

MT. OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH, 3500 Edwards Mill Road, Raleigh, NC 27612

NEWS & EVENTS – September 2023

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Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.
(Psalms 143:10)

Whether we are businessmen seeking advantage in negotiation, or participating in a sports contest, or a military unit engaging the enemy, the place where the meeting is held seems to matter greatly. We need a meeting place that gives us an edge. A sports team enjoys the support of the folks in their hometown to cheer them on. A familiar crowd can be supportive and forgiving or have a long memory of serious shortcomings and they won't ever let you forget it! A commander of warriors seeks to gain the upper hand by engaging the enemy where familiar terrain is traveled, or tactics are employed to their advantage. Businessman often make it their business to stage successful negotiations at places where power is on full display. So, what is the most challenging place for man to meet his God? When you meet God on His home turf, His righteousness is on full display. This place of righteousness is foreign territory to human beings. When Moses really met God, it was at a strange place in his reality. Moses was at a strange place in his life and living in a strange land as well. Then he saw a strange sight. And he encountered the Most High God in a most unusual place. An unnatural place. Moses was told there that he was treading on holy ground. When a man meets his Maker, either at the end of his earthly life, or sometime during that time span, righteousness is where God will always be found. The psalmist makes several observations about this place called righteousness.

First of all, God speaks out of His righteousness. He answers a man's prayer because God is righteous. Every communication from the Lord is a righteous one. He is faithful to tell us about the right way to live, the right way to think, the right way to speak, the right company to keep. If we truly pray, we only approach God's righteousness through the justification earned for us by Jesus. God does not hear us because of our good works, or casual acquaintance or fine reputation. He hears our plea because of the work of Christ on the cross.

Secondly, the righteousness of God is something alien to the natural man. We are not born with it. We are born again into it. The Word of God declares that no living man is righteous...*no living man*. No man alive.

This tells me that when we die, we will meet God with no righteousness on board for that meeting. We will have nothing to negotiate with. We will not have a hometown crowd rooting for us. We cannot fight our way into His presence. This also means that I must die to my sinful self-righteousness and recognize I need righteousness for the meeting. It only comes from one Source. God imparts His righteousness when I am connected to His Spirit.

I cannot live with God without it, and I cannot live for Him without it. The Lord God speaks righteousness, and He sees righteousness. A natural born man lacks what he needs to meet God on His terms and on His ground. The Psalmist pleads for the Lord God to answer him in his desperate and desolate condition. He has been beaten down, overwhelmed, and his soul is weary. His spirit is failing and fainting. He thirsts for the righteousness of God in a parched land. A man without the righteousness of God is like a wilted plant. He is dying out and drying up. The psalmist cries out for help as he withers away. He needs the refuge of righteousness to live with God and live for God. The natural man must become a supernatural man. God's life-giving Spirit revives us with Living Water in this parched place. We must be taught to do the will of God. The will of God is revealed in the Word of God by the Spirit of God. Righteousness refreshes.

Lastly, God's Good Spirit leads us on level ground. It is easier to walk on level ground. It is easier to live in a culture of unrighteousness insulated and shielded by the righteousness of Christ. Righteousness will always be attacked by unrighteousness. The goal is to make us want righteousness less. But once you've encountered this place of refuge, you'll find there is no substitute. Righteousness delivers us to the place of righteousness. David, the Sweet Psalmist, gives us a word that confirms the Word of the Most High God... *He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. (Psalm 23:3)* Here's a parting thought to consider... When Restored and Redeemed Man meets his God, it will be for the sake of His name. The Kingdom of God is a Righteous Kingdom led by a Righteous King. Righteousness is the place King Jesus went to prepare. And when we get there, it will be because we want to be there. And we will find that we have been prepared for the place... and we will belong there... and we've been longing to be there. Take heart, weary traveler. God gathers those who belong to Him. He is gathering a righteous harvest for Himself. Be there.

Be righteous. You'll be glad you were.

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam

(If you are unable to attend Mt. Olivet's 11 AM Sunday worship service in person, can go to website www.mabc.org and click on "Worship Services" for live streaming or prior messages.)