

LENT DEVOTION

Austin Christian Fellowship of India (ACFI)

March 16th 2019

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Jesus said, “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that (self-righteousness) of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law; you certainly will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). It is that “higher standard” or the “surpassing” of righteousness that is expected of a human being to enter into the Kingdom of God. Only God can make it happen as we have been meditating thus far.

The word ‘of’ in the phrase “righteousness of God” tells us that God possess “righteousness” and it belongs to Him. That is who He is and that’s how God deals and will deal with His creation. That is what Martin Luther of Reformation emphasized most and said that “God punishes the sinners” with His righteousness. Some of the early Church Fathers said that “God gives to all their due – the rewards to the good and punishing the wicked.” However, that is only one of the salient features of the righteousness of God. We will meditate on other facets in the coming days!!

Yes, the Righteousness of God is the standard by which God will judge. We read in Psalms that “He will judge the world in righteousness” (Psalm 9:8). The believer will be judged (2 Corinthians 5:10); everyone will be judged [“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that face judgment” (Hebrews 9:27)] and evil angels will be judged [“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment” (2 Peter 2:4)]. The standard of every judgment is the Righteousness of God! The Judgement seat of Christ is for believers only (2 Corinthians 5:10) and it should not be confused with the Great White Throne of Judgment which is for unbelievers (Revelation 20:11—15).

The believers will be standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ in heaven. The issue at the Judgment Seat will not be salvation or entrance into heaven. The believers are already in heaven by this time after rapture. But the purpose of this judgment will be to determine the reward or loss of reward based upon the believer’s lifestyle on earth. “Each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). God’s standard of Righteousness will be the standard and the “higher standard” or the “surpassing righteousness” marked by growth in faithfulness and obedience on the part of a believer will be the issue when Christ judges.