

The Wednesday Word, May 18, 2011: The Danger of Resting on Feelings

Because it is true that repentance and faith go hand in hand, there are those who think they are unqualified to ask for mercy. They are concerned that they do not feel repentant enough to ask for salvation. They know that they need the Saviour, but think they lack a sufficient amount of feelings to qualify for grace.

If this is so of you, let me ask you a question. Does your lack of being totally miserable about your sin alter the gospel? Does it in any way change the good news? Does your lack of feelings mean that the gospel is no longer for the undeserving and unlovable? Does your lack of feelings change the graciousness of the Lord Jesus?

In reality you are attempting the impossible for you are trying to receive grace by works. You think you will deserve grace if you show God how bad you feel about your sin. However, this course of action is impossible because grace is reserved exclusively for the undeserving who do not work for it (Rom 4:5).

Here's some good news. The gospel suits us—it fits us like a glove! It meets us where we are and announces to us the Christ who saves undeserving sinners. "But" you say, "I don't think I am sufficiently sorry to qualify for the gospel." Listen to me, although God gives a godly sorrow that leads to repentance (2 Cor 7:9; Rom 2:4), being tearfully miserable about your sins will not make you more welcome than you already are, nor will it persuade God to be more kindly disposed to you than He is in Christ.

Yet, in spite of this, some people insist that true repentance comes only with tears. If this is so, we must ask, "What's the going rate for tears nowadays?---Just how many tears does God require? Does he want a bucket full? A half a bucket full? And while we are at it, what size is the bucket anyway?

Listen to me, you are not disqualified from the gospel because of the lack of feelings. Faith does not spring out of feelings, feelings grow out of faith. The less we feel the more we have an opportunity to trust. Nevertheless here's the thing, we cannot feel properly until we have believed. This is also so with repentance: all true repentance has its root in faith. Although no one is saved without repentance, repentance is not a condition or cause of grace: it is always the result of grace. Repentance can never earn God's grace and forgiveness. All grace and forgiveness has already been earned for us by the Lord Jesus. The legalist, however, wants you to get all emotional and weep over your sins, but this is not required to move God towards you. God has already moved towards you in the person of Christ Jesus. It was not the prodigal son's repentance that earned the Father's love. The Father loved him apart from his works either good or bad.

Often, as believers, we want to feel saved rather than to simply rest on Christ alone. Again, here's some good news----we don't have to feel the fact that Christ is made unto us righteousness (1Cor 1:30). Likewise we don't have to feel the fact that, He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life (Jn 3:36). Nor do we have to feel the fact that, He that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (Jn 5:24) or even feel the fact that He that believes on me (Jesus) has everlasting life (Jn 6:47). These facts stand firm whether we feel them or not!

We are saved apart from feelings for it is written, "He that cometh to God must believe (not feel) that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"(Heb 11:6). Faith, not feelings, takes a hold of the Finished Work. Without faith no one can even call on the Lord for we "Cannot call on him in whom they have not believed?" (Romans 10:14).

If we insist that we have to feel something before believing then we have promoted feelings to an essential part of salvation. This is a grave error indeed! If we try to work up feelings to be accepted by God then we are seeking grace on the basis of works. This is a matter far short of the glory of the gospel. Do feelings have to drop miraculously into our heart to enable us to receive salvation? No! Does the Lord anywhere command that our level of feelings must be correct before He will save us? No! To believe and promote this wretched teaching would be a damnable lie, a delusion and a sin.

And that's the Gospel Truth!