

Teaching Sound Doctrine

“GOD HEARETH NOT SINNERS” Pt. 2

GOD HEARS THE RIGHTEOUS

Since we have previously discussed James’ comment relating to the power of prayer, we also should note whom James says has that power. “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam. 5:16). James, by inspiration, clearly states that the righteous man’s prayers are heard. There is no mention of prayers by someone other than a righteous man.

The wise man (wiser still because he wrote by inspiration of God) stated, “The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous” (Pro. 15:29). Again it is specifically stated the righteous man’s prayer is heard by God. However, at this point we also begin seeing God’s relation to the wicked (the man who is not righteous); God is far from that man. Being far would indicate to us (especially if this is antithetic parallelism) that God would not hear the wicked man’s prayer.

Peter reveals much the same thing when he writes, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12). The Lord’s ears are open to prayers of the righteous. We again learn the Lord’s response to those who are not righteous, those who do evil. God is against them or He disapproves of them, thus He would not hearken to their prayers.

We also need to know who the righteous man is. John answers clearly for us by saying, “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7). Part of God’s nature is that of righteousness. We can possess the same nature as God (2 Pet. 1:4). We can be righteous by doing righteousness. What is the doing of righteousness? The Psalmist said, “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness” (Psa. 119:172). Since God’s commands are righteousness, when we do God’s commands then we are righteous. Paul puts it this way. “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. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:16-17). The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, when we do the gospel of Christ or obey the gospel, then we will be righteous as our God is righteous. Putting it another way the

person who, after hearing the Word of God, believes (Heb. 11:6), repents of his sins (Acts 17:30), confesses his faith in Jesus as God's Son (Rom. 10:10), and is baptized in water for the remission of his sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), and then lives according to God's Word (1 Cor. 15:58) is the man who is righteous. This is the man who when he prays, God hears.

GOD'S NATURE

One of the attributes of God is that He is holy. There are more passages that speak of this nature of God than any other part of His character. "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name" (Psa. 111:9). "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Psa. 145:17). When Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on His throne, he also saw the seraphims: "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3). John reveals: "And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8). When Peter calls upon all men to be holy, he states that it is because that is God's nature. "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:15-16). He quotes what is written in and what the theme of Leviticus is.

What is holiness? The basic etymology of the word is "apart from the earth." It came from the altars which were built apart from the earth. God had commanded that altars be built on stilts or legs so they would be separated from the earth. These altars were referred to as holy. Holy is applied in the Scriptures in two ways: Free of sin, and Dedicated or Consecrated. When used of God, it carries the first of these meanings.

God is holy: free of sin. The idea of light as expressed in relation to God is the idea of His being free of sin. John writes, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). The last phrase is more emphatic in the Greek than in the English. The Greek uses a double negative, which is used to give emphasis; no, not even one speck of darkness in God. Darkness stands for sin in the Bible (John 3:19). Thus when John reveals that there is not any darkness at all in God, John is revealing that God does not have any sin: He is free of all sin. James expresses the same idea when he writes, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam. 1:17). James identifies God as the Father of lights. It is not just that He is the Creator of lights (sun, stars, etc.), but that all light comes from His nature for His nature is Light.

While there is variation with the earthly lights, there is no variation with God. Any way, any time you look at God, there is only pure absolute light. There is never any darkness (sin) in God.

Since God is without any sin, we also notice that He cannot associate with sin because of that holy nature. “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?” (Hab. 1:13). That is why Peter reveals that God’s face is against those who are in sin. “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12). God’s face is turned away from sin, He will not look upon it, He will not come into contact with it, He will not hear it. Notice God’s response when Israel sinned. “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2). God could have saved, but they separated themselves from God. The result was that his face was hid from them and God would not hear them. His holy nature could not associate with their sin. This is also why we are told repeatedly that sin brings death (Eze. 18:4, 20; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1; Jam. 1:15). Death is simply a separation; physical death is a separation of body and spirit (Jam. 2:26), and spiritual death is a separation from God. Sin brings spiritual death and thus separation from God as expressed in Isaiah. Being separated from God in a state of spiritual death, He will not hear the sinner who prays.