

The Wednesday Word, Sept. 9, 0015: Faith and Our Verdict from God

When Justification becomes ours, we enjoy acquittal in the courtroom of Heaven. We are declared not guilty. This is much greater than receiving a pardon. When a person is pardoned, the Judge is saying, "You did the crime but I forgive you." That, however, falls far short of Justification for in Justification, the Judge says, "You are not guilty, you did not commit the crime." Unfortunately, this distinction is not always pressed home, especially in many of our old hymns. We sing, "I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me; And purchased my pardon when nailed to the tree. " But, beautiful as the Hymn is, Jesus did much more than purchase our pardon, He purchased our acquittal!

It is interesting to note that, in the KJV version of the Bible there is no New Testament mention of the word pardon. It is an entirely Old Testament concept. Yet there are those who will fight tooth and nail to maintain the position that we are pardoned by the work of the cross. Justification we say again is much greater than pardon, it is full and entire acquittal! In fact, to be justified is the direct opposite of being condemned. A condemned man can be pardoned, but his pardon does not clear him of the guilt of having committed his crimes. However, for the believer, there is no condemnation, that is, there is no declaration by the court of Heaven that we are guilty.

Faith takes a hold of this new verdict and makes it our own. Faith believes Heaven's legal opinion. Understanding the declaration of Heaven's court, the believer will not look to any quality within himself to rest upon. We, as believers, can now stand before God, in Jesus Christ, by faith plus nothing. Faith grasps that it is Christ for us, not Christ "in us" which saves us. We are saved by us being "in Christ" not by Christ being in us. Our justification is through the finished work of one man and one man alone...The Lord Jesus Christ. We, therefore, must renounce all claims of merit on our behalf and rest all our confidence in Christ and His good works for us. Horatius Bonar, in his masterpiece on Justification, The Everlasting Righteousness tells us,

"Christ in us, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27), is a well-known and blessed truth; but Christ IN US, our justification, is a ruinous error, leading man away from a crucified Christ-a Christ crucified FOR US. Christ for us is one truth; Christ in us is quite another. The mingling of these two together, or the transposition of them, is the nullifying of Substitute. Let it be granted that Christ in us is the source of holiness and fruitfulness the one finished work of the (John 15:4); but let it never be overlooked that first of all there be Christ FOR US, as our propitiation, our justification, our righteousness. The risen Christ in us, our justification, is a modern theory which subverts the cross. Washing, pardoning, reconciling, justifying, all come from the one work of the cross, not from resurrection. The dying Christ completed the work for us from which all the above benefits flow. The risen Christ but sealed and applied what, three days before, He had done once for all.

(The Everlasting Righteousness: Cpt 7, Not Faith But Christ)

Indeed, Bonar is correct, looking to Christ in us for Justification is a disastrous and damaging error yet Colossians 1:27 does speak of "Christ in you the hope of glory". However, the 'you' in this verse in the Greek is plural thus this verse refers to Christ in the midst of His Church. And of course, He is in each member of His church, but the fact that He is 'in us' is not our justification and right standing before God. This passage, in Colossians 1:27, is not dealing with justification, but rather with the future state of the believer, his resurrection and the return of the Lord. Paul has already spoken to them of their hope (future) which is laid up in heaven (verse 5) and of the hope of the Gospel (future) (verse 23). The Spirit of God will always lift the eyes of the believer away from himself and his experience and fix his gaze upon Christ, His accomplishments and our future destiny in Him.

Attributing a righteousness “in us” as being the ground of Salvation was one of the great errors of the Roman Communion and one which the Reformers fought with all the resources at their disposal. Yet today there are many sincere believers, in Bible believing churches, caught up in and promoting this same ruinous error.

And that’s the Gospel Truth!

(I would suggest that for further reading on this, see the use of the word ‘hope’ in the New Testament see Acts 2:26-27, Acts 23:6, Acts 24:15. Also see, Romans 8:20,23-24, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 1 Thess. 4:13-14, 1 Tim. 1:1, Titus 2:13, 1 Peter 1:3-4, 1 John 3:2-3). “Hope” in these verses points to the eschaton and the final consummation of God’s redemptive acts at the end of the age).