

The Right View of God

People, as the book of Job tells us, are prone to trouble. There are as many troubles as the sparks that ascend from a campfire. The Scripture says it like this: "*Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward*" (Job 5:7). If you were to ask me what are the most difficult responsibilities of being a pastor, I would say one of them is sitting across from someone, diagnosing their problems and prescribing an activity of some nature that might provide relief for their unique situation. My friend, Dr. Jim Binney, gave an insightful answer. When asked a very general question about the root of all marriage problems, Jim branched out his answer to most all problems stemming from this one thing: people have the wrong view of God. As I sat there, I thought (and still think) what an overwhelming task it would be to change one's paradigm from the wrong to right view of God.

This then brings to mind the possible arrogance that may fester as we attempt to inculcate our view of God on other people. For instance, a word that we often hear to the point of becoming a cliché is "worldview:" Please observe the many faceted reflections on this word: James Sire, in *The Universe Next Door*, gives the following definition of worldview: "A worldview is a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false), which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic make-up of our world." Or we could simply say it is the sum total of what we believe about the most important issues of life. Any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement, or religion that provides an overarching approach to understanding God, the world, and man's relation to God and the world. Worldview has been defined as our view of all life - a comprehensive and usually personal conception or view of humanity, the world, or life. It is also a set of beliefs about who we are, the way things are, and what we ought to do about it; state of mind, metaphysics, and morality. Even the definitions remind me of something that was going on in my last year of college. We were encouraged to develop our philosophy of ministry. In our resume, we could include our beliefs and priorities in one brief, concise paragraph. A verse of Scripture kept coming to mind whenever this subject was approached, "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*" (Colossians 2:8). Nothing is wrong with being a lover of wisdom. The Bible is full of it. It is so important that we should pray for it (James 1:5). The problems arise when we bow down in idolatrous fervor to the god of self, deceit, tradition of man, and the basics of life defined by our own worldview. Paul said to Timothy, "*O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:*" (I Timothy 6:20). If our belief system is limited to our own deductive reasoning powers away from the mind of God, we shall be, of all men, most miserable. Samuel Johnson, the essayist and dictionary-maker of the eighteenth century, said: "Truth, sir, is a cow; which, when skeptics have found it will give them no more milk, they have gone off to milk the bull." Milking the bull is not only futile in effort; it can be decidedly dangerous to one's health! Even more dangerous to a person's spiritual health and earthly happiness is living by our own pattern of life without the injection and overall influence of the very life of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Life without God in Christ and Christ in you is a life that will not work.

The goal of obtaining the right view of God will come by searching the Scriptures to discover who God really is. For instance, God is omniscient - all knowing (Psalm 139:1-3). God is omnipresent - the ability to be everywhere at the same time (Psalm 139:7-12). God is immutable - He never changes (Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8). We could go further and list other of God's attributes such as His Sovereignty, Infinitude, Eternality, Wisdom, Faithfulness, Self-existence, Justice and Mercy. One of the most life-changing books that I read in my youth was *The Knowledge of the Holy* by A. W. Tozer. He states as a premise, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." Tozer goes on to say, "Man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshipper entertains high or low thoughts of God." I believe there are two attributes of God, that if properly understood will give us a right view of God. There are two high thoughts of God that will not only change and adjust our worldview,

but will change us for the better. The two attributes of which I speak are the Love of God and the Holiness of God.

1) The Love of God

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (I John 4:8). Very simply put, God says if we do not know love, we do not know God. What pulls at our heart when we see people mistreated and abused? What is it that makes us take the time to spend with someone who is so lonely they could die (even if we don't know them)? I would submit to you, it is the love of God. Why is it that God who is infinite in His glorious person could have mercy on such finite, sinful beings as ourselves? It is because he loves us. Deuteronomy 7:7 says, *"The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people."* God's love is beyond the ability of mere mortals to earn or even to define.

As we examine the love of God we are in awe. We are in awe of His freeness to mercifully pardon us when we repent and believe in Him. We are in awe of His willingness to use us though we are so flawed in a fallen world. There is a truth of which we need to be aware, i.e. we are not loved arbitrarily. Although we are loved freely, it came at a price. This thought is a perfect segue into the other attribute, which is perhaps the most important attribute of God.

2) The Holiness of God

In the year King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord. In Isaiah 6:3, he heard the seraphim of heaven declare, *"...Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts..."* In ancient days the linguist showed emphasis in different ways than today. In today's methods we will underline, italicize, or place exclamation points to make our statements stronger or more dogmatic. Linguists of old would use repetition to emphasize their points. Nowhere in the Bible does God say, "God is love, love, love." No other attribute is listed with this emphasis. God is most definitely love, but when we get to the very essence of who God is, we cannot sideline or by-pass His holiness. Holiness is so much more than that which exudes from His person - He is holy.

In returning to our original premise of having the right view of God we must see that since God is holy, He will not violate that holiness to express to mankind His great love. Therefore the only way God will release His love to us is through Christ. Christ is our bridge from God and to God. If you miss the Bridge, you miss God. The world in which we live is isolated and marooned from God. God is holy; only through the merits of Christ can one be accepted and cross over. The beginning of emotional, mental and spiritual health must begin with the right view of God. He is holy; He is love. He offers His great gift of love because holiness was satisfied in the person of Christ for us. And now through His grace those who know Jesus receive as a gift God's righteousness. *"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"* (Romans 3:25,26). The right view of God comes down to personal relationship with Christ. Only from this vantage point will our view of God, the world and our role in this world make sense.

- Pastor Pope -

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