

Friday with Fred – July 28, 2017



Approval Ratings

Today ratings are everything; TV ratings, internet website ratings, consumer product safety ratings, personal credit ratings, and of course, no one is surprised at congressional approval ratings.....a definite all-time low.

Ratings have to do with approval. The essential questions are as they always have been: Who, What, When, Where, How and Why? Who is doing the rating? Who is giving the approval and who is gaining the approval? What is the purpose and why does it matter? Where and When does this approval evaluation take place?

In the book of Hebrews the word for approval comes from the word "martyr" and is often translated testimony. Men and women in the Bible gained approval and garnered a testimony because of the function of their faith. In the famous list of the "Heroes of the Faith" catalogued in Hebrews 11 the list begins and ends with a reference to approval based on faith amid the losses incurred during life and culminating in the loss of life. (11:1,39)

The author of Hebrews, as he starts chapter 12:1 reminds us that since we have such a cloud of witnesses - such a group of distinguished testimonies of faithful men and women who have gained approval, *"let us run with endurance the race set before us."*

The race we run is different for all of us. If you live under the rule of ISIS or the reign of Communist China the race has its unique difficulties. If you run the race in a materialistic society and a sensate culture such as ours the race takes on a different flavor. But mark it well - it is a race we must run and a race we must win if we are to gain approval. The Apostle Paul understood this and instructs us as he evaluated his own racing technique in I Corinthians 9:24-27:

Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receive the prize? Even so run; that ye may attain. And every man that strives in the games exercising self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air: but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

What motivated Paul was the realization that the approval or the evaluation of his life would take place at the Bema seat, the judgment seat of Christ.

For we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. 5:9-10. See also Rom. 14:10

This judgment is not to determine if I am a Christian, but to determine what type of Christian life I lived. Never forget Ephesians 2:8-10.

...for by grace have you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God also prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

The gift is free, but the prize is costly. Eternal life is free, given to those who by faith trust in Jesus. Reward for faithful service, approval by the king, is earned by living a life of faithfulness for Jesus.

How do we run the race, you ask? We have two principles as to how to run. First, we must disrobe. *"Stripping off the encumbrances and the sin that so easily entangles us."* Second, we must focus: *"Fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before Him endured the cross and despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the throne God."* Hebrews 12:1-2

The book of Hebrews opened up by recalling for us that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (1:3-4) and now at the closing of the book the author reminds us of this most important fact. Focus on HIM as you run your race and live your life.

Let us never forget that Jesus is seated, having run and won His race. The cloud of witnesses, the faithful ones, have run their race and won, having been given approval for the life they lived in the most difficult of times, offering up their very lives.

And what about us today.
Shall we Run our Race and gain His approval?

Serving Him with you
Until He comes for us,
Fred

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