

"Where is God?"

Some folks think God is absent in our world today; others say that God is dead. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And welcome to a Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's Way." Is God alive and active in the world today and working for our good? Well stay with us. You won't want to miss today's study.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We want to know all we can about God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; and the way to know God is through a study of His Word, the Bible. So we go again and again to Scripture. We appreciate so much that you tune in to this program each week. We want to be a part of your life.

How we view God matters greatly in how we view life and how we understand our purpose and role in this world. An atheist does not believe God exists at all. An agnostic says he doesn't know whether God exists, because he thinks God is unknowable. Some believe God got the world going and then abandoned it. Others hold that belief in God was relevant in ancient times, but God is now dead. We no longer need God in our lives today according to them.

Several years ago in graduate school, I spent a couple of semesters studying skeptics and atheists. One thing I found was that skepticism and atheism grew more out of an attitude than it did out of evidence. Atheists and skeptics tended to focus on the disorder and the ugly in life. They seemed to ignore the order, the beauty, the grandeur, and the wisdom so evident in our universe. They were intelligent people, but they missed the intelligent design that's all around us. I'm amazed at how easily people can slip into a very narrow view of life and of God. Some folks close their eyes and their minds to the beauty of God and see only the evil and the ugly.

God is good and actively blesses us every day. Thankfully, we can know Him and what He's done for us to bless us and give us eternal life.

Now we offer the information on this program free. And if you'd like a printed copy, or a CD or tape of our study, then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send us an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, if you like, call our toll-free telephone number. We'll pay for the call. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website www.searchtv.org.

Well, we'll join the Edmond church in song, and then we'll read from Proverbs 3 verses 5 to 7.

Our reading today comes from the book of Proverbs, chapter 3, verses 5 thru 7. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil." That's good advice from the book of Proverbs. Let's pray together. Father we're so grateful that You are so trustworthy and that we can put ourselves into Your hands, day to day. And Father we know that You're with us and that You help us. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Paul said in Ephesians 1:18 to 19, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." God wants our hearts to be open to His power. God's power towards us who believe is greater than we think!

Have you ever experienced an "aha!aa" moment—awakening to something that's a great truth that had eluded you? Well that's what Paul wanted for the Ephesians. He wanted them to understand what God causes to happen—God is at work! God has great power—and His power works in the lives of His people.

You might ask how God is at work. He's working in a variety of ways. First, God works in the universe. As a prophet, King David, said in Psalm 19 verse 1, that "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands." One can hardly look at the beauty, the order, and the wisdom of the universe and not see how wise and how powerful God is. The God who makes the sun shine and flowers bloom, the God who regulates times and seasons has such great power and wisdom that it's truly beyond our understanding. Paul proclaimed in Acts 14 verses 16 and 17: "And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." All that we have, all our blessings come from God!

Jesus is not only our Creator, He's also the one who keeps this world together. Colossians 1 verses 15 to 17 says, "And He (speaking of Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." God's power and wisdom cause our seasons, cause the earth to rotate every 24 hours making night and day, cause the moon to revolve around the earth every 28 days and controlling the tides of the ocean, and causing the earth to go around the sun every 365 and one fourth days determining our year and our seasons. Now this could not just happen on its own; God has been in control.

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6 and verse 11: "Give us this day our daily bread." Now we're blessed to have food to eat each day, food that God provides. Have you ever thought about the power of one seed planted in the ground? One kernel of corn planted in the ground, watered and fertilized can produce an ear of corn with sixteen rows and 800 kernels. Many cornstalks will have more than one ear! God created that kernel of corn with the information and the ability to reproduce itself that way.

God is indeed powerful! The Lord Jesus said in Mark 4 verses 27 to 29, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground. Well he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; and he doesn't know how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, and then the ear, and then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." You see God has been taking care of us in marvelous ways for a very long time.

Second, God is at work in your salvation. God sent His Son to die upon the cross; God through the Holy Spirit inspired men to write the Bible including the gospel, which has the power to save; and Christ built His church, who are the saved. From the very beginning God has been working toward your salvation and mine. The apostle Paul by inspiration said in Ephesians 2 verses 4 to 9, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (and then he says) by grace you've been saved, and He raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come, He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ

Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

The salvation that we enjoy through Christ was not easy. It's the gift of God, and for that we are thankful. But great gifts are not cheap, and our redemption came at a price greater than silver or gold. God sacrificed his Son Jesus, and Jesus sacrificed His body on the cross for you and me. We must not take our salvation for granted or treat it lightly as if it were trivial. People who mock the Lord, people who ignore the cross, or criticize the church are usually unthankful for what God has done to save them. They don't realize what He sacrificed to give them eternal life. The Bible is the message of that life. And without the message of the Bible we would all be in great peril—without hope and without God in this present world.

The Bible teaches us how to come to Christ, and how the blood of Christ cleanses us, and how we can have new life with Christ. The Bible says in Colossians 2 verses 12 and 13, “having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions.” You may not realize it, but it is God who is “at work” in baptism.

In baptism God unites us with Christ, God washes away our sins, God takes away that old man of sin, God buries us with Christ, and God raises us up from spiritual death to newness of life. In baptism God adds us to the church and God makes us His children. Oh God is very busy working on us in baptism. And for this reason, I cannot quite understand why anybody would say baptism is unnecessary for our salvation. You see, baptism is when God works on us.

And God doesn't forget us once we're saved. You know, every Christian sins, and that's unfortunate. Christians wish they could keep from sinning; because they love God, and they hate it when they sin and they want to stop it afterward. Well now, God knows that we're weak, but He's also provided for our weaknesses. The Bible says in Hebrews 7 verse 25, “Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” You see, that's what Jesus is doing right now for us. He's interceding with the Father on our behalf, asking the Father to forgive us and to continue blessing us, even when we have sinned. Oh, I am so thankful for the Lord who loves me enough to pray for me.

Third, God is at work answering prayer. The Bible says in Isaiah 65 and verse 24, that "It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear." God wants to hear your prayers. In fact He invites you to pray to Him. The Bible says in James 1 and verse 17, that “Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.” God loves us enough to hear our prayers and to help us when we need Him. The apostle Paul reminds us in Ephesians 3 verses 20 to 21, “Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”

Fourth, God is busy shaping our lives. He works in us. The Bible says in Philippians 1 and verse 6, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” Yes, God prepares His people to do His work, so that we may live for an eternity in heaven with Him. What God is doing in us now prepares us for the life to come. The Bible says in Philippians 2 verses 12 to 13, “So then, my beloved, just as you've always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." Now God is shaping our hearts, our attitudes, our will, and our lives to conform to His will, so that we might live with Him always.

God also saved us so that we might be His servants, doing good works and impacting the world for love and righteousness. The Bible says in Ephesians 2 and verse 10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Now so much good is being done in the world because of the love of God and the teaching of the Bible, Christians feed the hungry, they take care of widows and orphans, they help unwed mothers, they provide help to the lonely and homeless, and they point sinners to righteousness.

I saw a book written by a skeptic, called *The God Problem*. His subtitle suggested that God never addresses the problem of evil in the Bible. Well, I wondered which Bible he was reading from, because it's not the Bible that I've spent my life studying. God knows all about our suffering, and the cross of Christ demonstrates God's willingness to suffer for us. Romans 8 and verse 28 says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Now God doesn't stop every event of suffering, but God does use even suffering to work for our good. We don't always understand what God is doing or why; but we know that God loves us and will use every circumstance in our lives, pleasing or painful, to work for good in some way. We can trust God!

The sweet psalmist of Israel, David, who was inspired of God, said in Psalm 103, verses 1 thru 5, "Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities; Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit; Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle."

Now God has been working in our lives a very long time. He isn't hidden, but we do get distracted by life and sometimes we're unable to see what He's doing. The Bible reminds us of all the good that God is doing for us and in us. You remember Paul said in Acts 20 and verse 32, "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Oh God's word is far from being harmful. It's the source of love and life and good and righteousness. Oh, we need the Bible every day to help us grow and to live as God intended. Let's pray together. Oh Father help us every day to love You more and to see how You're working in our lives. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

I join Paul in His prayer in Ephesians 1:18 to 19: he said "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." God can work in your life, IF you let Him. He won't twist your arm; He won't make you do anything. But if you out of love put your life into His hands, God can do amazing things.

It's not the power of God that is lacking. It's not the willingness of God to work in our lives that is lacking. What is lacking is our willingness to let God into our hearts and our lives.

Proverbs 3:5 to 6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." You've got to trust Him and to let Him work in you. God desires that we believe in Jesus Christ enough to obey Him and to trust His promises.

Now that starts by trusting Him enough to repent of your sins and confess the name of Christ before others. Christ doesn't want a secret disciple. He wants you to confess with your mouth that He is your Lord and that you believe He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now after you've repented and made that confession, God wants you to be baptized into Christ, where God cleanses you with the blood of Jesus and makes you into one of His own children. Won't you do that today? Won't you obey the gospel and put the Lord first? Will you let God work in your life?

Now I hope that you've been blessed by today's study of God's Word. If you want a free printed copy, or CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or by e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

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