

DO WE DARE TO APPROACH GOD?

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APPROACHING GOD

INTRODUCTION

Every single person who has reached the age of accountability has committed sin: (Rom. 3:23) *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”* That little word “all” includes you and me. No one person is without sin after they reach the age of accountability. Now the age of accountability can vary according to the person, some people develop and learn what God’s will is quicker than others; I certainly am unable to put an age of when anyone becomes accountable to God. If as a child you were raised up going to church and you have been taught spiritual matters all of your young life you will certainly become accountable to God sooner than someone who has never gone to church or who was never taught. Allow me to here insert the thought that ignorance is no excuse: (Acts 17:30) *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:”* Since God no longer “winks at ignorance” we cannot remain ignorant; we must learn the truth: (John 8:32) *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* Jesus said, “ye **shall** know the truth”; He did not say ‘Ye ought to know the truth’; if we want to be free of sin we must know the **truth!**

What is sin? If everyone is guilty of sin [Rom. 3:23] it would be a good idea to know what Paul meant when he said “all have sinned”. Sin is transgression of God’s will: (1 John 3:4) *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”* Have you done everything that God requires of you? If you answer no then you too are a sinner. Paul was right, wasn’t he?

The Result of Sin

Referring to Romans 3:23 once again we see that those who have sinned “come short of the glory of God”. This thought is bad enough in and of itself; but it gets even worse; (Isa. 59:1 – 2) *“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ²But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.* Could anything be any worse than being separated from God? Isaiah informs us that God is still capable of hearing and saving. The power of God has not been lessened, nor will it ever be. God has many, many prayers to hear and answer everyday and He can do so today just as well as He ever did!

God can hear as well today as He ever heard; the problem is with us, we grow weary in praying to God.

Notice the first word of Isaiah fifty nine verse two, it is “but”. There is something that is standing in the way of God hearing and saving you. What could that be? Isaiah says it is “your iniquities”. The sooner we come to understand that it is our sins that separates us from God and prevents Him hearing us the better off we will be. Once we come to this knowledge; that is when God will once again hear our prayers. We need to realize that our sins will prevent the grace of God to be shed upon us. It is upon this knowledge that we come to realize that we are in need of a way to “approach God”.

Access to God

Access to God is made possible by God, Himself: *(Psa. 65:4) “Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.”* The Psalmist says that the man whom God chooses to allow to approach Him is blessed. There are many who may desire to approach God who are not chosen by God to do so; the reason for God’s disapproval is SIN.

It is sin that separates us from God [Isa. 59:1, 2]. This verse (Psa. 65:4) most likely refers to the priests who were chosen by God to serve at the tabernacle; however, we too are blessed to be allowed to serve God and to approach Him in prayer. We should always remember that this privilege can be taken away by God if we are sinners and if we are unwilling to repent of our sins. I can only speak for myself but I know for certain that I do not want to lose the wonderful privilege of approaching God in prayer.

We Approach God By Faith

Faith is required to approach God: *(Rom. 5:1 – 2) “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ²By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”* Isn’t it a wonderful thought to know that we have peace with God? This can be ours through “our Lord Jesus Christ”. Paul also mentions another blessing that can be ours through faith; it is the access to God. Through faith we are allowed to approach God and gain His wonderful grace.

Without faith we cannot please God: *(Heb. 11:6) “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is,*

and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Let’s break this verse down; first we are told that “without faith it is impossible to please God”. I think it would be fair to say that nearly everyone desires to be pleasing to God. If you are not pleasing to God, it is cause for great concern; you may not care or worry about pleasing God now; but you will be very unhappy at the day of Judgment when Jesus says: *(Matt. 25:41) “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:”* Not only will you have regrets at this time; you will spend all eternity regretting that you did not have faith. Next the Hebrew writer mentions “coming to God”. Is this not another way of saying approaching God? Don’t forget that faith is mentioned in this verse! Therefore, faith is essential to approach God. Remember that we are justified by faith and that faith is through Jesus Christ. And finally we see that God is “a rewarder of those diligently seeking Him”. I feel certain that when you approach God today in prayer you do so feeling assured that you will receive a reward; but are you as sure of receiving an eternal reward? What eternal rewards can we receive? Matthew chapter six verse eighteen says that God will reward us openly. The reward that I’m making reference to is an inheritance: *(Col. 3:24) “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.* Now you may receive a large inheritance here in your lifetime but it won’t even compare to what you will receive from God if you approach Him through faith in Jesus Christ. Please commit Hebrews eleven verse six to memory; it will help you when you want to approach God.

Access to God Is By Jesus Christ

On more than one occasion Jesus declared that he was the way to God: *(John 14:6) “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 10:7) Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.”* If you want to approach God you must go through Jesus Christ, there is no other way; there is no other name whereby we can be saved: *(Acts 4:12) “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* It is those who are saved from their sins that God hears and welcomes their approach; if we enter through the right door.

Remembering that our sins have separated us from God we must go searching for a way to get back in favor with God. Let us look no further than Ephesians 2:13 *“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made*

nigh by the blood of Christ.” Paul also tells us that we can have boldness when we approach God if we do so through faith: (Eph. 3:12) “*In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*” The Hebrew writer says that boldness comes through the “blood of Jesus: (Heb. 10:19) “*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,*” How do we come into contact with the blood of Christ; we do so when we are buried with him in baptism: (Rom. 6:4) “*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* When we are buried with Christ in baptism we come in contact with his blood and then we have the right and privilege of approaching God. This is made possible because baptism washes away sin: (Acts 22:16) “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*”

Peter wrote by inspiration that it was when Jesus “suffered for sins” that he brought us to God. (1 Pet. 3:18) “*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*” Have you considered lately that it was for your sins that Christ suffered? What a wonderful accomplishment Jesus made as he suffered on that rugged cross; by doing this he was able to bring us back to God [I.e. to reconcile us with God] and make it possible for us to approach God once again. (Col. 1:21 – 22) “*And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled ²²In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:*” Let there be no misunderstanding sin alienates us from God; but Jesus reconciled us with God by giving his life on the cross.

If you want to approach God you must do so through Jesus Christ!

We approach God Through Prayer

Moses gets the attention of his listeners by asking “what nation is there so great?” (Deut. 4:7) “*For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?*” They know immediately that he was referring to them; then he reminds them how close God is to them and that they could call [I.e. approach God] by calling upon Him in prayer: In return God expected their faithful obedience to His law. Did God have the right to expect obedience from them? Most certainly; they needed to remember how God had delivered them from the Egyptian bondage. Does God have the right to demand obedience of us? We need to remember how God has delivered us from the bondage of sin. God was always there for the children of

Israel; all they had to do was to approach Him in prayer; God is always there for you and I if we will only approach Him.

Jesus gave us some specific instructions concerning prayer: (*Matt. 6:6*) “*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*” Have you ever wondered why Jesus tells us to go into a closet and shut the door? The answer is found in verse five: (*Matt. 6:5*) “*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*” Also often times when we approach God in prayer the things we tell Him and ask of Him are personal matters. We should remember not to ask for things that are not needed or that would harm another. Jesus also tells us that God “rewards” those who approach Him in prayer; what a wonderful God he is that we worship and serve!

Peter tells us that when we approach God in prayer that God hears us without “respect of persons” (*1 Pet. 1:17*) “*And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:*” God does not favor the Jews over the Gentiles! The apostle Paul expounds upon Peter’s statement: (*Gal. 3:28*) “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* Friends, we need to be very careful what we do because God will judge us according to “every man’s work! The works that we do demonstrate our love and faith; regardless of whether they are good or bad; this is something we need to remember each day of our lives.

Why Do We Approach God?

God is always ready and willing to listen as we approach Him in prayer; but the Hebrew writer tells us of a specific reason for approaching God: (*Heb. 4:16*) “*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*” Some day we must stand before the throne of judgment: (*Heb. 9:27*) “*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:* But while we are still living we can go to the “throne of grace boldly” and there we will find “grace and mercy”. Life does have its ups and downs; has there ever been a time in your life when you felt as though you needed help and you could not think of anyone who would be willing or capable of helping you? Friends, this is when you need to approach the “throne of grace”. All too often we try to handle hard situations by ourselves and we end up feeling worse. Approach God with your problems and you will be sure to find mercy!

God has an abundant supply of grace and mercy. As David stated in the

Twenty-third Psalms God's mercy can be available all the days of our lives: *(Psa. 23:6) "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."*

Saints Approach God With Confidence

I remember many years ago I was at the State Fair and when I looked to my right there stood Governor Kit Bond. I did not have the confidence to shake his hand; in fact I did not even speak to him, I just walked away. God is far greater than Governor Bond and I can have "boldness" and confidence to approach God. Paul confirms that this is possible with saints: *(Eph. 3:12) "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."* The Greek implies a formal introduction to the presence of a king. Even this is better than a governor. It is only in Jesus' name that we can pray to God and it is through faith that we can approach God. It is only through Christ that we can be introduced to God and it is for His sake that God hears our prayers and saves us.

Here is what the Hebrew writer wrote: *(Heb. 10:19 – 20) "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; This is similar to Hebrews 4:14-16 as he writes about "boldness" in approaching God. Let it be remembered that this was once a privilege reserved for the high priest, but now we who are Christians have the same privilege as high priests once had. In fact we have privileges that high priests did not have; we can approach God at any time and they could only approach God once a year. We can approach God with "boldness". We can approach God as often as we want by the blood of Jesus Christ.*

The Wicked Are Comanded To Seek God

The theme of Isaiah chapter two is "A day of reckoning is coming" so we find him writing words in an effort to get other people to approach God so that all can learn the ways of God. *(Isa 2:3) "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."* God

certainly wants everyone to learn of His ways and He desires that all be saved: (*1 Tim. 2:4*) “*Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*” Brethren, we would be wise if we followed the advice that Isaiah gives and “go” and invite others to approach God. A personal invitation will do more good than all the billboards or advertisements that you might use. Approaching God may be against the will of many, but that is the only hope that sinners have.

Jeremiah made an effort to restore the sinner and he encouraged them to approach God: (*Jer 31:6*) “*For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.*” In verses 1-9 God gives assurance that He will take the sinners back into a covenant relationship. God will take sinners back today. It is as the song goes “What He has done for others, He will do for you!” If you have strayed from the straight and narrow you need to repent and approach God in prayer: (*Acts 8:21 – 22*) “*Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. ²²Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.*”

We Approach God With Words

It is no secret, God wants us to approach Him and He said to do so with words” (*Hos. 14:2*) “*Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* Yes we can approach God with words and we do this when we go to Him in prayer. God is a great help in taking away iniquity; He will not allow Satan to tempt us above what we are able to resist: (*1 Cor. 10:13*) “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*” We may feel weak at times and if we don’t approach God in prayer there is grave danger in being overcome. Is it any wonder that God wants us to approach Him with words? Hosea also informs us that God will “receive us graciously. So yes, we can “dare to approach God”!

Approach God With All Your Heart

Any time we approach God we cannot do so half-heartedly. In the book of Joel the instruction is to turn to God with “**ALL**” your heart. (*Joel 2:12*) “*Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and*

with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:” We need to take particular notice that this instruction comes directly from God. This is an avenue that God has provided to all who have sinned. God wants us to approach Him “with all your heart’ [I.e. in all seriousness]; if we turn from sin and turn to God there is a chance that we will so with “weeping”. When we turn to God with “weeping and with mourning” that simply means that we are sorry that we have transgressed the will of God. Are you sorry enough to turn to God with “all your heart”?

Conclusion

I think by now that I have given enough evidence that God wants us to approach Him. So this is one dare that we should have no fear of.

Will you accept the dare to approach God? If you have never obeyed the gospel; which is God’s power unto salvation (*Rom. 1:16*) “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*” you need to consider approaching God in obedience to the gospel of Christ. This is a dare anyone can accept because it is for both Jews and Gentiles.

If you have fallen from grace and even though there are those in the religious world who say “you can’t fall from grace” it is completely foreign to the Word of God. In fact the Bible does tell us that it is possible to “fall from Grace’: (*Gal. 5:4*) “*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*” I might add that trying to be justified by the law is not the only way that we can “fall from grace”. Again, I say you need to consider approaching God for forgiveness of any sin you may have committed. You do this by repenting of your sins: (*Luke 13:3*) “*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” Also you need to approach God in prayer to be forgiven: (*Acts 8:22*) “*Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.*” Not only do we learn from this passage that we are to pray for forgiveness we even learn that our thoughts can condemn us.

If for any reason you need to approach God I would like to encourage you to do so before it is everlastingly too late!

If you have questions or comments, you may contact me at:

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