

"Christian Morality"

A recent Gallup poll found three-fourths of Americans saying that moral values in the United States are getting worse. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible Study "In Search of the Lord's Way." We're going to explore the causes of America's moral decline and the solution.

Welcome to *In Search of the Lord's Way*, where we search the Scriptures to find the Lord's teaching about salvation and the Christian life. Thanks for spending time studying God's Word with us. We love hearing from you that you're watching or listening. We want to study God's Word with you each week.

For several years the moral standards and values of our culture has been declining. It seems the whole moral world has just turned upside down. Some in our culture have worked hard to silence religious values, so that Christians feel pressured not to speak out about sin. What a shame! What confusion! National laws have changed how some look at the sanctity of life and marriage, so that we no longer have freedom of conscience to oppose sin without being labeled or punished for it. Others have made it their life goal to silence the Bible on any moral issue. Well now this isn't new; people have never wanted to hear what they do is wrong. They would rather excuse sin than repent of it.

When people said the moral values of America are declining, the Gallup researchers asked them why. Well people offered several reasons: lack of respect, poor parenting, scandals, increased crime and violence, the breakdown of the typical two-parent home. All of these certainly contribute to declining moral values, but many of them are symptoms of the problem and not the root cause.

Our moral confusion comes from the fact that many Americans no longer give God the fear and the respect that He deserves. They no longer take Him seriously. Some in our culture have told God to just be quiet and to leave us alone. The worst thing that we can do is to abandon God and His ways. Choices have consequences. And the consequences of abandoning God are revealing themselves in our land. We have sown to the wind and reaped a whirlwind.

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

Larry Owsley will lead the Edmond Church of Christ in song. And you might want to sing along, and then we'll read from Titus 3 verses 3 to 7.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to Titus, chapter 3, verses 3 to 7. "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." That's God's wonderful statement of God's salvation. Let's pray together. Father, we're thankful for the joy that we have in Christ, and for the freedom from sin that He gives to us. And Father may we do Your will always. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

What wonderful singing and praise to the Lord! I just love *a cappella* singing. That's how God intended Christian worship in song to be.

In the 1800s millions of children in America learned to read from a McGuffey's Eclectic Reader. In the 1836 edition the author published this paragraph that seems prophetic:

He said, "If you can induce a community to doubt the genuineness and the authenticity of the Scriptures; to question the reality and obligations of religion; to hesitate, un-deciding, whether there be any such thing as virtue or vice; whether there be an eternal state of retribution beyond the grave; or whether there exists any such being as God, well you've broken down the barriers of moral virtue and you've hoisted the flood gates of immorality and crime. . . . Every bond that holds society together would be ruptured; fraud and treachery would take the place of confidence between man and man; the tribunals would be scenes of bribery and injustice; avarice, perjury, ambition and revenge would walk through the land and render it more like the dwelling of savage beasts than the tranquil abode of civilized and Christianized men."

The National Cultural Values survey found America is losing its fear of God. According to the survey, 87 percent of Americans say they believe in God; and 52 percent say they believe the Bible is God's authoritative word. Yet only 36 percent believe people should live by God's principles; only 15 percent say that they will live by their own principles even if they conflict with God's principles; and 45 percent prefer to combine God's teachings with their own values. They've replaced the God of Heaven with their own thinking.

Many people live not in immorality but in amorality. One is "amoral" when he doesn't care about right and wrong or morality. Amoral people never feel accountable to God. Many today don't know the God of the Bible, so they make up a god after their own desires. They imagine what they want God to be like. When they find the God of the Bible doesn't match their imagined ideas, they exchange the God of Heaven for the god that's in their own imagination. But we can never replace the God of Heaven with a dreamed-up god.

You see, the god people create in their minds is only an imaginary god. He doesn't require anything of them morally or spiritually, so they're happy with this god. But the God of the Bible, the true God of Heaven, is not like man-made gods. He is entirely holy, He is absolutely righteous, and He is totally moral. He doesn't tolerate or approve sin. He doesn't overlook or excuse some sins, while punishing others.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:14 to 19, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who has called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.' And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."

A famous preacher today says that Jesus never referred to anyone as a sinner, but that preacher needs to read the New Testament more closely. At various times, Jesus publicly denounced sinners as snakes, dogs, foxes, hypocrites, corrupted tombs, and unwashed dishes. Jesus didn't want His hearers to miss the point. God condemns sin, but Jesus doesn't leave us the way that He finds us. Jesus didn't save us so that we could keep on practicing sin. He graciously wants to wash the sins away (yes) away from our souls, but He also wants to transform our lives.

The God of love forgives and wants us to overcome our sins; He blesses the repentant who change their hearts and lives. Now repentant people grieve over their sins, forsake them, and then they begin living righteously for God. They don't want to repeat the evil that they've done. After David sinned

against God by committing adultery with Bathsheba and killing her husband, that's Uriah, he sought forgiveness. And he wrote in Psalm 51 verse 17, that "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." Psalm 34 verse 18 says, that "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and He saves the crushed in spirit."

People rarely mourn over their sins any more. Instead, they excuse them or justify them. They love to blame somebody else or even blame God for their sins. When have you, friend, been broken-hearted and contrite over your personal sins, the things that you've done that are wrong? When have you taken responsibility for your sins? When you have, friend, confessed your sins and your sorrow for having committed those sins, then that's a part of repentance.

The apostle Paul rebuked the church in Corinth for ignoring sin and for their arrogant attitude about sin. God's Word says in 1 Corinthians 5 verses 1 and 2, that "It's actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant (he says)! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you." Paul rebuked them, that church at Corinth for tolerating the sin instead of taking action against the man who committed it.

Now the inspired apostle then does take action. He writes in verses 3 to 5, "For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you're assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you're to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."

Now many are shocked to hear such language coming from the Bible, because they think well Christ never judges sin, oh yes He does. Jesus called for people to repent so they wouldn't be lost. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 13:5, "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." The Lord Jesus will not continue to extend His grace to those who refuse to repent.

Many people presume upon the patience and the grace of God. They honestly believe that God would never condemn anybody, but God's grace and forgiveness have limits. The Bible says in Galatians 5 verses 19 to 21, "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. (Paul said) I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do (or practice) such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." You cannot live the sinful lifestyle and expect to go to heaven. God is serious about sin.

The Bible warns in Hebrews 10 verses 26 to 31, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Now anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' Oh it's a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Christ is not content to leave us where He found us. The Lord Jesus takes a man where He finds him and helps him to become what he wants him to be. A Christian is a person Christ has transformed. He takes us out of sin and He puts us into a life that is clean and righteous. He wants to transform your life, but Christ cannot help us out of sin if we are unwilling to see the sin that's in our lives. We don't have to keep on living in sin. We can forsake our sins.

As we read a moment ago, Titus 3:3 to 7 says, "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Now Christians don't see themselves as better than others. The Christians that I know realize that they were once lost in sin but saved by the grace of God. They live grateful lives for what God has done for them. We are all strugglers in this life to become the kind of person that glorifies the Lord Jesus. My favorite saying is, "I'm not all I ought to be; I'm not all I want to be; I'm not all I'm going to be; but thank God that by His grace I'm not what I used to be."

A person who loves God will not be content to keep on committing sin. The Bible says in 1 John 3:1 to 3, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God; and so we are. (I tell you) the reason why the world does not know us is that it didn't know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears that we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure."

Love and faith lead a Christian to please the Lord in every respect. Christians who love the Lord are not content to lead their old lives. They want to grow in their faith, their holiness, and their love for God and man. Paul told the young preacher Timothy, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."

Some preachers will not speak against sin. They do a great disservice! When Christians fail to speak against sin or they fail to set an example of holiness, they confuse the younger generation. It's no surprise that many young adults see no sin in sex outside of marriage, or having a baby out of wedlock. I tell you, this is no small matter! Not only is fornication immoral, it's also a major cause of children growing up in single-parent homes and in poverty.

Someone says, "Well Phil, you're being awfully hard on people." No, I'm not being hard. I'm being honest and loving. A cruel person would never tell you sin is wrong or ask you to repent. A cruel person would laugh at sin and tell you to just forget it. Oh that may seem kind or tolerant, until we realize this: that God does not forget about unresolved sin, He punishes it. Friend, God still says "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6 and verse 23).

Our tolerant culture may overlook your sins, but God will not overlook unresolved sin. God instead wants you to repent; He wants to cleanse you of your sin by the blood of Jesus. And He loves you and He sent His Son Jesus to the cross to forgive you. Why not come to Him for cleansing? Let's pray together. Oh Father help us to love You, and to lead lives that honor You and honor Your will. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

"The clock of life is wound but once, and no man has the power to tell just when the hands will stop at late or early hour. To lose one's wealth is sad indeed. To lose one's health is more. To lose one's soul is such a loss that no man can restore." Somewhere in the world thirty people died while I was reading that short poem. One hundred twenty people die every minute. Their spirits return to God to be judged for the lives that they've lived.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:29 to 30, "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it's better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole

body to be thrown into hell. "If your right hand makes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it's better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body be going into hell." Jesus isn't interested in our being blind; what He wants us to do is to repent.

You might ignore the sin in your life today, but you cannot ignore it forever. God expects you to turn your life around and to put your trust in Christ Jesus. When you believe with all your heart, repent of your sins, confess the name of Jesus Christ before others, and are baptized, you'll find God's grace and forgiveness. At the time of baptism, God washes away all our sins (Acts 22 verse 16), and He does it through the blood of Jesus Christ. He adds us to His church, He makes us His child. Baptism is an immersion in water for a penitent person who professes his faith.

And that's why we should come to Christ in true repentance and be baptized, just as Peter taught in Acts 2 and verse 38. And if you're a Christian, maybe you've fallen away, you need to come back to the Lord. And today is the day to do it. There's no better time!

We hope that you'll think deeply about this study. And if you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, 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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We ask that you please worship with one of the churches of Christ in your area. Oh the church of Christ loves guests, and you'll be so glad that you visited and worshipped with them. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and tell your friends about this program, tell everyone you know and encourage them to watch. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.