

The Wednesday Word, Jan. 20, 2010: The Spirit and God's Verdict

If God renders a guilty verdict against us, who can argue with him? (See Romans 3:10ff). If God condemns us, who then can acquit us? (Rom 3:19). Let's say we could employ world-class lawyers to defend us against God's accusations, even the best of them could not shield us. When God the judge of all the earth issues His verdict our lawyers, brilliant as they may be, cannot thwart the charges. Nor can they point to our character and ask for clemency based on our goodness. Our goodness, when compared to God's, is non-existent. At best, our defective goodness qualifies us for condemnation, not clemency.

If you disagree with this assessment and think it doesn't apply to you then here's the bad news--- you are self-righteous (Rom 3:20). You are still not in the place where you can call out to Christ Jesus for mercy. You can disagree all you like, but you'll discover that it's futile and foolish to dispute God's verdict. God the Judge knows all the facts and cannot be mistaken (Romans 2:2). Only the Holy Spirit can open your eyes to see the wretchedness of your condition. As Bonar says, "Conviction of sin is just the sinner seeing himself as he is, and as God has all along seen him."

When the Holy Spirit shows up, every idea of self-goodness, either in whole or in part, disappears. He convicts the world of righteousness (John 16:8). The things that once seemed good to us now appear so bad, and the bad things so awful, that every prop falls from under us, and all hope of being saved because of our 'good' character is taken away. We see that we can neither save ourselves nor help God to save us. It is only as the Holy Spirit begins to deal with us that we see that, outside of Christ, we are lost and helpless.

Gospel faith however takes us away from any misplaced self-righteous confidence. Faith grasps that it is the blood that justifies (Romans 5:9). Faith sees that it is because the Lamb has shed His blood that we can now approach the throne of God (Heb 10:19). Faith sees that mercy is ours because Christ has died, Christ is risen and Christ is seated at the right hand of God interceding for us (Rom 8:34). Faith sees that it is the blood which has brought us peace with God (Colossians 1:20). Faith grasps that our redemption has been secured by the blood (Ephesians 1:7).

Faith does not look at anything inside us for the ground of justification. Faith will never confuse the finished work of God 'for us' with the work that He is doing 'in us' by His Spirit. Christ 'in us' leads to consecration and growth in grace, but Christ 'for us' in His finished work is the only ground of our right standing before God. Faith will, therefore, never cause us to look to any goodness in us, even an infused goodness, by the Holy Spirit, to declare us not guilty and acquit us before God. Faith grasps that all our security rests outside of us in Christ alone.

And That's the Gospel Truth.