

The Wednesday Word, Feb. 20, 2013: Gospel Acquittal

Because of the gospel we have been not merely pardoned for sins, but totally acquitted and declared not guilty. Do you see the difference?

I read once of how a man who had been in prison for a crime was brought before the Judge. The prisoner had had a profound change of life. He had served much time and was now a reformed man. The Judge heard the facts and because of the prisoner's change of character, issued him a pardon. It was a lovely story, but it's quite unlike the gospel. You see, there is nothing in us that deserves any kind of mercy. We are all guilty before the thrice-holy, supreme majesty! The apostle Paul spoke for us all when he said, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing" (Romans 7:18). None of us deserve any favour or mercy from God! We all should be condemned.

Our salvation, however, was bought and paid for by Christ, but He purchased much more than our pardon. The pardoned man in our story was still a guilty man, but the acquitted man is not guilty of any charges! Christ alone purchased and secured our acquittal. The declaration from heaven upon us is, therefore, "Not guilty ... case dismissed."

The acquittal or 'not guilty' verdict is ours because the Father has given us the same verdict He gave to His Son (Romans 2:13). Because Christ was our substitute in His life and death, the Father's verdict on Christ is automatically ours. Christ lived and died as our willing substitute. Because of this, when He was born sinlessly, we were born sinlessly. When He lived sinlessly, we lived sinlessly, and when He poured out His blood for our sins He died as though He were us. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). This is especially good news.

"Oh," you say, "how I wish I could feel that." I understand you and can sympathise, but the facts are these, you don't have to feel, "not guilty" to be not guilty. When someone is acquitted in court, they receive their verdict, not by feelings, but, rather, by the word of the Judge. In heaven's court, God the Judge has declared us not guilty. The Lord said it; that settles it; I believe it; that settles me!

As we learn to take God at His word about our acquittal, the feelings of guilt flee. We rest in the word of the God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2). We may be the feeblest believer who has ever walked the face of the earth, but if Christ is our Saviour, we now enjoy the freedom of the, not guilty verdict. He has put our sins behind His back (Isaiah 38:17). Indeed, "As far as the East is from the West so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalms 103:12).

Acquittal is a gospel mercy which we take by sheer faith. No one has ever seen God blotting out their sin, and no one has ever heard the declaration of the "not guilty" verdict, but we believe it has been done because the Lord Christ has said, "It is Finished" (John 19:30).

It's wonderful to know that our sins are no longer charged against us, but it's even better to know that they are forgotten. Hebrews 10:17 says, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." If they are forgotten by God, what are we doing digging them up and remembering them?

The wisdom of this world says, "Blessed is the man who is rich and powerful." But the wisdom of the Lord says, "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit is no guile" (Psalms 32:1-2).

And that's the Gospel Truth!