

The Wednesday Word, Feb. 12, 2014: Righteous Grace: Part 3

It is written, "The soul that sins it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). In the light of this scripture, we see that each one of us was under the death sentence. Indeed, the righteous demands of God made our death a necessity. Therefore, to meet this dreadful obligation and to rescue us, the Eternal One, in grace and love, became one of us and died in our place.

Let's say someone was to die for a person for whom there was no need to die; we would be unlikely to call this death a proof of affection. Quite the contrary, we would likely consider it a strange and illogical demonstration of pointlessness. However, to die for someone, when there was really a need for dying ... now that's the test of true and genuine love. The hymn writer said it well when he penned the lines,

“Here is love, vast as the ocean,
Loving-kindness as the flood,
When the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
Shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten,
Throughout Heav'n's eternal days.”

If ever we were to be saved from damnation, Christ Jesus had to die. Because of this necessity, grace and righteousness combined and led the eternal One to the cross. There at Calvary, He died in the sinner's place and thus made it a righteous thing for God to cancel the believing sinner's guilt and to rescind his sentence of death.

Thomas Watson, the Puritan, said, ‘When we were rebelling—He was dying! When we had weapons in our hands—then He had the spear in His side! This is the very quintessence of love! "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us!" (Romans 5:8). When we were engulfed in misery and had lost our beauty—then Christ died for us. O amazing love, which should swallow up all our thoughts!’”

Had it not been for Christ's doing and dying, God and the sinner could not have met, and righteousness would have forbidden reconciliation. It was love working in harmony with righteous grace that secured our salvation.

“On the mount of crucifixion,
Fountains opened deep and wide;
Through the floodgates of God's mercy
Flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
Poured incessant from above,
And Heav'n's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love.”

Unless God had punished our substitute at the cross, it would not have been correct for God to receive us or indeed, safe for us to come to Him. But now, in Christ, mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed (Psalm 85:10). Now, through Christ, gracious salvation is also

righteous. It is as faith grasps both the righteous and gracious nature of the work of Calvary that our conscience finds peace (Hebrews 9:14). Peace flows to us as we see that our reconciliation is anchored in the righteousness of God (Ephesians 2:13-16) and this righteous reconciliation will stand every test and will last throughout eternity.

The troubled conscience can only find true peace in the gospel as it understands that Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6). Faith grasps that God justifies, not the godly, but the ungodly (Romans 4:5). The righteous grace which is ours, through the sin-bearing work of Christ, tells us that there can be no possible condemnation nor even a hint of mild disapproval for one who is saved by the free grace of God alone (Romans 8:1). God is Just, yet the Justifier of the ungodly (Romans 3:26)! This is astonishing news! This is super abounding grace!

And that's the Gospel Truth!