

"God With Us"

Does it matter whether God is with us? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're exploring the blessing of having God with us. 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 like a mirror that allows a person to see himself as God sees him. If you wish to look into your soul, read and meditate on the Scriptures. They'll sometimes assure you, and they will sometimes show your faults and weaknesses. They will surely tell you what God sees, thinks, feels, and says. We're wise to pay close attention to what God says, if we wish to have His blessing. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

An angel of the Lord told Joseph, when he considered Mary's condition in Matthew 1:21 to 23, that, "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name IMMANUEL,' which translated means, "GOD with us." We can certainly see God with us in the life of Jesus who revealed what God is like.

Jesus promised in Matthew 28 and verse 20, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Paul often closed his epistles with a phrase similar to "the Lord be with you." In Romans 15:33 he told the Romans, "Now the God of peace be with you all." Later in Romans 16:20 he said, "The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you." He told the Corinthians, "the God of love and peace be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11). Such greetings speak of God's favor and blessing for those who love and obey Him. Do you love and obey Him? Is God's favor with you?

We offer this study free on how God is with us. 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 Psalm 23, and then we'll explore the fact that Jesus is with us.

Our reading today is probably the best known Psalm of David. It shows his close relationship with God. Psalm 23.

The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.
He restores my soul;
He guides me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You have anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.
Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

A beautiful and wonderful psalm. Let's pray together. Father, we're thankful for Your loving kindness, for Your compassion, for how You provide for our needs. Father help us to stay close to You. Father, may You always be with us as we do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

Jesus came into this world as Immanuel, "God with us." It matters whether God is with us. Having a relationship with God is the most important relationship of all. When God is with us, we have His favor and blessing. If God is absent in our lives, we're spiritually alone and without hope. For this reason, I want God in my heart and in my life. I want to cling to Him and like Jesus I always want to do the things that are pleasing to Him (John 8 verse 29).

So...what happens when God is with us? And what difference does it make? We might consider the case of Noah. In the days of Noah, 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. The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." God determined to blot out man, but "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6 verse 8). Noah and his family, eight persons, were saved; but the rest of the people on earth perished in the flood.

Even though Joseph's older brothers hated him and sold him into slavery, God took care of him. Genesis 39:2 to 3 says, "The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand." Well, Stephen said about Joseph in Acts 7 verses 9 and 10, that, "God was with him, and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt."

In later years, God was with the judges after Israel had taken the land of Canaan. Judges 2 verse 18 says, "When the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them."

David was a man after God's own heart. And, though he suffered through many trials, 1 Samuel 18:14 says, that, "David was prospering in all his ways for the LORD was with him." 2 Samuel 5 and verse 10 says, "that, David became greater and greater, for the LORD God of hosts was with him." When God is with us, He blesses us and helps us through our struggles and challenges.

King Hezekiah "did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done." And Hezekiah "clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments." As a result 2 Kings 18 verses 7 and 8 says, "And the LORD was with him; wherever he went he prospered. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. He defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city." Now, God blessed Hezekiah, because Hezekiah clung to the Lord and kept His commandments.

The Lord God said to Israel in Isaiah 41 verse 10, "Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." When we cling to God, He clings to us. James 4:7 to 8

says, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

When God is with us, that doesn't mean that we'll never suffer or be tempted. We all face trials, heartaches, and difficulties. An anyone who has read the stories of Joseph, David, or Hezekiah knows that their lives were not always easy. What God being "with" us does mean is that we are never alone in our temptations, our struggles, and our suffering. We look to God for our strength, our comfort, and our hope.

Well, what happens, then, when people forsake God and no longer have His blessing? I can think of a few illustrations. Do you remember Samson and Delilah? Samson's power came from God. As long as he observed God's ways, God was with him. Delilah wanted to know the source of Samson's strength. And Judges 16:16 to 20 tells the story: "It came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death. So he told her all that was in his heart and said to her, "A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I will become weak and be like any other man." When Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all that is in his heart." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. She made him sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to afflict him, and his strength left him. She said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him." When his hair came off, Samson's favor with the Lord ceased. He could no longer defeat the Philistines. Thankfully, Samson's hair grew back. And when Samson prayed, God restored his strength.

Scripture gives us more than one picture of God's view of Solomon. When Solomon first became king, 2 Chronicles 1 and verse 1 says, "Now Solomon the son of David established himself securely over his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him and exalted him greatly." But, Solomon's many wives led him astray. 1 Kings 11:6 to 9 says, "Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and (he) did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice." He no longer pleased God, because he loved his foreign wives.

The people of Judah, who were God's people, in later years turned away from God and followed Baal and other Canaanite gods. You see, they believed they could practice idolatry and immorality and still be right with God. Do you remember Jeremiah 2:12 to 13 says, "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." You see, they left the God who loved them for worthless gods who were only man-made pieces of stone and wood. God says in Jeremiah 5:29 to 31 "Shall I not punish these people?' declares the LORD, 'On a nation such as this Shall I not avenge Myself?' An appalling and horrible thing Has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule on their own authority; And My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?"

We too must ask the question, if we have forsaken the Lord, what will we do at the end of it, when God holds us responsible. You see, they chose sin over righteousness and they hardened their hearts against God. We must be careful to keep our hearts close to God. Jeremiah 6 and verse 15 says of Jerusalem, "Were they ashamed because of the abomination (that) they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time (He says) that I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the LORD." You know, I see even in our own culture, some who are never ashamed of immorality and don't know how to blush over their sins. This, my friend, is great weakness of heart and mind.

Hebrews 3:12 to 13 warns, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." The idea that Christians who turn from God cannot lose their souls is a myth. God urges us to stay faithful to Him and to continue worshiping with the church. Hebrews 10 verse 25 says, "not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

Some have decided to forsake assembling with the church altogether, to forsake the Lord. Hebrews 10:26 to 31 says, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." And again, "The LORD will judge his people." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

I tell ya, God has a track record of punishing those who forsake him and lose all respect for what is good and right. We must not, as Jerusalem did in the days of Jeremiah, listen to the wrong people and take the grace of God for granted. The Jews hardened their hearts and refused to repent. And so, God punished them. God will punish us too, if we harden our hearts and refuse to repent. God is the God of grace, but He is also a holy and just God who punishes sin.

My friend, will you refuse the blessing of God, so that you can live a worldly life without God? Would you gain the world but lose your soul? Will you stray from the truth? James 5:19 to 20 says, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." Won't you return to God if you're away from Him?

You know, most people know John 3:16, but do you know John 3:18? It says that, "He who believes in Him is not judged; (but) he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." You can't expect God to be with you and bless you, if you do not believe and serve the Lord. According to Ephesians 2 and verse 12, people outside of Christ are "separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Yes, it matters whether you are with God and whether God is with you.

Let's pray together. Oh, Heavenly Father, help us always to draw near to You and to cling to You. To serve You and to love You. And to be obedient to Your will. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

The Lord Jesus said in John 14:23 to 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 abode (our home) with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me." You know, those whom God loves and with whom He makes His home, His abode, are those who love Him and keep His commandments. Do you?

Now, if you have the Lord with you in this life, you can live with the Lord in the life to come. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:6 to 8, "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body (that) we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be (now get this) at home with the Lord." Now, if you wish to be at home with the Lord in eternity, then let the Lord make his home with you in this life.

To begin a relationship with the Lord, you must place your faith and trust in Him. Believing in Jesus Christ is more than acknowledging His existence; it means that you believe Him and in Him. You believe His words and His promises. You want to serve Him. You turn away from sinful things and you begin living for the Lord—folks that's repentance! Now, with you, with your love, and your faith, and penitent heart, then you can confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, just like the bible teaches in Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16 and Romans 6:3 to 7.

Well we hope that today's study about God with us has really stirred your heart to think about your responsibility to be with the Lord Jesus so that He can be with you. And if you live in the United States and you 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 that are in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." That's all one word. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now, don't worry, if you get a hold of us, we're not here to try to exploit you, get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

There is no better day than today to get your life where you want it to be and right with God. Start worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ that's in your area. Why not worship with them today? And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. Keep searching God's Word with us and tell one of your friends about this program. Let em know that you're watching. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.