

The Righteous Offering

Introduction

Over the Edge: Death in Grand Canyon. (Result of trekkers lacking respect, awe or fear.)

I. You just don't get it

A. No Fear

"They do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts." (3:5)

1. God's words

Love *"I have loved you." (1:2)*

Power *"For I am a Great King and my name is to be feared among the nations." (1:14)*

Promise *"My Covenant with [Levi] was one of life and peace and I gave them to him that he might fear Me...and he stood in awe of My name." (2:5)*

Indictment *"You have wearied the Lord with your words."*

2. Their words

Insolent *"How have we wearied Him?" (2:17)*

Grumbling Complaining to each other about God, as opposed to talking to God directly in prayer. We are invited to bring our doubts and fears to him as in the psalms.

Scornful Accusing God of calling evil good. Their desire *"is not for God to right wrongs, but to challenge His ability or willingness to do so." (Adams, 97)*

Arrogant Putting God on trial and charging Him with injustice. *"Where is this God of Justice?" (v.17)*

II. You may get what you ask for

A. Know fear

"And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, He is coming...but who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?" (3:1, 2)

1. My messenger

Forerunner

The royal messenger's task is to clear the crowd so the coming king could approach unimpeded. Incredibly God will dispense with his messengers (the prophets) and come to His people Himself. *"Behold! I send my messenger who will clear the way before Me."* First word (3:1) lit. *"Here I am!"*

John the Baptist

"The voice of one calling: 'in the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord.'" (Is. 40:3)

John pointed to the unique ministry of Christ saying: *“After me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry.” (Matt 3:11)* He testified to Christ’s deity saying: *“This is the Son of God.” (John 1:34)*

2. Messenger of the covenant

Refers to the Lord Himself, who will come to enact the justice they were seeking. However, they wouldn’t receive vindication, but rather condemnation for their sins. The uncomfortable truth is that we are all deserving of God’s impartial and comprehensive justice. Who can stand?

3. Gracious refinement

“For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers soap. He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord.” (v.2-3)

Trial by Fire and Water

The refiner’s fire melts the silver and the dross. The impurities float to the top, are skimmed off and separated from the silver. This process is repeated until the silversmith can see his face reflected in the molten silver. *“In such a manner, God will apply the heat of affliction and discipline until He can see His image in His people.” (Boice, 507).*

The harsh alkaline lye in fullers soap dislodges dirt and washes it down the drain. *The fire and water do their purifying work by separating the valuable from the worthless, and discarding the worthless.” (Duguid,151)*

4. Comes near in judgment

He comes near, not in final judgment, but only to *testify* against sinners. He will be *“a swift witness against the sorcerers, adulterers, those who swear falsely, those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, those who thrust aside the sojourner and do not fear me.”(v.3:5)*

This list is representative of the whole covenant code, encompassing private sins of the heart, and public sins of injustice. For we have *“all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”(Rom 3:23)*

The objective of this judgment and purification process, in which the priests and Levites will be refined like gold and silver, is that *“they will bring offerings in righteousness, acceptable to the Lord.”* And the people will return to the Lord *“as in the days of old.” (vv.3:4,7)*

Ultimately we know they will fail: *“The Lord saw that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede, therefore His own arm brought salvation.” (Isaiah 59:16-17)*

III. I’ve got this

A. Perfect Love

1. Came to the temple

First as a baby in His mother’s arms, and later as a refiner’s fire *“bringing judgment on His own house, armed with a whip of cords, driving out the merchants who had turned the most sacred of buildings into a robbers’ den.” (Duguid, 155)*

2. Endured fire and water

Baptism by Water

Although sinless, Jesus, as our sin bearer had to be baptized to identify with us in our sinful condition so that he could take our place under God's judgment on the cross.

"He joined us in our water baptism, which symbolizes our trial by water, the washing that cleanses away the sin and dirt in our lives." (Duguid, 155)

Baptism by Fire

"I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled. I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:49-50)

During His first coming, Jesus was consumed by the fire of God's cosmic judgment so that the refining heat of affliction burns off the dross of our sin without consuming us.

3. Came to purify us

"After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb 1:3) Christ's atoning death was the priestly act that purged our sins, cleansing us so we can come into the presence of God in worship.

4. Came as *the* righteous offering

"The ultimate act of calling good evil and evil good was nailing the Perfect One to the cross and releasing a terrorist." In the face of human hypocrisy that accuses God of injustice, "God turned His back on His own Son, the only one who was ever truly just, so that we who are by nature evil might be good in His sight and become people in whom he delights." (Duguid, 156)

B. Casts out fear

1. He has drawn near in love

*"We have come to know and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. **By this** love is perfected in us that we may have boldness on the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment." (1 John 4:17-18)*

We're set free from the paralyzing fear of anticipated judgment because the *"footing on which we stand with Him is one of love. God deals with us in the way of rich and free grace."*(Candlish, 151)

2. Our secure standing

*"as He is so also are we **in this world.**"*

Status

Jesus now (in heaven)	Us now (in this world)
He's paid the wages of sin. The condemnation He bore for us is removed, His righteousness accepted.	Free of condemnation –declared righteous. God deals with us on the basis of grace not judgment.
He is with the Father, loved completely and perfectly by the Father.	Beloved by the Father as much Jesus is. Fully known and fully loved.

"To you as to Christ, death as the wages of sin is really past. There is no longer any judicial reckoning with you on God's part, no more with you than with Christ; but only love made perfect, love unfettered, unrestrained." (Candlish, 150)

It is *His* perfect love, not ours, that frees us from the fear that mars our peace and joy.
“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”(Heb 10:14)

C. What does this mean for us?

1. Respond in belief

“We have come to know and believe the love the Father has for us. God is love.”(I John 4:16)
It’s a process –*“It is not you who must generate this love through painful inward working. Look to Him, believe on Him; embrace the love He has for you.” (Candlish, 159).*

2. Respond in love

“We love because He first loved us...he who loves God must love his brother.” (1 John 4:19,21)
Always remember that God loved you first, with a love that seeks, knocks, waits, and forbears, -putting up with you at your worst. *“Then, from that love with which God first loved you –there will spring up love in you.” (Candlish, 158)*

3. A Pleasing offering

“Through Him, then let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that confess His name.” (Heb. 13:5) Or, as we find in 1 Peter 2:5, “Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Since we cannot give God any gift as a recompense (i.e., guilt offering), all that is left is the thank-offering that He has wanted all along.” (Horton)

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