

January 5, 2020

Starting Again Romans 6:15-19

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

As 2020 begins, I hope you're thinking about starting _____ and making a new commitment to the Lord. Someone has said that the God of the Bible is the God of second _____. The Scriptures _____ God's love for all people and His willingness to accept those who penitently humble their hearts and seek for a new and better life. With God's help, you can _____ your ways and start over. God wants to _____ you become the godly person you've always wanted to be.

Eleven years ago, I moved to Edmond, Oklahoma and became _____ of In Search of the Lord's Way. Your love, support, and prayers have encouraged me, and I thank you. I've deeply appreciated working with Chris Lyon, my fellow-workers, and all the volunteers who make this program possible. The Search ministry requires many people working together to bring the gospel to the world by television, radio, and the internet. Please let us know you're watching and be sure to thank the entire team of Christian servants who truly care about you and your souls.

If you look in the mirror of your _____, you may not like what you see. We all have consciences that monitor our _____ and spiritual lives. When we fail to live as God desires, our conscience pricks our _____. We feel guilty when we know that we've sinned, and we feel _____ when we consider that we're the kind of people who could do such immoral things. All people sin, but God has provided His grace to _____.

Our reading today comes from the Book of Romans 6:15-19.

People say, "I don't _____ God to forgive me of my sins. There's no such thing as sin." In fact, 13 percent of Americans say there's no such thing as sin, and nearly forty percent say that the word sin is _____. Some people _____ the existence of sin because they don't believe in God. They assume they won't _____ any consequences for their sins, that God won't hold them accountable, and they can go on living as they please. Sadly, they _____ what sin does to their consciences and their memories. There's an inescapable moral law within, and that moral law within speaks to a moral lawmaker, God. Even if people say there's no such thing as sin they will have to admit there is such a thing as crime. Those who don't want to be judged, judge the behavior of others every day. All humans have a moral sense, and that moral sense is God-given.

When people commit a sin, they may not suffer any immediate punishment; but they do feel the prick of _____ in their hearts. They may think they can rid their guilt on their own by denying they've sinned, or by blaming others, or by blaming God; but these methods don't work. Just because you can _____ like sin doesn't matter doesn't mean that it doesn't matter to God. Unresolved guilt doesn't go away when we know the truth about our sins; the weight of guilt can

linger for a lifetime. God doesn't ignore or forget unresolved sin; He punishes it. God told His people, "Be sure your _____ will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). Beyond that, people with a stained conscience find it hard to respect themselves because they're ashamed of what they did.

Over time, one may become callous and refuse to _____. Jeremiah spoke of the Jews in his day who would not listen to God or repent of their sins, even when God punished them. God demands that we be _____ about our sin. He said, "O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish; you have consumed them, but they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent" (Jeremiah 5:3). Some will do anything, anything to keep from admitting that they have sinned.

When people _____ to repent, God takes notice. With a broken heart, He punishes them for their wicked _____. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow about His _____, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to _____." God said through the prophet Ezekiel, "'But if the wicked man _____ from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely _____; he shall not die. All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live. Do I have any _____ in the death of the wicked,' declares the Lord GOD,' rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?" (Ezekiel 18:21-23).

God has always been interested in our being _____ and in changing our sinful ways. Zacchaeus, as a chief tax-collector in Jericho, was despised by the Jews as a _____ who had compromised with the Romans. Many thought he became rich by _____ from them. Zacchaeus had climbed a sycamore tree just to _____ Jesus pass by. Jesus, however, when He saw Zacchaeus up in the sycamore tree _____ for Zacchaeus to come down. Jesus was going to His house that day. Luke 19:7-10 says, "When they saw it, they all began to _____, saying, 'He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.' Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the _____, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today _____ has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was _____.'"

Jesus, in spite of the crowd, took an _____ in Zacchaeus, something Zacchaeus lacked from his fellow citizens of Jericho. His willingness to be with Zacchaeus so touched the tax-collector that he proclaimed his willingness to _____ his wealth and to right any wrongs that he'd committed. He was a changed man, changed in his _____ and willing to demonstrate it. That reveals repentance. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of _____. Repentance, like faith and love, is essential to a new life.

The prodigal son also shows the _____ of repentance. This disobedient young man decided to live the life of sin and caused himself great _____. He left everything good and found only loneliness and misery. He came to his _____ and decided to go home. Luke 15:20-23

says, “So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and _____ and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have _____ against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.’” In sin the son was _____ and lost; but coming home to repent he was _____ and found. He came home repentant, and His father took him in. Today, many estranged children of God need to come _____ to God repentant!

For those who’ve never become Christians, consider Nicodemus who came to Jesus acknowledging that He came from God. The Lord Jesus told Nicodemus about a _____ birth, “‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?’ Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’” (John 3:3-7).

Though Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, he still _____ to be born again. No matter who you are, you too need to be born again. The Lord made it clear that unless you’re born of water and the Spirit you cannot enter the _____ of God! Being born again means you’re a new and _____ kind of person. You have a new life _____ your old ways. Your thinking, your speech, your choices, and your behavior conform not to the world but to the ways _____ by the Lord Jesus. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the _____ of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

This new birth begins with a _____ away of the old way of sin and taking on a new life. This regeneration and salvation happens when a person is _____. Titus 3:3-7 says, “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 _____ 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 _____, 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 _____ of eternal life.”

God saves us by washing us _____ from sin and regenerating us, giving us new life. We cease living like the world and we begin living like Christ when we’re washed or baptized into Christ. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things _____ away; behold, new things have come.”

Read how Paul explains this in more detail in Romans 6:3-7.

Baptism _____ us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. In baptism, we're crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, and raised with Christ. Just as Christ had newness of life when God raised Him up, so God gives us newness of life when we are raised up with Him. This takes place, of course, in baptism! The old body of _____ is crucified with Christ, so that our body of sin might be done away with. In baptism, we are _____ from sin and can now live new lives in Christ!

You can _____ to live as a slave of sin or a slave of righteousness. I hope you will choose to be a slave of the Lord Jesus. The prodigal son chose to be a slave of sin and _____ for it. You will, too. Romans 6:16-18 says, "Do you not know that when you _____ yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you _____, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the _____ to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been _____ from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

Sadly, some who've been right with God at one time _____ God and sin grievously. When David sinned with Bathsheba and was guilty of causing the death of Uriah, her husband, he _____ great guilt and shame. He knew how he had sinned against God and what he'd _____. David said, "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will _____ my transgressions to the LORD'; And You _____ the guilt of my sin" (Psalm 32:3-5).

David cried out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). God gives us a clean heart when we repent. Once forgiven, David could say, and what we ought to say, "I'm not all I ought to be, I'm not all I want to be, I'm not all I hope to be or going to be, but thank God by His mercy and grace I'm not what I used to be." There's no greater blessing than knowing your sins are forgiven and that you're right with the living God!

Paul said, "For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Corinthians 15:9). Perhaps you've felt, "I am not fit to be a Christian because I've sinned." You may feel there's no hope. Paul called himself the chief of sinners. He also said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain." Has God's grace saved you? (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Read Paul's explanation in 1 Timothy 1:12-16.

You too can come to the grace of God by faith. Believe in the Lord Jesus, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. Ananias told Paul, who was Saul of Tarsus, "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name" (Acts 22:16). Paul knew that one is baptized into the death of Christ, where the blood washes away his sins.