

The Wednesday Word, Jan. 26, 2011: Nothing in Faith that Saves!

Let's continue with the thought from last time. As we discovered, faith is nothing in and of itself—there is no saving quality in it. How faith saves is that it lays a hold of Christ (1 Tim 6:12a). Faith grasps that saving merit is found in Christ alone (Rom 3:24). Faith understands that it is not because Christ is in us that we are saved, but salvation is ours because of the accomplishments of Christ 2000 years ago. The summary of our faith is this, Christ Jesus is our Saviour; He is in heaven; He is our righteousness and right standing before God; He is our treasury of grace and mercy; He is on the throne of Omnipotence and He is our ever living High Priest (Heb 4:14, Eph 1:11; 1 Cor 1:30; Rom 3:21-26, Col 2:3). Furthermore, faith knows and grasps that the righteousness that justifies is imputed to, not infused into, the believer, (Rom 4:6; Rom 10:3-4)! . Faith sees these things and grasps that our entire hope is in one man and one man only, the heavenly man. Our hope is in no man on earth and certainly never in us.

John Bunyan in his “Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners” writes of how one day he was in turmoil as to his standing before God. He says,

“Suddenly a sentence fell upon my soul---*Thy righteousness is in heaven*. And I thought I saw with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand; there, I say was my righteousness; so that, wherever I was or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, “he lacks my righteousness” for that was just before Him. I also saw moreover that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better nor my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, ‘the same yesterday today and forever. My chains fell off, I was loosened from my afflictions and my temptations fled away-----I went home rejoicing for the grace and love of God. Now Christ was all; all my righteousness, all my sanctification and all my redemption (1 Cor 1:30).”

The righteousness which is imputed to the believer is Christ Himself. When we talk of the word ‘impute’ or ‘imputed’ some folks get confused. Perhaps the concept is a little difficult to understand at first. However a clear illustration of its meaning can be found in Philemon where Paul writes to his friend about the runaway slave Onesimus. He says, ***“If He hath wronged thee or oweth thee ought, put that to my account.”*** In a similar manner, our entire sin and guilt has been charged to Christ's account and Christ's entire righteousness has been credited to ours (Phil 3:9). This is imputation and it's a truth that stabilizes and frees us the more we let it seep into the depths of our understanding.

So let us say it again, we are not made right with God by any quality within us; nor does the performing of an act of faith save us. If performing an act of faith was the ground of our salvation, it would make faith a qualifying work for salvation; in which case, grace would no longer be grace (Rom 10:4; Rom 11:6). Luther said correctly, ***“Grace cannot stand it when we want to give something to God or establish merit or pay him with our works. This is the greatest of blasphemies and idolatries and is nothing less than the denial and even the ridicule of God.”***

If faith itself carried within it some merit necessary for salvation it would mean then that Christ's work was, in reality, unfinished. If faith itself was the finishing touch that made Christ's work complete it would mean then that Christ's work then was imperfect, ineffective, incomplete and

unsuitable for us. If faith itself carried within it some necessary merit, we would then be called to rest in Christ plus our act of believing on Christ! But to make our faith any part of our confidence before God would be to lean on a rubber crutch (Gal 2:16).

“Now to the Lamb that once was slain,
Be endless blessings paid;
Salvation, glory, joy remain
Forever on thy head.

Thou hast redeemed our souls with blood,
Hath set the prisoner free
Hast made us kings and priests unto God,
And now we reign with Thee”

And that's the Gospel Truth