

The Wednesday Word, Dec. 19, 2009: What Truths Must We Believe to go to Heaven?

There are many great and wonderful truths taught in the Bible, but which of them do we primarily need to rest in order to receive acquittal before God? Take the 'Second Coming', for example, (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18): that Christ will one day return to this earth in great glory is an excellent truth. In fact, if someone told me that they were a believer, but rejected this truth I would probably question their salvation (1 Jn 3:3). Yet we are not in any sense declared not guilty by believing in the second coming of our Lord.

We believe that Christ ascended into heaven (Eph 4:10) and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high (Heb 10:12), but wonderful as this truth is, it is not the basis of our justification.

We believe that the Holy Spirit has been sent to earth as the exclusive substitute for Christ (John 14:16-20) and that He is actively calling out a bride for the wonderful Son of God, yet again, believing these things does not cause us to receive right standing before the all-holy and righteous God.

What about the resurrection? Faith looks at the resurrection and sees it as the proof that Christ satisfied the justice of God. Romans 4:25 tells us that He, "...was raised again for our justification.' Faith sees that the resurrection was, therefore, the visible pledge of a justification already accomplished. However, although the resurrection is the proof of our justification, it is not the ground of our acquittal.

So, what then is the belief that we need to have in order to be saved? What we need is faith in Christ Jesus, the God/Man, who was crucified on our behalf. It is not merely enough to assent to the fact that He died; we must be possessed by a faith in His person and death. What we need is a faith that Christ, the man who is God, died as our substitute and our propitiation to remove the righteous wrath of the all-holy God. But more than that, the faith that justifies also grasps that Christ Himself is now our only righteousness (Jeremiah 33:16; Romans 1:16-17). Faith sees that no other righteousness other than Christ's admits us to heaven. Faith also sees that no other righteousness is either requested or required (Phil 3:9)!

No one will stand in the presence of God who does not have the righteousness of Christ as their very own. His righteousness is the only perfect righteousness in existence (Isa 11:1-5; Ps 40: 7-8;) and it is given to us as a free gift in the gospel (Rom 5:15-18; Heb 10:9-14). The only way of salvation is in Christ plus nothing. If He and His finished work are not your exclusive hope then, regardless of what else you believe in the Bible, you are lost; you are still under sin, guilt, and condemnation.

Faith, although it receives all the great truths of the Word, always brings us back to Christ crucified as the exclusive ground and basis of our justification. Christ plus nothing received by faith plus nothing is where we stand.

There's a marvelous text in 2 Timothy 1:12 where the apostle says "Nevertheless I'm not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day." Many years ago, 'Rabbi' Duncan, Professor of Hebrew at

New College, Edinburgh, (he was nicknamed Rabbi for he was so steeped in learning), was lecturing in class and they were discussing this particular verse. One of the students cited the text, "I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded." Professor Duncan stopped him and said, "Repeat that text." He said, "I know in whom I have believed," "My dear sir," interrupted Rabbi Duncan, " it's 'I know whom I have believed; '---- you must never let even a preposition come between you and your Savior."

So, let's say it again, it is Christ plus nothing received by faith plus nothing that is the true gospel ground.

And that's the Gospel Truth!