

The Wednesday Word, June 9, 2010: Righteous Grace, Part 3

It is written, "The soul that sins it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

The righteous demands of God made the death of Christ necessary. Because of this, the Eternal One, in grace and love, stooped to become human, to live and die in our place. This is excellent news!

Consider this, let's say a man were to die for someone for whom there was no need to die, we should hardly call his death a proof of affection. On the contrary, we would probably consider it a pretty retarded way of showing devotion. However, to die for someone when there was really a need for dying is the test of true and genuine love. When someone dies to prevent our death we are confronted with a demonstration of love. As William Rees wrote,

Here is love, vast as the ocean,
Lovingkindness as the flood,
When the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
Shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten,
Throughout Heav'n's eternal days.

If ever we were to be saved from eternal death, Christ Jesus had to die. Because of this, grace and righteousness combined and led the Everlasting One to the cradle and then to the cross. There at Calvary He died as the sinner's substitute and thus made it a righteous thing for God to cancel our guilt and annul our death sentence.

Thomas Watson, the Puritan, said,

‘When we were rebelling—He was dying! When we had weapons in our hands—then He had the spear in His side! This is the very quintessence of love! "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!" (Romans 5:8). When we were engulfed in misery and had lost our beauty—then Christ died for us. O amazing love, which should swallow up all our thoughts!’

Had it not been for Christ's death, grace and guilt could not have successfully met; God and the sinner could not have come near; righteousness would have forbidden reconciliation. However, in Christ, love working in concert with righteousness secured our salvation. Unless God had dealt with our sins righteously, by punishing our substitute at the cross, it would not have been right for Him to receive us or indeed, safe for us to approach Him.

But now, in Christ, mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed (Ps 85:10). Now through Christ, grace is righteous and righteousness is wrapped in grace. It is only when faith grasps both the righteous and gracious nature of the work of Calvary that the conscience finds true peace (Heb 9:14). Our reconciliation is anchored to the righteousness of God (Eph 2:13-

16). This is exceedingly good news because a righteous reconciliation will stand every test and last throughout eternity.

The troubled conscience can only find true peace in the righteous grace of the gospel, as it understands that Christ died not for the good guys, but for the ungodly (Rom 5:6). Faith grasps that God justifies the ungodly (Rom 4:5). The righteous grace which comes to us through the cross tells us that there can be no condemnation for anyone who is saved by the righteous grace of God (Rom 8:1). The God of the gospel is just, yet the justifier of the ungodly (Rom 3:26)! This is good news! This is grace! God's salvation, His divine gift, is freely lavished on us, in spite of our lack of character, for Christ's sake alone.

And that's the Gospel Truth