

The Wednesday Word, July 25, 2012: In Us and For Us—What's the Difference?

If ever we are to be established in the gospel, we must learn not to confuse the work of God for us with the work of God in us! The work of God for us is the work which God has accomplished, completed and perfected in the doing, dying and rising again of Christ (Romans 3:25-26). It is this magnificent work which is the object of our faith. This work is finished. The second great work is the work of God in us (Philippians 2:13)! This is the continuing unfinished work of the Holy Spirit. It is sad to observe the endless mischief that has been unleashed on poorly taught Christians who confuse these two works. They fail to grasp that it is Christ's finished work for us which has secured our acquittal. They seem painfully unaware that no amount of the moving of the Spirit in our experience can improve upon Christ's experience on our behalf!

Looking at our experience and resting on it as our acceptance before the Father is a terrible mistake. James Buchanan tells us,

“There is, perhaps, no more subtle or plausible error, on the subject of Justification, than that which makes it to rest on the indwelling presence, and the gracious work, of the Holy Spirit in the heart.”

Yet there are many who insist that they have had a thrilling experience when they were born again or filled with the Spirit. They tell us that because of these experiences they now know that they have been accepted by God. This is so very lethal! To put confidence and hope of heaven in the fact that something has happened within us is to rest on a quagmire. It is a fatal error.

Our righteousness is in Christ alone; This exalted Christ who, at this moment, is applying the benefits of His redemption is our resting place. This means that the work of the Spirit, vital though it is, can never be our righteousness. By the Spirit, God gives us faith to look outside ourselves to the Saviour who is already enthroned in cosmic authority and majesty. Horatius Bonar says, and I paraphrase, “Faith, is the great identifier since it identifies us with the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is the great grasper in that it grasps all that is in the Lord Jesus Christ! Faith is the great acceptor in that it accepts the righteousness of Christ as the only hope of salvation.”

It is Christ and His work for us, done on our behalf, that saves us. Faith understands this. Concerning faith, let me again paraphrase Bonar: he says, “Faith is really nothing but our consenting to be saved by someone else.” That's great!

As the Spirit works faith into our hearts we receive the glorious truth of the work done for us, apart from and outside of us 2000 years ago. He, the Spirit, generates faith under the hearing of the gospel and causes us to look to the all-sufficiency of Jesus and His finished work, outside of us, to save us. Faith causes us to see that God is just, and yet the justifier of all those who believe in Jesus (Romans 3:26); the penalty of sin has been taken away (1 John 8-10), the curse of the broken law removed (Galatians 3:13), justice satisfied (John 19:30), and Satan defeated (Colossians 2:15).

It is no wonder then that gospel driven believers are thrilled with the Lord Jesus. We delight in Him for He alone is our hope and salvation. Faith has freed us from the bondage of having to look to our experience or our performance to find peace with God. Faith has taught us that all our hope

is in Christ and His finished work, not in the work He is doing within us by His Spirit.

And that's the Gospel Truth!