

"I Am Accountable"

We must realize that we're accountable to God. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." The God who created us will one day hold us accountable for our lives. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God's word is "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119 verse 105). God helps us understand His ways through the Scriptures. That's why we take them seriously and ask you to pay close attention. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Today marks the 42nd anniversary of In Search of the Lord's Way. Mack Lyon began this television program on September 1, 1980 on KTEN in Ada, Oklahoma. Today people throughout this nation and many nations of the world can see this broadcast. Generous churches of Christ and individual Christians make it possible, and we thank God for those who work here, those who volunteer, and those who support this program and pray for us.

Throughout life, we've been accountable for our attitudes, our words, and our behavior. From our earliest days, we learned that we had to obey our parents, and soon after we learned that we must listen to and obey our teachers. Applying for a driver's license means that we must keep all the traffic laws or be accountable to the court. Getting a job means we must pay taxes or face the IRS. The banks expect us to put more money in our checking accounts than we pay out. Yes, we learn accountability from the very beginning. Why then should it surprise us that we're also accountable to God? Why should we suppose God will not judge our lives? Sadly, some think they have no accountability before God.

But Romans 3:23 says that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"; and Romans 6:23 reminds us, that "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Let's take God seriously.

We offer this study free on the importance of our accountability to God. 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 and on YouTube.

Now we'll now worship in song, read from Psalm 139:1 to 6, and explore our accountability before God.

Our reading today comes from a Psalm of David, Psalm 139, verses 1 to 6. And here David expresses the closeness of God and how He knows all about us. "O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thoughts from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it." That's a reading from God's holy word.

Let's pray together. "Father we're thankful that You are so close to us to bless us and to help us in times of need. And Father help us to remember how close You are, and to live holy lives and obey Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

Ezekiel 18:20 says, "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be

upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." Now you may have a saintly father or mother, but you'll be judged by what you have done. You may have saintly children, but that will not sanctify you. God will judge each one individually on whether he has believed and how he or she has lived.

Hebrews 4:12 to 13 says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him with whom we must give an account." Yes, God sees, hears, and knows all about us. And one day He will hold us accountable for our works.

Now this passage, Hebrews 4, reminds us first of all that God can discern the thoughts and the intentions of our hearts. He knows all about us. Psalm 139:2 says, "You know me when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar." People can't read one another's minds, but our thoughts are not hidden from God. John 2:23 to 25 tells us about the Lord Jesus, "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man."

The LORD said to Samuel when he was about to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as king of Israel in 1 Samuel 16:7, he said "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." God knew David's heart and made him king. The Lord looks at your heart too.

David once said in Psalm 26 verses 2 to 3, "Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and my mind. For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness." Would you ask God to try and test your heart and mind? What would He find in you? God looks at the hearts of all men and seeks those who will follow Him. In 2 Chronicles 16 and verse 9, Hanani the seer told Asa the king of Judah, "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His." Does your heart belong to God? We must realize from Hebrews 4:12 to 13 that no one and nothing is hidden from the Lord.

Job 34:21 says, "For his eyes are on the ways of a man, and he sees all his steps." Again, Psalm 11 verse 4 says, "The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man." Proverbs 15:3 says that "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good." David could say in Psalm 139:11 to 12, "If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,' even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you."

The Lord Jesus said in Luke 12:2 to 3, that "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you've said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops."

The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:4 to 5, "For I'm not aware of anything against myself, but I'm not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. And therefore, do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God."

We shouldn't imagine that God has no care for us. He wants us to enjoy life, but He wants us to enjoy life in righteousness. I hear people justify their sins by saying, "Well God wants me to be happy," but love for God "does not rejoice in unrighteousness" (1 Corinthians 13 verse 6). Rejoicing over sinful behavior never, never pleases God. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 11:9 to 10, "Rejoice, O young man,

in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. (And so) Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.” Later Solomon reminds us in Ecclesiastes 12:13 to 14, that “The end of the matter (here it is); all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

Third, from Hebrews 4:12 to 13 we understand that we must give an account of ourselves to the Lord Himself. God wants us to be honest about our lives and the intentions of our hearts. Psalm 51 and verse 6 says, “Behold, you (that is God) you delight in truth (and that truth that takes place) in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.” We can’t deceive or hide from God. Romans 2 and verse 16 reveals that on the day of judgement, “according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.”

Romans 14:8 to 12 says, “For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. And so, why do you pass judgment on your brother? (he says in chapter 14) Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we all will stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”

John 12:48 reveals the standard of our judgment, “The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.” People often say they love Jesus, but they don’t agree with Him. Well agree or not, the Lord Jesus will judge us by His words, not by our opinions or desires. Please don’t imagine that this passage refers only to the red letters that are found in your New Testament. Now whether you read the four gospel accounts, Acts, the epistles, or the book of Revelation, every word of the New Testament is from the Lord. The apostle Paul by inspiration said in 1 Corinthians 14:37 to 38, that “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.”

We must take seriously God’s commandments and the Lord’s warnings. And I fear that many have the notion that the Lord doesn’t really mean what He says. The Lord Jesus, who will judge us on the last day, said in Luke 11:31 to 32, that “The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”

Many people regard the grace of God as something cheap and easy. Since salvation by grace is a gift, they believe that they can take it for granted and live any way they please. Well when people fail to remain faithful and lack the qualities of Christian virtue, they’re “blind and short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins” (2 Peter 1 verse 9). Some would say “well, just as I am” I come that way, sadly stay that way. They don’t take up a cross daily or follow the Lord; instead, they continue living just like they did and those who don’t even know God.

1 Corinthians 10 reminds us of the Israelites as they were coming out of the land of Egypt on the way to the Promised Land. Verses 6 to 12 says, “Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.’ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as

some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." We too can fall into the ways of sin and lose our souls.

Peter knew what could happen when people fall back into sin. 2 Peter 2:20 to 22 says, "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, (that is they became Christians) and they are again entangled in them and are overcome, (he says) the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A dog returns to its own vomit,' and, 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.'" Yes, a Christian who turns to his old sinful ways is in a worse condition than he was before he became a Christian.

Now this matters, my friend. You may have gone back into sin. You may once have been faithful to the Lord, attending worship every Lord's Day but have stopped attending in more recent days. You may have decided to leave the church altogether. Remember, Jesus built His church and purchased it with His precious blood (Acts 20:28). When you quit being part of the Lord's church, you quit the Lord's will for your life. When you quit the church, you show that you no longer value the blood that Jesus poured out to purchase the church and to purchase you.

The Lord God said to Israel in Ezekiel 18:30 to 32, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn (that is, repent), and live." Now what God said then to Israel, He's saying to you and me today. Turn back from worldly ways, turn back to the Lord.

Let's pray. "Father we're grateful for Your love, we're grateful for Your grace, we're thankful for all the goodness that You give to us, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the blood that He shed. And Father help us to live in such a way that we honor Your name, and glorify You. Help us to love You and to be obedient to Your will every day of our lives. In Jesus name, Amen."

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Hebrews 5:8 to 9 reminds us, that "Although He (that is Jesus) was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." Now talking faith and living your faith are two different things. While we can't earn our salvation by meritorious works, God does expect us to have an obedient faith. Paul realized that the grace and apostleship he received from the Lord Jesus Christ led him to bring about the obedience of the faith (Romans 1 verse 5).

Now God expects us to have a change of heart that leads to a change in our behavior. Paul told the pagan philosophers in Acts 17:30 to 31, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." Now repentance is not optional for anyone who fixes their hope in Christ. The Lord will judge us on whether we have repented.

You can become a Christian by being united with Christ. So put your faith in Him as the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess Him before others, and be baptized into Christ. Now baptism is when those outside of Christ are united and come into Christ to be forgiven of their sins and to be blessed, and to become children of God. The Lord washes away our sins whenever we're baptized (Acts 22 verse 16). And the Lord unites us with Christ when we're baptized (Romans 6, chapter 6 verses 4 to 5). And that's why we need to be baptized. Why not come to the Lord today!

Now, we hope that today's study about our accountability to God has stirred you to be prepared to meet God. Now if you live in the United States and you 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. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And be sure to like the programs you watch; this helps us spread the program. Now, we also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. 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 focus your heart on God, worship at church. Everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. Well 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.