

216 The Entry Ticket of Prayer

We are using these few Reflections to refresh our understanding of prayer, that we may steadily grow in spiritual effectiveness with God being given all the glory that is His due.

At the heart of our prayers is the need to remember the nature of the “Entry Ticket” we have been given that allows us access to the Lord God in prayer, an access we can so easily take for granted. We know that the living God is indeed the God of love, but many people tend to assume from this that He is an endlessly benign Father Christmas-type figure, with a mock-serious “tut-tut-tut” over our misdoings and an ever-twinkling eye as He gazes with delight on us all. Such notions have nothing to do with Scripture, and everything to do with Satan, the father of lies. For within the divine love, alongside His favour towards us, are also holiness, purity, righteousness and justice.

Almighty God our Creator is entitled to full honour from His creation – a response of worship, gratitude, awe, obedience and joy. But any withholding of that honour, by the wrong use of our God-given human freedom, is termed “sin”, and sin has immediate consequences. Sin puts Christians out of fellowship with our Creator, (but not out of salvation because they are still covered by Christ); and sin keeps those “not in Christ” within the realm of spiritual death, into which we are all born because of “original sin”.

When physical death comes there is thus no change in a person’s spiritual state: those in Christ pass through to eternal life, and those not in Christ pass through into a non-time place offering no further access to Almighty God – the God they chose to spurn in this physical stage of human

existence. That passing-through into a lost eternity is grim, deeply sad, and not what God wishes for anyone (egs., John 3.16-17, 36 / I Timothy 2.4-6 / Luke 13. 24,28; 16.26).

Clearly this brief reminder of mankind's natural state before Almighty God is stark: a sin-wrought state from which we, for our part, are unable to escape.

But thankfully we know that God has acted to crack the problem that we cannot crack ourselves, and allow fallen, sinful people back into fellowship and life with Him. This explains the meticulous rituals of the tabernacle and temple which God instigated for His "visual-aid people", the children of Israel. These rituals were not some joke by a capricious God to make life awkward for the priests and people: they were the only way that He would accept their approach so that the divine justice embedded within His character was satisfied.

At the heart of those rituals was the shedding of innocent blood, for such shedding of blood is the only way that divine justice can be satisfied and hence sin's effects conquered. Thus the worship was deliberately a very gory business, so that no-one could forget the terms by which fallen sinners could approach God (eg., the Passover – Exodus 12.3-14).

This shedding of blood of innocent animals, shed on behalf of human sinners, only ever a token and ever-pointing ahead to the One True Lamb, became suddenly redundant at Calvary, when Christ Himself - "by His own blood, entered in once to the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (from Hebrews 9.11-12 / John 1.29).

In Christ, everything is changed - just look at things now!
"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest

by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (from Hebrews 10.19-22, AV).

So there we have it – the God-achieved terms by which we are given that Entry Ticket that allows us to come into the holy place with our prayers (eg., Romans 5.1-10). We come, humbly, gratefully yet boldly, to God the Father, to whom our prayers are usually addressed; we come only “through Jesus Christ our Lord”, and solely on the basis of our acceptance of Jesus’ innocent blood shed on our behalf; and we come by the enabling work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, “the Comforter” (eg., John 14.26; 15.26; 16.7-10 / I Corinthians 6.19-20).

As a result this amazing God allows His Christ-redeemed children in their prayers to call Him “Abba, Father”. May our remembrance of what it has cost Him to grant us that privilege keep us on the true paths in our prayers.

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