

The Wednesday Word, Feb. 3, 2010: Approaching God

No matter how many religious things we do or feel, whether praying, generous giving or abstaining from our ideas of worldliness, we cannot find, in any of them, a qualification by which we can approach God. Religious activity provides no resting place on which to discover the smile of God. If sin were a simple thing like a disease then perhaps religious observations might be helpful in mending the separating gulf between man and the Almighty. But sin is much worse than any disease; the unsaved sinner is not merely 'sin-sick', he is 'sin-dead' (Eph 2:1). Worse still, he is under the righteous condemnation of inflexible justice (Jn 3:18). God, the unchangeable judge has an unalterable hatred of sin and has warned about His coming wrath against the unsaved sinner and his sin (Matt 23:33).

Unbelieving self-righteous religious people make the awful mistake of trying to present their character to God as the basis of approaching Him. Approaching God in an acceptable way, however, has nothing whatsoever to do with the quality of our character. God says that our goodness, as a qualification, is non-existent: there is no goodness in us that entitles us to or recommends us for His acceptance (Job 15:14-16).

But unbelieving religious folk are not the only ones who have got the wrong idea about approaching God. There are many professing believers who think that if they pray for several hours or so, study the Bible and are really in earnest then they are now qualified to find a welcome from God. But, this makes zero sense since they are offering something they have done as the basis of their acceptance. Have you ever been like that?

This kind of thinking overlooks another question, "How am I to approach God in the first place?" When we pray we are trying to approach God, but how can we actually approach Him when His explicit testimony against all of us is, "You are unfit to approach me in your own merit"? (Ps 53:2-3). To imagine that we can pray ourselves out of unfitness towards God and into acceptable fitness is ridiculous. Unbeliever and believer alike must learn that our religious efforts can never be the ground of our approach to God. No amount of praying, working or feeling, can satisfy the righteousness of God, or open the door to the presence of the Holy One.

The big question that must then be answered is, "How shall a sinful man approach God and find acceptance before Him?" (Job 25:4). No appeal can be made to God based on our personal character, goodness, or religious performances (Romans 3:10 ff)-----If God is not sufficiently impressed with our puny efforts or with us, what then are we to do? The good news is that we are not left to work this matter out for ourselves. God has already done something about our problem. He has settled the dilemma of approaching Him in the doing, dying and rising of Christ. It only remains for us to, by faith alone, receive what He has done. It is on the basis of Christ and His shed blood that we have an open and welcome approach to Heaven itself (Heb 10:22).

“Wherewith shall we approach the Lord
And bow before His throne?
By trusting in His faithful word,
And pleading Christ alone.

The blood, the righteousness and love
Of Jesus, will we plead;
He lives within the veil above,
For us to intercede.”

To approach God we need to remain poor, needy and broken, dependant entirely and exclusively on the person, work, name and grace of Christ Jesus our Savior, Shepherd and Substitute.

And that’s the Gospel Truth