

DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

April 28 – May 2, 2008



April 28, 2008 **Confession: Agreeing with God**

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”¹

This week a man wrongly convicted 18 years ago of murder was acquitted, in part by his lawyers making the case the serial killer Paul Bernardo was the more likely culprit. When asked by the media why Bernardo doesn't admit the crime since he is already serving life sentences, the response was that Bernardo confesses to nothing because he has 'delusions of freedom'. In his own mind, Bernardo does not see himself as a bad guy. He hopes to convince authorities that he should be set free!

While this perspective may appear stunningly delusional, in fact it is just an extreme example of the way most humans relate to God. In our own eyes, we are all pretty good people. Sure we've made a few 'errors in judgement', but nothing worthy of severe punishment.

The reality is that, from the perspective of a perfectly just and holy God, we are guilty of great wrongdoing and deserving of death. God longs for us to stop deluding ourselves and confess. Confession means that we truly do agree with God. We realize that we are sinners and we know we need forgiveness. In that space, we are ready for grace.

¹ 1 John 1:8-9 (TNIV)

April 29, 2008

Repentance

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”¹

In some ways, modern practices of evangelism have contributed to the problem of ‘cheap grace’. When an evangelistic message is given followed by an ‘altar call’, the intimation is that confession of sin equals saving faith. People are encouraged to go forward, pray a prayer confessing sin and asking Christ to be their Saviour. They are then given assurance that they are forgiven and are a child of God, destined to get into heaven with no questions asked. This may be why surveys find that a great many people claim to be ‘born again’, but give no other evidence of Christian faith or lifestyle.

In fact, confession of sin must be accompanied by repentance. Repentance means a turnaround – doing a 180 degree turn of direction.

If we confess that we have been rebels against God who have sinned against God and contributed to the evils of planet Earth, we must also agree that we need to change. Instead of being rebels, resisting God’s will, we need to surrender to God’s control and direction. Jesus must not only be Saviour, forgiving us and giving us new life, but also Lord, the One whom we follow and obey. Repentance means we transfer our allegiance from the kingdom of this world, where everyone is his/her own boss and we become citizens of the Kingdom of God, where Jesus is King and we follow his directions. That must result in a very different way of living from our old lifestyle. Repentance marks a commitment to radical change.

¹ Acts 2:38 (TNIV)

April 30, 2008

Justification

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”¹

Justification is a judicial or legal act. As convicted sinners we deserve punishment. That punishment is death – death in all respects: physical, spiritual, eternal.

As one who is perfectly just and holy, God cannot simply ignore the penalty we need to pay. We would not want him to let people like Adolph Hitler off the hook. That would not be just or right. We cannot expect him to fudge things for us and grade on the curve. God must punish the guilty. We are guilty.

Nor can we hope to make up for the wrong with good deeds. The debt is too great and grows too fast. We are essentially bankrupt.

Our only hope is for someone else to pay the penalty for us, and that is what Christ did on the cross. He suffered in our place. He died for us. He paid our debt to divine justice. He then offers us that payment as a gracious, free gift. If we accept it, it is applied to our account. When God looks on our rap sheet, it is empty – wiped clean.

Justification means that all the claims of the law against us are satisfied by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We are set free from the punishment of sin because He paid the price.

¹ Romans 5:1-2a (TNIV)

May 1, 2008 **Justification/Sanctification**

“I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”¹

Justification changes our status or condition before God. It does not change us on the inside. The latter is the work of ‘sanctification’. A comparison of the two may be helpful:

1. Justification takes away the guilt of sin and restores to us the status of being daughters and sons of God, with all the rights and privileges that go along with that. Sanctification changes us on the inside, dealing with our sinful attitudes and acts, making us gradually more like Christ.
2. Justification is a one time, completed action. When we receive the gift of salvation, all of our sins, past, present and future are forgiven. By contrast, sanctification is a continuous process of change that is not completed until we get to heaven.
3. Justification is an external fact. It takes place in the court of God. It does not matter whether we feel forgiven or believe it to be true, the fact of the matter is that we are declared innocent. Sanctification on the other hand, takes place within us. It does affect us subjectively and it impacts us experientially.
4. Justification is primarily a work of the Son, with the declaration of righteousness being handed down by the Father. Sanctification is primarily a work of the Holy Spirit.

Justification is gloriously important. It declares our salvation. From there the journey continues as we walk with God and are changed by him.

¹ Acts 26:17b-18 (TNIV)

May 2, 2008

Adoption

“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.”¹

In a very limited sense, every human being is a ‘child’ of God in that we are created by him and were crafted ‘in his image’. Paul infers this in his speech to the Athenians: *“For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’”²*

However, one of the consequences of our rebellion and Fall was that we were disinherited from our status as children of God. His image in us was damaged to the point where ‘family resemblance’ is negligible. We became metaphysical orphans.

In justification, God not only erases our guilt, he legally adopts us as his children. All of our inheritance to eternal life is restored. Back then, as legal documents were attested with a wax ‘seal’ to guarantee their binding nature, the seal of the Holy Spirit was set upon us as confirmation.³ And over and above that formal ‘legal’ declaration, the Spirit perpetually reminds us that we are children of God and that we can approach God as our heavenly father: *“God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba’, Father.”⁴*

Justification restores our relationship to God as his beloved, precious children. He wants us to live in full confidence and experience of that relationship.

¹ John 1:12-13 (TNIV)

² Acts 17:28 (TNIV)

³ Ephesians 1:13; 4:30

⁴ Galatians 4:6 (TNIV)