

GETTING BACK TO GOD

By

Curtis Dickinson

“Draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto thee” (James 4:8).

The gospel is a call to repent, to turn away from all that alienates one from God and turn to God, focusing all energy of life upon Him that one may be in close fellowship with Him. The doctrine of the cross is not only that the death sentence is met by Jesus to free us of that final doom at judgment, but that sin is eradicated so that we may be fit company for God. We are made “near in the blood of Christ.” What God is after is a restoration of the original harmony that He had with man when they walked together in the garden, those days before Adam sought to make it on his own and after sinning tried to hide himself from God.

In Christ’s invitation to “come unto me” the emphasis is upon the close relationship that is desired rather than upon the cessation of labor. This great invitation is prefaced by Christ’s words concerning His own close relationship to the Father.

“All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knows the son, and he to whomsoever the son wills to reveal Him.” It is upon this basis that Jesus utters His great invitation: “Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:27–30). The invitation is to a knowledgeable fellowship with Christ involving the total life as was demonstrated in the relationship existing between the Father and the Son. We are to be yoked together with Him, benefiting from His character of meekness. It is hard to imagine any closer fellowship than that which would exist by two people being yoked together as oxen are yoked together for their daily work. Such a close walk and interdependence between two people requires a great amount of meekness. Christ, in meekness, is willing, and challenges us to humble ourselves that we may draw close to Him and receive the benefit of His constant presence.

The teaching of Christ is that we should seek first the things of God and His righteousness, that we should strive for purity in order that we might realize the ultimate goal of seeing God. “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”

But while these truths are so evident in scripture, one might never know them from the evidence in the churches and the general witness of modern Christians. Living in close proximity to God does not seem to be one of the major goals in modern evangelism. Devotion has been replaced by promotion. You may hear of offering goals, attendance goals and addition goals. There are gimmicks for growth, fads for finances and methods for manipulating responses out of people. There are seminaries on marriage, on being single, on being divorced, on being young, and on being old. There are studies on prophecy, on the elders, on conversion, and on unity. There is emphasis on loyalty (attend every service), on witnessing (what has the Lord done for me lately?), and fellowship (a party at Joe’s, swimming at Sue’s and water-skiing at the lake all day Saturday). But in the meantime, there remains the alienated heart, aching to be filled with the mighty flood of God’s grace, the many members of the body who’s joy is only fun-

deep, who when back home alone with themselves still feel that a great chunk of the peace Christian faith is supposed to give is missing.

Modern Christianity is able to draw man to a religious stance and a fellowship pattern but fails to draw him to God.

Suppose that you have a son upon whom you pour out all your love and in whom you place great hopes. At the age of seventeen he takes the car which you had bought for him, cashes in his saving bonds which you have sacrificed to purchase for him through three years, packs up all his belongings and leaves home with the flippant boast that he is old enough to be on his own and wants to “do his own thing” as the saying goes. After his leaving you hear no more from him. Not a letter, not a phone call and nothing in answer to all your inquiries. You know nothing of his whereabouts. Years pass and you wait anxiously for a word, for some indication that he is still alive, but you hear nothing from him. He is in your prayers and in your thoughts continually. If you could only see him. If he would only come back home and give you a chance to show him your great love again. But not a word. In the meantime, your business flourishes. You become wealthy and powerful, influential, even a bit famous.

Then one day you get a telephone call. “Dad, I want to come home.” What joy fills your heart. Your son loves you after all and is coming home to you. Your mind is flooded with exciting plans of things you will do together and the joy you will have in the close companionship of one whom you love so much.

The day finally arrives and your son is home. It is like having one back from the dead. Your son is delighted at the beautiful home you’ve been able to build. He thrills at the new car he is now able to drive. He is proud to invite his friends into the home and enjoy all the luxury from his father’s riches. But something is wrong. The companionship for which you had longed never develops. He is concerned only with things which you provide; the security, the comfort, the luxury and all the fun that I know his because he is home again where his father provides everything. It finally dawns upon you that your son did not come home to be with you. He did not return because of his love for you but because of his love for your gifts. It was not you he sought but the fulfillment of his own desires at your expense.

But isn’t this what the church is telling people by saying, “Look what God will do for you. Come to Christ and receive all these benefits for your life.”

Churches seem to be competing with one another in offering believers all manner of promises, things that God will do for them if they will only come and let Him. Testimonials usually have to do with “what God did for me.” This is not to say that such are not good testimonials, for God does so many good things for us we are zealous to give Him glory and praise. But what about testimonials concerning one’s devotion to God when God isn’t doing all of these things, when the road is rough, when healing doesn’t come, when finances get worse instead of better, when relationships are broken? Are we only concerned with using God in order to benefit our earthly lives? It might seem so from all the testimonials, books, articles and sermons that continually tell us “how to get the most out of God.”

One of the popular themes of our day is “How to know God’s purpose for my life.” What is knowing God’s purpose compared to living close to God? Do we want to get close to God in order to take advantage of His person in making our lives full of our pleasure or do we want to be close to God in order to be filled with His goodness?

The command to repent in both Old and New Testaments embraces not only the necessity of turning away from sin, but also the demand to turn to God. Peter preached, “Repent you therefore and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19). The idea is not only to turn from sin, but to experience the presence of the Lord.

While we have emphasized the need to forsake sin, we have failed to emphasize the necessity of turning completely to the Lord. How often we hear the same woeful story that one has tried to break a bad habit or to give up a sinful practice only to fail time and time again, until he simply says to himself that there is no use, that he is a victim of the sin and will never be able to overcome it.

If this is your case, then the answer is simple. To depart from sin one must draw close to the Lord. The power of refreshing comes from “the presence of the Lord.” First, turn to Christ. Fix your whole mind and heart upon Him. Enter into covenant with Him. Submit to Him your total affection, your will, your ambition. Put Him first. Seek Him; that is, seek to know Him, to learn His purpose and His program. Read again and again His word, His commandments, His promises. When you turn fully to Jesus, you will be turning your back on sin, on whatever it is that hinders, harms and hurts. One cannot pursue sin and Christ at the same time.

God’s object in creating was to have man, not only in His image, but in His fellowship as well. Adam and God were close as they walked in the garden until Adam turned his back on God to follow his own way. The sin can be shaken only when man turns himself back to God and seeks to be in fellowship with Him. Jesus was most favorably impressed by people who desired to be close to him. While Martha was busy all over the house, Mary sat at Jesus’ feet. Jesus said she had made the right choice. He criticized the multitude who sought Him only for the bread and fish He could give.

Concerning Christ’s coming, Paul explained that the dead will arise and all the Christians will be taken up in the clouds to meet the Lord, concluding with the words, “And so shall we ever be with the Lord” (I Thess. 4:17). This promise was given to comfort us at the death of our loved ones. There is nothing in it about harps of gold and glorious dwelling places. Nothing here about the riches and splendor of the eternal home. Just one great reality that surpasses all other considerations: to be with the Lord forever.

The sin that surrounds us in the world exerts a steady pressure which tries our patience and endurance. It tends to disorientate us, weaken our purpose and neutralize us. This is evidenced by the confused, depressed and despairing people all around us. They are like the house on the sand, the chaff driven by the wind. But one who seeks the presence of the Lord, whose chief aim is to abide in Him, has purpose, direction and stability, like the house on the rock and a tree planted by the river.

The world offers a variety of problems and issues to be solved. But there is one common issue that lies at the root of every man’s life — his relationship to the Creator. To have everything in the world and live apart from Christ is to fail in this life and to miss the next. To have nothing in the world, but the fellowship of Christ, is to live successfully here and gloriously in the hereafter.

“Draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto you.”

.....
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries.
Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute
Curtis' articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article
for permission to be valid. Vol. XIX, Number 8.
.....