

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES

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Drawing Near To God

In James 4:8, we are told that if "we draw near to God, He will draw near to us." Most people realize the advantages as well as the necessity of drawing near to God. But how does one do that? It's not easy to get into the presence of a popular or important person. If you wanted to see the President of the United States, you couldn't just go to the White House and announce "I want to see the president." There are certain procedures that must be followed in order to be granted that privilege. The same is true with the Governor of a State, for some famous person. In considering what is necessary in drawing near to God, there are three things of importance that we need to consider. (1) The initiative, (2) the advantages to be obtained, and (3) the procedure to be followed.

I. The Initiative.

This is very important, whether we are talking about a checker game or a full-scale battle. "Whose move is it?" may determine the difference between victory or defeat. The bible teaches that originally God send the prophets to warn the people of their sin and call them to repentance. The Jews rejected the prophets and their messages. They killed many of them and mistreated others. Finally, God sent His own Son to save man. After the coming of Christ, the imitative changed from God to man. This truth is proved over and over in the New Testament scriptures. Matthew 11:28 "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." John 7:37 "If any man thirst, let him come and drink of the water of life..." God had done His part, it is now up to man. Romans 3:24 affirms that Christ was "sent to be a propitiation for our sins." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son..." John 3:16. It is up to you today to either obey Christ or reject him. God has done his part, and if we will accept his gift, we can be saved. If we reject it, we will be lost.

II. The Advantages.

There are so many advantages that come to those who obey Christ. In fact, it is difficult to understand why anyone would fail to "draw near to God." There is safety in the presence of God. Psalms 119:117 "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." We live in a world where few people are really safe. Those in Christ, however, are safe both now and for the future.

It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, Truth is so
That, how so e're I stray and range
What e're I do, thou dost not change
I steadier step, when I recall
That, if I slip, Thou does not fall. A. Clough

There is also joy in drawing near to God. When born into this world the angels said of Christ "We bring good tidings of great joy..." Luke 2:10 The man in Acts 8:37 "went on his way rejoicing." Those who obey God have joy in their heart. It is one of the advantages of being a child of God. Drawing near to God also reduces the power of temptation. God says "draw near to me, and I will draw near to you." There is a reciprocal action involved. The closer we move toward God, the closer He moves toward us. When Peter followed the Lord "afar off" he lingered in dangerous territory. The result was they the denied Christ. Why? Anyone who allows a great distance to come between him and Christ will find the power of temptation greater. God's influence is magnified in the hearts of those who draw near. God's power in our lives is enhanced when we draw near to Him.

III. The Procedure.

It is the prerogative of a King or President to make certain requirements of anyone who would approach him. He has the right to make whatever demands he feels necessary. God also has an appointed way that we are to approach Him. That is His right, and we have no right to try and dictate to Him how we can be saved. What is God's way? The answer is given in Hebrews 10:21-22 "And having a high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

A true heart. God has always demanded this. No hypocrite need apply or double minded man, or impostor. The scriptures teach us to "keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life." "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Jesus said "blessed are the pure in heart." Mt.5 We are promised that "if with all your hearts ye seek him, ye shall find him." A well infected with typhus germs, does not need a new pump, but a new well. Man whose heart is defiled, evil, and sinful, needs a new heart. In order to draw near to God, our heart must be changed.

Full assurance of faith.

The scriptures teach that we are saved by faith. But what kind of faith saves? The bible speaks of a "weak faith," "dead faith," "little faith," "saving faith," "great faith," "obedient faith," "loving faith," and "working faith." The phrase "full assurance of faith" indicates the type of faith that will save a person is one that is alive and working. In fact James declares that "faith without works is dead, being alone" James 2:24-26. One time a little girl who was asked to define faith replied "faith is believing what God says without asking any questions." How true. Full assurance of faith just simply means that one comes to Christ doing what is commanded without arguing or disputing what God has said.

Having Your Hearts Sprinkled.

Note carefully that the bible does not say having your head sprinkled, or having your body sprinkled, but "having your heart sprinkled." The "heart" refers to the mind or intellect of man. Note Mark 2:8 "And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves. he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your

hearts?" One reasons with the heart. Our heart is sprinkled when our conscience is purged Hebrews 9:14. We become aware of our sins, and through our obedience to God we are made right and we know things have been made right.

Bodies washed with pure water.

This is obviously a reference to baptism, which is the gateway to the church. Paul tells us in 1Cor. 12:13 that by "one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." In 1Peter 3:21 the scripture tells us that "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." When we are baptized our sins are remitted Acts 2:38. We are saved Mark 16:16 and added to the body of Christ Acts 2:47. These who deny that baptism saves, over look the above given scriptures. Those who fail to realize that baptism is a command have not consulted Acts 10:48.

We can draw near to God with the blessed assurance that he will draw near to us. What a great and thrilling privilege. But in order to do so, we must remember that the initiative belongs to us, and that the procedure means that we must come to Him with a pure heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed (baptized) with pure water.