

The Wednesday Word, April 20, 2022: Continual Acceptance

I recently had a conversation with a brother who was having difficulty believing he could be continually accepted by God. That's a more widespread problem than you may think.

As believers, one of the subtle difficulties we encounter in the Christian life is that we begin to look for qualities within ourselves as being the ground and basis of our acceptance with God. But this is deception. And, if we do not continually bathe ourselves in the gospel, this kind of thing happens to us quite frequently. An absence of the gospel will cause us to quietly forget that our continual acceptance before God is found in Christ alone plus nothing!

We may be in Christian service and ministry, but that's not why we are accepted before God. We may work sacrificially for the cause of Christ, but that's not why we are accepted before God.

Indeed, we may have a great prayer life, but that's not why we are accepted before God. And we may abound in spiritual gifts but, again, that's not why we are accepted before God.

The gospel truth is that we are fully and totally accepted because of one man, the God-man, Jesus the Christ. Let's say it again, the only acceptance we have before God is Christ Himself! We are, "*found in Him*." (Philippians 3:9). This must mean that our own "self" has disappeared and instead, in the Father's eyes, there is Christ, the beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. (Matthew 3:17).

Horatius Bonar observed, "*Found in ourselves, there was nothing but wrath; found in Him there is nothing but favour*." We are hidden in Christ (Colossians 3:3): we are complete in Him (Colossians 2:10). He is our continual acceptance before God.

As we grow in grace, we recognize that although we are, within ourselves, unworthy of the Father's welcome, we are actually accepted beyond measure. Also, gospel grace teaches us that we are entirely loved in spite of being, in ourselves, utterly unlovable. Gospel grace further informs us that we are totally accepted in spite of being, in ourselves, totally unacceptable.

Because we are in Christ, we no longer put confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3). Because we are in Christ, we are liberated from the search for acceptance with God through resolutions and vows. The true believer knows that, in him, that is in his flesh, there dwells no good thing. (Romans 7:18). He knows that compared to God, everything within Him is vileness and sin. The truth is, if a man had the power to save Himself, he would not have the desire to do so; and if He had the desire to save himself, he would not have the power to do so. "Apart from Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5).

This is why the Holy Spirit always fixes our eyes on Jesus (John 16:14). He never turns our eye in on our performance as a means of gaining confidence. He never leads us to get encouragement by looking at our own character or performance. No! The way by which the Spirit gives us confidence is to continually glorify and magnify the perfections of Lord Jesus.

Are you living with something less than full assurance of your acceptance before the Father? If

you are a believer Christ has died for you, Christ has risen for you and is even now seated in cosmic authority making intercession for you. (Romans 8:34). Has unbelief caused you to distrust the abilities and will of your Saviour to save you? Do you doubt the truth of God's testimony? Do you honestly believe that the Rock of Ages is going to crumble?

John Bunyan said,

"Christ is all and in all" (Colossians 3:11). He who knows this knows what fully satisfies and cheers. He who knows this best has the deepest and truest peace: for he has learned the secret of being always a sinner, yet always righteous; always incomplete, yet always complete; always empty, and yet always full; always poor, and yet always rich."

For continued acceptance before God and a present, joyful assurance of salvation, we need Christ and His finished work plus nothing.

And that's the Gospel Truth!