

## The Wednesday Word, Feb. 5, 2014: Righteous Grace (Part 2)

It's one thing to feel good about the gospel, but quite a different matter to grasp its ramifications. I have met many professing Christians who, for example, are 'martyrs' to a bad conscience. They know the words, "saved by grace," but suspect that grace means, 'God's lackadaisical kindness'. Not having understood that the grace which saves is righteous grace, they have no peace. The 'gospel' that they know ministers calm to neither their mind nor their conscience (Jeremiah 6:14).

For true peace we, as gospel believers, continually find ourselves going back to the cross. When your conscience tells you that you are a rat, then asks you if you are sure that God is merciful?" ... What do you do? And just as you are thinking about the question, your conscience pipes up again saying "What if God grows weary of you and forgets to be gracious?" What can you say? The only answer to these accusations is the cross for it boldly declares that, "Christ Jesus was set forth as a substitutionary wrath offering for sin." At the cross, we learn that He saves by both love and justice. At the cross, we learn that we are saved as a matter of righteousness grace (Romans 3:24-26).

He saves us justly. This is good news for we easily could imagine a scenario where God could cease to be merciful, but we could never envision Him ceasing to be just.

Righteous grace is no new concept. In the Old Testament, the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled on the mercy seat. Justice and mercy combined. The sinner was, consequently, saved, not only by grace, but also saved righteously. Likewise, in the New Covenant, the God of the gospel graciously justified the ungodly by ruthlessly punishing our sins in the person of our substitute Jesus Christ. Although we are saved by grace alone, saving grace is never alone for it is inseparably joined to righteousness. Our salvation and right standing with God now rest on the righteous and gracious work which God has already accomplished for us, outside of us, in the Person of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24).

Two thousand years ago there was an objective, actual, historical event when God Himself broke into human history as one of us. He became our representative and was so identified with us that all which He did was, not only done for us, but was exactly the same as if we had done it ourselves. When He graciously bore the punishment for our sin, we were righteously punished in Him. When He arose, we arose. When He was exalted to the right hand of the majesty on high so were we (Ephesians 2:6)! It is finished! We can now be at peace.

Have you ever had a troubled conscience? I have! The following are some scriptures (in personalized form) that I have frequently used to defeat the accusations of a bad conscience. Take these wonderful truths and confess them.

"Christ died for my sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

"He was wounded for my transgressions; he was bruised for my iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5).

"Christ was once offered to bear my sins" (Hebrews 9:28).

Who gave himself for me, that he might redeem me (Titus 2:14).

He was "delivered for my offences and was raised for my justification" (Romans 4:25).

He "gave himself for my sins" (Galatians 1:4)

"Christ died for me" (Romans 5:6).

"He has appeared to put away my sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

See also 1 Peter 4:1, 1 Peter 3:18, 1 Peter 2:24.

Notice how the words, 'Himself' and 'He' appear frequently in the preceding verses. This is because the gracious and righteous Lord Himself is our salvation. He is our robe of righteousness.

Someone once asked Irenaeus, the 2nd Century, iconic champion of the faith, "Irenaeus, what has Christ brought that other religious leaders have not brought?" He answered, "He brought Himself."

That's what makes our gospel different. God came here Himself to righteously and graciously deal with sin and sinners. This is good news for the troubled conscience.

And that's the Gospel Truth!