

"A New Life"

Many people fill their lives with sin and deep regret. Do you ever wish you could start over, clean and pure? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." The Lord Jesus gives us the opportunity for a new life.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The God we read about in the Bible is the One who created the world and each of us. He's the God of hope and forgiveness, who gives us an opportunity to start over fresh and pure in Christ. The Lord God expects us to keep His commands and avoid sin; but God is also our Father in heaven who has compassion on us, when we humble ourselves and repent. Through Christ we can have newness of life, filled with good things. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Today is the first Lord's day of this new year, and for me it's an anniversary. I began working with In SEARCH of the Lord's Way in January 2009. I've partnered with some of the finest people in the world over the last thirteen years, people who work hard to bring this program to you. And I'm thankful for them and thankful to you for your prayers and kind words. Please remember to keep us in your prayers.

When people sin, and know they've sinned, they feel defiled and wish they could start over clean and pure. They become ashamed of themselves. They long for an opportunity to put the past behind and transform their lives into something nobler and better. The Lord's way is the best way to live; it's nobler and better than following the ways of the world. The Lord's way frees us from the deception and enslavement of sin; it brings joy and peace. The Lord's way opens the door to hope and to eternal life. Worldly ways will promise you freedom and happiness, while it corrupts and leads to ruin. Those who love this world will lose all that the love of God can bring.

We offer this study free on a new life. And if you'd like a printed copy of our study 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.

We'll now worship in song, we'll read from John 3:1 to 7, and explore the beauty and value of a new life!

Our reading today comes from the gospel of John, chapter 3, verses 1 through 7, and deals with a new life. "Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'Well 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.'" That's a reading from God's holy word.

Let's pray together. "Oh Father we're thankful that You have taught us and led us to know what You would have us to do and to be. Father we are thankful that we can be born again, and that we can enter the kingdom. Bless us and help us to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

David, who committed the sins of adultery with Bathsheba and then caused the murder of her husband Uriah, then learned about God's forgiveness, and he wrote in Psalm 103:8 to 12, "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."

God loves us and wants to remain in lovingkindness toward us. Yes, we are flawed and sin, but God's love and forgiveness are great. He offers to each of us the opportunity to be born again to a new and different life, free from the past. When He forgives us, He no longer holds our past sins against us. He offers us a new and better life.

People often delight in sin, but as time passes that happiness turns to misery. When people understand what the old life is really like, they're ashamed of themselves. They wished they had never lived so worldly. Romans 6 verses 20 to 23 says "For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you're now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Paul gives us a before and after description of what it means to know the Lord and to walk with the Lord. Ephesians 4:17 to 19 says, "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."

Now, this way of life is characterized by a darkened understanding and a futile way of life. God excludes them because of their ignorance of His ways. They've become hard-hearted and callous, giving themselves over to sensuality, impurity, and greed. The word sensuality refers to the conduct of one who is morally unprincipled, who excites disgust, by unbridled lust and shamelessness. Now these ways have no restraints. They're filled with selfish pride and have no place for God.

Paul then describes the transformed lives of those who walk with Christ. Ephesians 4:20 to 24 says, "But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."

At the heart of the transformed life in Christ is the truth. Christians listen to the voice of the Lord and have found the truth that sets them free. Truth is and has always been in Jesus. Truth about sin and about Christ will open the eyes of anyone. It'll lead a person to lay aside that old self, because they realize how the lusts of deceit corrupt one morally and spiritually. But it doesn't stop there! When you know Christ, you want to put on the new self, which is in the likeness of God. When a person is in Christ, he is created to live in righteousness and to embrace the holiness that comes when we know the truth.

The devil himself is a liar and wants to keep us ignorant of right and wrong, of sin and righteousness, and of heaven and hell. He wants everyone to believe that he can live any way he desires and will suffer no consequences. But Christ brings us the truth and with it freedom, hope, life,

and love! He can help us lay aside the things that defeat us with corruption and give us victory over them.

Paul describes his thanksgiving for the church at Colossae that made that transformation from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of God's beloved Son. Paul wrote in Colossians 1:3 to 5, "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel." The gospel message is God's power to save; and when we hear and obey the gospel, we're blessed with a true faith, a true love for all, and a hope laid up in heaven.

Because the Colossians had this kind of faith, Paul wrote in Colossians 1:9 to 14, "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we've not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Now look at these marvelous blessings given to these redeemed souls who came to Christ in faith, love, and obedience. First, they were rescued, delivered from the domain of darkness, by the blood of Christ from their sins. Satan no longer has a hold on them. Second, God through Jesus has transferred them into the kingdom of His beloved Son, the church. We know it's the church, because Paul is writing to the church about this kingdom. Third, God gave them through the preaching of the word the knowledge of His will, which provides all spiritual wisdom and understanding. God's teaching opens the door to the wisdom that leads to eternal life.

Fourth, this wisdom and understanding helps us to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, so that we may please our Creator in every way. When we see the love of God shown on the cross, it makes us want to love and to please Him. Fifth, His love for us leads us to love others and to bear fruit in every good work. His love showing in our lives makes the whole world a better place; our energy is not wasted on selfish desire but on caring for others. And anyone who loves the Lord loves to bless the lives of others with good works. Sixth, a convert will be strengthened with all power according to His glorious might. We must not overlook the power of God to strengthen us, to protect us and to provide for us what we need to do His will (2 Corinthians 9 verses 8 to 10). Seventh, God's activity in our lives will help us to become steadfast in our faith and patient while we wait for God's providence and protection.

Now all of these blessings call us to give thanks joyfully to our God who has loved us so richly and qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. We have all these blessings here and heaven for an eternal home.

It's no wonder that Paul never looked back. He left his old Jewish life and took on faith in Christ. He said 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.”

Now Paul never considered himself as a perfect man, nor does any faithful Christian. He knew that he still had to reach forward and press on to the goal. He said in Philippians 3:12 to 14, “Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. [And then he said,] Brethren, I don’t regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Paul would not let his past keep him from disciplining himself and serving the Lord.

As you read the first few chapters of the book of Romans, you’ll see the terrible nature of sin. There were people who suppressed the truth, who ignored God, and would not thank Him for all His blessings (Romans 1:18 to 20). Some who professed wisdom became fools. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, worshiping the creature rather than the Creator. They followed degrading passions and took on a depraved mind and were filled with all unrighteousness.

In the second chapter of Romans, Paul describes those who knew the Law, passed judgment on others, and yet they practiced the same evil things. He says, “God will render to each person according to his deeds,” and “there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2, verse 6 and verse 11). Ultimately, we must realize that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3 and verse 23). And so we need rescuing, we need redemption, we need the forgiveness of sins.

Converting to Christ by our obedience to the gospel is just the beginning. Hearing the word of truth, we believe, we repent, we confess that Jesus Christ is God’s Son, and we’re baptized into Christ. And when we’re baptized, God adds us to His people (Acts 2:41), He washes away our sins (Acts 22:16), and He gives us newness of life (Romans 6 and verse 4). Becoming a Christian by being born of water and the Spirit is necessary to salvation and necessary to enter the kingdom. Baptism is a birth to a whole new life; a life that one must continue to serve the Lord all through his days.

Romans 12 and verse 2 was written to Christians. And it 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.” We’re transformed by the renewing of the mind, setting out minds on the will of God and living it out. Renew your mind by studying the word of God daily and meditating on it. Spend time daily in prayer. And get busy worshipping with the church.

Let’s pray together. “Oh Father we’re thankful that we can have a new life through Your Son Jesus, being forgiven and redeemed, and we can be Your children. Father help us always to love You and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.”

I like to remind people of this saying: “I’m not all I ought to be; I’m not all I want to be; I’m not all I’m going to be; but thank God by His mercy and grace I’m not what I used to be.” Don’t believe anyone who tells you that you cannot change or that you cannot start over with your life. Transformation or conversion always expects repentance on our part. The Bible everywhere assumes people can repent, if they choose to do so. The prodigal son repented, Nineveh repented, David repented, the people at Pentecost repented, Saul of Tarsus repented, and you too can repent. You don’t have to be stuck in a past way of life. You don’t have to stay ashamed. And you can have newness of life.

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.” You can become a new creature in Christ. So place your trust in Christ and the gospel. Repent by turning from your old way of life to serve the Lord.

Confess Jesus Christ as God's Son, and be baptized into Christ. Romans 6 and verse 4 says, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism [that birth of water in spirit] 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." In baptism we're crucified with Christ so that our body of sin might be done away with (Romans 6 and verse 6). Through baptism into Christ, God makes us His children (Galatians 3:26 to 27) and transfers us into the kingdom of His beloved Son. Today is the best day, 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. This is the best day for you to do that. It's the best day to begin your new walk with the Lord Jesus. And so repent and be baptized, find a church home, and live every day for the Lord.

We hope today's study about a new life has stirred you to start afresh in your spiritual walk with God. 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. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. And you can also watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Be sure to like the programs when you watch them; that helps to spread them.

Well we encourage you to start going to church and to get involved. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.