

Doing Righteous Deeds but Disobeying God

And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment. ... For Thou hast hidden Thy face from us ... But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father, we are the clay, and Thou our potter; and all of us are the work of Thy hand. –Isaiah 64:6-8, NAS

It is easy to get so busy in doing “righteous” things such as being active in church matters—and think that God must be thrilled. He may be nowhere near, but we carry on.

I think it is possible for God to be with us in one area and absent in another area at the same time. For example, He dealt with me in two significant areas: complaining and bitterness. The result was a fresh renewal of the Spirit in my personal life and public ministry.

But there is another area of my life where I was, I fear, a failure. It had to do with my role as a father. I was doing “righteous deeds”—preaching, praying, and, yes, fasting once in a while. Books emerged from the press. Some people claimed to be blessed by my preaching and writing. But I overlooked my family.

This illustrates why I believe it is possible to experience the presence of Christ and His absence at the same time. Strange as it may seem, God can show His face and hide His face at the same time. He can be with me powerfully in one aspect of my life, yet allow the Dove to flutter away in another.

You may ask me, “Why didn’t God tell you to spend time with your family?” He did. I didn’t listen. I carried on. And yet He has proved to be with me in my ministry generally. But we must be careful not to presume that God approves of all that we care and do merely because He is gracious to us in a

particular area.

God isn't interested in our performance of certain righteous deeds—even though we enjoy doing them. He knows, and we must learn, that we often neglect what should be our priorities while concentrating on righteous deed-doing.

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