attempt to avoid war and resolve their differences. Chamberlain almost unilaterally pushed for seeking peace by whatever means necessary. He, with the help of French Defense Minister Daladier, pressured the Czechs to surrender their territory and sign the Munich Agreement, stating that they would stand alone in their fight against Germany.

Believing his policy of appeasement and compromise had won him favor, Chamberlain requested a private meeting with Hitler. He thought that he could convince him to sign an additional pact stating that Germany would never go to war against Britain.

## Introduce

Although Hitler eagerly signed that pact, he never had any intention of keeping it. These acts of compromise only continued to embolden Germany and placed the entire European continent at imminent risk of collapse under Nazi oppression. On September 1, 1939, German forces invaded Poland which began the conflict we now know as World War II. With lightning speed, Germany swept through Western Europe as countries fell with little fight. As the Germans advanced toward the beaches of Dunkirk and Calais, France, Great Britain stood woefully unprepared and seemingly helpless to withstand a German attack. The policy of compromise and appeasement had failed and the *laissez-faire* attitude of many leaders had jeopardized their nations!

Today, as in John the Apostle's day, many churches have grown weary of fighting an arduous, on-going battle with secular culture. They have decided that compromise and tolerance are the best courses of action. Churches have fallen one-by-one to accept and even celebrate cultural practices that Scripture identifies as sin. Instead of preaching the whole truth of God's Word, many churches tolerate and even affirm members who hold sinful views that reflect the culture rather than Christ. Although we should always seek to restore such individuals to right standing in accordance with Scripture, we must confront their wicked views and practices in love and point them to the truth in the Bible.

If you hold such views and participate in such practices that God has clearly labeled as sin in His Word, know that we as a church still love you just as God does. But God will judge and hold you accountable for your sinful beliefs and actions. We as a church, therefore, cannot compromise or appease either culture or members when it comes to sin. If you agree with culture against the Lord, then you are His enemy ([Jas 4:4](#)). You're fighting against the Lord rather than sin and the culture. As believers, we cannot afford to tolerate or compromise on matters of sin like the church in Pergamos because it always leads to destruction. Therefore, let us fight on the side of the Lord without compromise by remaining pure and holy in the practice of His Word.

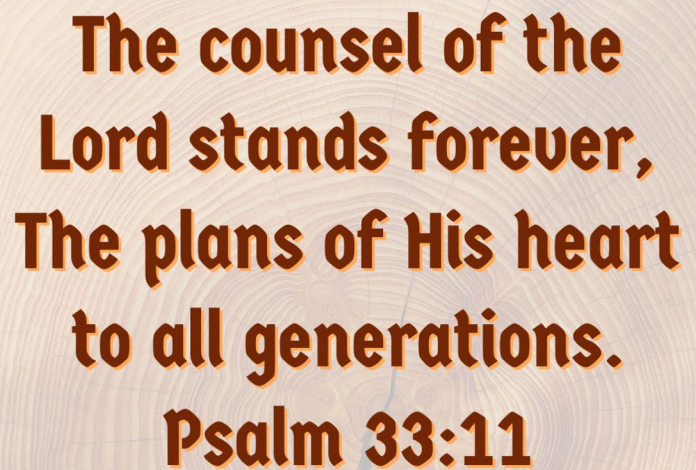
Key  
Question

Concerning what beliefs or practices have some churches compromised according to the truth of Scripture?

### Revelation 2:12-13

#### REMAIN FAITHFUL TO CHRIST OVER CULTURE:

To the third in a series of seven churches in Asia Minor, Jesus sends an **angel to the church in Pergamos** with a letter warning of impending judgment unless they change their ways (v. 12). The description of Jesus as the One **who has the sharp two-edged sword** conveys the very image of judgment. In the secular world, the Romans utilized this imagery to depict their justice system which artfully portrayed how its citizens looked to the power of the state for justice and solving problems. Perhaps, Jesus chose this symbol because the ancient city of **Pergamos** had become the center for the imperial cult which sought to elevate the prominence of the Roman government by enforcing the worship of the emperor. In fact, Emperor Octavian, or Augustus which means “divine one” in Latin, supported the building of a temple in **Pergamos** to facilitate worship



**The counsel of the  
Lord stands forever,  
The plans of His heart  
to all generations.  
Psalm 33:11**

in his honor in AD 29. Although people today may not literally bow in worship to the government, they foolishly place their faith and trust in it, thinking it will solve all their problems. In ignorance, they have turned to a human organization fraught with foibles over the perfect Lamb of God who can truly resolve all our problems!

Scripture also uses this imagery of a **two-edged sword** to describe judgment which comes through the righteousness of God’s Word. [Hebrews 4:12](#), for example, describes Scripture as “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” which is more effective than any form of human justice because “it is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Therefore, Jesus’ pronouncement of judgment based upon Scripture is effective for three reasons. First, He offers impartial judgment because He does not involve fickle emotions or selfish biases as human judges tend to do. Thus, Scripture can attest, “For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe” ([Deut 10:17](#)).

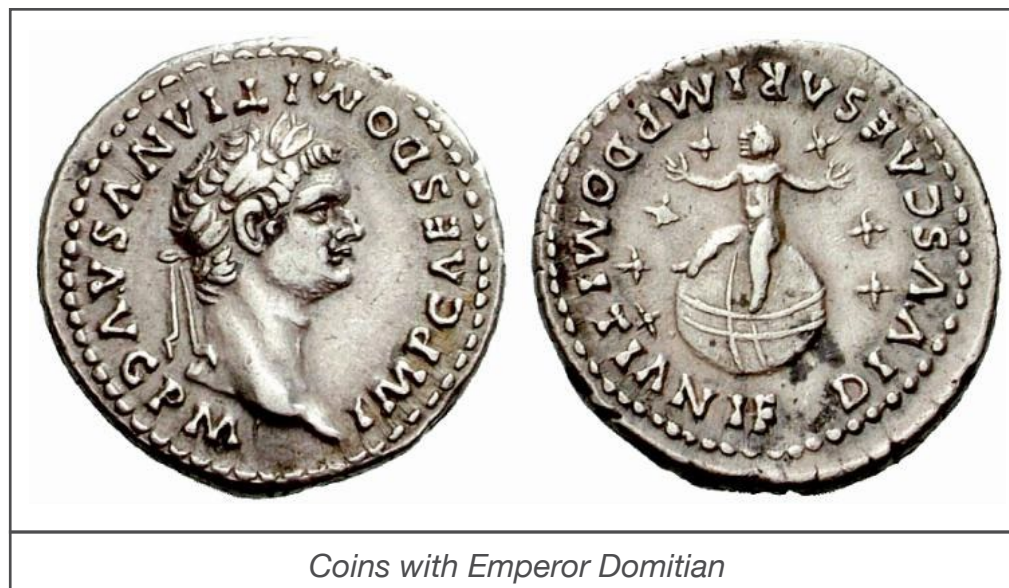
## Instruct

Second, both Jesus ([Heb 13:8](#)) and Scripture ([Psalm 33:11](#)) are immutable. They set a perfect standard which does not change with the shifting winds of culture and personal opinion. We can fully rely upon them to judge with exactness and equity. If we stood before a human judge, we would want them to consistently use a standard that applies equally to all people. We would not want that standard to shift arbitrarily. Only God's Word applied through Jesus can offer such a constant, timeless standard! Finally, Jesus' judgment based upon Scripture is infallible—no one is ever wrongly convicted. Nothing remains hidden before Him. Although some may fool other people and even "beat" a lie detector test, Scripture lays all bare before Him. He knows our thoughts, our motives, and our actions performed in "secrecy" ([2 Chron 28:9](#); [Psalm 44:21](#)). Consequently, Jesus can judge flawlessly with this knowledge.

If you stood in the heavenly courtroom before Jesus today, how would He judge you according to His Word? What changes might you need to implement in your life?

Question  
# 1

As an infallible Judge, Jesus can then accurately declare that He knows the **works** of this church as well as those of the secular culture in their community (v. 13). Jesus first notes the intensity of the struggle they face before He commends them for holding **fast**, or remaining faithful, **to His name**. They face this titanic struggle because they  **dwell where Satan's throne is**. **Satan's throne** is a veiled reference to all the temples of the imperial cult which celebrated the Roman emperor. Beginning with Augustus who simply permitted his worship by an adoring public, emperors who followed him



Coins with Emperor Domitian

increasingly began to demand it. At the time of the latter days of Paul's missionary work, Nero had the heads on the statues of the gods in the temples replaced with his own, so that people would bow before him in honor. By the time John transcribed these words

here in Revelation 2, the Roman emperor, Domitian, demanded he be worshiped as divine. He even insisted on people addressing him with the title *dominus et deus* (lord and god).

**Pergamos** had become the center for such worship. Participants in the imperial cult would parade through the city with an image of the emperor. Every citizen would be expected to bow before the icon as it passed and many would even offer sacrifices to him. Anyone who refused to participate in the festivities and demonstrate their fealty to the emperor became the target of intense persecution—some even to the point of death. In such a hostile environment, believers in **Pergamos** found themselves faced with a crucial choice: Do they only worship the one true and living God by confessing His Son as Lord or do they bow down to the Roman emperor to appease the crowd? To their credit, they remained faithful to Jesus' **name** and **did not deny** His **faith**. They did not renounce their **faith** in Christ even under duress or coercion and they continued to confess only Jesus as Lord—not the Roman emperor. Literally, they fulfilled Paul's assertion "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" ([Phil 2:10-11](#)). When we have a genuine relationship with Christ and not one in "name" only, we will persevere to the end no matter what we may experience in life. However, some profess to have a relationship with Him and they may even identify themselves as "Christians," but they truly don't know Him. When turbulent times come, they **deny** and reject Him to take the path which seems to be of the least resistance. For those who choose this path, Jesus has stern words of warning: "But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God" (Luke 12:9).

Today, how can we show our loyalty and faithfulness to the name of Jesus?

Question  
# 2

During His earthly ministry, Jesus often spoke of the cost for those who would follow Him. He tells His disciples that they "will be hated by all for My name's sake" ([Matt 10:22](#)) and later that "if they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" ([John 15:20](#)) which ultimately would include even death. We see an example of that hostility directed toward **Antipas** whom Jesus calls His **faithful** witness **who was** indeed **killed**. Other than this verse, we do not know anything about **Antipas** from Scripture. But this verse certainly commends him as a **faithful** example to be followed! When we faithfully stand for Christ, we stand in opposition to the world. This opposition will

frequently bring intense persecution because the world hates Christ since He exposes sin and convicts the sinner!

### In-Depth Information



*The NKJV translates the typical word for “witness” as **martyr**. The Greek term, however, did not take this nuance until nearly a century later. Therefore, witness refers to the testimony Antipas gave—both the verbal testimony in his affirmation of Christ and the visual testimony of what he did or how he lived. This testimony, however, eventually did cost him his life.*

Today, we live in a society that pushes “political correctness” by affirming everyone and tolerating any belief or action. In fact, they tolerate almost everything except for Christ and His truth. As a result, they disparage anyone who truly follows Christ as narrow-minded, bigoted, intolerant, unloving, and uneducated—labels which ironically reflect their own position about the truth of Scripture exemplified in Christ. Great pressure comes from the media and the general, outspoken populace to conform to their beliefs which often conflict with Scripture. We, however, must stand on the truth of God’s Word without compromise when faced with opposition from the culture. God defines truth—not man or a consensus of the culture at the time.

To battle the culture and resist compromise, we must all be united in Christ, practicing His Word and applying its principles. If we say that we follow Christ, we must accept His Word and believe what it says—not what we want it to say or how we want to adapt it to fit our opinions. We cannot pick and choose what we **hold fast** and what we believe. We must practice His Word without hypocrisy which means we should never claim we believe one way and act another or that we believe God’s Word and then accept some cultural tenet that contradicts it. Above all, we must exhibit love—true love as defined by the Bible—which loves our enemies, refuses to tolerate sin, and speaks the truth. We should never intentionally be offensive in our actions nor should we ever let “political correctness” dictate what we believe. Christ alone gives life to those who confess Him. And those who confess Him show their love for Him by being obedient to His entire Word.

In what ways does the culture pressure us to compromise?

Question  
# 3

**REJECT TOLERANCE OF ANY CORRUPTION:**

Having commended them for remaining faithful to His **name**, Jesus now turns to address **a few things** He has against them (v. 14). The church has an element within it that has compromised with the culture. But they have refused to do anything about it and have allowed them to remain, engaging in their errant ways without correcting them. Jesus uses an example from the Old Testament in the book of Numbers to help them understand the danger and consequences of harboring those who have compromised without seeking to correct them lovingly or part ways with them if they refuse to repent.



Therefore, Jesus compares them to **Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before Israel, to eat meat sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality**. To understand Jesus' words in context, we must go back to [Numbers chapters 22 through 25](#) for an overview.

Balaam was a pagan prophet hired by Balak, King of Moab, to curse Israel because he had seen how God had prospered them. God thwarted that plan by impeding Balaam's donkey and literally speaking through it. Consequently, Balaam actually ended up blessing Israel rather than cursing them. Nonetheless, he continued in his quest to ruin Israel, so he devised a plan to send Moabite women amongst the people to entice the men into sexual relations. This infidelity, which God prohibits in both His command against adultery as well as against inter-marriage with non-Israelites, led to idolatry. Israel became unfaithful to the Lord and began worshiping the pagan deities of the Moabites. This brought a curse upon Israel, leading to sickness and death. To lift the curse, God instructed Moses to execute all Israel's leaders. But Moses did not immediately obey and, when he did, not all the leaders were hanged as God had decreed. However, once Moses carried out God's instruction in full, the curse was lifted. And God warned Balaam that if he continued to pursue Israel he would die by the sword—which he was indeed killed by the sword.

## Instruct

In the same sense, some people within the church in Pergamos had prostituted themselves to the secular culture. We aren't told in exactly what way they have linked with them other than they held their **doctrine**. This could mean that they literally participated in pagan festivals (i.e., ate **things sacrificed to idols**) and committed **sexual immorality**. But it more widely indicates that they held the beliefs and values of the culture around them. And no one in the church did anything to confront them about their errant beliefs. To this false **doctrine of Balaam**, some have adopted the **doctrine of the Nicolaitans** which Jesus hates (v. 15). Other than here and to the church in Ephesus ([Rev 2:1-7](#)), we have no other references to this group. So, we should not speculate about their **doctrine**. We only know that it conflicts with Jesus' teaching and He has rejected it. Therefore, we can conclude that Jesus is speaking about anything that culture says or does that conflicts with His Word. We should not tolerate it or engage in it!

What is the danger of harboring in the church those who believe cultural views that contradict Scripture?

Question  
# 4

When we continually subject ourselves to corruption, even a little, without confronting it with God's Word, it dulls our senses and desensitizes us. The more we are around it the less harmful it may seem, but the more damage it does. In the end, we usually don't just tolerate an unbiblical belief; we accept it and may even practice it. We would all agree that rust on metal is corrosive in any amount. Over time, it spreads over all the metal and slowly destroys it. On a car, for example, the corrosion may be on the bottom of the chassis. It may start small and may even be imperceptible, but it slowly eats away at the surface until the whole vehicle is destroyed if nothing is done to prevent it. Although it may be hidden where we barely ever notice, it can rapidly spread and cause major damage.

Harboring unbiblical beliefs in the church which conflict with God's truth can also cause great harm. Over time, they desensitize people to God's Word and encourage them to elevate their opinion over truth. Such beliefs also rarely stay isolated and contained within a small group. They are like a cancer that spreads and affects the healthy parts. Paul uses this metaphor in [2 Timothy 2:17](#) to address wrong beliefs and ungodly practices in the church at Ephesus. He notes that "their message will spread



like cancer.” Again, Paul illustrates how a few incorrect beliefs can obscure people “from obeying the truth” (Gal 5:7). Because these people attempt to persuade and convince others, Paul emphasizes “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (Gal 5:9).

Society has not changed much in nearly two millennium. People

who hold Scripture do not merely want others to tolerate them; they want to persuade others to agree with them and even accept their views. They push for acceptance because they want to justify their beliefs and choices as well as placate their consciences from the conviction of sin. If anyone opposes their views, they attempt to apply pressure. They even resort to underhanded and scrupulous methods to distract them like Balaam did with Israel.



How does the culture attempt to distract us from the truth of God's Word?

Question # 5

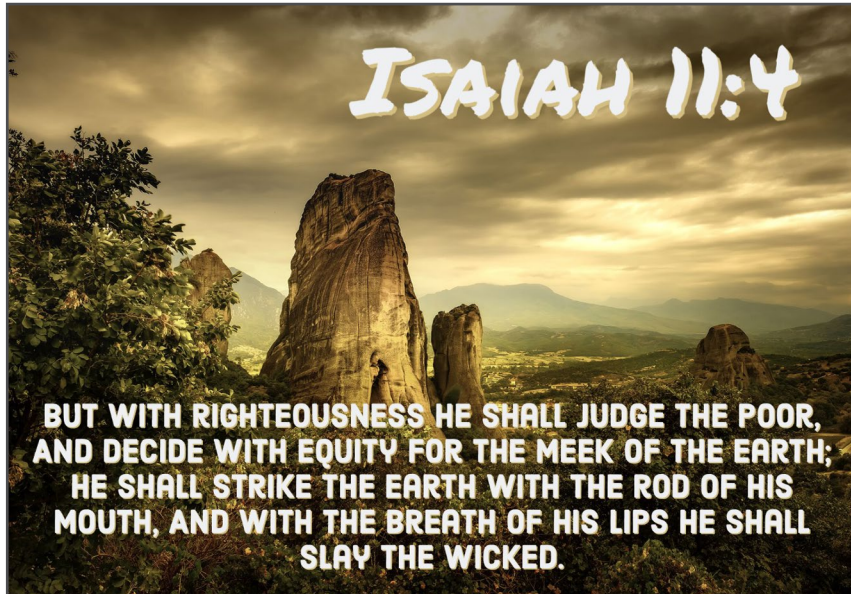
I could list a number of views that our culture currently holds that conflict with the truth of Scripture. And many of these views have taken residence in churches among professing believers who have either accepted them or even begun to practice them. But I could never list them all here. Unfortunately, when pressed, we might even find some in our own church who hold such views that reflect the culture rather than Christ. This ought never be! It is incumbent upon us as a church to teach God's Word wholly and remain faithful to it in its entirety. It is also incumbent upon us as individuals to examine our views against the context of Scripture. If our views do not match Scripture, we must change them and conform them to God's Word. We cannot continue to support what we know God opposes. We must repent of any area of compromise as Jesus bids the church of Pergamos in the next section.

### **Revelation 2:16-17**

#### **REPENT OF ANY AREA OF COMPROMISE:**

Jesus now urges them to **repent** of any area of compromise and takes steps to deal with it or else He **will come quickly** and **fight against** them **with the sword of His**

**mouth** (v. 16). In other words, Jesus will come and judge them with righteousness through Scripture and punish them for their insolent and rebellious ways. This image



of judgment portrayed as a **sword** coming from Christ's **mouth** reflects Isaiah 11:4 where the Lord will judge "with righteousness" and "strike the earth with the rod of His mouth." Just as God literally judged Balaam by the sword for continuing his defiance ([Num 31:8](#)), Jesus will also figurately judge with the **sword** of Scripture that emanates from His **mouth** for

all who continue to defy His Word. This could mean physical death ([1 John 5:16-17](#)) or the imminent judgment that awaits those who rebel against Christ here on earth. In either case, the consequences are serious and the message should be heeded.

Typical of His conclusions in these letters, Jesus implores the church to **hear what the Spirit says** and apply it to their lives (v. 17). To the one **who** listens and **overcomes**, Jesus describes the blessing of **hidden manna** that they shall receive. The reference to **hidden manna** alludes to the pure fellowship those who overcome will have with Christ. **Manna**, of course, refers to the food provided by God to Israel in their sojourn in the wilderness as they awaited entry into the Promised Land. God sustained the people when they had nothing else and no hope humanly speaking. In Revelation 2:17, the **manna** stands in contrast to the meat **sacrificed to idols**. Those who overcome will abstain from fellowship with the culture and being stained by sin to have fellowship with the Lord. Like the **manna** in the wilderness, God made all this possible through Christ. Only through Christ can they be made in right standing and have fellowship with Him. As a result, this looks forward to the ultimate promise of fellowship when believers will be joined together with Christ around the table at the marriage supper in heaven and we can spend eternity with our Savior ([Rev 19:6-9](#)).

How does Christ sustain us in a culture that bombards us to conform to its image and ideas?

Question  
# 6

Jesus also asserts that He will give the one **who overcomes a white stone** with a **new name written** on it **which no one knows except him who receives it**. This symbol presents a little more difficulty in determining its exact meaning since a **white stone** had several purposes in antiquity. Perhaps, the two most relevant uses of a **white stone** for our context are what ancient jurors used to cast a vote for “not guilty” or for admission into an exclusive event much like we use tickets today. However, no names were typically written on these stones. Nevertheless, it seems that those whom Jesus has declared “not guilty” through the acceptance of His sacrifice will receive admission into the heavenly realm for eternal life. In a sense, Jesus’ blood which cleanses our sins provides us with the ticket to fellowship with the Lord.

The **new name** on the **stone** also poses some challenges for interpretation. Most likely, Jesus is appealing to the prophecy in Isaiah 62:2 where Jerusalem receives a **new name**: “The Gentiles shall see your righteousness and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name.” Jerusalem, in this context, refers collectively to the people of God rather than to individuals. Thus, a **new name** given by God shows His ownership of the people. They belong to Him. As a result, receiving a **new name** identifies us with Christ as victors. With this **new name**, those who overcome the culture should represent and reflect the new person they have become in Christ.

How should our new name reflect who we have become in Christ?

Question  
# 7

Throughout history, we have seen the danger or compromise and tolerance when it comes to tyranny. The early stages of World War II served to confirm such danger. President Ronald Reagan once warned us in his inaugural address as the governor of California that “freedom is fragile” and “never more than one generation away from extinction.” Unfortunately, humans are often forgetful in addition to stubborn and obstinate. Rather than cling to absolute truth and to doing what is right, culture pushes compromise and consensus—irrespective of right or wrong. And we as the church cannot afford to hold such a view. We cannot compromise on the matters of truth in the Scripture. But many churches have and culture is holding them captive. Christ has called us to distinguish ourselves from culture and abstain from their errant beliefs and doctrines. God’s Word is absolute truth without error and it provides an absolute source of judgment. So we must ensure our beliefs match the truth of God’s Word. When Jesus judges us, we will not deviate from His Word. Therefore, we cannot afford to compromise ourselves and surround ourselves with incorrect teaching in the church. We need to remain faithful to Christ in our practices and beliefs.

## *Incorporate*

How does the culture subtly try to influence people, including the church?

How do we see compromise in the church? How should the church deal biblically with those who have compromised with the culture?

Examining your life in accordance with Scripture as a whole, perhaps for what areas of compromise might you need to repent?

*June 20, 2021*



# *Overcome the Culture*

## *Revelation 3:7-13*

Focal Verse:

I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name."

Revelation 3:8

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## Introduce

Two friends embarked on an epic journey to experience the wild beauty of Alaska's frozen tundra by backpacking from Denali National Park to Barrow situated along the unforgiving coastline of the Arctic Ocean. They carried only the gear essential for survival. But this didn't include many navigational tools, such as a compass. They wanted to test themselves and their ability to utilize the things in nature which God had designed for guidance. During an unexpected early-season storm, the two had become separated



in the vast open spaces of Denali. They had both previously agreed to continue their northward trek to Barrow rather than spend time looking for one another if they ever became separated. Timothy had much more survival training than did Thomas. Still, Timothy had confidence that his friend would be able to recall his training and press on toward Barrow.

Timothy instantly realized that he could use Polaris, or the North Star, to guide him directly to that coastal city. Because of the earth's location, Polaris is situated almost directly over the North Pole and its proximity from the earth makes its orbit almost imperceptible, giving it the appearance of being fixed in the night sky and never moving. Every night, Timothy would locate the Little Dipper and find the brightest star in its "handle." From broken branches strewn about on the ground, he would fashion an arrow which pointed directly to the star so he would know true north in the morning when he woke to begin traveling. Every night, he performed this same routine to ensure that he did not deviate from the right path. If he were to make it to Barrow, he would need to remain true and faithful in his course.

Thomas, on the other hand, never thought about using Polaris as a guide. He looked for clues in nature. He thought he could simply find a stream and follow it northward to the coast and then walk along the coast until he discovered Barrow. Streams, however, meander and change course frequently as they flow from higher elevations to lower. One could certainly follow a stream and find a larger river which would eventually lead

## Introduce

to civilization and then the coast. But from a stream, one could never be assured of the cardinal directions. With all the constant directional changes, it would be impossible to tell the direction a stream is flowing. They are not immutable and fixed like Polaris to give exact direction. Nonetheless, Thomas continued to pursue this line of reasoning. After several weeks, Timothy arrived in Barrow to wait for his friend. But Thomas never came. Discouraged after waiting several more weeks, Timothy eventually returned to his home in Anchorage presuming that his friend had perished along the way. When he arrived, much to his surprise, he bumped into Thomas! He learned that Thomas had followed a river from Denali that led to Tuntutuliak along the southwest coast. He had gone in the completely opposite direction from Barrow! Although no harm had come to him and he faithfully pursued the path that seemed right to him, he was misled and never arrived at the right destination.

Proverbs 14:12 acknowledges, “There is a way that seems right unto man, but its end is the way of death.” We must trust in the right way—the way that never changes and always leads to the path of righteousness. We cannot find that way in culture because it changes direction more than a meandering stream and always leads us away from the Lord. Only through God and His Word can we navigate life because His Word never changes and always points to His holiness. Only through His Word can we know the way to salvation in Christ. Other ways may seem harmless, but they lead to destruction. The church in Philadelphia recognized the true guidance offered through Scripture and they faithfully “kept” God’s “Word” (Rev 3:8). In fact, Philadelphia is only one of two churches of the seven in Revelation about which Jesus has nothing negative to say! He praises them for their faithfulness and rewards them accordingly. In the midst of a confused culture, may we be found faithful like the church in Philadelphia. Let us overcome culture by faithfully adhering to God’s Word by obediently practicing its principles no matter what those around us may say so that we end up in the center of God’s will.

Key  
Question

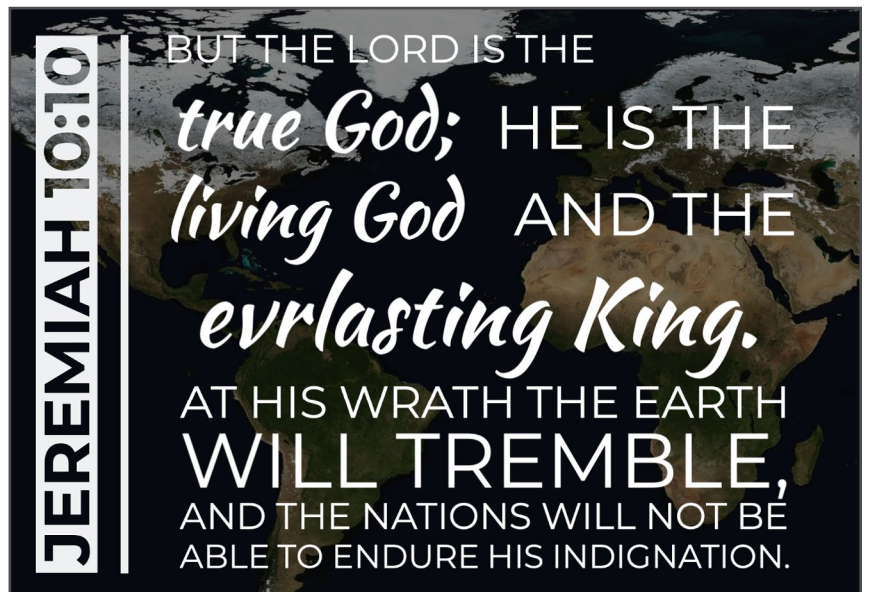
In what ways does culture misguide us and lead us away from the Lord?



## Revelation 3:7-8

### ***THE RECOGNITION OF OBEDIENCE:***

Of the seven churches to which Jesus has dictated a letter in Revelation, only two receive positive accolades from Him without any condemnation for something for which they must repent: Smyrna and **the church in Philadelphia** (v. 7). He has nothing negative to say about this **church** because He has found them faithful and obedient in the midst of a culture dominated by evil and sacrilege. Per His usual format in these letters, Jesus begins by revealing something about His character and position. He identifies Himself as the one **who is holy** and **true**. These two qualities are consistently used throughout the Old Testament to describe God which Jesus now applies to Himself to show He is indeed the **true** Messiah. The primary characteristic most associated with God in the Old Testament is His holiness as expressed through His faithfulness to His covenant and word ([Lev 19:2](#); [Psalm 77:13](#); [Job 6:10](#); [Isa 6:3](#)). As God in the flesh, Jesus shares this same quality as the sinless sacrifice who died in our place ([2 Cor 5:21](#)) and He who remains faithful when we ourselves are unfaithful ([2 Tim 2:13](#)). The Greek phrase **He who is holy** could also plausibly be translated the Holy One which reflects a key title used by the prophet Isaiah to describe God as the “Holy One of Israel” some twenty-four times ([Isa 1:4](#); [5:19, 24](#); [10:20](#); etc.). In addition to highlighting His holiness as God, Jesus also describes the unique status He alone shares with the Father. Like the former designation Holy One, **He who is true** can also be translated as the True One. Perhaps, the only more frequent description of God in the Old Testament than **holy** is His status as the only God. In other words, there are no other gods besides Him ([Deut 4:35](#); [2 Sam 7:22](#); [1 Kings 8:60](#); [Isa 44:6](#); [Hosea 13:4](#)); He alone is the one **true** and living God (Jer 10:10). On one hand, these descriptions of Jesus would resonate loudly in Philadelphia which had a highly antagonistic Jewish population (v. 9) which had



rejected Him as the Messiah. On the other hand, they would also clash with the prevalent pagan worship of many deities that dominated the city. Even in our own culture, to say that Jesus is God and the only way to have salvation and eternal life has become highly offensive and often elicits an antagonistic response.

In what ways has society become increasingly antagonistic to those who proclaim Christ? How do they pressure us to conform to their views?

Question  
# 1

The final designation about Jesus' position or status as Messiah comes in the form of a quote from [Isaiah 22:22](#): **"He who has the key of David, He who opens the door and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens."** Historically, it refers to God's replacement of Shebna, who served in a similar role to what we would call King Hezekiah's chief of staff today, with Eliakim. In this position, Eliakim would control who has access to the king and who would receive an audience before him. No one whom he deemed unworthy or unfit would be allowed in the king's house to appear before his court. Similarly, those to whom he granted permission would be able to address the king freely. As the Messiah, Jesus serves in this same role as the one who admits people into His Father's house (heaven) and grants them access to appear before His throne ([Rom 5:2](#); [Eph 2:18](#); [Heb 10:19](#)). There is only one way to guarantee such access and that is by believing in Jesus as the Messiah, accepting His gracious sacrifice, and surrendering our lives to Him.

Unfortunately, most of the world will not have access because they have rejected Him and they stand opposed to Him as an enemy rather than embracing Him as a Friend and Savior ([Matt 7:14](#)). We can no longer live in naïveté, thinking that people will tolerate Christ and those who follow Him or that we will escape persecution because we live in a civil, open-minded society which has given us both freedom and protection. Thankfully, we have enjoyed life in a country that has afforded us the privilege to worship and protected us from those who threaten it. But lawlessness and antagonism, particularly directed toward Christ, are on the rise in our nation and around the world. We, as a church, are not immune to persecution and should expect it as society pushes Jesus even further away.

Persecution most often begins benignly or subtly in the sense of trying to conform society to one particular view. The goal of society is not diversity as people claim,

but to dictate one way of thinking for all so that they can redefine the truth and justify their actions. They want to subvert truth and propagate their own opinion as truth irrespective of facts! We see this in a variety of ways in our own nation. Around Christmas last year, I read an article in which a Minnesota homeowner received a letter castigating them for hanging Christmas lights. The author found their Christmas display offensive, insensitive, and intolerant. The author complained they were alienating others who did not celebrate Christmas and showing disdain for those who couldn't afford lights. Ironically, the letter goes on to state that we should "respect the dignity of all people, while striving to learn from differences, ideas, and opinions of our neighbors."\* But in reality, the letter was engaging in the very same thing it claimed to be against!



*Not the Actual House*

### ***In Reference***



Lucas Manfredi, "[Minnesota Christmas Light Display Shamed for 'Harmful Impact' in Anonymous Letter](#)," (Dec 8, 2020), available [wdrb.com](#).

If the author of the letter cannot tolerate the "differences" of those who hang Christmas lights, then what is the standard by which we judge whether an "idea" should be treated with "respect" or dignity? Nothing uniform or concrete exists if this were truly the case! An ever-growing segment of the populace wants to redefine truth and dismiss anything that exposes sin and convicts. Therefore, they are tolerant of everything but Christ and His Word. Although Christmas has become more of a universal holiday associated with gift-giving rather than a celebration of Christ's birth, such an intolerant stance against a holiday that bears the name "Christ" shows the direction our society is headed in general. Please don't misunderstand this illustration. It's not about putting up Christmas lights or even saying "happy holidays" versus "merry Christmas." It highlights the dismissive, albeit subtle, way in which society begins to push against truth and persecute those who follow

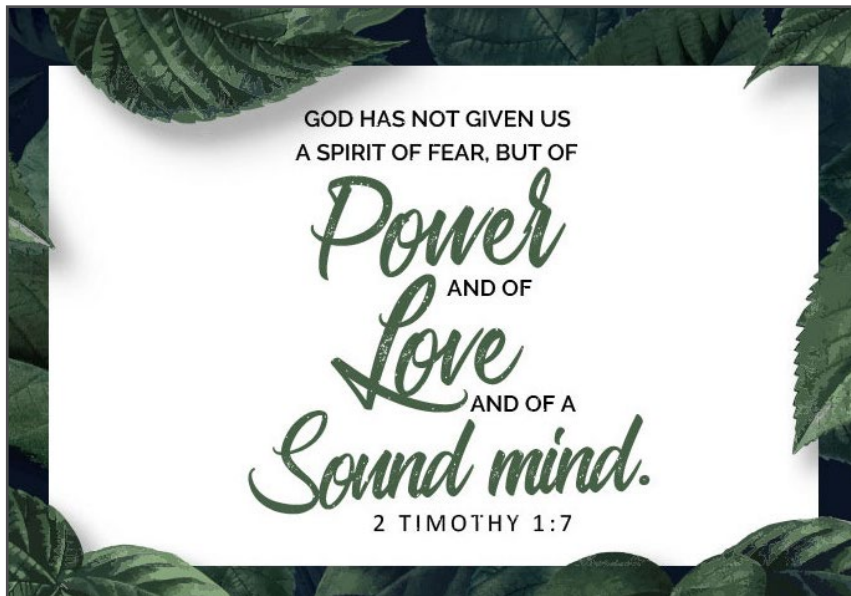
it while being blinded to its own ignorance and errors. Persecution may begin subtly, but it will increasingly become more overt and obvious as time marches along.

What are some of the subtle ways that you've notice society has become increasingly antagonistic to Christ and His Word?

Question  
# 2

Jesus now commends the **church** for their **works** (v. 8). They have remained faithful despite fierce opposition from the culture. Specifically, they **have kept** His **Word** and **have not denied** His **name**. Before we examine their faithfulness, we should note how Jesus ties this commendation back to His self-description. He points out that He has **set before** them **an open door** which **no one can shut**. In this context, this statement serves two purposes. First, it gives them hope and security in knowing that they have a relationship with Him and, therefore, have access to the Father so they can spend eternity dwelling in His presence. No matter how bad things get, no one can ever take this hope from them! Their fate rests squarely in the Father's hands. They may face severe persecution even to the point of death, but no one and nothing on earth can separate them from His love and the glorious life that awaits in Him ([John 10:28](#); [Rom 8:38-39](#)).

Second, the **open door** that Jesus sets **before** them also provides them with the opportunity to witness on His behalf. Thus, they serve as His witnesses in two ways:



through their obedience to His **Word** and by their faithfulness to His **name**. They serve faithfully both through the testimony of their actions (i.e., how they lived obediently) and by the verbal testimony they proclaimed (i.e., they did not deny Him). Truly, one cannot separate one's behavior and speech when it comes to Christ. We must be consistent in

both areas and represent Christ well as His ambassadors as this verse implies. We must align ourselves with Scripture and practice its principles in our lives. But we must also

verbally share the gospel with everyone and not shrink back in fear. We must do both as His witnesses!

Today, in some situations, some Christians may fear identifying themselves as followers of Christ. At times, some may even try to hide it from others or refuse to speak about it because they believe it can lead to ostracism and isolation in the community or even caused fractured relationships with family and friends. To be honest, these things may very likely happen. When viewing one's relationship with Christ in such terms, however, it can lead one to concede to the crowd and cave to the pressure of conformity. It can also cause believers to remain silent against things the Bible clearly identifies as sin and the need for salvation rather than confronting these things in love. Many believers desire to avoid conflict at all costs.

When we stand on the truth of Scripture without compromise, conflict with culture is inevitable because no one wants to be told they're wrong. We don't need to seek conflict nor should we intentionally create controversy through our actions or speech. But we cannot shy away from conflict by suppressing biblical truth and failing to share the gospel no matter how unpopular it may be. We need to live biblical truth in our own lives and proclaim the gospel verbally. Jesus Himself reminds us that no one lights a candle and places it under a basket, but puts it upon a mantle to light the entire house. So we as His followers should "let [our] light so shine before men, that they may see [our] good works and glorify [our] Father in heaven" ([Matthew 5:15-16](#)). Jesus commends **the church in Philadelphia** for this very reason. Even in the midst of conflict and persecution, the world could continually see the light of Christ in their lives!

In what ways can and should we present the gospel without compromise in love to the culture? How should we respond when conflict occurs?

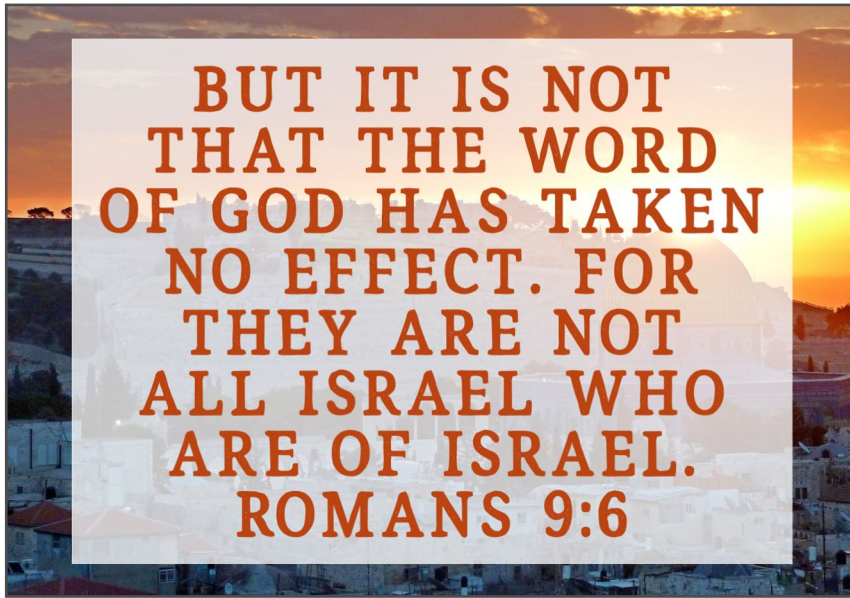
Question  
# 3

## ***Revelation 3:9-11***

### ***THE RECKONING OF THE WORLD:***

One day those who oppose Jesus will face a reckoning for their obstinacy and their refusal to repent. This reckoning will include those who perceive themselves as religious and even call themselves good people. Jesus here chides such people, in particular, those who call themselves **Jews and are not, but lie** (v. 9). He illustrates both the origin of their misconception and His repugnance to it by labeling them

**the synagogue of Satan.** These Jews wrongly think they have a relationship with



the Lord based on their physical heritage. And many of them may have even participated in the pagan culture of Philadelphia to earn a more favorable standing in the community and increase their chance of economic success. Although they may physically be of Jewish lineage, they have rejected the Messiah who came to save them. Therefore, they truly have

no part in His kingdom. Thus, Jesus reiterates what Paul has said in Romans 9:6, "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel."

Unfortunately, many people who identify themselves as "Christians" fall into this very same category by perceiving themselves as religious and good people, but they don't have a relationship with Christ. They wrongly believe that they are Christian because they were born to "Christian" parents, they attend church occasionally, or they participate in religious ceremonies like baptism and other works of service designed to merit favor from the Lord. Many of these people, however, reject the authoritativeness of Scripture and elevate their own beliefs and preferences over what God has clearly stated in His Word. In so doing, they practice sin and align themselves with culture rather than Christ. Consequently, they see themselves on the right path and refuse to repent, but they have never surrendered themselves to Christ. They have no relationship with Him. They are "Christian" in name only. They have been blinded by the culture and allowed themselves to compromise according to its principles.

In what ways do some in the church perceive themselves as "Christian" even though they do not have a relationship with Him?

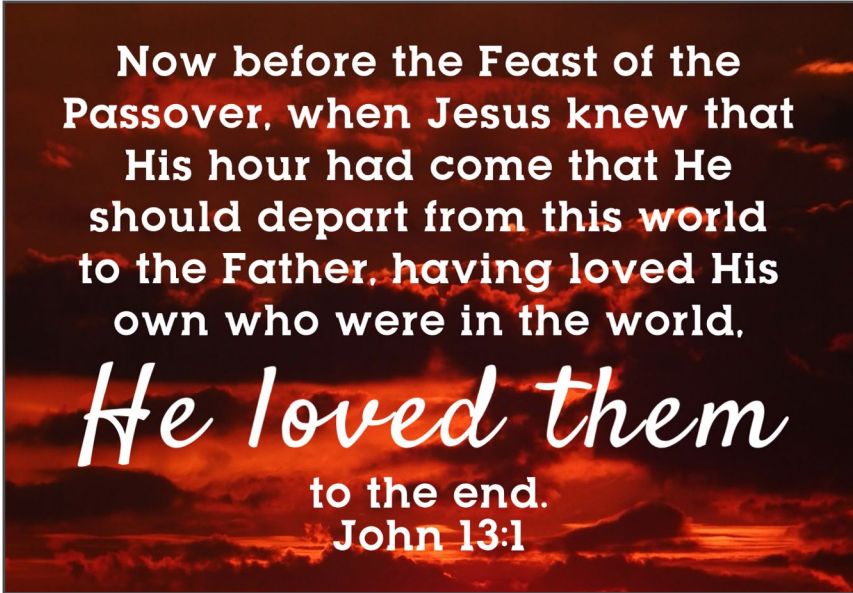
Question  
# 4

Soon, however, these individuals will realize their folly and bow in **worship** of the Lord **before** believers in Philadelphia. On earth during this current age, people have the choice whether to **worship** and serve the Lord. But one day, even if they have now

refused, everyone will bow in **worship** because their eyes will be opened to the truth and they will recognize Jesus as the true Messiah (Isa 37:20). At that point, He **will make them come and worship before their feet**. This does not mean the believers in Philadelphia receive their **worship** rather than they **worship** the Lord together in their presence ([Phil 2:9-11](#)). **Worship**, among these people, will be compensatory rather than voluntary! The Old Testament also shares this same theme in which the Gentiles will come and **worship** among the **Jews** in Jerusalem during the last days ([Zech 8:22-23](#); [Micah 4:2](#)). But these instances often reflect a transformed heart and voluntary **worship** together with believing Israel, having a relationship with Christ.

In Revelation, however, these wayward religious individuals only bow because Jesus has returned and they now understand that He is truly the Messiah. In a way, they will now become acutely aware of the benefits and privileges of the life they chose to reject and have now missed out. As a result, they will **know how much** He has **loved** those who have believed in Him. God indeed loves all His creation, but many people have refused His love because they have rejected the reconciliation He offers through the Messiah. When Christ returns, the whole world will see **how much** He truly loves those who have followed Him and remain faithful to His name.

This rebuke of those falsely religious stands in stark contrast to how Christ responds to those in Philadelphia who **have kept His command to persevere** and remain faithful (v. 10). He **will keep** them **from the hour of trial** which He will send upon **the whole world to test those who dwell on earth**—that is the wrath of God that will be unleashed upon unbelievers. To understand this properly in context, we must hear what Jesus states explicitly in this letter rather than looking at popular systems of interpretation. In Revelation, **those who dwell on earth** always refers to unbelievers ([Rev 6:10](#); [8:13](#); [11:10](#); etc.). Therefore, Jesus is not saying that the church will not suffer or be persecuted at the hands of unbelievers under the guise of sin and the enemy. In fact, the rest of Scripture makes abundantly clear that believers will suffer persecution in this world ([John 15: 18-20](#); [1 Peter 3:13-14](#)). On the contrary, He emphasizes in verse



**Now before the Feast of the  
Passover, when Jesus knew that  
His hour had come that He  
should depart from this world  
to the Father, having loved His  
own who were in the world,**

*He loved them*  
to the end.  
**John 13:1**

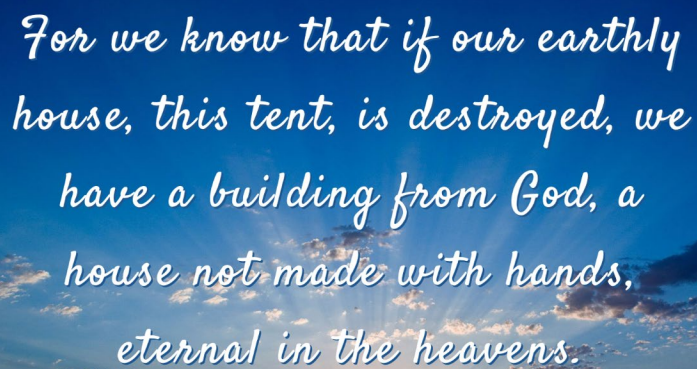
## Instruct

11 that they must continue to **hold fast** just as they have already done in keeping His **commandment** in the face of severe persecution in their community at the hands of **the synagogue of Satan**. Conversely, Jesus now informs them that He will spare them from the wrath of God that will come upon every unbeliever as this age draws to a close and He comes to establish His kingdom in full. They can then rest assured that they have a reward of eternal life rather than eternal destruction that awaits them because they have a relationship with the Savior and have remained faithful to His **name**.

## Revelation 3:12-13

### THE REWARD FOR OVERCOMERS:

As Jesus concludes His letter, He reveals the reward that those who overcome in Him will receive. They will have intimate fellowship with Him forever in the security of heaven. All the imagery of verse 12 points to that security and intimacy. First, Jesus **will make** them **a pillar in the temple**. We know that no literal or physical **temple** exists in heaven ([Rev 21:22](#)). On earth, **the temple** and tabernacle symbolized God's dwelling among His people. Now, God has brought His people to dwell with Him by making them part of His kingdom through Christ—symbolized as the **temple** here. This fellowship will last forever because they will **go out no more**. It's permanent; nothing can disrupt it, nothing can sever it, and nothing can destroy it. We can dwell permanently in the house of the Lord forever with confidence and security when we have a relationship with His Son—the one and only Messiah.



*For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

2 Corinthians 5:1

Second, Jesus **will write on** them **the name of His God** and His **city, the New Jerusalem**; He **will write on** them His **new name**. To **write** His **name** on us signifies that we belong to Him; we have fellowship with Him. Just as the Holy Spirit marks us as His children ([Rom 8:16-17](#)), so also His **name** identifies us with Him. We have this same concept in our own secular society.



Our surname or last **name** indicates the family to which we belong whether by birth, adoption, or marriage. In this case, God has adopted us into His family on the basis of the work of His Son. As members of that family, we should bear the character of the one who has given us His **name**. As a result, we cannot prostitute ourselves with the world around us by compromising our core values in Christ and participating in things that goes against His very character. We must remain pure and holy, submitting to His leadership to keep ourselves unstained by the world.

Jesus concludes by urging those in Philadelphia, and us by extension, to action. We cannot allow His words to fall on deaf ears. We must know them, meditate upon them, and most of all practice them. Jesus never intended His teaching to function as a game of trivia in which we can see who holds the most intellectual knowledge of the most minute facts. He expects His teaching to be applied or lived out. In this life, we will face trials, suffering, and persecution. God may not always deliver us *from* such ordeals, but He will always deliver us *through* them if only we would pursue Him and persevere in faithful obedience. The world constantly pressures us to compromise and conform to its pattern. But God has given us an open door to serve as His witness and look to Him to keep ourselves undefiled. God has set the open door before us, but we must take the initiative to walk through it in obedience. Let us, therefore, overcome the culture by remaining focused on Christ and faithful to His commands so that we might represent the name He has written upon us well!

How effectively are you putting into practice the teaching of Jesus? What tangible ways can you identify?

Question  
# 5

The two friends testing their navigational skills while hiking in Denali National Park learned the hard way about what they could trust to give them absolute direction in nature. Some things, like a river, may seem to provide good guidance, but they shift and meander as the physical environment changes. Culture may seem to provide an answer to man's dilemmas, but it cannot be trusted. It shifts and meanders over time based upon popular belief and opinions. It can never provide a constant standard which leads to absolute truth. Therefore, trusting in the culture leads to more problems and never offers a solution which leads to life in the end. Only one thing in life remains constant and reveals truth to us: God and His Word. God's Word always points us in the right direction and never leads us astray as do our own hearts and desires.

The church in Philadelphia understood this and remained faithful to God's Word despite the intense persecution they faced on all sides from the culture—whether Jew or Gentile. Their faith and knowledge of God's Word produce obedience. They acted upon it. They believed it and put it to practice! Because they stood faithfully upon God's Word without compromise, they could endure any challenge or persecution from the culture around them. Let us follow this same pattern today. May our belief in the Lord and understanding of His Word produce obedience in our lives. May we resist the temptation to compromise and keep our eyes focused on Christ, holding fast to His Word in a culture that pressures us to conform to it. Let us steadfastly seek to conform ourselves to Christ in all we do.

## ***Incorporate***

How are Christians primarily portrayed by the media, on television, or online? How does this influence society's actions toward the church? How can it lead to persecution?

What does it take for us as believers to remain faithful to the Lord in a culture that pushes us to compromise?

As a church, upon what things will Christ judge us? How are we as a church and you individually doing in those areas?

June 27, 2021



*Overcome by  
Complying  
Deuteronomy 8:1-20*

Focal Verse:

"Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him."

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Deuteronomy 8:6

## Introduce

Eighteen-year-old Jennifer Ann Murphy was excited about getting her new Texas drivers' license without provisions as she prepared for her first semester in college that Fall. With this new responsibility, her parents took her to dinner to remind her about their expectations for both her driving and her education. First, they indicated their expectation that she operate the vehicle in a safe manner at all times without distraction. That meant she should not text or call others on her cell phone, even in hands-free mode,



while driving. If she needed to talk, she could pull over at a safe location in a good area to park before making a call. Second, they also reiterated that they trusted her to use the car wisely while in college, but her focus should always remain on her studies rather than extracurricular activities. If she could not comply with these obligations, she would find herself riding the bus around campus.

One Friday evening, she came home from college to spend the weekend and found her parents sitting in the living room. After greeting briefly and spending some time catching up on how things were going, her father asked her to place her keys on his desk in the study. At the time, she didn't think anything about it, so she complied. The next morning, when she came to retrieve her keys, she found her father sitting at his desk reading his Bible. He would always rise early to have his personal quiet time. She started to reach for the keys when her father calmly asserted, "Leave them." She replied, "But Dad, I need them to do some errands and then return to campus." "You'll have to take the bus, my dear," he answered.

Confused, she inquired, "Why?" He explained, "Your mother and I took you to dinner several months ago and asked you not use your cell phone while operating your car, correct?" She retorted, "Yes." "That should be a sufficient explanation," her father stated bluntly. Jennifer questioned, "I don't understand. I need the car." As usual, her father answered with a story. "Years ago," he started, "Your grandfather Nor Knightly was on Riverside Drive in a 1963 Corvette which had a powerful engine. His father told him

## Introduce

that if he was ever found racing on the street that he would take away his car. That night from that light on Riverside Drive he took off quickly in an attempt to beat a friend. He won easily. But it just so happened that his father was at the cross street at the light waiting to cross Riverside and witnessed the whole event.”

Jennifer’s father concluded, “Be sure your sin will find you out. Your mother and I saw you on University Drive and Berry Street on your cell phone.” She interjected, “That’s not fair. I was stopped at a light while texting. I wasn’t even moving. I need my car. You can’t take it away.” Her father remained stalwart and stoic in his expression. He reminded her of their explicit instructions that she should pull over safely and park before making a call. He also reminded her that the car was not hers. He and her mother had paid for the car; they had only entrusted it into her use as long as she abided by the stipulations which they had set. They had not set these stipulations to be harsh or unfair. They set them because they loved her and wanted her to remain safe—focused on the road and paying attention to the other motorists. Indeed, she was an adult in the eyes of the state, but that didn’t give her an excuse to shirk her responsibilities concerning the things that her parents had graciously provided her—a place to live, transportation, and even her education! She had forgotten these things. Just as Jennifer had forgotten how much her parents loved her and how much they had provided for her, Israel was warned not to forget how much the Lord loved them and provided for them. Deuteronomy 8, therefore, is a call to remember. When Israel recalled the ways that the Lord had provided as well as the clear expectations that He had set forth for their benefit, it should have compelled them to comply. Like Israel, we must remember what God has done for us as well as the expectations He has given us in His Word so that we can obediently comply with them to demonstrate our love for Him.

Key  
Question

In what ways has the Lord provided for you and in what ways has He entrusted you as His steward or caretaker of the things He has given?

### Deuteronomy 8:1-5

#### **REMEMBER THE LORD'S PROVISION:**

Addressing an assembly of the entire nation, Moses urged the people to follow **every commandment** the Lord had given them so that they might **live and multiply** as they inherited **the land** promised to their forefathers long ago. Israel, however, did not earn this covenant based upon their merit or even as a reward for their obedience. Rather, their obedience would be a sign that they had accepted the covenant with the Lord which would also signal their commitment to Him alone. God had constituted these boundaries or commands for the people's benefit. He designed them to protect them as well as to give them the necessary tools for making wise decisions which would lead to success in life. Moreover, these commands also kept them focused on the Lord rather than foolishly becoming independent, thinking they could navigate life entirely on their own. For this reason, Moses bids them to **remember that the Lord God led them all the way these forty years in the wilderness** (v. 2).

Frequently, many people have misunderstood the true intention and purpose of a **commandment** or rule. They regard them as a series of restrictions rather than a means of instruction! For example, a parent's admonition to a child not to touch a

stove in use does theoretically restrict or prohibit a specific action. In reality, however, the command is designed to teach a child about the physical danger of touching a lit stove while keeping him from getting hurt. Still, many children must learn the hard way through personal experience. They quickly learn the command was given for their protection. Likewise, we



should view commands from the Lord in such a positive light. He has given them to teach us and keep us on the right path! They may theoretically restrict certain actions (murder, hatred, or adultery) or in other cases encourage certain behavior (love, forgiveness, or faithfulness), but in either case they are designed to instruct us and keep

us safe. Therefore, let's view God's commandments through the proper lenses with the right perspective.

In what ways are God's commands designed to instruct us?

Question  
# 1

To show Israel the benefit of these commands, Moses begins by reminding the people about how God had provided for them the entire time they spent **in the wilderness**. Their time in the wilderness served primarily as preparation and a **test** as they entered the Promised Land. The Lord used it to **humble** them and to **test them to know what was in their heart whether they would keep His commandments**. The **test** was more for their benefit than God's because in His omniscience He already knew the outcome; He did not dictate their choices for them, but He knew what they would choose. Therefore, the core of the **test** centered upon their ability to depend and rely upon the Lord. Thus, the word **humble** takes on the connotation of depending upon the Lord for everything because apart from Him they literally had nothing!

Moses underscores this lack by noting that they experienced hunger in the barren desert, but God **fed** them **with manna** which neither they nor their **fathers** had ever seen (v. 3). God **humbled** them in such a way to teach them the importance of trusting Him and abiding in His **Word**—that is practicing what He has told them. He wanted them to realize the greater spiritual value of trusting and following Him which supersedes anything physical we could ever attain. Consequently, they should understand that **man** should **not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord**. In other words, God supplied **manna** (physical food) in order to teach Israel from whence life truly comes. Only God can give life! When Israel recognizes that life and blessing only come from Him, they will learn to trust Him which then leads to obedience to His Word because they will comprehend it is the best course for life.

In addition to the provision of **manna**, God also prevented their **garments** from wearing **out** and their feet from swelling over this **forty**-year period (v. 4). He has used these three things as object lessons to show them that He wants the best for them and will provide for them if they would faithfully and obediently trust Him. Parents will often attempt to do something similar with their children by reminding them how effective their advice has been in the past in what they have provided for them what



they needed. Generally, a parent will tell his or her child something like this to reinforce the point that they should trust them and heed their advice:

“Remember when I told you to do this in response to that? How did that turn out?” For instance, a mother might say, “Remember when I said not to touch the stove? How did it feel when you didn’t listen and touched it anyway?” Parents will point to a specific event to show a concrete outcome

to help the children to connect the validity of the wisdom they offer. God did the same thing with the children of Israel: “**Remember** when I **fed you manna**? How did trusting Me turn out for you?”



To what lessons can you point in which God has taught you valuable wisdom?

Question  
# 2

In verse 5, Moses encourages the people to **know** in their **heart** that **as a man chastens his son, so the Lord chastens** His people. The word **chastens** can also mean discipline in the sense of providing instruction. For example, we have the “disciplines” of reading, writing, and arithmetic and the spiritual “disciplines” of prayer and Scripture reading. **Chastens**, in this context, carries more of the idea of being disciplined in the sense of learning rather than the sense of punishment. We often think of Israel’s time **in the wilderness** as punishment for their unbelief—save Joshua and Caleb. To some extent, God did punish or correct their wayward thinking. And He will ours as well when we stray from the truth. But God more so used the **wilderness** as a teaching tool. He wanted to reinforce the idea that they must rely upon Him alone.

The time **in the wilderness** prepared them for facing the well-fortified cities and the numerous inhabitants there in Canaan across the Jordan River. Even so, however, Israel at times forgot to rely upon the Lord despite the great things they had seen Him do through them. After God led them to conquer Jericho without lifting a weapon, they become overconfident and trusted in their own might and wisdom at Ai (pronounced *eye*)—and were soundly defeated. Again, they trusted in their own perception and

## Instruct

logic when they grievously made an error in signing a treaty with the Gibeonites. They also became complacent as they settled in the land and did not drive out the nations as God had specifically commanded, leading to severe repercussions later and turning their hearts from the Lord. Like the Israelites, we must constantly remind ourselves of the source of life and trust in God lest we forget and arrogantly trust in our own abilities and wisdom to great detriment.

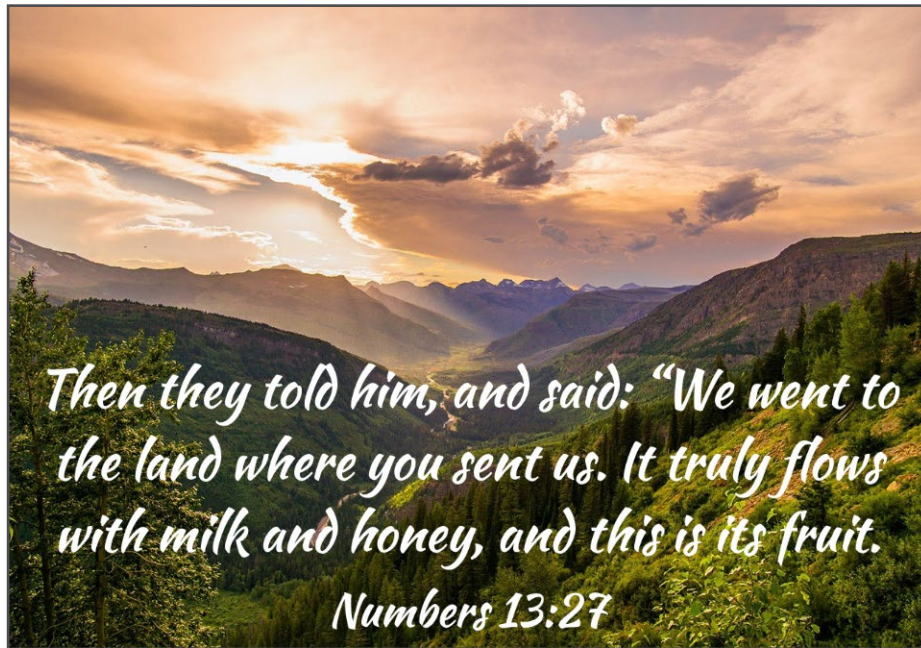
What times in your life have you had to learn the hard way by trusting in yourself rather than in the Lord?

Question  
# 3

## Deuteronomy 8:6-10

### REMEMBER THE LORD'S PROMISE:

Because of our propensity as humans to forget, God reminds the people to **keep His commandments, walk in His ways, and fear Him** (v. 6). He also calls them to remember the graciousness and greatness of His promises to them. Their obedience and faithfulness are a sign that they have accepted His gracious promise to bring them **into a good land** which has plentiful **brooks of water** as well as **fountains and**



**springs** flowing from the **valleys and hills** in contrast to the lack of the **wilderness** (v. 7). Still, they must trust and rely upon God rather than these resources. Moses continues to reiterate God's promise to provide them a fruitful **land** which yields crops of **wheat and barley** and has productive grapevines, **fig trees**, and **pomegranates**; it

also produces **olive oil and honey** (v. 8). Just as God provided life-sustaining resources **in the wilderness** like manna and water, He is still the source of all their bounty and fortune in this **land**. They should never forget this!

Not only will the land be fertile for farming, hence the modern designation the

Fertile Crescent, but it would also have ample minerals and other natural resources for construction and manufacturing. The **land**, for instance, would yield **iron** and **copper**. As time progressed, these minerals would become useful in fashioning various materials with which to cook and **iron**, in particular, would become indispensable in producing weapons with which to defend the land from invaders. Truly, the people had everything they would need to make a successful and comfortable life if only they would remain focused on the Lord and obedient to His will. For this reason, they should **bless** or give thanks to **the Lord for the good land** and truly everything good He **has** benevolently **given** them (v. 10).

In life, truly everything **good** we have attained or received has come from the Lord ([Jas 1:17](#)). We are responsible for working diligently, being good stewards or managers of the opportunities we have received, and living wisely in accordance with God's principles and boundaries. However, our world in general spends too much time focused on what they don't have and the opportunities they haven't been afforded rather than looking at what God has indeed given them. This poses just as much a danger as the feeling of entitlement and self-sufficiency. People become so mired in what they don't have and portraying themselves as victims of circumstance that they miss the opportunities that God has placed right before them.

What opportunities in life has God given you?  
What have you learned from them?

Question  
# 4

Israel thought this way **in the wilderness** and that generation missed an extraordinary opportunity that was before them! They vociferously complained that God had brought them into the wilderness to die and it would have been better to remain in Egypt ([Exod 14:12](#)). They missed all that God had done for them to free them from Egypt and protect them **in the wilderness** thus far! This failure to see God at work prevailed in the spies who feared entering a well-fortified land with strong people ([Num 13:16-33](#)). On their own, they could do nothing. If they had paid attention to God's provision rather than whining about their inability, however, they would have seen what God would have done through them and for them. Our society needs to learn this same lesson today. Stop whining and look to the Lord who wants to do something extraordinary in our lives despite the overwhelming odds against us in the world because of the effects of sin.

### Deuteronomy 8:11-17

#### REMEMBER THE PENALTY FOR PRIDE: :

Verse 11 transitions to a stern warning to **beware** so they do not forget the Lord which will be demonstrated by their disobedience—that is their failure to keep **His commandments**. The product of their disobedience will then be that they will regard themselves as self-made and self-sufficient. They will begin to believe wrongly that

"DO NOT LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES ON EARTH, WHERE MOTH AND RUST DESTROY AND WHERE THIEVES BREAK IN AND STEAL, BUT LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN, WHERE NEITHER MOTH NOR RUST DESTROYS AND WHERE THIEVES DO NOT BREAK IN AND STEAL. FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO!"

-MATTHEW 6:19-21



they themselves attained all these blessings and achieved all these feats on their own without any help from the Lord. Such thinking can only be described as pure folly. They will arrogantly boast **in their heart, "My power and the might of my hand have gained me all this wealth"** (v. 17). In today's language, we'd say something like this, "I did all this! I am a self-made

man. I earned all these riches myself. I deserve them!" Apart from Christ, however, we have absolutely nothing. In the end, material wealth and possessions are meaningless. We can take none of it with us. If we don't have the riches of a relationship with Christ, we will be poorer than any pauper here on earth as we spend eternity in torment separated from the One who loves us more than anyone!

For this reason, Moses details some of the blessings that could potentially distract them from the Lord. When they enter such a blessed and bountiful land, they will eat their fill and they will have **built beautiful houses** (v. 12). They will live comfortably and they won't have to worry about their most basic needs. This sounds very much like our own nation in which we live. Most people have the basic needs of life—housing, food, and clothing—or at least have help in getting access to them and yet they have abandoned and forgotten the Lord. Moses also reminds the people of their source of productivity as their **herds and flocks** flourish as well as their source of wealth in their **silver and gold multiplied** (v. 13). In fact, everything they **have** will be **multiplied!** But they must remember that it all came from the Lord. Again, this parallels our very nation!

God is the source of America's ingenuity, resourcefulness, power, and wealth—not any one individual, not the military, or the government.

When we become comfortable and complacent, how can it adversely affect our relationship with the Lord? What should we do so that this doesn't happen?

Question  
# 5

As people become comfortable, they tend to forget the sacrifices others have made, the opportunities they have received, and the help they have been given. God may indeed involve other people in these provisions, but they ultimately come from Him alone. When people forget, therefore, they forget the Lord! Consequently, Moses warns the people against allowing their **heart** to be **lifted up**—that is he warns them against becoming prideful and arrogant. When they become prideful, they will **forget** what the Lord has done. They will **forget** how He **brought** them out of **bondage in Egypt** (v. 14). They will **forget** He **who led them through the great and terrible wilderness** (v. 15). They will forget how He protected them from poisonous **serpents** and deadly **scorpions** and how He provided **water** in an arid **land** from nothing but **flinty rock!** He was the one who **fed** them with **manna** that none of them had ever experienced before (v. 16). God was the source of all their blessings!

Unfortunately, many believers may verbally express the sentiment that God is the source of all their blessings, but they don't live like it. Some never give thanks to the Lord and they never spend time with Him intimately until they want something or have experienced a difficulty. We can spot other people easily with such motives, whether a spouse, child, or friend, when they change their approach with us because they "want" something. God can too with us! Still, others may never give thanks, but they never fail to complain to the Lord. Likewise, these same people feel entitled and expect God to respond in a particular way and, when He doesn't, they become angry and disillusioned.

Similarly, some may agree that God has blessed them with finances and possessions,

EVERY GOOD GIFT AND  
EVERY PERFECT GIFT IS  
FROM ABOVE, AND COMES  
DOWN FROM THE FATHER OF  
LIGHTS, WITH WHOM THERE  
IS NO VARIATION OR  
SHADOW OF TURNING.

JAMES 1:17

## Instruct

but they never dedicate them to Him for His glory. Moreover, others may agree the Bible is inspired, inerrant, and practical, but they never live by its principles; they never apply it. They may profess to believe all these things intellectually, but for all practical purposes they have forgotten the Lord because they have failed to live in obedience to His Word. The exact thing of which Moses warns the people here in these verses! As he did in [verse 3](#), Moses reminds the people that God will **humble** them and **test** them in order to get them back on track so that He might **do good** to them **in the end**. Again, God does punish His wayward children. But His punishment has a positive purpose! He uses it as a teaching tool to help them remember the source of their blessings and keep them on the right path in life so that He can indeed continue to bless them. Certainly, children ought to obey their parents simply because they said so. But as their children mature and become capable of understanding, parents ought to take time to explain and tell them why rather than simply saying, "Because I said so." God does so with us! Here, God explains that following His commands will lead to a successful and fruitful life—not a perfect one free of challenges, but one in which people can find security and wisdom to overcome anything by looking to Him. But they must remember to look to Him which is the purpose of the commands in pointing in that direction!

What does Scripture tell us are the benefits of obedience unto the Lord?

Question  
# 6

## Deuteronomy 8:18-20

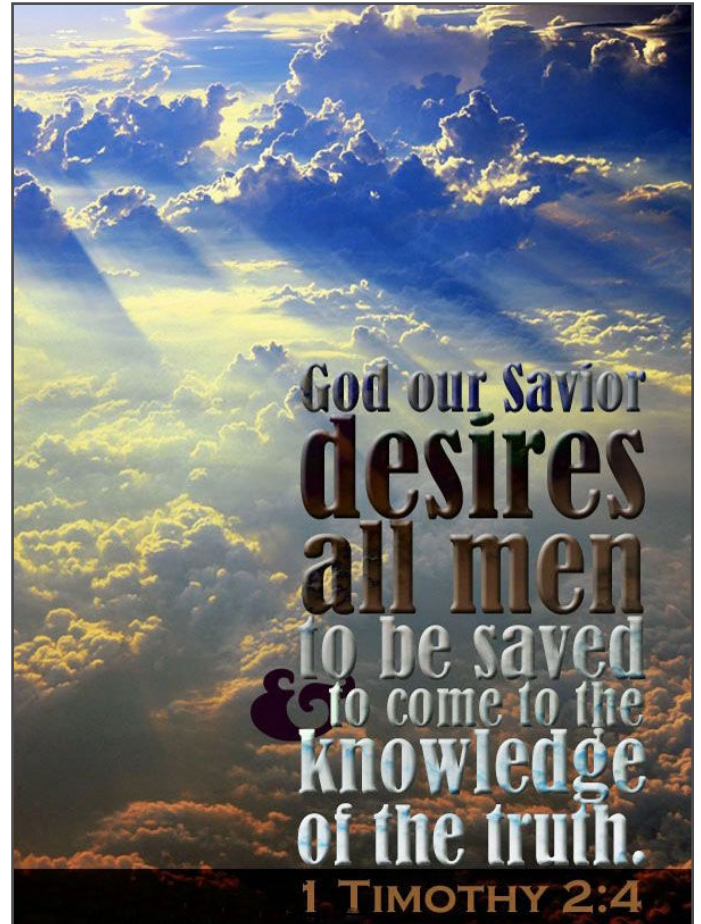
### **REMEMBER THE LORD'S POWER:**

Moses concludes this passage by stating explicitly what he has already implied all along. He exhorts the people to **remember the Lord** their **God** because He is the source of their blessing (v. 18). God is the one **who** gave them **power to get wealth** and the one who **established** and fulfilled **His covenant** with their **fathers** through them. If they reject this covenant of grace and these bountiful blessings, however, severe consequences await. They indicate their rejection by following other gods and serving and worshiping them (v. 19). In a sense, they haven't lost the **covenant** or been excluded from it, they never participated in in in the first place because they didn't have a relationship with the Lord alone. They served **other gods**. Without a relationship

with the Lord, Moses is clear; the people will **surely perish**.

They will share the same fate as those **nations** who have rejected the Lord and He has destroyed **before** them (v. 20). Like them, they too will **surely perish** because they **would not obey the voice of the Lord** their **God**. Again, the phrase **would not** indicates that those Israel refused a relationship with the Lord as exemplified through their disobedience. In a brief side note, God destroyed no nation or people group without giving them a chance to repent and turn to Him. The Old Testament gives many examples of nations, like the Assyrians in Nineveh, whom God gave that chance and they responded. We could list many others here as well, but often the Old Testament doesn't mention every one of these chances. However, we know that God is just, impartial, and loving to all His creation not wanting anyone to **perish**. Yet, to not **perish**, requires that we **repent** of our sins and have a relationship with Him.

We, too, must **remember** the Lord is the source of all our blessings. Just as He rescued Israel from physical bondage in Egypt, He offers salvation to the whole world from spiritual bondage to sin. In this area, we cannot be self-made or self-sufficient. We must depend wholly upon the sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, the sacrifice of Christ must always be at the forefront of our mind. We must always be cognizant of what He did for us and the price that He paid lest we forget and attempt to rely on other things. Let us, therefore, show our love for Christ through our obedient compliance to His Word and praise the Lord for all the blessings which He has generously and freely bestowed upon us.



What can we do to keep the covenant of the Lord and His blessings at the forefront of our minds and prevent us from forgetting?

Question  
# 7

Jennifer Ann Murphy failed to comply with her parents' expectations about driving while using her cell phone. Her parents had given her explicit guidelines along with the consequences if she transgressed them. Taking after her grandfather, Nor Knightly, whether she had simply forgotten in the heat of the moment or thought that she wouldn't get caught, she violated her parents' expectations and found herself riding a bus as a freshman in college as a result. God has also clearly defined His expectations for us and stated the consequences for breaking them. He can discern the motives of our hearts and see the things we do in "secret." Our sins will be found out; they are evident before Him.

Let us not forget what the Lord has commanded us in His Word so we can show our love to Him by obediently complying with it. Through His Word, see how God desires the best for us and has taken steps to provide for us in every way. His commands are not burdensome, but they allow us to live life to the fullest. When we look back over our lives, we should remember how God has lavished His love upon us, acted graciously toward us, and extended His provision of salvation to us through His Son. Therefore, let us serve and worship Him alone in the obedient way that we faithfully comply with all the principles in His Word.



## *Incorporate*

How has God provided for us as a church? What can we do as His church to memorialize or remember His provision?

What specific commands has God given us in the New Testament to follow as His people? How well are we as a church, and individuals within the church, complying with and fulfilling those commands?

How have many churches, and individuals, compromised either by forgetting or even willfully ignoring God's Word? What is the danger of such compromise?

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