

Weekly Word

July 21, 2008

By Mary Ruth Stone

Devotion

Christian Liberty

Martin Luther, the great reformer, has been credited with saying that human beings are like a drunk man who climbs up on one side of a horse only to fall off the other side. Then he climbs back up on that side only to fall off on the original side. His problem is that he can't sit straight up in the saddle in the middle of the horse.

So it is with Christian liberty, good works, and faith in Christ. We are not saved by good works. We are saved by faith. However, it still is desirable to perform good works, but out of love rather than necessity. It also is desirable to avoid sinful behavior, but out of love rather than fear. Christians are liberated when they stand or sit, walk or ride in the saddle of God's grace grounded in faith. When that is the case, good works are done because we love people and desire to help them. Sin is avoided because we love the Lord and want to bring honor to His kingdom.

I heard someone say that God is not an angry Clint Eastwood character sitting up in heaven looking down with a threatening scowl, waiting for us to sin so He can zap us while growling, "Go ahead. Make my day." Yet many Christians live in fear of just such a God.

Paul makes it clear in Romans 6:1, 2, that we should not commit sins just because we know that God's grace abounds toward the sinner. He wrote: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"

We do good deeds in love, because it pleases God and helps humankind. But that is not what saves us. We refrain from sin, because it pleases God, protects ourselves and others, and brings honor to our heavenly Father. But that is not what saves us.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

Scripture

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

This 'n That

"Only one card has ever been issued by God and it came in the form of a cross. The good news is that Jesus stands by the singular door to God's presence insisting, 'I have prepaid your entrance. Through Me you can draw near to God!' Use the Master's card."

— Alicia Britt Chole

Prayer

Lord,

Thank You for grace. I could never have earned it. Amen.

Gratefully,
Mary Ruth