

The Right and Wrong Approaches to God

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I. Introduction.

- A. Many people think they know the right way to heaven, but there is often something desperately wrong with their approach.
- B. Text: Luke 18.
- C. There are only two approaches to God. One of them is right, and one of them is wrong.

II. The wrong way: the Pharisee.

- A. The Pharisee comes to God based on personal performance.
- B. This man is self-centered. He is self-righteous. His approach is based upon self-effort.
- C. Anybody can make himself or herself look good by comparing himself or herself to another person. However, we all fall short when we compare ourselves to Jesus.
- D. There is no expression of any need of God nor is there any repentance.

III. The right way: the tax collector.

- A. The tax collector came to God based on pardon.
- B. There is a sense of conviction. He understands that his life is simple. He confesses and comes in the spirit of humility.

IV. How people approach God today.

- A. People come to God on the basis of performance.
 - 1. They have been told that they come to God on the basis of what they have done. This is personal self-centered performance. It has nothing to do with the grace of God.
 - 2. The problem is that there are many good moral people out there that will not get into heaven because they believe one is accepted by performing well.
- B. People come to God based on pardon.
 - 1. They recognize they are wrong and need help.
 - 2. God has an answer for this person.
 - 3. Every person has a debt before God. Straightening up today does not eliminate the sin debt of the past. Straightening up old ways does not give life to what is dead.

4. We are saved by grace through faith, not through performance. We are saved by God's mercy. If a person is to be accepted in God's eyes by performance, God made a horrible mistake when God the father crucified His own Son at Calvary in order to make it possible for a person to be saved.
5. A person must bow in his heart to get to heaven.
6. Pride will keep a person from heaven.
7. The cross makes little sense without the grace of God.
8. Salvation is not something we get fixed up with, salvation is life.
9. Many people live as if they are not saved because many are not saved.
10. To be saved, humble yourself before God acknowledging that you have sin, asking God for forgiveness for sin believing that Jesus Christ paid for your sin debt.
11. If performance gets one accepted there is no end to the question about what exactly that performance is.

Application questions:

1. How would you summarize the two different ways to earn acceptance before God?

2. Why will many people who do good things not make it into heaven?

3. How does the cross of Christ demonstrate that a person will not be saved by performance?
