

Bible Basics Conference 2010: Results of Christ's Death

Part 6

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[00:00:01] Okay, in this session we're going to look at another aspect of the results of Christ's work, access, approach and acceptance.

And we sometimes say it's as easy as A-B-C, well it's even easier, here it's A-A-A. Now, it may be that we can't exactly discern between access and approach, and indeed my session was really split into two, access and approach, firstly, and then thirdly, acceptance. But perhaps I may break it down into these three, and the way I would think of it is this, that the three things are progressive, and initially, the first thing is we must gain access into the presence of God.

And then secondly, having gained access into the presence of God, we can approach in the sense that we can draw near. [00:01:08] And once we're there, conscious that we're in the presence of God and we can draw near, then we can think about our place there in God's present acceptance.

And I make no apologies for going over a little bit some of the ground we've already gone through, because we need to be well grounded in the basis of what we have in blessing. And I want us to go back a little and to take perhaps a similar approach to Michael. Before we look at the right, the correct approach to God, I want us to consider the wrong way. And I'm going to look at this in two ways. Firstly, sewing, as in sewing with a needle, and secondly, sewing grain.

[00:02:05] And for this, we need to go back to Genesis. It's always a very good thing to go back to Genesis. We find there very often the principles set out, and we've had this already in our first session. Simon reminded us that consequent upon the fall, Adam and Eve, they sewed fig leaves together to make themselves aprons.

And we were reminded that Adam and Eve were conscious in God's presence of being naked.

They were aware that before the eyes of God, they were open to scrutiny.

They felt naked, and they attempted to remedy this by doing a work.

Their own works, their own efforts, they sewed.

[00:03:01] I don't suppose they had a needle and thread, exactly as we would understand them, but the Bible tells us they sewed fig leaves together to make themselves aprons.

And you know, this is very much an attitude of men and women today. They think that they can answer to their own need, if they think about it at all, if they're conscious of their nakedness before God, that they don't measure up to the mark. Nevertheless, they think that by working, by sewing, that they can accumulate enough good deeds to tip the balance. Some, regrettably, may even take a very much stronger position, one of arrogance.

And I've heard people say things like this, If there is a God, they say, if, and if I ever come before him, I'll tell him why I should be accepted.

[00:04:07] I'll ask him about this, about that. Why did he allow such and such a disaster to happen? What about this? What about that? This is the arrogance of man. They think that if they stand before God in their sins, they'll be able to argue their case. And I tell you, they'll not open their mouth. They'll be silent. And the proof of it is here, because Adam and Eve, they took those fig leaves and they sewed aprons. Now, think of what an apron is.

It's just, I think, really, the word here, we could translate it, loincloth. That's all it is, the bare minimum, a token covering to their nakedness. And we read, we read in Genesis chapter three, they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. [00:05:04] And what confidence did Adam and Eve have in their aprons? Nothing.

As we read, they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord.

And Adam said, I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid.

And, you know, this will be the response of anyone that thinks, anyone that dares to think they can approach God still in their sins, when it comes to it, that terrible day of judgment.

They'll not have any answer. There'll be fear.

They'll have to acknowledge that they stand before a holy and a righteous God and they have no answer. They have no covering. They are naked.

And so this is a very solemn matter to take up. Man's works are inadequate.

[00:06:03] And not only are they inadequate from God's side, they're inadequate from our side. There is no peace, no rest, no security.

We've moved a few years ago, but our old next-door neighbor, she spends some of her time knitting. And she knits very nice little garments. And, in fact, she's donated some garments to be sent to those that have need of them overseas. And she said to Ruth one day when she was handing over her latest batch, well, she said, you know, you do what you can. You do your best. You do good things and you hope it's enough. Well, it's a very sad and solemn thing to think of anyone thinking like that. Can we ever take up knitting needles, sewing, needle and thread? Can we ever think we can ever do

anything to remedy the state we're in before God?

[00:07:07] Thankfully, in the case of Adam and Eve, God stepped in. And we've been reminded, Simon helpfully pointed out, that God did something for Adam and Eve in place of their own works. He made coats of skins and clothed them.

And here, notice it's not provided aprons, but he clothed them.

A full garment.

And that's one aspect of what we're taking up in our studies today and tomorrow. That what God does goes so far beyond our necessity.

It doesn't just answer to our need, but it brings us into a wideness and a fullness of blessing. And we see this, I suggest, even in God's providing clothing. Not just aprons, but a full garment of skins.

[00:08:05] And we've already been reminded that this brings into the truth of substitution. The animal that had to die in order to provide the skins is a picture of the person and the work of the Lord Jesus. Okay, that's sewing with a needle. Then we had sewing a seed.

And this now brings in another aspect. With Adam and Eve, their sewing was with a view to meeting their need.

To atoning for their sins, their sinful state, their disobedience in taking the fruit. And they attempted to provide their own covering for such things. But now we have Cain and Abel and we're told Cain was a keeper of sheep. Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a tiller of the ground. He sowed, he sowed grain, he sowed corn.

[00:09:02] And as a result, there was fruit came up.

And we can read in Genesis 4 that Cain brought of the fruits of the ground and offering unto the Lord. Abel, he also brought, he brought of the firstlings, the fat of his flock. And now there's a key difference. A key difference because Abel was, his role, his work involved life.

And sheep are alive and what he offered involved death.

So one of his sheep, it had to be given up in death. Again, a picture, a figure of the work of the Lord Jesus. And we read that it was of the firstlings, the fat. It was the very best. And this answers to the demand of God that the lamb should be without spot, without blemish. [00:10:03] But of Cain, we read only this, that he brought of his, the fruits of the ground. It doesn't say it was the best. It doesn't say it was the first of the crop that was available. It was just some of it. It almost seems that it was just what was spare, what was left over. You see the completely different attitude that Cain and Abel had. Now, I suggest this brings out another aspect of the approach, the attempt to come into God's presence that men have. This is not so much now covering for sin.

It's not a matter of atonement. But it's simply men presuming that they can come into God's presence and bring something which God will find acceptable. Some time ago, I asked some young people to define or suggest what they understood by the term worship.

[00:11:09] And there were various suggestions, various responses. And I think they were quite typical. If we ask, we were to ask anyone about what is worship?

I think you'll find you'll get all sorts of different answers. And people will say, well, there's all different forms of worship. And I worship in my way and he or she worships in another way. And it's all just a different way of approaching God. And I think the root of it is found here in Cain.

He presumed to approach God with something according to his own ideas.

And we read, the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. [00:12:01] And as a consequence, Cain was very angry and his countenance fell.

So we have this twofold aspect of the attempt of men.

You know, some time ago there was a young man, and I think he's in our audience today. He posed this question to the editor of the Bible Monthly.

The question was, what is worship? Well, you can find yourself an old copy of Bible Monthly and find out what Mr. Hocking's answer was. But I think it was along these lines. That worship is simply the presentation to God, the Father, of the person and the work of the Lord Jesus.

And that is the only basis on which we can have access to, approach to, God.

And all these things are figured. [00:13:01] And we have a number of verses I'd like us to take up very briefly. Romans 5 verse 2.

We have by whom the Lord Jesus, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.

And we've seen thus far that all the results of Christ's blessing rest on himself as a person, the value to God of who the Lord Jesus is, his own beloved Son, sinless, spotless, holy, undefiled, the Lamb of God.

And secondly, on the work of the Lord Jesus, what he did for us on the cross, a matter of substitution again.

Those three hours of darkness, a very terrible and solemn time, during those hours of darkness, the Lord, he did a work for us. [00:14:03] And we can say that these two things are inextricably tied up, his person and his work. And these two things together, they and they alone, form the basis for our entitlement to come into the presence of God, firstly, and secondly, to draw near, to boldly come into nearness to God. And we'll see in these verses that everything is based on, flows out from, connected with the person and the work of the Lord Jesus. Another one, Ephesians 2 verse 18. Through him, the Lord Jesus, we both, that's both Jews and Gentiles, have access by one spirit unto the Father.

Ephesians 3 verse 12, Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

[00:15:08] Again, we can go back to Genesis, an Old Testament principle established. Noah built an altar unto the Lord, took of every clean animal, of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour. Now, this is again something we've already looked at. Leviticus chapter 1, the first offering that's taken up isn't the sin offering, not the trespass offering, not that which meets our need. That comes subsequently.

But the first offering, the first matter taken up is what is acceptable to God, the burnt offering. And Noah, he understood something of this. He took account of it. And as a consequence of being passed through the flood, he offered that which was acceptable to God, a burnt offering.

[00:16:07] And we read, it shall be accepted for him. So, this now leads us on to the last of our three.

I trust we can follow that there is one basis and one basis alone on which we can come into the presence of God. And secondly, to draw near with boldness.

Not ever having anything of that fear of Adam and Eve, because we're not resting on our own work. There's no possibility of failure on the work of Christ.

There is, of course, with our own work. We've never come with boldness to God on the basis of what we have done. But if we come on the basis of what Christ has done, it is grasping the truth of what we are positionally, then it has a practical outworking.

[00:17:05] And Hebrews tells us that we have, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiness, holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way. And that's something we need to apprehend. It's something we need to know, to accept, to be clear about, to stand on and to rest on.

It's a foundation stone.

And having done that, and I trust that after this day, this weekend, we should be better equipped to know what it is on which we stand and rest. To be certain of the foundation on which we stand. But there must be something that goes beyond that. There must be a building, if you like, that's erected on the foundation. And here we have it.

Let us draw near with a true heart.

[00:18:02] Now, I've got a number of pictures. They might be a little like Simon's. They might need a little bit of explanation for us to work out what have they to do with our subject. Well, here we have a very happy scene. We can assume it's a father with his two young children, young enough to pick up in an arm each. Now, look at the scene.

Look there at the delight that the father has in his children.

And look, too, at the delight the children have in the father. It's a very happy scene of relaxed intimacy.

And there's no sense in either of these children that they're not really at home in his arms.

They're not entitled to be there. They're not in the arms of a stranger, are they? Can we understand

something of the feelings of these three characters in our picture? [00:19:06] Now, of course, it's going to fall far short of the spiritual truth that we are thinking about today. But it's just a little help, I hope, that we might understand what it is that we have as a basis of the person and the work of Christ. That we can come with boldness into the presence of God, having complete confidence.

And this is where our third A, acceptance, comes in. We have complete confidence that we have a right to be there. We're at home. Nothing intrudes. There's no doubt. There's no being held at arm's length. These two children are as close as they possibly could be to their father. And now we have another scene. This is a homely scene, a family scene, a father and a mother and the three children, a nice, cosy, warm fire.

[00:20:08] Now, I suggest we all know something of this. We have experience of what it is to be at home in our own homes. Perhaps to be at home in one another's homes. I heard of some visitors, I think they might even be here today. They were visiting my parents-in-law. And the man, whom I won't name, he put his feet up on the coffee table. And his daughter said, hey, Dad, what are you doing? And he said, it's okay, I feel at home here.

And I'm sure it went down perfectly well. Well, I won't tell you who it was because you might not invite him to your house. But, you know, this is a very happy thing if we can feel at home in the homes of the brethren. Believers on the Lord Jesus, when I go to the home of another believer, [00:21:03] it feels like home because we're of the same family. We have the same father. And this is a little something of what I want us to apprehend. The results of the work of Christ is that we are accepted in the Father's presence. We're at home in his presence. There's a warm glow.

And this little scene, no doubt they're talking about something that's happened at school or I don't know, but it's a scene of domestic bliss and rest.

And that should be a little picture to us of what our wonderful portion is in the presence of God the Father. Now, a different aspect.

Here we have a proud father, a young son, and they're dressed the same.

[00:22:05] So this man has aspirations for his son.

He wants him to be a chip off the old block. He wants him to follow in his footsteps. And this man has every confidence in his son.

He's going to grow up to be just like him. He even dresses the same. That's the same tailor.

And this young boy, do you think he feels uncomfortable?

No, he's there, his father's hand on his shoulder. He feels relaxed.

He's got someone to look up to.

There's a relationship here. The father and his son, they know each other. They know where they're going. They have the same aspirations, the same interests.

Now, again, it falls far short of the spiritual truth we're considering. [00:23:02] But, you know, we have to say, speaking reverently now, of the father and the son there of one mind.

This was clear in the life of the Lord Jesus. And if we want to know anything about the father, we have it revealed in the person of the son. And I suggest, too, that there's maturity in this young boy.

He's only a young boy, but already there's a measure of maturity. It goes beyond that other little picture of the two children in their father's arms. This young boy here, he knows and understands his father's business, his father's mind, his father's thoughts. You know, that place is ours in Christ.

We are brought into a measure of mature association with Christ before the father.

[00:24:05] We can think the way God the father thinks. He's brought us into a place where he desires for us to know his mind.

We have his word.

He's brought us, in his word he tells us what he's going to do in regard to his son, the Lord Jesus. We've had it already. At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow. We know something of the prophetic scriptures which tell us what God is going to do in this world and beyond into the eternal state. God the father has entrusted us with wonderful truths and secrets.

We're brought into a measure of maturity as a result of the person, the work of the Lord Jesus. And we have this brought out in this little scene. The father and the son working together on something that they enjoy. [00:25:06] And there's a common purpose and a common activity.

Of course, spiritual truth goes far beyond this simple picture. But this is just a little taste of what I want us to think about. And in closing, I would say, you know, it's a practical matter. Practice flows out of the positional side. What we know, what we rest on, should have a working out in our lives. And I suggest that in one area in particular, we can know this wonderful truth of having access, approach and acceptance before God. And that's when we come together on the Lord's Day morning to remember the Lord Jesus in his death. We have before us the tokens, the emblems of his love, his work.

[00:26:03] The cup, the loaf separated speaks of death. And we're there to remember him and what he's done.

Now, when we're occupied with the Lord Jesus in that way, are we not brought into a conscious sense of our place before God?

Can we not see that we're accepted in the beloved? Is there not then a being led out to appreciate our place before God, the Father?

Can we not draw near in worship? Not as Cain, not just bringing any old thing that will do, but like Abel bringing the firstling of the flock. What can we bring that's acceptable to God? We bring our true worship, our heart's appreciation of the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. [00:27:01] That alone is acceptable to God. And we are, we're accepted in the beloved. This wonderful verse, having predestinated us, marked us out beforehand. It's a measure of sanctification there.

We're predestinated, what for? For adoption by Christ, by Jesus Christ to himself.

So we have this entitlement to be in the presence of God as his family. This is the aspect of children, but it goes beyond that. According to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved.

We have no greater, no better basis on which to come into the presence of God.

And once there, to know that we're accepted. And I want to close by recalling an occasion when we were remembering the Lord. [00:28:02] The Lord's Day morning in a town in the middle of the UK, in a meeting room which they no longer use because they now have a new one. I'll give you a clue. And an old brother there, at the end of the meeting, another brother who's present here today, he went up to him and he said, you know, I think we had a touch, a taste of heaven this morning. You know what this old brother said? He said, a touch, a taste? He said, we were there. We were there.

And that's the sense, dear friends, that I want us to get to today, that on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus, we can draw near with boldness to the presence of God, and there in his presence to rejoice in our being accepted in the beloved. And it's not only a taste, a foretaste of heaven, but we can say that we can know something of it. We can say we were there.