

"When You Face God"

You have an appointment that you cannot avoid. One day you will face God in the Judgment. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're exploring what it means to face God. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Since the time is coming when all of us will face God and give an account for the lives that we've lived, it's necessary that we take time to see what the Scriptures say about our accountability toward God. Hebrews 4:12 to 13 says, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Facing the God who already knows our hearts and our lives is not an easy thing. Thankfully, through Jesus we have hope. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Many people think, like Adam and Eve, that they can do as they please. They think of God as one from whom they can hide their deeds. After they ate from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve discovered they were naked and hid from God in the bushes. Well, God knew what happened, just as He knows all things. Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating of the fruit that was forbidden to them.

People today still think of God, and how He doesn't see what we do. God reported the sins of the wicked in Psalm 50 and He said in verse 21, "These things you have done and I kept silence; You thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes." God knows and will confront us one day.

Now we offer this study free on facing God. And if you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, 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, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Genesis 3:8 to 13, and explore what happens when we face God.

Our reading today comes from Genesis 3, verses 8 to 13. This passage comes right after Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Verse 8, "They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.' And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.' Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you've done?' And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'" That's the beginning of sin.

Let's pray together. "Oh Father, we are thankful for these stories of ancient times, that help us to understand what has happened in the past and what can happen in our lives. Help us Heavenly Father to be true to You, and true to Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

Many in our culture think little or nothing about the day when they're going to face God. They live their lives on their own terms according to their own rules. Many dismiss God from their minds and

their morals. Some have no need for God, and they'll be surprised one day to realize God is still God. He's still our Creator and our Judge. There will be no atheists on Judgment Day. No one can replace God, and no one can dethrone Him. No one can change His laws. And He alone is the One who rules heaven and earth.

It's astonishing what ways people justify themselves rather than admit anything they've done is sinful. Solomon remarked in Ecclesiastes 7, verse 29, "Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices." Some blame others. Adam blamed Eve and God for giving her to him, and Eve blamed the serpent. Some blame God for making them the way they are and never consider their own responsibility.

James 1:13 to 16 says, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I'm being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he's carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren." If we sin, it's not because God led us into sin; but we sin because we gave into our desires that carry us away into sin and spiritual death. We're responsible for what we do.

Some lie to themselves and try to relabel their sins as something harmless and innocent, but they aren't fooling God. There is an old riddle which asks, "How many legs does a dog have if you call the tail a leg?" Well some might say, "five" but the answer is four. You see, calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg. You can't change God's truth or God's morals no matter how hard you try.

Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." People don't like facing the reality of sin. They would rather ignore it or act like their sin doesn't and didn't happen. Proverbs 30 and verse 12 says, "There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth." They think what they are doing is acceptable in our culture, and so it must be acceptable to God; but God sees them as they really are. Proverbs 30 and verse 20 says, "This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and she wipes her mouth, and says, 'I have done no wrong.'"

The Lord Himself said in Jeremiah 17, verses 9 and 10, that "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds." Because of this, Jeremiah the prophet said in chapter 10, verse 23, "I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps."

Hebrews 9, verse 27 reminds us, that "it's appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." God one day will judge each of us according to the way that we've lived. Paul told the Stoics and Epicureans in Athens in Acts 17:30 to 31, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Many think God's love means He doesn't judge anymore. They see God in an unbalanced way. While God is the God of grace, He is still the Holy God, who is just and punishes sin and lawlessness. We can't intentionally live any way we please and then presume upon the grace of God. God's grace came at the ultimate price of the precious blood of Jesus Christ; and we have no right to cheapen or take that grace for granted. Will God judge us today? Yes He will! And He distinguishes the sheep from the goats, the righteous from the unrighteous.

Paul spoke to those who refused to repent in Romans 2:5 to 11, he said "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you're storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and

revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will repay each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, He will give eternal life; but to those who are self-serving and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, He will give wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of mankind who does evil, for the Jew first and also for the Greek, but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who does what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.”

The apostle Peter also speaks of God’s judgment and distinguishes the righteous from the unrighteous. 2 Peter 2, verses 4 to 10 says, “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority.”

There will be a Judgment Day for us all. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive compensation for his deeds done through the body, in accordance with what he has done, whether good or bad.” How we think, how we talk, how we treat others, how we observe God’s morals, and whether we follow the Lord will matter on that day. On that day, we’ll come face to face with the Lord and have to look him in the eye. Romans 14:12 says, “So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.” God Himself is our final judge, and He will judge us by the words of Jesus Christ. And His words will judge us on the last day (John 12, verse 48).

Now we may consider the things that we say and do are like the culture around us, but being like the world hardly makes us right with the living God. Just because our culture believes something doesn’t mean that God approves of it. Just because the masses approve or participate in some activity doesn’t mean God approves of that activity. God has determined what is right and wrong, good and evil, and righteous and unrighteous. God doesn’t change His mind, simply because something becomes fashionable and acceptable in society. Because the Lord Jesus will judge us on the last day, the Lord Jesus will have the final say. Since Jesus knows everything about us, we won’t be able to overrule or even to object to His verdict. The Day of Judgment will come on the last day when the Lord Jesus comes from heaven and appears in the sky. That day every person will be raised from the dead, and the earth and its works will be destroyed.

We don’t want to be like the five foolish virgins who failed to prepare for the coming of the Master. The Lord Jesus tells about what it will be like on that day of reckoning in Matthew 25, verses 1 to 13, “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they didn’t take extra oil with them; but the prudent ones took oil in flasks with their lamps. Now while the groom was delaying, they all became drowsy and began to sleep. But at midnight there was finally was a shout: ‘Behold, the groom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. But the foolish virgins said to the prudent ones, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.’ However, the prudent ones answered, ‘No, there most certainly

would not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.' But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the groom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. Yet later, the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' Be on the alert then, because you do not know the day nor the hour."

My friend, no one can prepare for you. You have to do that on your own. You may know many religious people, even some righteous people; but that doesn't make you righteous or prepared. Jesus doesn't accept everyone; He accepts those who obey God's will. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 to 23, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

The book of Revelation gives us a picture of that last day when every person will stand before the white throne of the Lord Jesus. Revelation 20:11 to 12, "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds." You'll notice that the present heaven and earth have fled away; Revelation 21 and verse 1 says they have "passed away"; that is they are no more. You'll also notice that we're judged by what is written in the books. Well what books? Well the books found in the Bible; they are God's laws and commandments. They can't be changed, and no one can rewrite them on the last day. What God through Jesus and through the Holy Spirit said in the first century will stand as the whole truth on the last day. God's word is unchangeable.

Will you be ready to meet the Lord or will you hide from Him? Can you say, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus"; or will you have dread and fear the day that Jesus comes again?

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, we pray that You will help us to be ready on that day, help us to be obedient to Your will, to love You and to Serve You, and to put away the sins from our lives. Give us strength and hope, and give us faith, and give us love, so that we might love You and love one another. All these things we pray in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen."

God has called you to an appointment that you cannot avoid. You'll face God one day to give an account for what you've done. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 11 and verse 9, "Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of your young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things." Wouldn't it be sad to have lived in rebellion to God only to find out God is real and He means what He says. He wants you, and He wants to make you His child and to bless you forever and ever. Don't turn from Him and lose your soul.

We often sing an invitation song: "Careless soul, why will you linger, Wand'ring from the fold of God? Hear you not the invitation? Oh, prepare to meet thy God. Careless soul, oh, heed the warning, For your life will soon be gone; Oh, how sad to face the judgment, Unprepared to meet thy God."

There is a need to be prepared, and we do this by faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. A saving faith is one built upon Scripture. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" [or the word of God] (Romans 10, verse 17). Now faith leads us to repent of our sins, denying ourselves so that we can serve Christ. Saving faith is always obedient, so we receive the word and are baptized into Christ, just

as they did in Acts 2:38 to 41. Now baptism into Christ is an immersion in water that unites us to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and frees us from sin according to Acts 22, verse 16 and Colossians 2, verses 12 and 13.

We hope that today's study about when you face God has stirred you to consider your soul. Now if you live in the United States and want a free printed copy 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. Or, call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633.

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We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.