

The Wednesday Word, Oct. 22, 2008: Eight Gospel Mercies

For the believer, true guilt free, victorious living can only be realized through continual exposure to the gospel. There are no techniques or formulas for freedom. The true victorious life comes from beholding Christ alone. Far from being merely for the unsaved, the gospel is actually the essential message for every believer. Alas, in this day and age of formulas and the quick fix, this truth is missing from many of our pulpits. However, as the gospel is preached, applied and its mercies understood, God's people will begin to walk in the freedom and joy of their 'so great salvation'. today we want to briefly look at eight gospel mercies which pour out of the finished work of Jesus the Christ.

1) Forgiveness

The first gospel mercy we want to consider is total forgiveness for every sin. "Through this man (Jesus) is preached unto you forgiveness of sins' (Acts 13:38).

Our forgiveness was bought and paid for at the cross. God said it; that settles it; I believed it; that settled me! Forgiveness is a mercy we take by sheer faith. No one ever saw God blotting out his or her sin, but we believe it has been done because God said so. As we learn to take God at His word, guilt will flee! Luther was asked if he felt like his sins were forgiven to which he replied, "No! But I'm sure that they are! Get thee behind me Satan!" You may be the feeblest believer who ever walked the face of the earth, but if you have trusted Christ as your Savior you have received the forgiveness Christ has obtained for you. The Lord has put our sins behind His back (Isaiah 38:17) Furthermore,

"As far as the East is from the West so far has HE removed our transgressions from us" (Psalms 103:12).

It's wonderful that our sins are forgiven, but even better to know they are forgotten; Hebrews 10:17 says,

"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

If they are forgotten by God what are we doing digging them up and remembering them?

The wisdom of this world says, "Blessed is the man who is rich and powerful." But the wisdom of the Lord says,

"Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit is no guile." (Psalm 32:1-2).

2) Accepted as Righteous

The second gospel mercy is acceptance as being righteous. We are accepted, in Heaven, in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:6). This is a wonderful gospel benefit whereby God looks at us and says we never committed the sins in the first place. We have been acquitted of all charges and have been

given a new righteousness in Christ. This is like getting our past expunged and being given a totally new identity. It's like being in a witness protection program that is 100% secure! Since all things are now new, I have no time to run around the place feeling guilty. What do I have to feel guilty about? All the rotten wretched things I have ever done are under the blood: They are forgiven, forgotten, buried and done away with in Christ! I used to be under a curse as a lawbreaker (Galatians 3:10), but now Christ has redeemed me from the curse of the law having been made a curse for me at the cross (Galatians 3:13). God now reckons us as being righteous. That is why we read in 1 Corinthians 1:30,

"Christ is made unto us righteousness."

Get absorbed in this truth and guilt will never take a hold of you. Bathe yourself in the knowledge that all your guilt and sin was charged to Christ's account and that all His righteousness is reckoned to yours. We can never hear enough of this glorious truth!

3) Adoption

It's good to be forgiven and accepted as righteous, but it's even better to be made a child of God. And that's exactly what happens to us as a result of the gospel. We are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26). As one of His children, the Father loves you just the same way He loves Christ! We don't have to try to make God love us. A child doesn't have to cajole a good parent into love. It's not, therefore, a presumption for you to say (and to keep saying), "God loves me." The fact is, He's crazy about you! Hard for us to believe isn't it? That's because we know what we are really like. We've taken a good look at ourselves and found that there's not too much to love in there. Too often we don't feel loved because we feel we are unlovable. We have, as some call it, 'an orphaned heart'! But the more we know the gospel, the more we will realize that we don't have to feel loved. We need to stop trying to feel His love and begin to believe His love. We are His children, we are in Christ and we are loved! Believe this gospel mercy and begin to enjoy life.

"Behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us that we should be called Sons of God" (1John 3:1).

4) A New Heart

This is what the theologians call regeneration. Regeneration is neither a process nor an improving of the old nature. In the Old Testament the Lord prophesied through Ezekiel,

"A new heart will I give you and a new Spirit will I put within you" (Ezekiel 36:26).

God invades us by the Holy Spirit and makes us spiritually alive. What a wonderful work the Spirit does within us. Not only does He generate new life in us, He continues to work within every believer both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13). He will cause us to know His will, to love it and to do it! He puts His laws into our hearts and writes them in our minds (Hebrews 10:18). All of this is a wonderful 'Gospel Mercy'. As followers of the Lamb, we don't have to work up a feeling of spirituality or need to feel guilty when we think it is absent. What we

need to do is to, by faith, enter into gospel rest and trust the Holy Spirit to draw us out of ourselves to behold the glories of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The new heart has brought us alive unto God and the gospel. The Holy Spirit is now resident within us creating powerful new godly passions and desires. The Holy Spirit causes faith to grow in response to the Word and brings alive such promises as, “There is now, therefore, no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:21).

5) Spirit of Repentance

Acts 5:31 says,

“Him (Christ) hath God exalted with His right hand to be a prince and savior for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”

According to this scripture, repentance is a gift. What wonderful gifts God gives! He gives us repentance to come to Christ and continues to give us repentance as we grow and mature in Christ. In fact it is usually after we come to Christ that we find out what true repentance is. As Thomas Brooks, the old Puritan, said,

“A true penitent must go on from faith to faith, from strength to strength; he must never stand still nor turn back. Repentance is a grace, and must have its daily operation as well as other graces. True repentance is a continued spring, where the waters of godly sorrow are always flowing: 'My sin is ever before me'" (Psalm 51:3).

Thomas Brooks: True Repentance

Indeed, it's often only after we begin to grow in God that we discover what sin really is. As the old woman said to the minister, “Pastor we didn't know what sin was until you came to this church.” Thank God for His gift of repentance! It always leads us to the Throne of Grace where we confess our sins to Jesus our faithful High Priest. If we have sinned, what's the point in killing ourselves with the guilt of our actions? Some people beat themselves over and over because of past failures. However, often times this is just another form of self-righteousness whereby they are saying to God, “See Lord, see how sorry I really am. Take note of this and forgive me because I am really repenting here.” But how foolish it is to try to impress God with our repentance! Take everything to the blood! That's God's provision for our guilt. “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

6) Good Works

One of the great gospel mercies is that God gives us power to do good works that please Him. We read in Ephesians 2:10,

“We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we might walk in them”.

Now remember this, forgiveness is not by works, acceptance as being righteous is not by works,

adoption is not by works and the new heart is not by works, but now that we have all these things we are released to do good works. One of the reformers said, “We are saved by faith alone but the faith which saves is never alone.” And the good news is that God has uniquely tailored good works for us to enjoy doing for Him. He uniquely forms you: there is no one else like you and there are certain things only you can do for Him. Consider the wonderful way in which God orders and arranges our lives. First, He prepares good works for us to do; next He gives us the desire to do them; then He equips and empowers us perform them and finally He rewards us for actually doing them. What a deal!

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and your labor of love which you have shown towards His name in that you have ministered to His people and do minister” (Heb 6:10).

Consider how excellent this really is! He plans the works, promotes them to us, prepares us to do them and then rewards us as we get involved with His plan. What an amazing Father He is!

Some people labor under the guilt of feeling that they can only please God if their works are perfect. The truth is, only one man pleased God because His works were perfect and His name was Jesus. Faith has united us to Him and now His works are reckoned as ours. I’m already a perfect worker in Christ Jesus. If I start from this vantage point then I’m setting myself up for a guilt free life! If on the other hand I see God as demanding perfection from everything I do I’m going to destroy myself. Someone says, “But what if I should mess up when trying to witness to someone? Won’t God punish me for that!” NO a thousand times no! There’s grace love and mercy flowing towards us through Christ Jesus. “But what about our failures?” Any and all failures we take to the blood and, by faith, see Christ as our penal substitute. Guilt can never trap a believer who thinks like this. I think I hear someone say, “But brother, aren’t you afraid that people will abuse the kind of freedom you seem to be advocating”? No I’m not! While I’m aware that there are some people that might misuse this truth, I don’t see any point in ceasing to proclaim it. Some years ago my cousin was killed when a snow-laden tree fell on her, does this mean that all trees and forests should be cut down? When we were kids, a young boy from our village, in Ireland, drowned while swimming in the sea! Does that mean that we should drain the ocean? Sometimes trees and oceans do terrible things. So it is with some people! I’m advocating, however, that in spite of the dangers of potential abuse, that we believers live in the gospel and enjoy the wonderful freedom afforded to us by His gospel mercies. What a marvelous thing it would be if all believers everywhere enjoyed being saved!

8) Everlasting Life

Because of the gospel we are given, not life for a day or a month or a year but given everlasting life!

“Verily, verily I say unto you he that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47):

“He that believes on Him that sent me has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

It has been argued that the term everlasting life also includes an idea of a certain quality of

life. Here we see that part of this quality is the absence of condemnation. If you are in Christ there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1). If you are in Christ, there is no reason for you to be plagued by guilt. Believer, embrace the gospel and its mercies! Start living outside yourself and start setting your affection on things above where Christ is seated on the right hand of God (see Colossians 3:1-4).

These are but eight of many gospel mercies; if we embrace them they will revolutionize and transform our lives. Preaching, however, devoid of the gospel, urging us to try harder and harder, in reality, only brings guilt and death. Right standing with God is altogether by the blood of Christ and has nothing whatsoever to do with how we behave. ---“That’s dangerous brother” Yes, but again I say, so are trees and oceans! Let this truth sink into you, you will never be any more righteous than the blood of Christ has made you. You will never be more accepted that you already are in the ‘Beloved One’. Works could not get you into right standing with God and your failings cannot get you out.

Peace with God and freedom from all condemnation can only be obtained and maintained in the gospel. The Hymn writer got it right when she penned the following words,

“When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the sin within,
Upward I look and see Him there, who made an end to all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died, my guilty soul is counted free,
For God the Just is satisfied to look on Him and pardon me,
To look on Him and pardon me”.

And that’s the Gospel Truth

Paul told the Corinthian Church” I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” Paul purposed that this should be the only point of knowledge in which he would claim to have any expertise. In Paul’s apostolic mind it was in Christ crucified that the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the eternal intentions of God were revealed. For Paul, the knowledge of Christ crucified was higher than heaven, deeper than hell, longer than eternity, and broader than the universe. In the light of this one great truth, Paul was able to say that he counted “all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil 3:8). But, would Paul get a hearing in many of today’s churches? I doubt it! This message of Christ crucified is not in style and “not in step with what the spirit is speaking” or so I’m told. The needs and concerns of the believer are now the focus of the Church! Our Church services are now believer-centered and not Christ centered. This week, therefore, we will look at the gospel versus the believer-centered believer.