

The Wednesday Word, Sept. 21, 2008: The Gospel and Faith, Part 1

“Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God” Romans 5:1

Does God look for faith in a believer and then upon seeing it declares him not guilty? Well if you were to believe what many Christians say about this matter you would think yes, absolutely yes! But this thinking is a grim error for the gospel knows nothing of the sort!

Saving faith is not a quality within us. We are saved entirely by a work outside of us. Faith, however, takes a hold of the perfect salvation which has already been accomplished on our behalf by the Lord Jesus. Faith acknowledges that all things necessary to make us accepted before God have already been done in the substitutionary work of Christ Jesus. Faith takes hold of the good news that in our name and on our behalf, Jesus Christ lived, died and rose again. Faith sees that Jesus as our substitute and representative has met and fulfilled every legal and righteous requirement needed to restore us to God. Faith alone sees that the Christ event is sufficient and complete and that nothing whatsoever can be or needs to be added to it. But we must never think that faith is a quality in us that saves us.

Faith embraces the fact that Jesus Christ alone saves. Faith sees that He is enough; faith sees that He is perfect and sees that His work is complete.

Since nothing can be added to Christ’s finished work, then salvation is not a matter of Christ plus faith. Where so many depart from the gospel is that they believe their faith makes them accepted to God. But faith does not make us accepted to God. We are only accepted in the acceptable One, Jesus Christ.

We must be clear about this, although we are saved through faith, faith is not our savior. Our Savior is Jesus Christ alone and our salvation is in Him alone! He is the object of our faith. He alone is the Savior. What faith does is to take a hold of Jesus and His accomplishments and make them our own. Faith grasps that our righteousness is not in ourselves but rather outside of us in Christ Jesus. But faith does not bring salvation into existence nor does it produce the righteousness by which God justifies us. What faith does, however, is to take something already in existence and enables us to reckon it as our own!

Faith is dynamic and continues to grow as it is bathed in the gospel. Romans 10:16 says, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”. Notice how the “WORD of GOD” and the “GOSPEL” are equated in this passage. They are one and the same! Faith will grow, therefore, as the gospel is expounded! The preaching of the gospel always brings and generates faith. This is why we must get away from the idea that the message of Christ is only for evangelic meetings! The Gospel is every bit as much for the believer as it is for the lost!

What a wonderful gift of God faith really is! It enables us to take hold of the ‘so great salvation’ that has been accomplished in Christ Jesus. When faith comes to our lives it agrees with God’s verdict that our human righteousness is no cleaner than a filthy rag. In the light of this, faith causes us to abandon all hope of ever being saved by our own goodness. The more we are bathed and

washed in the gospel the more we will realize that it is not because we have been born again or been filled with the Spirit or have had this or that new blessing that we are fully accepted. Faith's vision is not foggy! Faith sees clearly that we are not made more accepted in heaven because of experiences. Faith does not rest on our experiences no matter how intense they have been. Faith sees that our full acceptance before God rests entirely upon Christ's experience for us and not on our experience of God.

Faith also see that we are not saved because we are being good and are trying to be obedient to God: Faith sees, however, that the obedience of Jesus Christ is entirely superior to our faulty attempts at obedience and totally sufficient to satisfy all the demands of God's holy and righteous character.

But surely this is a dangerous teaching! Are there not those who will twist this kind of thing and live like the Devil? Of course there are! But does that mean that we should, therefore, hold back from proclaiming the applications of the Gospel because some people may pervert them?

When the person of Christ and his doing and dying is preached, faith is generated and the believer is reduced to nothing. It is the preaching and application of the gospel which produces true humility in that it brings us to an end of ourselves. Faith will cause us to continually hold sentiments like these,

“Nothing in my hand I bring

Simply to thy cross I cling,

Naked come to Thee for dress

Helpless look to Thee for Grace,

Foul I to the fountain fly,

Wash me Savior or I die”.

Because gospel faith will cause us to see our bankruptcy and destitution, the gospel, when properly expounded to the church, will cause us to take up our cross and follow Christ. A truly destitute man has nowhere else to go but to Christ and nowhere else to look but up. He sees his spiritual poverty and it humbles him. He must now turn in reliance and trust to Christ Jesus who alone can do for him that which he cannot do for himself. The person of faith has no need, therefore, to be taught techniques of self-surrender and self- crucifixion. Self-crucifixion is both a spiritual and physical impossibility! Try physical crucifixion and see for yourself. You can hammer the nails into your feet and then maybe into one of your hands, but you just can't hammer the last nail into the remaining hand. This is also true of self-imposed spiritual crucifixion---it is a myth!

With faith alone, such techniques are done away with because gospel faith reduces us to our proper place of brokenness and dependency. Jesus taught that true discipleship was to deny self, take up our cross and follow Him. This is exactly what happens when we receive salvation by faith

alone. Faith fully agrees with and embraces God's verdict that we, in ourselves, are nothing and that we stand in total need of the Savior. In that way we are broken; self is denied; the cross is taken up and we follow Christ. Faith sees that the true believer is already crucified with Christ and that He, Jesus Christ alone, is his life.

And that's the Gospel Truth