

The Wednesday Word, Aug. 8, 2012: Don't Get Confused!

Here's another gospel foundation which we need to continually build into our thinking --although we are saved by faith, faith is not our Saviour. There are those who erroneously teach that God looks at us and, if He sees faith, He declares us not guilty. This error, although taught by many, is a distorted, defiling of the gospel.

Believing that we are given eternal life because God looks and sees our faith, is to entirely miss the truth of the gospel. It is like the sick man who drives to the doctor, gets cured and then believes that his car healed him. Valuable as the car was in that it brought him to the doctor, it merely connected him with the healer. No right thinking person could conclude that a car had healed them. Likewise, faith connects us with our Great Physician, the Lord Jesus; faith brings us to Him, but faith, like the car, is neither our healer nor our Saviour!

In His masterpiece, 'The Everlasting Righteousness', Horatius Bonar writes,

"The bringer of the sacrifice into the tabernacle was to lay his hand upon the head of the sheep or the bullock; otherwise the offering would not have been accepted for him. But the laying on of his hand was not the same as the victim on which it was laid. The serpent-bitten Israelite was to look at the uplifted serpent of brass in order to be healed. But his looking was not the brazen serpent. We may say it was his looking that healed him, just as the Lord said, "Thy faith hath saved thee"; but this is figurative language. It was not his act of looking that healed him, but the object to which he looked."

Likewise, faith is not our righteousness: it merely knits us to the righteous One, and makes us partakers of His righteousness.

So, let's say it again, faith is not our Saviour. It was not faith that was born as the representative of its people. It was not faith that fulfilled all righteousness; it was not faith that walked the weary road to Calvary; it was not faith that was executed in our place; it was not faith that bore our sins in its own body on the tree; it was not faith that poured out purchasing, redeeming blood. It was not faith that died and rose again for our sins so let's be careful not confuse faith with its object—the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 3:16; Romans 5:19).

The object of our faith is Christ alone. He is our spiritual physician, and it is faith and faith alone which unites us to Him. Continuing with the car analogy, let's say that we refuse to travel to Christ by faith and choose rather to capture His saving righteousness by taking church sacraments and performing good works. We would be like a man, travelling in the wrong direction, not this time in a car, but with the car strapped to his back. He's on the way to no towns and very few villages, --- and so are we if we look to religion or inward qualities to get us into right standing with God!

However, no church sacrament can save us for sacraments and ordinances cannot produce the perfect, completed righteousness required by God. The righteousness we need is the one which exists in Christ alone; it alone is the righteousness which presents us faultless before the throne of grace. But how do we make it ours? Is it by doing good, churchy things? No, the righteousness which saves us becomes ours by faith alone (Romans 4:22-25).

We do not obtain right standing before God because of our faith, but rather because of the doing, dying and rising again of our substitute and representative, Jesus Christ. His doing, dying and rising again is freely imputed to us and received by faith alone.

And that's the Gospel Truth!