

"The Sacred Writings"

What is the single greatest spiritual problem facing our world today? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're going to explore something missing, something we badly need. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We search Scripture, because the Bible is God-given. We can rely on Scripture for the truth and for what is most relevant. We can distinguish right from wrong and good from evil, because of God's teaching in His written word. God's word is specific and does not leave us in doubt about sin. Let's give thanks that we have God's holy word. We appreciate you for taking time with us today. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

If we asked what the single greatest spiritual problem of our time is, what would you say? You might speak of war or our current moral decline. You might suggest the breakup of the home. There can be no doubt that we are a confused culture, an angry and divided culture, and a supremely selfish culture. Paul described his world in Titus 3 and verse 3, "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another."

Well how does this happen? How can we be so confused about the most basic things and be so divided and angry? Well I'll tell you, we have lost our sense of the sacred. We no longer know what it means to be holy, nor do we separate the holy from the profane. We've become like the pagans who do not know God. We acknowledge there is a God. And society gives Him a seat at the table as long as He keeps quiet and doesn't speak. Our culture no longer treats Him as holy or His word as holy. And this we find heartbreaking; and this tells us why our culture is so morally confused and chaotic. Scripture is the way of God to wisdom and light.

Now we offer this study free on the sacred writings. 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.

Larry Owsley will lead us in song, we'll read from 2 Timothy 3:14 to 17, and we'll explore the importance of the sacred writings.

Our reading today comes from 2 Timothy, chapter 3, verses 14 to 17. And this is right on the heels of a statement by Paul that evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse. And then he says in verse 14, "You, however, continue in the things you've learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

And that's the promise we have from God about what the scriptures can do for us. Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father we praise Your name and exalt You as the creator and the lover of all men.

And Father we're thankful for Your Word, which can teach us and correct us and train us to be the kind of people that You want us to be. Father we pray that we may always love You and do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

The Lord told Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18 to 20, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die." The Lord makes a distinction between the true prophet and the false prophet, between the things He has commanded and the opinions and creeds from other sources.

God distinguishes between His words that are holy and the words of human origin. What is holy and divine, and what is human? Jesus once asked the chief priests and elders of the people a question, "The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" (Matthew 21 verse 25). Now this is not a trivial question. If we don't face the difference between what is from God and what is from man in this life, we'll have to face it in the life to come!

If a message is from God, then we ought to pay earnest attention to it. If a message is someone's opinion or even the proclamation of a group of men, it's human of origin. Many claim the Holy Spirit speaks to them today, but the Lord Jesus promised to the apostles in the first century in John 14:26, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." The apostles didn't lack any teaching of the Lord in the first century. Again, the Lord promised the apostles in John 16:13, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all the truth; the Spirit taught them all things. They lacked nothing of what Jesus taught or what would be revealed. All truth is not a little truth, some truth, or even most of the truth. It is all truth. Nothing was lacking. Jude confirmed this promise when he challenged Christians in Jude 3. He said, "Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all (time, once for all) delivered to the saints." Now just as Jesus died once for all on the cross, the contents of the faith had also been delivered to the saints in the first century.

For this reason, we should look to the apostles and to the written word instead of early councils as an authority for the faith. The councils were just men who voted what they thought. We should look to God's holy word, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Nor should we look to reformation councils and creeds of the sixteenth century for the faith. The Holy Spirit through the apostles and prophets delivered the "one faith" in the first century. Councils and creeds of human origin aren't divine. The message that contains all truth for Christians is the promised teaching given to the apostles and found in the written word of God, especially in the New Testament.

God has never permitted men to add to, to take away, or to edit His word. God's word is holy, tested, and true. To change it in any way would be disrespectful to God Himself; it shows a lack of faith in His wisdom and character. Psalm 12 verse 6 says, "The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times." God's words are holy and pure. Not only that, they are unchanging, just as God Himself is unchanging. Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, O LORD,

your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.” The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 24:35, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” 1 Peter 1:23 to 25 makes it clear, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you’ve been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that was preached to you.”

Since God’s word is truly settled in heaven, since it lives and abides forever, since it’s the imperishable seed that causes us to be born again, and since it’s the same good news preached in the first century, why would we ever want to change it? If you change God’s seed, you won’t get God’s fruit. You’ll get something different, and something that will keep you from being born again. False gospels and false teaching don’t produce what the true gospel produces.

Paul rebuked the Galatians for attempting to produce a different gospel. He said in Galatians 1:6 to 9, “I’m astonished that you’re so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel that’s contrary to the one which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.” Preaching a different gospel will cause the preacher and the people who listen to him to be lost.

Changing the teaching of God in any way defiles God’s word. Do you honestly think God will approve those who add to any command, take away any command, twist any command, or edit any teaching to suit our society? The Lord had Moses write in Deuteronomy 12:32, “Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.” Proverbs 30:5 to 6 says, that “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.” Along the same lines, Revelation 22:18 to 19 says, “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”

Deuteronomy, Proverbs, and Revelation clearly teach we cannot ignore, add to, throw out, or change the teaching of Scripture. And God will punish anyone who thinks they can rewrite Scripture into the culture of the day. Those who twist the Scriptures will have to face God Himself one day. What God calls sin is still sin; what God calls holy is still holy. Time and culture will not change what is written in Scripture. People may attempt to twist the Scriptures into something that fits the culture, but God doesn’t change with the whims of culture. You may feel something is okay when God’s word says it isn’t! Isaiah 55:6 to 9 says, “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Yes, Proverbs 16:25 says, that “There is a way that seems right (seems right) to a man, but its end is the way to death.” People so easily lie to themselves about their morals and desires. They imagine things are right when they only lead to death.

We can trust the words of Jesus Christ, because He took such care to tell us what the Father wanted us to know. The Lord Jesus said in John 7 and verse 16, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.” And He repeats this in chapter 12, verses 49 to 50 of John, “For I have not spoken on my own authority (or initiative), but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know (Jesus says) that his commandment is eternal life. And what I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.” God’s commandment is eternal life, and our eternal destinies are tied up in what is said in the Scriptures. On the last day according to John 12:48, we will be judged by the words of Jesus. Now God’s words are not only holy and sacred, they speak with final authority.

Jesus once asked in Luke 6:46, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” On another occasion, the Lord said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7 verse 21). Now when you change His commandments, you lose His promises. When you refuse to listen to Him, you are by that very act not treating Him as Lord.

The apostles understood how important it was to hear and keep the words of Jesus and not be swayed by the teachings of men. When several disciples in John 6 didn’t like what Jesus taught, they left the Lord. And when Jesus asked the apostles if they would go away as well, Simon Peter answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6 verse 68). Now if you search for spiritual answers elsewhere, you won’t find the words of eternal life. You might find something you like, but you won’t find God’s will outside Scripture. You’ll find people’s opinions and suggestions, but you won’t find God’s truth.

The Lord Jesus told Satan, “It is written, ‘You shall not live by bread alone but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” We all need what God says, every commandment, every teaching, and every promise. The phrase, “It is written,” means it stands written. God causes Scripture to remain written and binding even with the passing of centuries. God’s teaching doesn’t stop being true or authoritative. More than that, God’s commandments are indeed sacred and holy; they rise above the beliefs and the mores of our culture. They’re still binding on Judgment Day, but there’s no Scriptural suggestion that the dictates of councils and creeds will judge us. Many people look to culture for spiritual guidance, but cultures are fickle and change with the wind. God’s word, however, is eternal and settled in heaven.

Study God’s word for yourself. Don’t listen to opinions that lead you astray by twisting the Scripture. 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15 says, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”

Let’s pray together. “Father we’re thankful that You have given us Your sacred writings, Your Holy Word. And Father, help us to honor it as we honor You, to listen carefully, and to be obedient to Your will as we love You. This is our prayer in Jesus name, Amen.”

Since the Scriptures are holy and sacred, they’re in a category all their own. We must listen to them first, last and always. We must not add to them or take away from them. The Scriptures are from God, who knows all things and who rules all things. Since we’ll be judged by the words of Jesus, let’s go to His words for all things, knowing the Spirit guided the apostles into all the truth. Let’s speak where God speaks and be silent where God is silent. Since God is holy, let’s honor Him and His word as holy.

If you cannot find what you believe and practice in Scripture, then you may be following men and not God. Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of

your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (what it really is).” Don’t be content with the ways of the world and miss the narrow road that leads to life. Follow the will of God, which is good and acceptable and perfect.

To become a Christian don’t depend on substitutions and innovations that arose in the centuries after the apostles. The New Testament knows nothing about sprinkling and pouring for baptism; nor does it know anything about baptizing infants. The disciples baptized by immersion in water in the book of Acts those who were old enough to believe and repent. People chose to be baptized that day and hour, because they knew their sins would be washed away in baptism (Acts 22:16). They didn’t fuss about what to do; those who gladly received God’s word were baptized (Acts 2 and verse 41). They heard what they needed to know and acted as soon as possible.

Well we hope today’s study about the sacred writings has stirred you to consider what you believe and what you practice. 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. Now you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, “SearchTVMInistry.” And be sure to like the programs that you watch; this helps us spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get a hold of us don’t worry, we’re not here asking for money. We’re here to help you draw close to God.

So we ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there’s probably a church of Christ near you. And if you’re looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we’ll gladly help you find one. We’ll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God’s Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.