

How Can I be Right with God?

John 6:22-40

by Rev. Tom Aicken

How can I be right with God? Sadly, most people assume that that problem is not insurmountable, that they are not so bad on the one hand, and that God is not so demanding on the other, and thus, if we want it badly enough, we can achieve reconciliation with God.

In point of fact, though, the Bible teaches quite the opposite of that. (1) It teaches that all men are totally depraved – that is, affected by sin in every part of their being – and, as a result, no man is able to do anything that is truly good and acceptable to God. (2) The Bible also teaches that God is indeed demanding, that He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and will be no means clear the guilty.

The wages of sin is death, and that includes a death that will continue to torment beyond the grave in a place called hell. So, then, while men tend to narrow the gap between God and men, a gap that they think they can bridge on their own, or help to bridge, God's own Word describes it as a wide gulf, one that is fixed and allowing us no access to God. How can I be right with God? Suddenly, the perplexity of that question now appears to us as something overwhelming!

Clearly, if there is to be any reconciliation between men and God, it must come from God Himself. That is our only hope. It seems too amazing that He would ever reconcile sinners to Himself, especially since He is the One whom we have offended, but every other door is sealed shut, so let's focus on what God Himself must do to achieve such reconciliation for us. He must become a man, live a life of perfect obedience, and then die as the perfect Substitute for sinners, that we might be freely and fully forgiven by Him. Thanks be to God, believer, this is precisely what He has done for us in the Person of His own dear Son!

But we need to be very clear about this: God did this FOR us, for all whom He loved in Christ from eternity, but not for anything IN us. Once we try to add anything of our own to the finished work of Christ, we miss the whole point of what the Saviour did and, at the same time, we forfeit the blessing that it would otherwise bring. "How great the love that drew salvation's plan! How great the grace that brought it down to men! How great the gap that Christ did span, at Calvary!"

This brings us to the passage before us, John 6. Jesus had been a very popular Teacher, but, still, the people believed that they could make themselves right with God through what they did themselves. V. 28, "Then they said to Him, 'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?'" V. 29, "Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He sent.'" In other words, "Do not do anything. The gap between you and God is too great for you to bridge it on your own. You must transfer your hope of heaven from relying on what you can do to relying on Me (Jesus) exclusively." Is that, dear reader, what you are doing? Are you looking away from yourself, and from every arm of flesh, and trusting in the finished work of Christ alone? Do you see how important this is? Do you see how urgent it is?