

The Wednesday Word, January 1, 2020: Grace not Debt

“Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” Romans 4:4-5

Good gracious, that is an audacious statement, but it is perfectly correct and accurate.

God justifies the ungodly!

Why the ungodly? Because there is no other kind of people for Him to justify. All outside of Christ are ungodly. As Romans 3 explained, *“There is none righteous and none that doeth good.”* NONE! That’s comprehensive if you ask me.

So, let’s say it again, if God did not justify the ungodly, no one would be justified (*acquitted*). All are ungodly, some are very ungodly; but none are too ungodly to be justified. Why so? Because justification, (acquittal) is by grace— sheer unbounded grace, and not because of merit (what we deserve or earn).

At Calvary, infinite grace met unbounded demerit and grace triumphed.

Notice, we are not even told to believe that God justifies the ungodly. No, we are called to believe on Him,—on God Himself,—who justifies the ungodly (see our text).

Faith in God for justification implies the abandonment of any confidence we have in justification by our own good works. The old gospel Hymn by James Proctor deals so well with this. It says,

When He, from His lofty throne,
Stooped to do and die,
Ev'rything was fully done;
Hearken to His cry!

Refrain

It is finished! yes, indeed,
Finished, ev'ry jot;
Sinner, this is all you need,
Tell me, is it not?

Weary, working, burdened one,
Wherefore toil you so?
Cease your doing; all was done
Long, long ago.

Refrain

Till to Jesus' work you cling

By a simple faith,
"Doing" is a deadly thing-
"Doing" ends in death.

Refrain

Cast your deadly "doing" down-
Down at Jesus' feet;
Stand in Him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete.”

Our only hope of heaven is Jesus Himself. Our good works cannot bring us eternal life. As the scripture says, “To him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” Now that is a plain, well-known matter. If we work for a wage, we’ve earned it. It is not grace, therefore, on the part of our employer to, at the end of the week, give us our wages. We’ve earned them. But grace gives us what we haven’t earned or deserved.

Supposing you met a homeless stranger and you bought him a meal, that would be grace,—but only in a small measure. Gospel grace is much greater than that. Gospel grace is more akin to the following. Suppose a stranger plundered your home and robbed you and you, knowing who he was and what he had done, unbegrudgingly and gladly bought him a meal, that’s more like the grace of God.

We are saved by grace!

There is no question of working for wages to gain eternal life. Salvation is “to him that works not— but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly,”—Gospel truth makes us repudiate our works as our hope of salvation. In grace, the Lord justifies the ungodly, the stranger, the destitute and the enemy. He is “the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.”

The blood of the Lamb is the basis on which He can righteously justify. That is why He “is just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus” (Romans 3:25-26). God justifies the ungodly—but some people would rather do anything other than simply trust themselves to Him. They would rather work than believe. They want their own righteousness and refuse to surrender themselves to the righteousness of God. They won't submit, they won't repent.

But, thank God, the most ungodly who trusts in Him is declared not guilty.

And that’s the Gospel Truth!