

"Starting Again"

As 2020 begins, I hope you're thinking about starting fresh and making a new commitment to the Lord. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Join us as we think of starting over!

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Someone has said that the God of the Bible is the God of second chances. The Scriptures reveal His love for all people and His willingness to accept those who penitently humble their hearts and seek for a new a better life. With God's help, you can change your ways and start over. God wants to help you become the godly person you've always wanted to be.

Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Eleven years ago, I moved to Edmond, Oklahoma and became part of the Search, 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.

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

We offer this study free on starting again. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you 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 Romans 6:15 to 19, and explore the fact that life in God's will matters.

Our reading today comes from the book of Romans chapter 6 verses 15 to 19. And here Paul talks about how we can make changes to our lives.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, (that) you are slaves of the one whom you obey, 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 heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

God wants us to live holy lives. And we can change. Let's pray together. Father, we're thankful that Your grace and Your mercy opens the door for us to be able to change. And to become the kind of people that You would have us to be. Help us Father, to start over and to do and to be what You would have us to be. In Jesus name, Amen.

People say, "I don't need 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 obsolete. Some people deny the existence of sin, because they don't believe in God. They assume they won't face any consequences for their sins, that God won't hold them accountable, and they can go on living as they please. Sadly, they ignore 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. Now, 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 guilt 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 act 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 in Numbers 32 verse 23, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Beyond that, people with a stained conscience find it hard to respect themselves, because they're ashamed of what they did.

One may over time become callous and refuse to repent. 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 honest about our sin. He said in Jeremiah 5 and verse 3, "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." Some will do anything, anything to keep from admitting that they have sinned.

When people refuse to repent, God takes notice. With a broken heart, he punishes them for their wicked deeds. 2 Peter 3 and verse 9 says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." God said through the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 18:21 to 23, "But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; 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 pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord GOD," rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?"

God has always been interested in our being saved and in changing our sinful ways. Zacchaeus, as a chief tax-collector in Jericho, was despised by the Jews as a sinner who had compromised with the Romans. Many thought he became rich by stealing from them. Zacchaeus had climbed a sycamore tree just to see Jesus pass by. Jesus, however, when He saw Zacchaeus up in the sycamore fig tree, called for Zacchaeus to come down. Jesus was going to His house that day. And Luke 19:7 to 10 says, "When they saw it, they all began to grumble, 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 poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation 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 lost.'"

Now, Jesus, in spite of the crowd, took an interest 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 share his wealth and to right any wrongs that he'd committed. He was a changed man, changed in his heart and willing to demonstrate it. That, my friend, reveals repentance. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of ways. Repentance, like faith and love, is essential to a new life.

The prodigal son also shows the value of repentance. This disobedient young man decided to live the life of sin and caused himself great misery. He left everything good and found only loneliness and misery. Well, he came to his senses and decided to go home. Luke 15:20 to 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 ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned 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.'" Oh, in sin, the son was dead and lost; but coming home to repent, he was alive and found. He came home repentant, and His father took him in. There are today many estranged children of God, who need to come home to God repentant!

For those who've never become Christians, consider Nicodemus, who came to Jesus acknowledging that He came from God. Well, the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus about a new birth in John 3 verses 3 to 7. He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (Well,) 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.'"

Though Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, he still needed to be born again. And 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 kingdom of God! Being born again means you're a new and different kind of person. You have a new life unlike your old ways. Your thinking, your speech, your choices, and your behavior conforms not to the world but to the ways taught by the Lord Jesus. Romans 12 and verse 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 will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Now, this new birth begins with a washing away of the old way of sin and taking on a new life. This regeneration and salvation happens when a person is baptized. Titus 3 verses 3 to 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 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, (how?) 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."

Now, God saves us by washing us clean 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. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

Now, Paul explains this in more detail in Romans 6 verses 3 to 7. He says, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead

through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.”

Baptism unites us with Christ in His death, burial, and a resurrection. In baptism, we're crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, and raised with Christ. And 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 sin is crucified with Christ, so that our body of sin might be done away with. In baptism we are free from sin and can now live new lives in Christ!

Now, you can choose to live as a slave of sin or a slave of righteousness. And I hope you will choose to be a slave of the Lord Jesus. The prodigal son chose to be a slave of sin and suffered for it. You will too. Romans 6:16 to 18 says, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, (that) you are slaves of the one whom you obey, 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 heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

Sadly, some who've been right with God at one time leave God and sin grievously. When David sinned with Bathsheba and was guilty of causing the death of Uriah, her husband, he felt great guilt and shame. He knew how he had sinned against God and what he'd lost. David said in Psalm 32:3 to 5, “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 confess my transgressions to the LORD’; And You forgave the guilt of my sin.”

David could cry out in Psalm 51 verse 10, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.” God gives us a clean heart when we repent. And once forgiven, David could say, like us and what we ought to say, that “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!

Let's pray. Oh Father, help us to do Your will, to change our hearts and lives and repent of those sins. And Father for those who need to be baptized to act upon their faith and to do what God has asked them to do. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:9, “For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” Perhaps you've felt, well, “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. And he also said in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 10, “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?

Paul explained in 1 Timothy 1:12 to 16, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”

Now, 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, in Acts 22:16, "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." You see, Paul knew that one is baptized into the death of Christ, where the blood washes away his sins.

We hope that today's study about God's grace has encouraged you. If you live in the United States and 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. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now, you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now, if you get a hold of us, don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're not here to exploit you. We're here to help you to learn the truth, so that you might go to heaven.

We do ask that you get your heart focused on God today. Do it by going to church; by worshipping there with the brethren. There's probably a church of Christ that's in your area. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We're always wanting to help people to come to know the Lord. To get involved in a congregation and to be what God wants them to be. 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 we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.