

The Wednesday Word, Aug. 15, 2012: His Part/My Part?

When I was much younger, I used to think that there were two parts to salvation, God's part and mine. I was saved by grace---that was God's part, through faith---that was my part. I had failed to read Ephesians 2:8 with anything other than my humanistic glasses and was, therefore, unconsciously determined that God should not have the entire glory for salvation. But, through His kindness, the Lord eventually showed me the absolute absence of all saving goodness within me. My understanding increased, and faith graciously identified me with the complete saving right and ability of the Lord Jesus.

It is so crucial to learn that faith does not contribute to our salvation as there is no contribution needed. How, after all, can faith or anything else for that matter, improve on or add to an already perfect, finished work? Faith of course is necessary in that it accepts the finished, completed work which was accomplished 2000 years ago. Faith makes it our own. But, faith cannot augment or add to that work since that work is already done.

I had to learn that, in the gospel, there is no dividing or sharing the work between ourselves and the Lord Jesus. The entire work of redemption and reconciliation is His from first to last.

Here's where some people get confused in their understanding. They readily agree that they are saved by grace, but they don't realise that the concept of grace presupposes unworthiness. They don't seem to see that, if any of us was worthy of salvation, in any manner, salvation could not be by grace. They don't see that, if salvation required any degree of worthiness on our part, it would then come to us as a reward.

Saving grace, however, is given exclusively to the unworthy and the undeserving. If we contribute anything to our salvation, no matter how small, grace ceases to be grace.

In a nutshell,----

We are saved entirely by grace or not at all.

Grace is undeserved and unearned or not at all.

We look for grace, clothed only in our unworthiness or not at all.

The scripture asks, "What do you have that you did not receive?" (see 1 Corinthians 4:7). What an excellent question! Faith is a free gift (Philippians 1:29)---we received that!. Repentance is a free gift (Acts 5:31)---we received that! Righteousness is a free gift (Romans 5:17-18) --- we received that! God is the giver, we are the receivers. So let's ask it again, "What do you have that you didn't receive?" The answer is NOTHING! It delights the Father to save us by His free and extravagant grace from beginning to end. Boasting is, therefore, excluded (Romans 3:27). If we have received grace, it is not because we gave anything to deserve it --- and that includes faith (John 6:65)! If we believe that faith is our part and not God's, then we have made ourselves co-providers of salvation. But this cannot be possible, for the scripture is abundantly clear that we are saved by grace alone.

We read in Psalms 115:1, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." Salvation by grace honours that verse! Faith will cause us to

see the absurdity of trying to compete with God and will cause us to receive freely and willingly His gracious salvation. Faith identifies us with His doing and dying as if it were our very own.

Salvation is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). If we were to try to add our puny efforts to Christ's already finished salvation, it would be like Able trying to add a daisy to his already acceptable offering of the substitute Lamb.

And that's the Gospel Truth!