

The Wednesday Word, July 14, 2010: Imperfect Faith and the Perfect Sacrifice.

In the Old Testament the sinner transferred his guilt to his substitute by laying his hands on the animal he was to sacrifice (see Lev 4). This pointed towards how we are called to, as it were, lay our hand of faith upon on the Lord Jesus. When a man came and laid his hand on the head of the sin offering he was acknowledging that he was a sinner. Since, the sin offering was exclusively for sinners it, therefore, goes without saying that a man who felt he was sinless had no business being there.----- So with us, if we say we have no sin we are un-qualified for Christ's saving power and grace (1 John 1:8). Christ died for sinners and no others.

In the Old Testament, the man who brought a sin offering before the Lord was saying, in effect, "I am a sinner and I must have my sin taken away for I am guilty in the sight of God. So I put my hand upon this animal, which is about to die, thereby confessing and transferring my sin to it as my substitute" (Lev 4:29). Think about it, many a feeble and diseased hand was laid on the head of the animal which was to be offered, but this neither altered the character of the sacrifice, nor made it less powerful. In addition, the priest would not turn the sinner away because he was weak and without strength nor would the sacrificial animal be refused because of some deficiency in the worshipper. The burnt offering was still the burnt offering and even the weakest touch established the connection between the worshipper and his substitute (Rom 5:6).

As for us, since God is righteous and just (Jeremiah 23:6) and we by nature are not and should, therefore, be condemned (Ps 109:7). But we have a substitute, the Lord Jesus, on whom we can lay our hand. Often, however, our faith lacks strength but, in His justice, the Father has forgiven us not because of the perfection of our faith but because of the perfection of our sin offering, the Christ of God.

When, therefore, we come to the Father, we don't come pretending to be something that we are not; we don't come to Him with our goodness or our supposed sanctification and obedience to recommend us. We don't come to Him promising future self-improvement as a condition for mercy; nor do we present our repentance to induce Him to receive us. Instead, we come by faith alone in Christ alone. By faith we look away from our guilt to Christ's shed blood, we look away from our disobedience to Christ's perfect obedience, we look away from our unrighteousness to Christ's righteousness, and trust Him and Him alone!

As unrighteous, imperfect people with imperfect faith we come in Jesus name to the righteous yet gracious God. Our faith may be imperfect, but because of the perfection of Christ, our sin offering, we find that Christ is not only our Savior, but is Himself our salvation.

When Isaac Watts, the great hymn writer lay dying he said:

"I am just waiting to see what God will do with me; ----If God should raise me up again, and use me to save a soul, that will be worth living for. If He has no more service for me, I can say, through grace, I am ready; I could without alarm, if God please, lay back my head on my pillow and die this afternoon or night. My sins are all cleansed through the Blood of Christ." He then closed his eyes and died.

Here are a few lines of one of his hymns:

“My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin

My soul looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And knows her guilt was there.

Believing we rejoice
To see the curse removed;
We bless the Lamb with cheerful
voice,
And sing His bleeding love.”

And that’s the Gospel Truth!