

The Wednesday Word, Aug. 29, 2012: The Gospel and Faith

We are saved totally, finally and entirely by an event that happened outside of us in history --- the doing, dying and rising again of Christ. Yet, we are called to receive the benefits of this event by faith alone (Romans 5:1). It is faith alone that connects us with the saving righteousness that is Christ. However, although, faith says amen to God, we cannot overstate that it is not faith in and of itself which saves. It is not the right kind of faith we need, but faith in the right Saviour. As John Murray said, "Though, your faith is as weak as a single strand of a spider's web, if it is faith in Christ, it is saving faith; because it is not faith that saves, it is not even faith in Christ that saves, it is Christ who saves."

Gospel faith takes a hold of the salvation which was accomplished at the cross of Calvary 2000 years ago and brings us into union with the Saviour, the risen Christ. If, however, we confuse our faith in the gospel with the gospel itself, we have changed and destroyed the Good News. We have replaced grace with works for now we believe in our act of faith rather than resting on Christ alone.

God looks at believers and reckons us, because of Christ, as having fulfilled all His righteous requirements, although we have not fulfilled any (Colossians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 5:19). This is good news for the weary! Why so? It's good news for this reason --- working to obtain God's favour leaves us exhausted and drained.

God's verdict concerning us is that we are righteous (Rom 3:21-22). But, you say, this is impossible. I wouldn't say that! To say that it is impossible for Christ to justify sinners is to have an exceptionally low opinion of Christ as a substitute. Is there no power or merit in His death? This, however, is not how the Father sees it! He looks at the life and death of His sinless Son and is thrilled with all His accomplishments (Matt 3:17; Luke 9:35). He is well pleased. In fact, the Father is so thrilled and satisfied with the finished work of Jesus that He has, because of it, accounted and reckoned all His people as legally righteous in His sight (Romans 9:30).

Faith takes a hold of this truth! That is why Romans 4:3 says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Literally, faith was counted to Abraham 'in order to', righteousness. Abraham believed + nothing. Concerning salvation, he was a believer, not an achiever; there were no works involved with this! The Lord told Abraham to look at the star filled sky and count, then promised, "So shall thy seed be." And Abraham believed in the LORD; and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:5-6).

The word "believe" in Hebrew is the word "Amen" from which we get the word "Amen." It is a term of agreement. When someone says something and we add our amen to their statement, we are declaring our agreement; we are declaring that we believe the truth of what has been said. God gave Abraham a magnificent promise and Abraham literally amen-ed the Lord. That's faith!

Since repetition is the price of learning we must say again that faith is not the ground of justification, it is simply the channel through which justification is received. Faith does not declare us 'not guilty'--that is God's declaration. But faith takes a hold of the Father's verdict and lets us know that the verdict belongs to us! This old verse was written by someone with faith;

"So near, so very near to God, I cannot nearer be;
For in the Person of His Son, I am as near as He;
"So dear, so very dear to God, More dear I cannot be;
The love wherewith He loves the Son, Such is His love to me."

And that's the Gospel Truth!