

"The Righteous Life"

"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is straight that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Which way are you going?

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We look to God with a hunger and thirst for righteousness. The Scriptures teach us how to please God and to live in a right relationship with Him. We want nothing less than to love God with all our heart and soul. God has promised to satisfy our hunger and thirst for righteousness, if we turn from evil and seek His face. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

The apostle Paul asked a serious question in Romans 6:1 to 2, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" The grace that forgives our sins is the marvelous gift of God. Faith in God, repentance of sin, and baptism lead to freedom from sin. When we repent, we die in our hearts to sin. We no longer determine to live in sin but to follow the Lord Jesus. Grace and repentance work hand in hand. Grace forgives at baptism, but repentance changes the heart toward righteousness and away from sin.

Titus 2:11 to 14 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." Grace teaches us to live for the Lord and to turn away from evil. Allowing God's love and grace to work in our hearts and lives yields the fruit of righteousness.

Now today's study, "The Righteous Life" is free. And it's part of a booklet entitled, "Hungering for Righteousness" and 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 2 Peter 1:5 to 11, and we'll explore the righteous life.

Our reading comes from the second epistle of Peter, chapter 1, verses 5 thru 11. And here we have the word of God that gives us great and precious promises and gives us all that we need for life and Godliness. But this requires faith, but it requires more than faith. And so let's read verse 5 to 11. "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you." Oh what a wonderful promise.

Let's pray together. "Father, we are so grateful for Your precious promises, help us to grow and increase in all of these qualities in our lives, so that we may please You, and may love You more and more as days go by. Help us Heavenly Father in every way to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

Righteousness generally means adherence to what is required according to God's teaching and moral standards. Sadly some have sought to establish their own righteousness, since they didn't know about God's righteousness and didn't subject themselves to the righteousness of God (Romans 10, verse 3). The Pharisees adopted many humanly conceived traditions that caused them to annul God's own commandments, rendering their pursuit of 'their own righteousness' futile (Matthew 15, verses 3 to 14).

Today people still think of themselves as being righteous, though they permit and even celebrate what God calls sin in their lives. Many churches today suggest that we come as we are and leave the same way. Many ignore or forget the need to repent (Luke 13:3, and Acts 17:30). And so not wishing to confront or offend, many preachers no longer speak of repentance. Repentance demands that we turn our hearts from sin and reverse our lifestyles as well. Those who reject or ignore God's laws become a moral law to themselves, subjective and usually permissive. And by doing so, they set their minds and hearts on their own desires. They don't realize their rejection of God's laws means they cannot be righteous in His eyes.

Romans 8:5 to 8 says, "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it doesn't subject itself to the law of God, for it's not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." If you wish to be right with God, you must consider where the focus of your heart lies.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:27 to 30, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 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 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." What we think about in our hearts matters, and we must learn to control our eyes, our thoughts, and our desires. And whether it's the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life, we must learn to deal with it.

Many today have forgotten the momentary pleasures of sin have a high price. They may imagine there are no rules, but Scripture repeatedly warns of the dangers of sin. "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). And God will even judge the secret sins (Romans 2, verse 16). One may feel he's justified in his actions and yet he's only fooling himself. "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12). All the changes happening in our culture won't turn a lie into the truth, won't turn sin into righteousness, it won't turn the immoral things into moral, and it won't justify having no morality at all.

Sin always costs more than we think. Sin will always yield more pain than we thought. The wages of sin, which is death, will last longer than we can imagine (Romans 6, verse 23). If we think we can live for our desires and never face any consequences, we're only lying to ourselves. Galatians 6:7 to 8 says, "Don't be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

Therefore, the faithful Christian who hungers and thirsts for righteous needs to value virtue, integrity, and purity. The word "virtue" describes moral excellence. The virtuous person not only avoids sin, he's also highly involved in doing good to others. For him the pursuit of what is good is foremost in his daily thoughts. Paul described the way a Christian should think in Philippians 4 and verse 8, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there's any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."

Not only does the virtuous person think properly, he practices what he believes. Like Jesus in Acts 10, verse 38, he goes about doing good and blessing others. He does more than is expected for others and is kind to all. Since he knows he belongs to Jesus Christ, he looks for opportunities to serve others. They please God and bless all who know them. Ephesians 5, verses 1 and 2 says, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."

The righteous person is a person of integrity and honesty. He takes seriously the admonition in Romans 12 and verse 17, to "respect what is right in the sight of all men." A righteous person is honest with himself, he's honest with others. He doesn't lie, cheat, or steal; and he doesn't cover up for those who do. A righteous person does an honest day's work for an honest day's wage. A person of integrity keeps his word. Psalm 15 describes the person as one who shows integrity: whenever "he swears to his own hurt and does not change; He doesn't put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent." Integrity in character makes a person trustworthy.

The righteous man values also purity. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 and verse 8, "Blessed are those who are pure in heart, for they shall see God." Paul urged Timothy in 1 Timothy 4, verse 12 to show himself an example of purity. He said in 2 Timothy 2, verse 22, "Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." The righteous man shows self-control in his thoughts and his behavior. Sadly, some people allow their minds, their speech, and their behavior to become anything but pure. Titus 1 and verse 15 says, "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled." Do people see you as a person of virtue, integrity, and purity?

Righteousness can also refer to God's character of holiness and purity. We serve a holy and pure God, who doesn't sin, and doesn't permit sin, to please Him. We can learn about becoming righteous through the gospel. The apostle Paul said in Romans 1:16 to 17, "For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

The apostle Paul did not want a righteousness that comes from keeping the Mosaic Law but one that comes from faith in Christ Jesus. Paul, who had been a leading Jew and a Pharisee wrote in Philippians 3:7 to 11, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I've counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Because of Jesus, we can become right with God and enjoy the blessings of being His children and in His grace. Jesus suffered to redeem us and to make us right with God. The One “who knew no sin became sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5, verse 21). “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (1 Peter 2, verse 24).

We can have a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. And we’re justified (that is made righteous) “as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:22 and 24). It’s by the grace of God through faith that we’re freed from the condemnation of sin and are able to enjoy newness of life, being born again into the family of God and able to enter the kingdom of God. Of course, the faith that saves is an obedient faith (Romans 1, verse 5).

The Lord Jesus said in Mark 12 and verse 30, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Righteousness means loving God with all your heart and allowing God to rule in your heart. Many think of love as a feeling of the heart, but love for God requires the whole person: heart, soul, mind and strength. The Lord Jesus said love for God includes how we react to His commandments. He said in John 14:23 and 24, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.” Faith alone is not enough to show love for God; one must also be obedient to His will.

And it means loving the things that God loves and avoiding the things that offend God. It’s all about Jesus Christ being your Savior but also your Lord. You long for His mercy and grace, but you also must respect His being your Lord and Master. Righteousness is all about walking with God and giving God a home in your life. We won’t find purpose, love, rest, joy, peace, or hope, until we find it in the Lord Jesus Christ. You’ll remain hungry for righteousness until you taste and see the Lord is good. Augustine of Hippo was right about our need for God when he said, “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in thee.”

Jesus calls us to that rest in Matthew 11:28 to 30 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” If you wish to live as a righteous person, then come, come to the Lord Jesus.

Let’s pray. “Oh Father we’re thankful that Your word helps us to understand Your will for our lives, help us to have faith, help us to know of Your grace, help us to turn from evil and to live lives that please You, that are righteous. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.”

What does the righteous life look like? How does living for the Lord make a difference?

Galatians 5:22 to 24 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; and against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” These are marvelous gifts and beautiful ways of life; they bless everyone. When you hunger and thirst for righteousness, that leads you to act in faith and obedience, and the blessings of life grow each day. God’s grace can make a difference! Don’t doubt what God can do in your life, if you deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acting in faith means putting away your old way of life and taking up the Lord’s way. You can’t find God’s satisfying ways while you live in sin. You must hunger and thirst for righteousness. Do you thirst for God? Place your faith in the Lord Jesus and believe in the gospel. Turn from sin and follow the Lord

in repentance. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. Now baptism into Christ is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38).

And the apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:21, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of the dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Now if you wish to be saved, don't argue with God or hold to your sins; be obedient to the Lord in faith. And today is the best day to let that hunger for righteousness lead you to be filled with faith, love, and peace.

We hope that today's study has stirred you to consider whether you're living the righteous life. This study is available in a booklet titled, *Hungering for Righteousness*. And if you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, 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. Now there's a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that in your area at searchtv.org. You can also watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! And we hope that you'll go to it, it's there available 7 days a week. Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And when you're watching be sure to like the programs that you watch; this helps spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

So focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. And 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. As always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.