

"Search Me, O God"

Even when no one else does, the Father in Heaven knows everything about me. He knows how I think, what I say, and what I do. Would I ask the Lord to open my heart and see if there is any hurtful way in me? Am I willing to rid my life of every sin? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study In Search of the Lord's Way. And these important questions challenge us to live by a higher standard.

Welcome to *In Search of the Lord's Way*, where we search the Scriptures to find the Lord's way to be saved and to live the Christian life. Thanks so very much for taking time with us. We really appreciate hearing that you're watching or listening. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

I hope and pray that you make it your goal each day to live pleasing to the Lord. It's amazing how many take the grace of God for granted and never think about improving their spiritual lives. The apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5 verses 9 and 10, "So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." Now each of us must one day face the consequences of our behavior. How does God see you?

Have you made it the business of your life to grow in your faith, your love, and your zeal for the Lord? Many people live lives in complacency, thinking that because they're under the grace of God, they never need to mature or grow. But God expects all of us to examine our hearts and to see if there are things we can do better. As we study from the Scriptures today, I hope you'll take a long look at your heart, your life, and your soul. Are you living as God wills? Could there be some sinful or hurtful way in you?

Now we offer this Bible study free to anyone who asks. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our program, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, if you like, call our toll-free telephone number. We'll pay for the call. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond Church of Christ will now worship in song, we'll read from Psalm 139, verses 1 to 6 and we'll take some time to examine ourselves.

Our reading today comes from Over David's Psalms, Psalm 139, verses 1 through 6. "O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. *Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is *too* high, I cannot attain to it." That's a reading from God's inspired word. Let's pray together. Father we're grateful that You know us so well, that You do encompass us before and behind, and that You know us and love us all the same. And Father we pray that our love for You may grow more and more. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

One cannot think about this magnificent Psalm, Psalm 139, without the overwhelming realization that God is present with us. He sees and knows everything about us. He searches our hearts and knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows how we think and all our actions. Psalm 139 says, "You know when I sit down and when I rise up." God knows our thoughts. Psalm 139 says that God discerns our "thoughts from afar." The Lord even knows every word we speak. Psalm 139 says, "Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether."

The Bible says that God encircles us. "You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me" (Psalm 139 verse 5). The fact is that you cannot go anywhere that God isn't already present. You can't run away from God. Psalm 139 verses 7 to 12 says, "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, (what) you're there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you're there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,' even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you."

God is both omniscient (that is all-knowing) and omnipresent (that is everywhere-present). He's not limited by space or time; and nothing escapes His notice. Proverbs 15 verse 3 says, that "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." Now no one can escape the presence of God. This fact ought to warn us that we must have pure and holy lives. God said in Leviticus 11 and verse 44 and again in 1 Peter 1 verse 16, that "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Again the Bible says in Hebrews 12 verse 14, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." God expects His people to forsake their sins and live holy lives. God will not tolerate being put in second place to our sins. God wants to be first in your heart, in your life, in your thoughts, and in your words. David knew that God will not tolerate wickedness but will one day slay the wicked.

Now God knew about us even before we were born. Speaking of God, David said in Psalm 139 verses 13 to 16, "For you formed my inward parts; and you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; and in your book were written, all my days, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them."

Because David knew that God saw every aspect of his life and that sin would displease God the Father, he asked the Father in Heaven in verses 23 to 24, he asked, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous (any sinful) way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" David wanted to please the Father so much that he wanted God to search his heart and life to see if there was any grievous or hurtful way in him. Now, God would already know it. God didn't need to search to find out. It was David who was the one who needed to know. He didn't want anything to come between God and himself. He wanted to get rid of the hurtful way and be led in the everlasting way!

David was saying, "You know Father, if there's something wrong with me, I want to know it so I can change my ways." Now this we all need to consider! David wanted so badly to stand right in the sight of God that he opened up his life up to God's scrutiny. We might be able to fool others; we might even fool ourselves about our sins; but we can never, never, never fool God. David was afraid that he was ignorant of a sin, or he had blinded himself to a sin he was committing. And oh how people tend to do that this day and time, of blinding themselves to the things that God calls sin.

We must all be concerned about whether we are living in sinful ways and we don't even recognize it. You know, perhaps we're entertaining some wicked thoughts or failing to do our duties as Christians. God's Word tells us the things that we must do and the things that we must not do. And they're clearly set out in Scripture, but many people live their lives completely oblivious to their own sin. I'm reminded of Proverbs 30 and verse 20, which says, "This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, And says, 'I have done no wrong.'"

Sin is deceitful. And people who commit sin don't like to acknowledge that they could have done such a thing. The more people sin, the more likely they are to excuse themselves of sin. They often re-label sin to soften the sting and to make it appear innocent. For instance, a person isn't greedy; he has "business savvy." Or a drunk will hardly ever admit that he is intoxicated; instead he'll say he's "high." A gossip may never admit he or she is backbiting; instead they're merely being zealous against sin. Many people shape their principles according to their practice rather than shape their practice according to their principles.

Sin is able to deceive us because sin colors our judgment. If I allow a certain lust in my heart to continue, it won't be long until I find a way to approve of my own actions. People just naturally begin to think that whatever pleases them must be all right. The same passions that lead people into sin blind them to its deceitfulness. And so they begin justifying their behavior. For instance, the more that we hate someone, the more inclined we may be to tell ourselves this person is rotten and deserves to be hated. We may even tell ourselves that we're right to hate others. Well sin corrupts the heart and it makes its thoughts twisted.

Now this is why the Bible says in Hebrews 3 verses 12 and 13, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it's called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Sin deceives us, blinds us to ourselves, and then it hardens our hearts toward Christ and other people. Many people who get caught up in sin grow angry at anyone who thinks what they're doing is wrong. But inside they know the truth; they just don't want to face it, and that's why they become angry.

Proverbs 21 and verse 2 says that, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart." You know if given enough time you can justify to yourself whatever it is you want to. But just because you think it's all right, doesn't mean that God approves of your sin. Even if everybody in the world says it's OK, it doesn't necessarily mean that God approves of that sin. Basically what people do is they tend to lie to themselves. We can't always trust our own hearts. The Bible says in Proverbs 28 and verse 26, "Whoever trusts in his own mind (his own heart) is a fool, but whoever walks in wisdom will be delivered." And that's why we need to study our bibles. Don't trust in your own thinking as to what is right and wrong; trust the wisdom of God found in the Word of God. Now God's the one who's going to judge in the end, you need to listen to what He has to say, and not put your blinders on, but to hear Him and not try to argue with Him.

People easily see the faults of others but they seem to miss even the most glaring faults of their own. You remember the words of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 7 verses 3 to 5 about unfair judging: He said "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but you don't even notice the log that's in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take that speck out of your eye,' when there is this big old log in your own eye? You hypocrite (Jesus says), first take this log out of your own eye, and then you'll see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

When some people see the errors of others, they can quickly condemn them; but it seems easy for people to excuse themselves for committing the same sin. Romans 2 verses 1 through 3 says, "Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who do such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?"

Paul urged the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 13 and verse 5, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" So, let's ask ourselves some questions that search our souls. Let's see if there is any grievous or hurtful way in our lives. Let's see if we pass the test.

First, do I believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? Do I believe that He died for my sins and that He was raised up, that He really died on the cross, he really did resurrect from the dead. Do I believe the Bible is truly inspired of God and free from error? Do I believe the Lord Jesus is coming again one day to judge the world in righteousness according to the things that are written in the Book and according to our deeds? Do I really, really believe? You see if I don't have faith in Christ, there's no way that I can please God at all. I have failed the test.

A second question is do I love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength? We might easily say that we love God, but do we love Him completely and freely? Do we put Him first in our lives, and our decisions, our plans, and our time? Do I pray regularly and fervently? Do I study and meditate on God's Word? Do I put God first? Do I tell others about God? Do I turn to God when I hurt? Am I compassionate toward those who hurt and those who are poor? Have I encouraged anyone lately? Am I willing to be a bigot towards other races or be prejudiced towards those who are not like me?

Do I let the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life to lead me away from God? Do I have pet sins that I keep committing? With what kinds of things do I feed my heart? Do I think pure thoughts or do I allow sexual sin to flirt with me? Do I allow my eyes to see things that I shouldn't see or my ears to hear things I shouldn't hear?

Do I allow my heart to indulge in envy or jealousy? Do I fuss with others often? Do I gossip? Am I greedy? Do I support the Lord's church generously? Am I grateful for all the blessings that God gives to me and my family? Do I tell lies? Am I honest in all my dealings with others? Do I cheat on my taxes?

The grace of God provides a wonderful blessing of forgiveness, and we all desperately need the grace of God. But God's loving grace should lead us to repentance and a change of ways. We must never presume on the grace of God or think the grace of God allows us to continue in sin. Oh no, God's gracious gift of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, it was done so that we might be forgiven, and it was not a cheap gift. It deserves to be taken seriously. So, let's examine ourselves so that the grace that God has given us may not be in vain. Let's pray together. Father we're so grateful for the grace that You have given us through the blood of Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of eternal life. And Father help us not to take these things for granted, but that we may live out lives that please you. May Your will be done on earth, in our lives, as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

In Psalm 26:2, David asks God, "Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind." Could you ask God to examine you to see what kind of person you are? Would you want God to look into your heart? What would He see? Would you want Him to look into your mind? Would you want Him to know what you're thinking right now? Listen to me, God already knows what's inside of you, but are you willing to face yourself spiritually, that you might correct what is wrong? Would you be willing to see if there is any grievous way in you and then give it up?

David could say in Psalm 26 and verse 1, "I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering." Can you say that? In verse three, David says, "For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness. I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites he says. I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked." Can you say this?

As you look at your life, you might ask yourself if you have made a firm commitment to God. God has loved you enough to send His Son to die for you. Have you come to Him? A person makes a commitment and becomes a Christian when he believes with all his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. A person who commits to Christ will recognize Jesus as Lord and turn away from every sinful thought or behavior and turn to a life that pleases God; that's repentance. A person who commits to Jesus will confess Him before others and will be baptized in water for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Oh I pray that you'll do that today.

We hope that you've been blessed by today's study. If you want a free printed copy, or CD of this message, "Search Me, O God," mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

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