

YOU ARE JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS

What are you doing to obtain praise from God?

What has God done to obtain praise from you?

John 5:37-47

TEXT: *And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. "I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God? "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

The spiritual condition of the Jews in Jesus' day was not unlike what it is today among those who profess to be Christians. Most of them were Jews in name only.

They were a people with an amazing history. They had been raised up by the Lord Himself from old Abraham and Sarah. Within 500 years, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had become a nation too numerous to count. Their amazing salvation from slavery in Egypt by crossing the Red Sea on dry land, their preservation for 40 years while wandering in the Sinai desert, their astounding victories, starting with Joshua and the destruction of Jericho, and their conquest of Canaan all testified to the Lord's gracious purpose for Israel as the people from whom He would raise up the Savior of the world. Over the next 600 years, the Lord would raise up prophets through whom He would continue to guide and preserve them with His verbally inspired Word.

But when God's appointed time had come and the Savior God had come into the world in human flesh and blood, most of them rejected Him. It was just as Isaiah had foretold: ***He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*** Is 53 This is to what our Lord Jesus refers when one day He confronted the Jewish religious leaders and said: ***You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*** All the Bible study in the world, all the efforts to find God and eternal life, are tragically fruitless unless Jesus, the eternal Son of God, is the focus of all that is written, from cover to cover in the Bible.

May we never forget what this means: **YOU ARE JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS.** To refresh our minds and hearts on what this means let us ask two questions: I. What are you doing to obtain praise from God? II. What has God done to obtain praise from you?

A recent phenomenon sweeping the world is the "selfie." With iphones and ipads we are able to take pictures and videos of anything at any given moment. Taking "a selfie" is to hold the iphone out at arm's length to take a picture of yourself. They even sell a contraption that will hold your phone camera out beyond arm's length to get a better picture of yourself.

"Face Book" has become phenomenally popular. Whether you are "on Face Book" or not, most everyone is familiar with the program. What amazes me, however, is how there are so many who are sharing so much of the most mundane events of their daily lives: "I just returned from having my teeth cleaned; Here's a picture of what I had for lunch at my favorite restaurant; Here I am on vacation!"

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that there is anything wrong with all this "social media" technology, but I find that there is an ever-increasing obsession with "the self." More than ever, the selfish desire for recognition, acceptance, approval from others stands out as a hallmark of our culture and this generation.

Jesus warned the Jews about self-adoration. He said: ***How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?*** Each of us should take this to heart and ask: From whom do I seek praise? From friends: then you must do what pleases your friends. From parents? Then you must do what pleases them. From your employer? Then you must do what pleases him. According to Jesus, first and foremost in anyone's life must be, "What am I doing to please God and to obtain praise from Him?"

I've often pointed out that the very last verse in the Book of Judges reads: ***In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.*** Jdg 21 Could this tragic assessment of God's chosen people be appropriately applied to our generation? We can shake our heads at the obvious selfishness of the culture of which we are a part, but that doesn't exempt us from asking ourselves: "what am I doing that merits one ounce of God's praise of me and my life?" Now and then there might be a good deed that stands out among others so that they might praise me. But when Jesus says ***"You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect..."*** Mtt 5 then any hope of divine approval vanishes like the vapor of warm breath on an icy day.

The all-important question in all of this is not "What are you doing to obtain praise from God?" but rather, "What has God done to obtain praise from you?"

Unbelievers compensate for their inability to obtain praise from God by seeking praise from men. Jesus said to the Jews: ***How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?*** Yet even in their unbelief they found their self-approval from searching the Scriptures. Even today there are many who consider themselves to be Christians because they try to follow a morality that is found in the Bible. Jesus warned the Jews: ***You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me...*** What is it about Jesus that they were missing? What they were missing is the golden key that unlocks all of what the Scriptures are about. From the Fall into Sin when the Lord revealed that He was going to raise up a Descendant of Eve to crush Satan to Isaiah's prophecy of the virgin's birth of a son who would be called Immanuel, which means "God with us," the hope of eternal life would lay entirely on Jesus' death and resurrection.

That is why Jesus told them: ***But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?*** Jesus was not there to accuse them. The Law of Moses had already done that. Jesus had come to redeem them. But, alas, they did not believe! If they truly knew Moses and what the Lord had been revealing through him, they would indeed know Jesus, as Moses did. Moses' only hope was in the coming Christ.

There is that amazing passage in the tiny one-page Book of Jude that speaks about a strange happening that occurred right after Moses died. It says: ***...even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*** Jude 9,10 It appears that there was some kind of Satanic effort to steal the body of Moses after the Lord had buried him. For whatever reason and the actual circumstances surrounding this revealed fact, the Bible doesn't say. But what stands shines brightly in this passage is the fact that even the Archangel Michael, did not DARE to bring an accusation of sin against Moses, who by faith in Jesus was JUSTIFIED by God! And we know that just before he died Moses did in fact commit a sin of anger that moved the Lord to dismiss him from his ministry.

There is nothing to add to this marvelous salvation! To think otherwise is a damnable sin of unbelief! Scripture declares: ***Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*** Ro 8 We are SET FREE to live our lives to the glory and praise of our Savior Jesus! Without fear of accusation, the forgiveness of sins is in our hearts and on our lips to the glory of His name!

Now for us God's law that once condemned me becomes my guideline for thanking and praising Him. Christian children obey their parents in the Lord. Christian couples honor marriage and keep it pure FOR THE LORD. Christians worship, not for what they get out of the experience, but FOR THE LORD. We give our offerings, not because the church needs the money, but FOR THE LORD. We are loving toward others and generous in our service, not for the praise we might get, BUT FOR THE PRAISE OF GOD'S HOLY NAME!

There is a difference as great as the divide that separates heaven from hell. Those who seek praise from others are in danger. Those who know Jesus are justified before God through faith in His name. Your praise from God will come when He calls us to our eternal reward. Amen.