

"Is God Active Today?"

Some think God is absent in our world today; and 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? Stay with us. You won't want to miss today's study.

Hello, and welcome to our weekly Bible study. We're here to search the Scriptures for the Lord's Way. We want to know all we can about God the Father and our 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 the Scripture. We appreciate so much that you tune in to this program each week. And 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 doesn't 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 just abandoned it. Others have that belief in God that He was relevant in ancient times, but now God is dead. They say we no longer need God.

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 the evidence. Atheists and skeptics tended to focus on the disorder and the ugly in life. They seemed to ignore the intelligent order, the beauty, the grandeur, and the wisdom that's so evident in our universe. They were intelligent, but they missed the intelligent design. I'm amazed at how easily people can slip into a very narrow view of life and of God. Some folks choose to close their eyes and their minds to the beauty of God and see only the evil.

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

We offer the information on this program free. And if you'd like a printed copy, or a CD of our study, 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, if you like, you can 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.

Larry Owsley will lead the Edmond church in song, we'll read from Proverbs 3:5 to 8, and then take a look at God's activity in this world.

Our scripture reading today comes from the book of Proverbs chapter 3 verses 5 to 8.

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. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.

That's a great encouragement to trust in the Lord. Let's pray together. Oh Father may we always trust in You and not lean on our own understanding. May we always acknowledge Your existence and Your presence in our lives. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Paul said in Ephesians 1verses 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, (and) 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 had an "aha!" experience—awakening to some great truth that had eluded you up until that time? 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 well, how God is at work. He is working in a variety of ways. First, God works in the universe. As a prophet of God, King David, said in Psalm 19 and 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 our universe and not see how wise and 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 is 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" Oh, all that we have, all of our blessings come from God!

Jesus is not only our Creator, He is also the one who keeps this world together. The Bible says in Colossians 1 verses 15 to 17, "And He (speaking about 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 cause the earth to go around the sun every 365 and one fourth days determining our year and our seasons. Well, this couldn't 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.' I tell you 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! Well, God created that kernel of corn with the information and the ability to reproduce itself in that marvelous way.

God is indeed powerful and wise! The Lord Jesus said in Mark 4 verses 27 to 29, that "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he doesn't know how. (and) The earth produces by itself, first the blade, 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." Oh, 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 only Son to die on 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 beginning God has been working toward your salvation. Now 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 have 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 toward 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.”

Now the salvation that we enjoy through Christ was expensive. It's the gift of God, and for that we are thankful. Great gifts are never cheap, and our redemption came at price greater than silver or gold. God sacrificed his Son Jesus, and Jesus sacrificed His body on the cross. And we must not take our salvation for granted or treat it lightly as if it were trivial. People who mock the Lord, ignore the cross, and criticize the church are usually people who are 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 2:12 to 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, and washes away our sins, takes away that old man of sin, buries us with Christ, and raises us up from spiritual death to life. In baptism God adds us to the church and makes us His children. Oh God is very busy working on us in baptism. And for this reason, I cannot quite understand why anyone would say baptism is unnecessary for our salvation. Read what the scripture says. Baptism is when God works on us.

And God doesn't forget us once we are saved as Christians. Once we've been baptized, oh no. Every Christian still has weaknesses and still sins. Now Christians wish they could keep from sinning; they hate it when they sin and they want to stop it afterward. And God knows that we're weak but He has provided for our weaknesses. The Bible says in Hebrews 7 and 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 is 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 65:24, “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. And He invites you to pray to Him. The Bible says in James 1:17, 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. You see 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.” You see God prepares His people to do His work, so we may live for an eternity in heaven with Him. And 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 have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, (he says to them I want you) 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." 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, take care of widows and orphans, help unwed mothers, provide help to the lonely and homeless, and point sinners to righteousness. Oh yes God is at work through the church.

I saw a book the other day written by a skeptic, called *The God Problem*. And his subtitle suggested that God never addresses the problem of evil in the Bible. Well I wondered which Bible he was reading, because it's not the Bible that I've spent my life studying. God knows about our suffering, and the cross of Christ demonstrates God's willingness to suffer for us. Romans 8 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 He uses 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, good or bad, pleasing or painful, to work for good, to work for good, in some way. And we can trust God!

David, who was inspired of God, said in Psalm 103 verses 1 to 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."

Friend, God has been working in our lives a very long time. He isn't hidden or dead; and the Bible reminds us of all the good that God is doing for us and in us. The apostle 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." I tell you God's word is far from being harmful. It is the source of love and life and good and righteousness. And we need the Bible every single day to help us grow spiritually and in character, and to live like God intended. Would you pray with me please. Oh Father we're thankful that You have been so active in our lives through the world that You created, through Your answer to pray, through the things that You've written in Your word. And through the providence we enjoy. And Father we pray that You'll bless us and help us to love You more each day. And to be good servant, to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

I join Paul in His prayer in Ephesians 1:18 and 19: and 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." I tell you God can work in your life, IF you let Him. Now He won't twist your arm; He won't force you to do anything. But if you out of love and obedience put your life into His hands, God can do amazing things.

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

You remember Proverbs 3:5 and 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 let Him work in you. God desires that we believe in Jesus Christ enough to obey Him and trust His promises. Do you?

Well 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. And 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 Jesus Christ first? Will you let God work in your life?

Well we hope you've been blessed today's by this study of God's Word. And if you want a free printed copy, 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. You can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs on line and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! And we do ask that you subscribe to our channel, and that channel on YouTube is "SearchTVMinistry." We also offer a free Bible Correspondence course. Now you can send in for one and we'll be glad to send it to you free. We'll grade them and we'll go back and forth as you do your program, ah do your courses. We'll grade them, send back with another one so that you can learn from the word of God. Now if you write to us don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're not here to exploit you or to do anything like that. We're here to help you get to heaven.

But we do ask that you please get involved with a church of Christ. Go and worship them. And if you're looking for a healthy and Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well, 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.