

"Mourning Over Sin"

Since sin is real and can cost you your soul, how do you react to the guilt of your sins? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Some ignore the consequences of sin and actually celebrate evil. What does God say? Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Bible is an entirely practical book, dealing with our everyday lives and the attitudes of our hearts. The Lord Jesus never speaks needlessly; we must know how to keep our hearts and lives within the Father's will. The difference between following the Lord and not following the Lord is a difference between eternal life and eternal destruction. We must take God and our sins seriously. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 and verse 4, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Now, most people think of this passage when they have lost a loved one; but it may not be referring to this, but to mourning over sin. Certainly the loss of a loved one hurts deeply and needs comforting; but the Lord is here speaking about something worse than death. You can suffer death and still have hope of eternal life with the Lord in heaven. The apostle Paul referred to his potential death at the hands of Caesar in Philippians 1:23 that he said he had "the desire to depart and to be with Christ, for that is very much better." Though we grieve for the loss of a loved one, we can celebrate when a faithful Christian is with the Lord.

If, however, a person refuses to believe, refuses to repent of sin, or refuses to obey the Lord, he'll face eternity without the Lord and without His blessing. In such cases we not only mourn our loss over a loved one, we also mourn for the fate of his soul. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

Now we offer this study free in a booklet titled, "Hungering for Righteousness." If you'd like a printed copy 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 James 4:7 to 10, and see why one is blessed to mourn over sin.

Our reading today comes from the book of James, chapter 4, verses 7 to 10. James is here talking about a group of people who unfortunately had made themselves friends of the world, and became a little arrogant about it. And so he says to them in verse 7. "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." That's a reading from God's holy word.

Let's pray together. "Oh Father help us always to put our focus upon You, to turn away from evil, to love You and to serve You, and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

In every age people have forgotten God and rejoiced over wicked ways, ignoring the consequences of their sins. Some have hardened their hearts for so long they've forgotten the guilt, same, and the harm that sin produces. Don't imagine that our culture was the first to depart from the ways of God.

Now before the flood found in the book of Genesis, it says, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only

evil continually. So the LORD was sorry that He had made mankind on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” (Genesis 6, verses 5 and 6). Now humanity had indeed corrupted its way on the earth with violence, so God determined to destroy them and had Noah to build an ark.

After the flood, God told Noah and his sons, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Genesis 9, verse 1). Instead, the people gathered at Shinar and decided to defy God. They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we’ll be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11, verse 4). Now at that time God confused their language, so that they couldn’t understand each other and scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

God used Moses to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt and to give them a law, establish them as a holy nation. And as the centuries passed, the people forgot God and His laws. They began serving other gods. The prophet Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 2, verse 5: Thus says the LORD, “What injustice did your fathers find in Me, That they went far from Me And walked after emptiness and became empty?” Well we wonder about why people who call themselves Christian today have wandered far from God for an empty way of life. Jeremiah 2:11 to 13 says “‘My people have changed their glory, For that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this, And shudder, be very desolate,’ declares the LORD. ‘For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, That can hold no water.’”

Now in parts of ancient Israel, there were few springs and creeks, so the people dug cisterns in strategic places to catch the rainwater during the rainy seasons. They would hollow out a place in the ground and seal it on the inside with a kind of plaster; but if there was even the slightest of earthquakes, or the plaster might crack, and then the water would slowly seep out. Now an empty cistern was useless.

Well our society has forgotten God and gone our own ways. We’ve forgotten God’s morals and deliberately mocked God with our confused and chaotic morality. Editing God’s ways and morals to suit ourselves is foolish beyond measure. When we imagine that we’re wiser than God, we’ll start drinking unclean water from a broken cistern.

Now Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet, because of the sins of the people. He said in Jeremiah 9:1 to 3, “‘Oh that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night, For the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the desert, A wayfarers’ lodging place; That I might leave my people, And go from them! For all of them are adulterers, An assembly of treacherous men. They bend their tongue like their bow; Lies and not truth prevail in the land; For they proceed from evil to evil, And do not know Me,’ declares the LORD.” Jeremiah prophesied and preached for forty years to Judah, but they didn’t listen to God’s words that came through him. Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 13:17, “‘But if you will not listen, my soul will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the LORD’s flock has been taken captive.’” Sinful desires can not only enslave us, they can also harden our hearts and drain out our faith and love for God. Psalm 119:136 says, “‘My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law.’”

The New Testament also speaks of the blessing when people mourn over sin. Do you remember the parable of Jesus about the Pharisee and the tax-collector in Luke 18? The self-righteous Pharisee who prayed to himself rather than to God did not see his need for God, but the humble tax-collector knew that he needed God’s forgiveness. And the Lord Jesus said in Luke 18: 13 to 14, “‘But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his

breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." God knows our hearts and He knows whether we have a heart that mourns our sin and hungers for righteousness.

Peter was a man who often spoke and acted before he thought, but He loved the Lord and wanted to do right. That describes many of us. The Lord Jesus predicted that Peter would deny Him three times in the night before He was crucified. Well Luke 22, verses 55 to 62 tells what happened: "After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, 'This man was with Him too.' But he denied it, saying, 'Woman, I don't know Him.' A little later, another saw him and said, 'You're one of them too!' But Peter said, 'Man, I'm not!' And after about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, 'Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too.' But Peter said, 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about.' And immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, 'Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and he wept bitterly." Have you ever wept over your sins?

Some folks instead of weeping become indignant and act like sin doesn't really matter. Paul dealt with this in the church at Rome, or excuse me Corinth. And he said in I Corinthians 5, verses 1 and 2 says, that "It's actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. (And then he said) You've become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who's done this deed would be removed from your midst." You see they ignored the situation, they tolerated it, and even boasted about an incestuous sin that the pagans wouldn't even allow. And Paul acted and he judged the man in the presence of the church. He wouldn't allow the church at Corinth to have fellowship with sexually immoral people. Well this apparently made the Corinthians stop and think about what they were doing. They needed to repent of tolerating sin.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7, verses 8 to 11, "For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I don't regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, not only for a while— I now rejoice, that you were made sorrowful (that is not that you were made sorrowful) but you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! And in everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter." When people remain unwilling to judge others' sins, even though they don't commit it themselves, they're siding with wickedness not with God.

We tend to celebrate today's sinful pleasures and forget what the Lord Jesus said. We also forget the Lord Jesus is coming again to judge us all. One day the Lord will call us to give an account of our lives, and no one will be celebrating sin on that day. We should be like Moses. Hebrews 11:24 to 26 says, "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. (You see he) considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was

looking to the reward." What matters to you? Do you count the fleeting pleasures of sin more valuable than a home in heaven?

There is a Day of Judgment coming, when the Lord Jesus will either reward or punish us according to the deeds that we've done in the body. Christians face a lot of animosity from those who do not know God or believe His teaching. 2 Thessalonians 1:7 to 9 says to faithful Christians, "and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might."

Well what should we do? Well James 4:7 to 10 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you." Let's look into our hearts and consider our souls. Let's be done with sin and draw near to God. Yes, we should mourn our sin; but God will comfort us.

Why does this matter? Well, remember the Lord's words. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:29 to 30, that "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. And 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 to go into hell." Being in sin is worse than losing an eye or hand, and it's even worse than physical death. You can die physically and still go to heaven; but you can't cherish sin and refuse to repent and enjoy eternal life. Only those who turn from sin and walk in the light with the Lord can enter heaven. Revelation 14:13 says, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them." In yet I can find no such promise for those who are lost in sin. We can't hold fast to our sins and presume that we are still in the grace of God. We're in great spiritual danger without God. So let's turn our hearts toward Him, repent of our sins, and draw close to Him.

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, help us to love You with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, to turn away from the things that are sinful and evil, and turn to You. So that we may do Your will and please You, and may live with You forever. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." God doesn't want to leave us in mourning for sin and not give us any hope of salvation. He wants to comfort us, and He does this by giving us hope and by saving us from sin. Though our sinful ways plague us, we have hope in the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us. The Lord God told Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." You can find healing and comfort from God when you humble yourself, pray, seek the face of God, and turn from your wicked ways.

We need to follow the Lord Jesus to do His will and do it His way. There's no path to heaven and righteousness except the Lord's way. Don't delight in thinking or the practices of the world, but turn your heart toward God and take up your cross to follow Jesus.

To be right with God, place your trust in the Lord Jesus as God's Son and listen to His word. Turn from evils of sin and renounce them. Determine to live righteous lives and confess Jesus Christ before

others. Be baptized into Christ; that's how God causes you to become united with Christ, to be born again, and to be freed from sin (Romans 6, verses 3 to 7). God washes you of your sins when you're baptized, immersed in water, for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16). What are you waiting for? Turn to God in faith and fulfill His desire for you to know the truth and to be saved. There's no better day than today.

We hope today's study titled "Mourning Over Sin" has stirred you to consider your soul. Its part of a series this month called, "Hungering for Righteousness." 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 you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633.

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