

Approaching the Throne

by Peter John Schrock

No one will find God's solution to a problem by focusing on the problem itself. It is through turning to the Lord, bringing our problems before Him, quieting all our fears, and submissively listening to the gentle whisper of our Father from the throne speaking to us through the indwelt Spirit (John 14:26-27, 16:13-15). Then from our place of rest in Him can we receive the needed direction without the frustrations of our own flesh getting in the way.

The Power to be Changed

People try to change, but Jesus Christ exposes and strips them of wickedness.

Finding grace and mercy in our time of need must become a moment by moment lifestyle, but all too often people settle for something other than these when they need help. As a result, they live weak unfruitful lives that bring shame upon God. The solution to this problem is found in approaching the throne of grace. If we approach the throne of grace and draw near to the Lord in humility, He is faithful to reveal our hearts to us. He exposes our motives, the foundations of our thoughts, and the roots of our attitudes (Hebrews 4:12-13, 1 Corinthians 4:5). Here in this wonderful place of LIGHT, we find cleansing from sin and transformation of our character through the vast outpouring of God's grace and mercy (1 John 1:7). Nevertheless, in order to make approaching the throne of grace effective in our lives we must exercise humility through listening, patience, and surrender.

The Necessity of Listening

People who are always talking only get to know themselves. In the same way, people who never quiet their spirit, never really get to know God.

There is a certain measure to which we need to speak to the Lord, but there is often a greater necessity to listen (Ecclesiastes 5:1-3). Those who are proud think they are the only ones who have something worthwhile to be heard (Proverbs 18:2), but those who humble them-

selves value other's words more than their own (Proverbs 12:15). When we approach the Lord we should not think we will hear anything from God if we are not humble enough to give Him a chance to speak. Also in our waiting we need to value what He is about to say. Many times it is all too easy to ask the Lord a question and then, when an immediate response does not come, to begin coming up with our own logical answers to the problem. This is a test from the Lord, to see how much we really care about what He has to say. Will we wait attentively, utterly acknowledging that our own logic is dreadfully useless (Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 55:8), or will we assume that we can figure matters out ourselves while we "wait" to find out if the Lord really cares about our request? The Lord does care about our petitions and greatly desires to respond to us, but if we are too busy listening to ourselves we will never consistently hear the voice of God.

Obtaining Needed Patience

Waiting on God often requires patience. Nevertheless, patience often comes from waiting on God.

We must obtain the discipline of patiently quieting ourselves in the presence of God as we wait to hear His voice. Yet, quietly waiting is not gritting our teeth and sitting for a long time while attempting not to think about anything. Such a form of waiting is a natural fleshly attempt to hear something when we are out of tune with the one we want to hear (1 Corinthians 2:11-14). Rather when we want to hear from the Lord, we must approach the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). The adjective used here

to describe this throne sheds great light into what we are drawing near to. This is not a throne of judgment and fear, but of undeserved loving kindness (grace). It is a place of rest and joy which renews our strength as we wait (Isaiah 40:31). Here patience naturally flows from the throne along with the other eight fruits of the spirit spoken of in Galatians 5:22-23 and here is found the wonderful voice of the Lord that is powerful and majestic (Psalm 16:11; 29:3-11, Rev. 16:11-21).

True Surrender

When everything needed to bare good fruit is provided, only the disobedient will continue in unfruitfulness.

Surrender is often thought of as the opposite of rebellion, but our surrender must go beyond this definition. It is easy to get concerned when we see rebellion in peoples' hearts, but another concern that is often overlooked is NOT having real spiritual fruit. If someone is not in outright rebellion and yet they are unfruitful, they often appear helpless, but this unfruitful helplessness should be a source of great concern. For unfruitfulness is just as dangerous as open rebellion (Luke 3:9). Granted, it is much easier to have mercy on one who does not desire to rebel, but frankly, if someone is not bearing the fruit of the spirit they are still not walking in obedience. For we are commanded to: "...love one another..." (John 15:12), "...be joyful always..." (1 Thessalonians 5:16), "Let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts..." (Colossians 3:15), "...clothe yourself with...patience...kindness" (Colossians 3:12), "...have faith in me..." (John 14:1), and "...walk worthy of the calling you have received in...gentleness" (Ephesians 4:1-2). Every believer is commanded to bare the fruit of the spirit and if they are not it is because they are still operating according to their flesh (trying to be spiritual by their own strength). Unfruitful people are not spiritual! It does not matter how much bible or history knowledge anyone has, if they are unfruitful they are distant from God and are not truly fellowshiping with Him.

Fruit bearing itself is not hard to do when done in the power of the spirit. For Jesus himself said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light..." (Matthew 11:30). The problem that unloving, depressed, worrisome, impatient, or arrogant people face is not that it is difficult to

be loving, joyful, peacefully at rest, patient, or gentle, but rather, their problem is drawing near to the Lord. They stand alone as a branch fallen to the ground from its vine. Lying there helplessly, they pitifully hold on to their shriveled ugly fruit all because they are too stuck on trying to transform its state while still on the ground. They trust too much in their own perceptions and reasoning to allow the vine to hold them in place and supply them. No one can become fruitful until they will stop relying on themselves and become dependent on the vine of Christ.

Our need to surrender must go beyond simple obedience and unto utter dependency. We must come to the place where we refuse to lean on our own understanding and give up all our attempts to be something apart from Christ. If we see that we are not bearing the fruit of the Spirit, we can no longer wallow in failure or even accept fruitfulness as a difficult achievement. Rather, we need to go to the heavenly throne room where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. There in His presence, by residing in that place of powerful love, humbly speaking the "AMEN" to what He exposes in our hearts, and resting in His splendor, we will be transformed into the image of God (2 Corinthians 3:18, 1 John 1:9). This is why it is said, "We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands" (1 John 2:3) because good fruit flows out of us when we are receiving life from His presence.

Final Note

The way to the throne of grace is by setting our minds and affections on Christ (John 14:5-6) and the door unto fruitfulness is humility (James 4:6).

If approaching the throne of Grace while patiently listening with a surrendered heart is so effective to produce the image and character of Christ in men, why do so many people choose a different path? "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other..." (Matthew 6:24). People have stored up for themselves treasure on earth and as a result have chosen a different master than the one who sits in heaven. They have set their minds and affections on things below, such as comforts, relationships, and status. So in their time of desperate need they focus on their treasure which will

perish with them unless they change their hearts. Jesus called the rich young ruler to give up all he loved and trusted in and then to come and make his greatest affection to continually be in the presence of the one who

looked at him with love (Mark 10:21). Nevertheless, if we hold onto our comforts, relationships, and status like the rich young ruler, then entering the presence of Jesus will only condemn us.

*Brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.
(Hebrews 10:19-23)*