

Tradition Service

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This morning I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Psalms chapter 1. The book of Psalms is typically a pretty easy place to find in your Bible. It's right there in the middle. The very first Psalm, Psalm chapter 1.

Today is one of those quote proverbial days on the calendar. It's a day that many of us look at with regrets, others with resolve. In fact, this is one of those days where we tend to look back and we reflect on days, weeks, months, and a year that has passed, and it is typically on this day that we resolve that we're finally gonna lose those 15 pounds. We resolve that we're finally gonna start exercising. We resolve this, we resolve that, and by the time Valentine's Day has come, we're already in a life of regret. That's typically how most of our New Year's go. Now the reason you're snickering is because you know that it is true but what if today, what if today from God's word, there was a secret? What if there was a way that we could know that we know that we know that more than a loss of weight or physical fitness, there could be a way, not just in this next calendar year, but in all calendar years, to have a life that the Bible calls blessed? Now when we speak of something that is blessed, particularly in our culture, we naturally navigate to the financial and the material, but as you're gonna see in just a moment, that the actual definitions for something that is blessed has little or nothing to do with material and/or physical blessings, so to speak. In Psalm chapter 1, it teaches us, it shows us how going forth from today, we can have a life that is categorically declared as blessed.

Now let me give you a warning in advance. As you're gonna see throughout the message, particularly at the end, this message is not an easy pill to swallow. In fact, I'm gonna go ahead and put the proverbial cart in front of the horse. There are a lot of spiritual disciplines that typically on a day like today, we advocate, we encourage, we typically reflect on our lackluster days past and we resolve to be more forthright in the future. Maybe that resolve is to spend more time with the Lord, to pray more, to read the Bible more. Maybe it's to be more faithful in worship or more ardent in our giving. There's a lot of practices of our faith that on this day we oftentimes say, you know, I kind of need to get it into gear, so to speak. But what if the quote secret sauce is actually the hardest discipline to practice? What if the key to the blessed life isn't the easy path but it's the most difficult?

In Psalm chapter 1, I'm gonna read verse 2, and then we're gonna go back and read the entirety of it. It says, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he

meditate day and night." We're gonna read the entirety of the Psalm in just a moment. What I wanna share with you from the very beginning is this: the key to everything we're gonna talk about today and for subsequent days is found in verse 2. It doesn't say to just read the word of God. It doesn't say to hear it preached from somebody who's faithful to the text. It doesn't say to listen to it on an app on your phone. What does it say? It says to delight in it, to meditate upon it, to ingrain it within us, to saturate our lives. Can I use a term of our contemporary culture? To memorize it, to make it a part of our lives so that when scenarios and situations come up, rather than having to run and quickly find a passage in the Bible that deals with that issue, it's already within our hearts. It is already there. That is the key to what verse 1 talks about this quote, blessed life.

I'm going to read the entirety of Psalms 1. It says,

1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Now this very short Psalm begins in verse 1 with a promise, the promise is that you and I can have a life that can be described as being, quote, blessed. Secondly, in verse 3, it gives us a very clear picture of what that looks like. It says that a life that is saturated with the word of God is pictured as a tree that is planted by the river. And then there's the problem, twice in this very short Psalm, the word "but" is used, and those of you that may have not been a part of First Baptist for a while, that's my absolute favorite word in all the Bible and the reason it's my favorite word is because anytime we use that conjunction, it reveals to us why what we desire has not come to fruition as of yet. Twice it says "but this" and "but that," meaning the reason we don't have that blessed life is because we are walking in error.

So let's begin with the promise. It says in verse 1 that we can have a, quote, blessed life. Now, it's reflected in verse 1 of what that looks like, but verse 2 is the key that this blessedness comes from the saturation, the meditation, the memorizing of God's word. But here's what I want to do. I just want to give you the three basic definitions for the word blessed and you're going to notice that most of these don't have anything to do with material and/or physical or financial. The primary definition, if you say that somebody is blessed or my life is blessed, the primary definition means this: to have contentment, satisfaction, or ease of mind. Now I don't know about you, but I use a whole lot of all those things, right? Contentment, the ability for whatever situation or your scenario that you find yourself in, to be trusting that God has got it in spite of what it looks like and what it sounds like. Satisfaction, you go back a half a century from Europe, the Rolling

Stones taught us we can't get no satisfaction no matter what we do, right? How about this one? Ease of mind. Phew. Is that not often what we spend hours praying for? That's what it means to have a blessed life. But there's also some possibilities there. You say, possibilities? The word to be blessed doesn't just mean contentment, ease of mind, it can also mean to experience pleasure or delight.

Now, if we look at that from a biblical context, we need to go no further than whom we know as the Apostle Paul. There was probably nobody in your New Testament that not only made more of an impact with and for the gospel, but one who experienced more hardship and difficulties. The Bible says five times he was stoned, three times he was left for dead. Now that is a message in all of its own. Can you imagine being the poor guys dragging him to the cemetery and him waking up on the way, not just once, but multiple times? Do you realize that half of what we have in the New Testament that the Lord gave us through the Apostle Paul, half of it was written when he was in prison? An environment that was less than conducive. He's able to say that he has the joy of the Lord. He has the hope of days ahead. And yet his scenario was so much more grave than most of what we will experience in the days ahead. He experienced a true blessed life because he was content and satisfied and at ease of mind of wherever the lord had him at any time and because of that It is possible to have pleasure and delight even if we're walking through the quote valleys of life. Let me remind you that in Acts chapter 11 when that famous event took place where the prison gates were opened and he proclaimed the gospel to that individual that was in charge of him, the Bible records that at midnight they were singing songs of praise to the Lord. I don't know about you and I'm just gonna get in the flesh for just a moment, I don't know if at midnight in the inner cell of a prison I'd be thanking the Lord for my scenario or my situation. But that's what happens when your life is blessed. But there's a prophetic element here. You say, a prophetic element? One that goes beyond the here and now, one that goes to ages and stages well beyond our realm and our race. You know what one of the definitions for being blessed is? To experience or to possess good fortune, or to be in a position that is desirable.

Let me talk big picture and then I'm gonna get a little more specific in just a moment. When that time in our life comes where we understand that we can't fix the world's problems on our own, that we do what the Bible says we do, we sin, we go contrary to God, we disobey him on a regular basis, when we understand that the only way to solve that problem is to believe on Jesus Christ, the Bible says we're forgiven, we're saved, and listen to this, it says we're given a seat in the heavenlies. I don't know about you, but being in heaven and not hell, I'll call that good fortune all day long. And that's a position. that I desire. That's a position that I want to be in one day. So when we talk about a blessed life, it begins with a contentment, a satisfaction, and ease of mind. It continues to say I can experience pleasure and delight no matter what my environment is because I know prophetically that this isn't the end of the story, that there is coming a day, and by the way, you may have heard this phrase before, eternity is way too long for it to go wrong. In other words, this is but, as the Bible says in Psalm 23, a shadow of the days that are to come.

That's the blessed life. But it's all contingent on verse 2. Notice what it says in verse 2. "But his delight." In other words, it doesn't say that we have a blessed life because we go to church on a regular basis. It doesn't say we have a blessed life because we do this on or that. It says a blessed life, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD. He doth meditate on it day and night." One of the things you're going to hear, not just today, but in subsequent days is the way to experience this blessed life is to make the word of God not just a regular part of our life, but to meditate, to memorize it, to saturate it so that when these difficult scenarios and situations come up, it supernaturally comes forth out of our life so that we can walk in blessedness even though it may look optically much the opposite.

Look at this picture in verse 3. It says, "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers." Now it's kind of the primary, I guess, observation there. When you think about a tree, obviously there's the optics of beauty and fruit, and we'll talk about that in a moment, but one aspect that amazes me about a tree, or a series of trees, is their ability to weather storms. Now, I joke all the time, growing up in Texas, you know, my description of Texas, it's flat, it's hot, and it's brown. That's what it is, right? A tree in Texas is a bush in Alabama, just so y'all know. And so having spent most of my adult life outside Texas, on the eastern side of it, one of the things that I've learned about these trees is they make me nervous. You say, what do you mean they make you nervous? When these winds kick up, these storms roll in, when these tornado sirens go off, man, we don't have trees like that out there and they start swaying and they start bending. You know what I've learned? 99.9% of the time when I go and look outside after the storm, those trees are still there and they're doing just fine. And why? Because those roots are so well and deeply planted under the ground that it doesn't matter what happens above the ground. The winds can come, the storms can roll but because they're firmly rooted and they're grounded, they don't wear away.

Now this reminds me of Matthew chapter 7 and Jesus preaches what we know is the great Sermon on the Mount. He ends that famous sermon with this analogy. He says two men build identical homes. I mean, they're the same square footage. They're made of the same composite materials. Here's the only difference: one of them builds his house on a rock, the other one builds his house on shifting sand. You know the part of the story that gets me the most? It says, the winds came and so did the rain. I got news for each and every one of us, no matter what you resolve, no matter how well you plan for this upcoming year, the winds are gonna howl and the rain is gonna come. The storms are going to happen in our life. The big question is this, how well grounded and rooted are you to weather those storms? What did it say back in verse 2? Our delight should be in the word of God and we should meditate on it day and night.

So what's the possibility? Well, it says here in verse 3, not only are we planted like a tree, but we shall bring forth fruit and our leaf shall not wither. Now, there are 32 parables in the gospels that were spoken by the mouth of Jesus. The most critical one is what we know is the parable of the sower. Now, somebody may say, well, that's not my favorite parable. Why do you say it's the most critical? Because that's what Jesus said. When Jesus interpreted that parable for the disciples, here's what he said, "If you can get this

one, you can get them all." Now it's a famous story that a sower goes out to sow, lands on four different types of soil. Says the first one gets scooped up by the fowls of the air, never even germinates. The second one springs up quickly but because it has no root, it dries up. The third one bears fruit for a season, but because of the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and other things, it ceases to. And then the last one says it bears fruit some 30, some 60, some 100 fold. You know one of the most fascinating things to me, particularly agriculturally when it comes to fruit, is this, you need to hear this on this day. If this moment, this day, you say, you know what? I'm into what Psalms 1 is teaching. I need to make this a part of my life. I will make you a promise, the fruit will probably not be born by February. The fruit will probably not even be born by this day next year. Fruit is a long-term investment and the problem is, and I get this quote from Luis Palau, the now deceased great evangelist from South America, he said most Christians give up on God within two years of him bearing the fruit. You say within two years? You know the problem with our culture? I've done this before. I have gotten mad that a drive-through line took less than four minutes, and the reason you're laughing is because you say, well, on my clock, it's three minutes. Exactly. We have an entire industry called fast food. We have in most of our homes a microwave where we can take something that should be cooked over three hours and do it in three minutes and we sit there and get upset that it's not two. I know I'm not the only one, but when it says there's a possibility of bearing fruit, I want you to hear me clearly. If we start enacting verse 2 in our lives, don't expect the results to look like a Google search. You say, what do you mean? You type in something and instantly you've got the answers. Fruit takes months, years and sometimes even decades.

When it said there in Mark 4 that they bore fruit some 30, some 60, some 100 fold, you do realize that does not happen overnight. It does not happen in one calendar year. It is a multiple season endeavor. So what we're talking about today on a blessed life, this isn't a one and done. This isn't a check off the box, I got it, it's gonna be a great year. No, no, you may not see the true fruit of Psalm chapter 1 for years or decades, which leads to the prophetic element of it. Notice what it says in the last part of verse 3. It says, "and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Now, that's where immediately the antennas go. We think, ah, prosperity. That's where we can kind of get into this material thing. Not so fast. In fact, if you were to parallel Psalm 1, one of the great passages to parallel it to is Joshua chapter 1. Let me set the stage for just a moment. The Israelites had been in Egypt for 400 years. They'd been in bondage. They'd been indentured servants. They were slaves. Through the hand of God, through the person of Moses, they were miraculously delivered out of Pharaoh's hand. They go through the Red Sea. Unfortunately, they wander for 40 years in the desert because they didn't believe God could do what God said he could do. That's another story for another day. Here's the point. They're about to go in the Promised Land. You know what it says in Joshua chapter 1? It says wherever their foot touches will prosper, but it qualifies it, if they do what God says. Now I want you to hear me clearly: prosperity biblically is not getting more. Prosperity is watching God work when you do what he tells you to do that you couldn't pull off on your own.

Let me give you the best example. It's a famous battle, Jericho. We even write kids songs about the famous battle of Jericho. The walls come tumbling down, right? Have you

analyzed the military strategy of that story lately? The other people, those in Jericho, they not only were behind steep walls, they had ammunition, they had firearms, they had chariots, they were trained militia. What did God tell the Israelites to do? "I want you to walk around the city once a day for six days. On the seventh day, walk around it seven times and then I want you to break out the big guns, bang the pots and the pans." Most of us would have bailed on day three and said this hasn't happened. The reason that that campaign and every other campaign following was, quote, prosperous isn't because of a material financial blessing, it was prosperous because they did what God told them to do and it wasn't that generation, listen to me, wasn't that generation that it had the greatest impact for. You know what it was? It was multiple generations later.

When we talk about verse 2 of Psalm 1, to make the word of God a part of our lives, what we need to understand is the fruit of that may not happen for years or decades, but the prosperity takes generations. I got news for each and every one of us, you and I right now, we are riding the coattails of the spiritual prosperity of generations gone by. You look back historically, we had a movement of God in the 1700s on this land that was so great, we had a second one. The First Great Awakening, the Second Great Awakening, we've had revival movements, we've had awakenings. You and I, whether you know it or not, you are the beneficiary to the prosperity of years ago, people saying, "Okay, God, you say it, we'll do it." You know what the problem is? We have not had a major, major coast-to-coast movement of God in this country for over 100 years. There is nobody here, there's nobody watching or listening to my voice who knows anybody who knows anybody who's ever seen it happen.

So why? Because we're experiencing what verse 3 says, the prosperity of previous generations who trusted the Lord but today's about us. Today's about how can we have a blessed life? How can we be like that tree that is not moved in the difficulties of life, bear fruit in the days and years ahead, and one day long after our passing, there is a, quote, heritage of faith that outlives our lifespan. Man, that's an incredible, incredible New Year's message. Here's the problem. It's that word "but." Notice what it says in verse 4. It says, "The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff that blows in the wind." When we talk about making the word of God a part of our life, when we talk about meditating on it, when we talk about, quote, memorizing it, I'm just going to call it what it is, most of us, even as, quote, believers in Jesus Christ, most of us act more like the lost world than we ever want to give ourselves credit for.

Let me give you a case in point. The lost world does not read the Bible, and most Christians don't either. The lost world doesn't think about going to church, and a whole lot of Christians don't either. I got real good news for you. Did you know that the lost world, those who want nothing to do with Jesus Christ, outside of John 3:16 at a football game, they haven't memorized a single verse in the Bible, and guess what? Most Christians haven't either. So guess what? We're a whole lot more like verse 4 than we ever want to admit. You know where this started? You know where we got our primary illustration from? The garden of Eden. Now that Bible that you have in front of you or on your phone, did you know it has 1,189 chapters in it? That's a number that's gonna be significant in the days ahead. Just put that in the back of your mind. There's 1,189

chapters. There are 66 books of the Bible. But did you know that the first Bible that God gave mankind was one verse? Now don't you wish it was that simple? You say one verse? Oh absolutely. Genesis chapter 2 verse 16, I want you to hear what God told Adam. He said, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." That was it. That's all we had. That's all we needed. And guess what, I just quoted it for you. You know what the problem is? That Adam and Eve did not heed Psalm 1:2. They didn't make the law of the Lord important to them. They didn't meditate on it because in the very next chapter, chapter 3, verse 1, not only does the serpent question the validity of the word of God, he misquotes the word of God, humanity agrees with his misquotation and then adds to it and says, "He told us we couldn't even touch it."

In other words, our lack of meditating on the word of God, our lack of memorizing the word of God is how we got in this mess in the first place. So if we're gonna get out of the mess, we need to reverse our course. That's why Psalms 119, verse 11 is so important. It says, "Hide the word of God in your heart so that you do not sin against him." Let me give you the possibility. It's found in Mark chapter 4. It's the parable of the sower. I've already alluded to it. I've already talked about the four grounds that the seed fell on. Do you know what happens to that seed, that first seed, when Jesus interprets it for the disciples? Here's what he says. The Bible says the fowls of the air came and took it away. Here's how Jesus interprets it, Satan comes and takes it before it can germinate in the heart. Can I give you the possibility? You know why scripture memory is so hard? Do you know why giving attention to the word of God is so hard in your life? It's because the last thing Satan wants you to do is to memorize the word of God because if you memorize the word of God, you can reverse the curse of Genesis 3 when we didn't memorize it and we got in this mess in the first place.

In other words, the possibility is this, that Satan is going to come up with anything and everything he can to keep you from meditating on the word of God and hiding it in your heart. That's why in Matthew 4 verse 4, Jesus is in the temptation, the wilderness after 40 days, 40 nights. He's tired. He's exhausted. He's whipped. Satan comes and tempts him. Remember what Jesus said? Not only do you not tempt the Lord your God, he said, "Man should not live by bread alone but by every word of God." Let me tell you what Jesus was saying there. When the doctors tell you that your medical diagnosis is terminal, the word of God says, don't worry, there's glory on the other side. When the world tells you that your bank account doesn't just have a zero in it, but it has a negative sign in front of it, the word of God says, the Lord owns a cattle on a thousand hills. When the world tells you you're no good, you're worthless, we didn't want you here in the first place, Psalm 27 10 says that when they forsake me, the Lord shall lift me up. I can keep going, but we all wanna eat lunch in just a moment.

In other words, the possibilities are endless but let me give you the prophetic. 1 Samuel chapter 3, one of the most famous men in all the Bible was called to his ministry, his name is Samuel. He lives with a man by the name of Eli. He's a priest. He's a representative of God. God comes and he speaks audibly, and Eli doesn't figure out what's going on. It's a great little story. That being said, in the very first verse of 1 Samuel

3, it says in those days, the word of God was precious. It couldn't be found. You know, there have been days past over the last 2,000 years where having a Bible in one's possession was a lifelong prayer that rarely came to fruition. The early church rarely had copies that could be in one's home. For what we know as the Dark Ages, thousand plus years, rarely could scripture be discovered. The last 500 years, we've had the prosperity of the scriptures. That being said, let me remind you of what the book of Amos, the prophet Amos, chapter 8 says, verse 11. It says there's a day coming, there's a day coming where there's gonna be a famine in the land. It's not a famine for food, but a famine for the word of God.

I'm gonna ask you a very serious rhetorical question. You do not have to answer audibly, because you know what the answer is. Do you believe that next year and the years ahead, our culture and our world is gonna be more conducive to Christianity or more in opposition to? Well, you answered, I told you you didn't have to, because we all know the answer. Let me remind you of a famine in the book of Genesis. God came to Joseph and said there's gonna be a time without food. You know how they responded? They stored it up. They stored it up. They made sure that when that famine came, that they would have food. If we really believe how you just answered, and we really believe that Amos is telling the truth, then you know what we better start doing? We better start storing up the word of God. I'm not talking about putting it on your shelf. I'm talking about putting it in our heart. I'm talking about we as a people making sure that we always have it even if we can't turn it on or open it up. It's not easy. In fact, I told you prayer's a whole lot easier than Bible memorization. Coming to church is a whole lot easier. Memorizing the scripture is tough.

Closing today, I wanna show you a short little video clip. I'm gonna take you back to 1962. I'm gonna take you to the city of Houston, Texas. The then sitting President, John F. Kennedy, gave one of the most famous speeches in Western civilization history. It's only about a minute long, the clip that I'm gonna show you. I want you to hear what he's talking about, then I want you to listen to how he describes it. Watch this brief clip.

[video clip]

President John F. Kennedy: "But why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask why climb the highest mountain? Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic?"

We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win..."

[end of video clip]

That line, we're not doing this because it is easy, we're doing this because it is hard. Next week, we begin an unbelievable endeavor, what would it look like if a local church, that's

those of us in person, those online, what if we actually stored up the grain? What if we actually took the entire Bible and made sure that we had it memorized so that when those days come that nobody can access it, they'll know where to find it? It will allow us to be personally and corporately fruitful and prosperous for generations ahead, but let me tell you in advance, it's gonna be tough. It's gonna be hard. We're not doing this so we can check off a box by Easter and say, done it. We're doing this over the course of the next year because it is hard.

So today in closing, I want to retitile the sermon. You ready? We talked about being blessed. I want to retitile it, "We choose to go to the moon." We choose to do that, not what is easy, but what is hard. We choose to do that, that can change not just this timeframe, but generations ahead and you'll notice up on that screen, there's a little number there, you'd better get used to this number, it's 1,189. That's how many chapters are in your Bible. You know what the wonderful thing is? There's more than that people in the room right now. I'm not talking about just having each chapter memorized. What if we had each chapter memorized two and three deep? What if we had four and five? I don't know what it's gonna look like but I'm gonna go ahead and tell you, we've seen what our life can look like when we meditate on the word of God. It's laid out in Psalm chapter 1. We're going in this next year, there's a lot of resolutions we're gonna make, there's a lot of hopes, but I'm gonna ask you, it's a hard ask, to do the hard thing, to store up the grain for the famine that one day is going to come. Amos told it was gonna come. To link arms with one another and say, "I've never done anything like this before, but if you're walking down a tough road, I can walk down a tough road with you." Is it going to be easy? Absolutely not. Are there gonna be some of you come May going, "Why did we come up with this crazy idea?" I'm gonna tell you why, because we choose to go to the moon. We choose to do that which may have never been done before.

I wanna go ahead and give you a little seed here. Those of you may remember a few months ago, we had a missions conference. A man who's traveled all over the world, he said, "I've never heard of a church doing anything like this." I said, exactly. I said, in the book of Genesis, when people were hungry for food, they had to go to Egypt. I said in the days ahead when people are hungry for the word of God, may the whole world come to Opelika, Alabama because we're gonna store it up so that we always have the opportunity to have a blessed life. Would you join me, not in doing what is easy, but in doing what's hard?

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. As we come to this time, the end of our service, I realize that the majority of the message was truly a challenge towards scripture memorization and understanding the importance of the word of God, but let me remind you of what verse 4 said, but the ungodly are like the chaff that are blown away and the Lord doesn't recognize them. I don't mean this as caustic as it may sound but you can memorize a chapter in the Bible, you can memorize a book in the Bible, that doesn't mean that you go to heaven one day. The Bible says that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. It means whoever recognizes their sin condition as I spoke of earlier and calls out for Jesus to save them. Maybe today, it's not about church attendance, it's not about Bible memorization, it's not about all those resolved things, maybe today is about

your soul and your eternal destiny. The Bible says to call out. It simply means to acknowledge your sin condition and believe on Jesus to save you. It's not about reading a script. It's not about saying the right words in the right order. So maybe today, wherever you are in person, online, wherever you are today, maybe today, maybe the best way to begin a new year and end the last year is to say, "You know what? It's about time I got on God's page, not just for this day, but for all of eternity." Maybe your heart's cry would go something like this, "God, today I recognize I got a sin problem. I've been places I shouldn't have been. Done things I shouldn't have done. Spoken words I should have never uttered. I've had thoughts that are so contrary to your word. And what I recognize, your Bible says the wages, the result of my sin is death. But it also says, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God, today, I believe. I believe Jesus is the only answer to my sin problem. I believe he loved me so much that he came for me. He lived a sinless life on my behalf. God, I believe that when he allowed himself to be nailed to his cross, he was bearing the pain, the punishment of my sin. And God today, I believe that when Jesus Christ rose from the dead three days later, he made it possible, he made it feasible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God today, I recognize my sin problem can only be fixed by the person of Jesus Christ. In the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed, our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today on this last day of the calendar year, sought it out and cried out for Jesus to save you. In a moment, I'm gonna pray for us. We're gonna stand and sing. I just wanna invite you wherever you are, just to step out and step forward. I'll be here, others as well. We just wanna celebrate with you. We wanna pray with you. And maybe today you say, "You know what, I've already got that covered. I need to talk to somebody about being baptized." Or maybe you're saying, "You know, I need to talk to somebody about becoming a part of this incredible Bible-believing church." Or maybe, just maybe, you say, "You know, we're entering a new year and it's been a rough 2023. I just need somebody to pray with me, pray for me." We've got those folks here. We'd love to be a part of it.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, God, thank you, thank you that you've called us to believe, you've called us to obey, and, God, you've challenged us to do that which isn't always easy, but is always a blessing. God, today I pray that whatever you've spoken through your words to our lives, we would simply respond to you and you alone. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.