

The Wednesday Word, April 28, 2010: The Stupidity of Unbelief! Part 1

Let's look for a moment at the real meaning of unbelief.

In relation to the gospel unbelief has two main ingredients, (1) a high opinion of self, and (2) a low opinion of God. It's that simple! So long as these two things exist, it is impossible for us to rest in the good news. Our high opinion of ourselves makes us think that it is within the realm of possibility to win God's favor by our religious performances. On the other hand, our low opinion of God makes us unwilling and even afraid to put ourselves entirely into His hands. Until our unbelief is removed we cannot grasp the free and generous character of the unearned grace of God.

By nature, all of us are spiritually foolish. In our natural man we think stupid things about God and ourselves (Rom 1:21, 1 Cor 1:18, 27; 1 Cor 2:14, 1 Cor 3:19). We are so indebted to the work of the Holy Spirit. He convinces us of sin and in doing so helps to destroy our foolish and overblown opinion of ourselves (Jn 16: 8-11). Even as believers we, all too often, find ourselves seated on self-righteous high horses and need to be knocked off. The Holy Spirit does just this as He helps us to see what we are really like. In His powerful grace He reduces our high estimate of our own character and helps us to see ourselves as God does. In this way He delivers us from the plague of self-righteousness.

Having altered our inflated opinion of ourselves, the Spirit goes to work to change our stupid opinion of God, and makes us see that the God we were against is in fact the God of all grace. He is the one who loved us and came here Himself in the person of His Son. He alone lived, died and rose again for us. Speaking of the Spirit's work in this regard, Joseph Hart the hymn writer says,

“He never moves a man to say.

‘Thank God I’m made so good’

But turns his eye another way,

To Jesus and his blood”

But do you want to hear what is really stupid? There are some people who, while they admit that they are sinners in the general sense of the word, feel that they are not sinners in the way that God says they are sinners. They consider themselves to be not so entirely bad as to be ruined by sin (Luke 18:11). Now here's the difficulty, as long as they remain in this mindset they have no part in the free and gracious salvation given to sinners. They need not complain about this arrangement for Christ died for sinners and only for sinners (Luke 5:32). Since the self-righteous continue, to the end of their days, reckoning themselves to be unqualified for the title of ‘poor lost sinner’, then evidently Christ did not die for them.

There are no partial sinners in God's eyes (Isa 1:5-6). We, all of us, are entire sinners, thoroughbred, dyed in the wool sinners (Rom 7:23-24) who need an entire, thoroughbred, dyed in the wool Savior to rescue us. We, all of us, are such sinners that we need the cross, blood, and righteousness of the God/Man. Christ Jesus is our only hope.

And That's the Gospel Truth!