

The Simplicity That Is In Christ

by Hendrik Joubert

The idea that a sinner may be saved is an amazingly gracious concept; that is if one fully appreciates the seriousness of sin. Regrettably we tend to focus on the grace aspect before realizing the utterly sinfulness of sin. *If God says we are sinners then we must be sinners, I guess.* If you think this seems a little harsh, ask yourself the question whether you consider yourself *bad enough* to deserve *eternal* punishment in hell. Put the question also to your friends and your neighbors for their honest opinion. *We all have our mistakes, but I am not that bad...?*

This focus influences how we view the grace of God, and the simple definition of *unmerited favor* is appealing because of the concept *unmerited*. For many this means that we do not have to do anything, *except believe in Jesus*. The fact of the matter is that *even if* one is able to live perfectly from this day onwards, you will still be guilty of the sins of the past. The Lord says: **“So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’”** (Luke 17:10)

Man always has to tinker with things and this lack of the awareness of our sinfulness causes many to tinker with God’s gracious instructions. Most the doctrines described in the creeds of the many denominations are adaptations of what we read of in the Scriptures. Suggesting that obedience to the ***doctrine of Christ (Matthew 15:9; 2John 9)*** is necessary for salvation is considered as denying salvation *by grace*; however if you do not remain loyal to the creeds of men you will find yourself excommunicated. A preacher-member of the Dutch Reformed Church had to leave because he allowed himself to be immersed in water. Although he was not condemned to hell, he was not able to remain a member of that human institution.

The doctrine explaining how God is to be honored is adapted to glorify sinners and their ideas. Simple acts of worship become elaborate rituals bestowing glory on a select few. Many who adjust the words of God declare themselves anointed of God. At the same time the ritualism of the Pharisees and Sadducees are condemned. Throughout history sinners have taken it upon themselves to adapt the words of God, often with disastrous consequences. Moses learned that doing differently from that which God commanded amounts to disbelief and disrespect. **(Numbers 20:12)** Saul learned that it is not the act of sacrificing per se, it is the obedience demonstrated by doing it as God directs which is the deciding factor. **(1Samuel 13:8-14; 15:22)**

It is extremely easy to see the splinter in the eyes of others and miss the log in our own eyes. The apostle seems to be paranoid about his insistence on not using even learned language to persuade sinners so as to avoid this fancy speech to be the deciding factor in the conversion of sinners. ***And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*** (1 Corinthians 2:4-5 NKJV)

How many *incentives* which may amount to distractions from the power of God have we come up with over the years in an effort to persuade men, and children? The fusion or the roles of the male and female, and especially that of father and mother, caused changes resulting in the church taking up some of the duties of parents. We labor to keep the social roles separate from the spiritual, and the distinction often occurs only in our minds as we lead others to a misunderstanding of ***the simplicity that is in Christ.*** (2 Corinthians 11:1-4 NKJV)

In the context the apostle warns about ***craftiness, deceit and corruption,*** concepts we do not want to associate ourselves with. We are perfectly able to see it in others; however all we do are done with pure motives – as if that makes it right. ***Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.*** (Romans 14:22 NKJV)

When commandments coming from God to His people of the Old Testament were added to the gospel it was made useless. **(Galatians 1:6-9; Acts 15)** When Moses and Aaron acted without careful forethought they found themselves condemned as unbelieving and disrespectful. **(Numbers 20:12)**

The most arrogant thing a sinner may do is to tinker with the things of God. **(Isaiah 55:8-9; Mark 7:7)** We need not come up with new initiatives; we need to trust in God’s power for salvation, the gospel. **(Romans 1:16-17)** These initiatives may only serve to distract man from his sinfulness and leave the impression that God needs worshippers, rather than sinners in need of salvation. We should not allow others to ***corrupt us from the simplicity that is in Christ,*** and we should not be the ones corrupting.