

The Wednesday Word, July 4, 2012: Saved by Someone Else!

There are some church folk whom I've met who think that simply by doing religious things they can avoid divine displeasure and secure God's favour (Luke 18:10-12). Are you like that? Do you secretly hope that if you can just do enough for God you will somehow find forgiveness before you die? Listen to me, I've got some terrible news for you; you are worshipping a God of human devising!

I'm serious, and no, I'm not picking on you for I know that, at times, we can all be guilty of creating our own acceptance system before God. That's why we need the gospel; it continually clears the cobwebs of legalistic thinking out of our brains.

In the gospel, we don't end with acceptance before God, we start with it! We begin our Christian life with full acceptance in Christ as we are embraced by perfect grace and acquittal (Romans 5:1). In the gospel, we are accepted by God, not because of our obedience, but because of the obedience of someone else (Romans 5:19). We are accepted, not because of our performance, but accepted only through the performance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acceptance with God is one of the central benefits of the gospel (Ephesians 1:6). Let's face it; there can be no acceptable worship unless there are first acceptable worshippers. But, notice how we reverse things. When not instructed by the gospel, we think that, by performing religious acts and doing religious things like going to Church, we can somehow find acceptance before God. This is legalism, it's our default mode. However, the gospel truth is this, we must first be accepted and then, and only then, are we qualified to acceptably worship. Acceptable worship comes only from accepted worshippers.

Man made religion also presents forgiveness as the end result of our efforts. But, again, this is not the gospel. The gospel secures our forgiveness from the very start. False religions are all essentially alike---they are like the same cat with different whiskers --- they teach that we should make sincere efforts to secure God's forgiveness. But, the truth is, our forgiveness has already been secured by the good works of another --- the Lord Jesus. It is in Christ and in Christ alone that we have full divine favour and forgiveness! And it is by faith alone that we take hold of these wonderfully gracious gospel benefits.

Knowing this love of God, we can now enjoy being saved. We, as believers, are already fully loved, accepted and welcomed, by the Father, apart from our performance. This is good news! We don't have to earn God's smile of love for we already have it and have had it, in Christ, from before time. And in case you doubt this love, look at the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus! It's in Him that we see love's full disclosure. See Him, hanging of on the cross, "Bearing shame and scoffing rude." It is in Jesus alone that we see the matchless grace of God towards us. When there was nothing we could do to save ourselves, He willingly became our substitute, and both lived and died in our place (Isaiah 53)!

We are saved by someone else; this is good news.

And that's the Gospel Truth!