

The Lord Is Far from The Wicked

Proverbs 15:29

Pastor Bill Farrow

“The Lord is far from the wicked: but He hears the prayer of the righteous” – Proverbs 15:29.

One of the most popular ideas in modern Churches today is that God is OK with everyone and He just wants everyone to feel good and be happy. For anyone who actually reads the Bible, it is easy to see that having an understanding of what the Word of God truly teaches is absolutely NOT that easy or simple. We need to think the matter through a bit more thoroughly and see what it is that God really has to say about those who are redeemed versus those who are “wicked” as this verse puts it. There are two basic ideas in this verse that set what God “closeness” from His being “far from”.

One thing that is very clear throughout the Bible is that Salvation is by means of Grace through Faith and NOT by human works (seeking to earn favor from God) in any fashion:

Paul is very clear about this over in Romans about this truth:

***Rom 11:6** And if by grace, then it is **no longer of works**; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.*

It is clear here (and elsewhere in the NT especially) that grace and faith are antithetical...they both cannot be true. We are redeemed by grace through faith and NOT by our own works. The “no longer” part is a reference to the Law in the OT when God’s people were required to observe certain rituals if they were to partake of the blessings of the Tabernacle.

He goes on just a few books after and tells the Galatians:

***Eph 2:9** not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Again, he repeated what he told the Romans (and will tell others). Salvation is not something we do by means of a bunch of stuff to earn. He then adds, to the Galatians. He later says to Timothy...speaking of what Jesus has done for us...

***2 Tim 1:9** who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, **not according to our works**, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,*

Pretty much just after this, Paul tells Titus...a bit more eloquently:

Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

He is there saying much the same thing he said in the other passages we have mentioned, that Salvation is NOT by works we do, but by grace through faith (a principle to be enlarged upon later in the NT!!)

Our point in this is that Solomon is upholding the basic idea we have enlarged. The “righteous” no matter which of the Testaments you are reading, refers to those who have trusted the Lord, exhibiting faith in He and His promises. This is what Abraham did, along with all of the OT saints of God. Hebrews 11 speaks of many of these saints as being men of faith and demonstrations of how God redeems men. The only thing not stressed in what Solomon says here is the idea of “grace through faith”

“The Lord is far from the wicked: but He hears the prayer of the righteous” – Proverbs 15:29.

The contrast is between the “wicked” and the “righteous”. The word for “wicked” is a fairly common Hebrew word that speaks he who is wicked or perhaps even criminal. The essence of the idea is one of a guilty one or one guilty of crime. It is sometimes used in a spiritual sense (as it is here) speaks of being wicked in the sense of being hostile to God and referring to one’s standing before the God of all men means that such a one is wicked or guilty of sin (against God or perhaps deliberately defying God with regards to man).

On the other hand, Solomon speaks of one who is righteous meaning one who is justified before God, in right standing before Him. It is used quite often in the OT and refers to being “lawful” or just, and in a spiritual sense, being righteous before God. We know from the carrying on of the idea in the NT especially, that this righteousness is counted to the account of one who trusts in the Lord because of the finished work of Christ, that trust being accomplished by grace through faith.

Solomon’s point is that those who stand in righteousness before God are those to whom He listens when they are in prayer. The wicked are those remain in the guilt that belongs to men because of their nature as all men are sinful before God. Of course, all men are not merely in sin as descendants of Adam, they are sinful in their actions, at least to some degree. It is only when they trust in the Salvation in Christ provided for by the Gospel that they can be said to stand in Righteousness before God. It is then that one can be confident that God hears, in both the aural sense as well as the “paying attention to” sense.

What we must take into consideration here is the difference that Solomon is seeking to underscore for us. There aren’t many people who would argue that God pays attention to and seeks to answer the prayers of every single man who is alive. Anyone who knows Christ will agree that there are many who are more interested in their own purposes than they are in serving the Lord Jesus. It is

important that we, as those seeking to please God, see to it that our standing before the Lord is one of righteousness rather than wickedness.

Thinking by way of interpretation and summary again - God, in His essence and power, is far from no one. "*In Him we live and move and have our being.*" Even in hell, He is there (Ps. 139:8). But He is said to be "*far from the wicked,*" in respect of diversity of mind and character, in the withdrawal of His sensible presence, and in His unwillingness to show them favor. Hence, they have no reason to expect that their prayers will be heard so as to be answered. Whereas, He is nigh unto the righteous in all those ways. His mind and character they (to some extent) reflect. He makes His presence *felt* within their hearts. His favor is toward them, and His ears are open unto their prayers to answer them in the best time and way.

We can think of several illustrations to pur forth our point.

- God's command to pitch the Tabernacle *without* the camp after the idolatry of the golden calf, was a withdrawal of the visible tokens of His presence and favor from Israel (Exod. 33:7).
- Saul's bitter cry, "*God is departed from me,*" was forced from him when, on account of his wickedness, no answer came to him by prophet, or by Urim, or by dreams.
- But of good men whose prayers have been heard, the Bible presents instances as well-known as numerous.

To think of the matter of application of our concept we first believe it is well to be reminded even of so trite a truth as this. For the belief in a personal Deity who takes cognizance of all His creatures, is the only foundation of true religion. "*He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*" (Heb. 11:6). If I do not believe this, I shall not come to God. If I am persuaded, *e.g.*, that He is unconcerned about His creatures, and, having set the wheel of nature in motion, leaves it to roll on without any moral government on His part, what motive have I for striving to please Him? But if I believe that He presides over His own laws, and will reward those who seek Him by hearing their prayers, then my heart responds, "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*" Then, moreover, conscience, enlightened by the Word, teaches that "in righteousness" only can I hope to behold God's face (Ps. 17:15), and so a sufficient motive offers itself for a holy life. This entered upon, experience proves that prayer is heard—heard according to the condition which must always bind a Father: "*If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us*" (1 John 5:14). Now, "*this is the will of God, even (our) sanctification*" (1 Thess. 4:3). Hence my prayers will be answered only at such time and in such manner as shall sub-serve that great object. But what more can a child of God desire? And what more could a wise and loving Father grant?