

How To Be Put Right With God

Why seek after God?

Seeking God and being put right with him is the most important thing a person can do. Jesus said, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36). The Bible warns that all have sinned and fall short of God's standard (Romans 3:23). We are made by God, therefore we are accountable to him for what we have done, and what we have failed to do. Nothing is hidden from God's sight, "Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (Hebrews 4:13). In comparison to God, every person on this earth is a sinner. "... no one living is righteous before you." (Psalm 143:2).

The judgment to come

Those who have not found forgiveness before God will face punishment. "... it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment," (Hebrews 9:27). There is good news on the judgment to come, and then there is really good news. First the good news; that being, all those who have committed terrible deeds will finally receive the punishment they deserve. To the delight of many, they will not escape. The Godless person who has done wrong against God; you, or anyone else, will receive a fair trial and be punished. The trial will include examining the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve." (Jeremiah 17:10).

Some will be punished, as the Bible puts it, 'with many blows' and the less guilty, 'with few blows.' (Luke 12:47-48). On this present earth with our justice system, some get justice, and others, 'rough justice'. In the age to come, all of the unrepentant sinners receive perfect justice, because the Lord will examine even thoughts and attitudes. That's good news, because no one will receive an unfair trial and punishment. An unfair punishment is impossible, because God is holy - He can not sin.

Now the really good news

The really good news is that God lovingly seeks out many sinners and brings them to himself (Matthew 20:28, Luke 19:10). Earnestly seeking after God is not something that a person can do in his own strength. People have a natural aversion to seeking after God because they are spiritually dead to his presence. God has to do a spiritual work in a person's soul before any life-changing relationship with God can be made (John 3:6-8). That is why I often ask a fellow Christian to pray with me for a particular person.

Before the time of Christ

Before the time of Christ a person who wanted his sins (wrong doing) before God forgiven, would take a lamb (sometimes the sacrifice was of a bull or a goat; it had to be a male without blemish) and present the lamb to the priest. The man (the sinner) would place his hand upon the head of the lamb. That action signified his sins were being transferred to the lamb. The lamb would then be sacrificed. (Leviticus 1:1-4,

10). Through this action, the sacrificial creature which has no blemish was paying the penalty before God on behalf of the sinner.

From the time of Christ

At the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ upon the earth, a man known as 'John the Baptist' (because he was baptising in water those who confessed they were sinners before God, and wanted to be put right), pointed to Jesus when he noticed him approaching and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 3:29).

John the Baptist made that statement because he recognised Jesus as the special one the holy prophets had spoken about who would take away the sins of all who place their sins upon him. The prophet Isaiah, speaking from 700 years before the time of Christ said, "... he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:5-6).

Pride is a hindrance

A man in an attitude of pride will not find forgiveness in the sight of God. Jesus declared, "... I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matt. 9:13). Jesus told a story about a tax collector who had a repentant attitude which gained the attention of God. "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'" (Luke 8:13).

That is typical of others. When the disciple Peter, first encountered Jesus (who is righteous, without sin), he became aware of his own sinful condition, "... he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8).

God is so holy that one of his prophets says, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

Myself, as the author of this article, write as a forgiven sinner, explaining to other sinners how to find forgiveness before a righteous God. The sins of everyone of us are such that we can not get right with God by simply becoming involved in works of charity to atone for our sins, or by engaging in a few religious activities. Something more radical is required. We must completely forget our own efforts, and trust in the perfect work of another. That person is the holy one from God - the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith in Christ

When a person declares that he places his faith in Jesus Christ, he in effect declares that it is outside of his own ability to deal with his sin; he places his faith in the perfect sacrifice of Christ, that being his death on the Cross on behalf of sinners. Just as sins were transferred to the head of the lamb in ancient times, now, from the time of Christ, repentant

sinner (in effect) place their own sins upon the head of Christ who pays for them by his death on the cross.

A changed life

Those who come into a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, worship with joy in their hearts because of what Christ has done. When God saves, he saves completely. “as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:12). Furthermore, the forgiven sinner is changed, the Bible says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (ESV, 2 Corinthians 5:17). God is not a killjoy. Jesus contrasts himself with the thief and says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10). God helps those who are committed to Him. “For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (2 Chronicles 16:28).

If you are serious about being put right with God, you may like to pray to him in the following manner.

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A prayer of a sinner

Dear Lord God, I confess that my life has not been right before you. Have mercy upon me this day and let me find forgiveness in your sight. Lord, I reach out and place my sins on Jesus Christ who paid the full penalty through his death on the cross. I thank you for what he has done for me. Help me to faithfully serve you. I ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen

To gain strength in the faith:

- Go to a Church which faithfully proclaims the message of the Bible.
- Pray to God for guidance and help.
- Regularly read the Bible.

In recent times, many excellent versions of the Bible have been produced which are very helpful for those who are new to the Christian faith. You may like to consider the TEV (Today's English Version) or the ESV (English Standard Version). Both versions are free as a smart phone app within the 'Bible Gateway' app.

For a more thorough and technical paper on the salvation of sinners, see *God's Method of Saving Sinners* (4 pages) on the defenceofthefait.org web site.

You may like to start by reading through the smallest of the Gospels, the Gospel of *Mark*. Then check out the references given in this paper.

May God bless you in your exciting new walk.

You may print this article and pass on to others.

There are many helps at:

defenceofthefait.org