

"You Are A Two-Faced Preacher"

by Walter Lewis Wilson, M.D.

A PREACHER is supposed to be honest. He is supposed to tell the same story when he is out of the pulpit as when he is in it. The following story reveals one way in which to catch a soul for Christ, even though it seems that the preacher did not tell the same story both times.

A service was held in a large fashionable church. The audience was composed largely of cultured people of the better educated class. The message for the evening was taken from Ephesians 2:8, 9. This passage is well known and has been much used of the Lord to bring the knowledge of salvation in practically every circle of humanity. I called attention to the utter inability of any person to obtain eternal life by his own good works. I explained to the audience quite clearly that no amount of service for God will make one related to God. One of the illustrations I used was that of obtaining citizenship. "Suppose a Frenchman should move to the United States and then decide that he would become a citizen of our country by working faithfully, paying his taxes, obeying the laws and taking an interest in civic affairs. Would that make him a citizen? No! We would quickly assure him that he had the wrong idea, for no amount of service would establish his citizenship. In order to become a citizen, he must go before the proper authorities and meet the requirements for citizenship."

There was such a deep desire in my heart to explain fully to the audience that salvation is entirely a matter of God's gracious work in the soul, that I used another illustration to help their understanding. "If a young lady should accept a position as secretary in an office, she certainly would understand that no amount of service for her employer would establish any relationship to him. She might work faithfully and efficiently over a period of years, but she still would be just an employee. She could, however, easily and quickly become a relative. It would only be necessary for both of them to agree, and then to seek out the proper authority and have the marriage ceremony performed. Relationship never results from service."

At the close of the service, a dignified lady of about fifty years came forward to meet me. I noticed that she was not very well pleased with the message she had heard. She was rather severe and hostile in her manner. I thought to myself, "Now I am in for it," and I was not badly mistaken. She did not extend her hand in greeting, but said rather

sharply, "I do not agree with what you said tonight in your sermon."

This was not a new thing to me, because frequently some in the audience have quite a different opinion from that expressed by the preacher. I said to her, diplomatically and kindly, "Tell me, please, what it was in my sermon that did not please you?"

She replied quite emphatically, "You said that we are not saved by good works, but I believe that we are. I have been taught all my life and have heard it preached that it is the good people who go to heaven. Your doctrine certainly does not make sense. Anybody knows that God rewards those who live good lives and I expect to stay by my own belief."

What a joy it is to find a person who really has some definite and honest opinions about the things of God! Even when they are wrong, it is rather easy to converse with them and quite often it is easy to win them. I looked to the Spirit for wisdom in addressing this friend, and then said, "I agree with you quite fully; I really believe that we are saved by good works." This statement shocked the lady considerably and she said, "You certainly must be a two-faced preacher. I have just listened to your sermon in which you said very plainly that we are not saved by good works. You endeavored to prove your argument from the Bible by twisting its meaning. After all of that message, how can you possibly say to me that we are saved by good works?"

Her curiosity was aroused, as I had intended by my statement that it should be. I have found that if we can get a person aroused by some unusual thought, then it is easier to help that one into the truth. This lady could not understand why I would say one thing in the pulpit and a different thing to her personally. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."

In order to deepen her perplexity and arouse her thoughts along unusual lines, I said to her, "Yes, I am a two-faced preacher, for I preach one thing in the pulpit and something different when I am talking personally with people. You know the Bible says that we should be 'all things to all men,' and I like to carry out that idea."

This seemed to puzzle her more than ever, and she said, "You do not look to me as if you were that kind of a man. When I listened to you preach, I thought from your earnestness that you must surely believe what you were preaching, even though I did not. Now you tell me that you believe quite the opposite from what you are preaching. I do not see how you can conscientiously do this."

I assured her that it was no difficulty at all for me, because my purpose was and is to win hearts for Christ and I would like very much to win her for the Lord Jesus. She replied, "You certainly cannot expect to convert me by any such tactics as that. I wish you would explain yourself more fully."

My mind was running quickly through the Scriptures to bring together those passages which I might use profitably in helping her. I saw that she was waiting for the answer and yet I did not want to give her the answer until she was in the attitude of mind to accept the revelation which I was about to give her. I said, "Why do you not agree with me? Do you think that I am contradicting myself? Do you not think it is possible to be saved without good works and yet also to be saved by good works? Consider this yourself and tell me your own thoughts about it."

She was thinking and fortunately other friends held aloof, for they saw that we were having a very earnest conversation. After a short time, she replied, "No, it seems utterly incompatible that we can be saved by good works and yet cannot be saved by good works. Why do you put it this way? You seem to be fooling me. I do not wish to be deceived. I want you to talk to me plainly and tell me what you are trying to convey."

Of course, this was just what I wanted and just the opportunity for which I was waiting. Opening my Bible, I turned again to Ephesians 2:8, 9 and read, "Not of works..." I called her attention to the fact that this statement was as plain as could be and really needed no explanation. She assented to this readily. In explaining the passage further, I said to her, "The works that are being considered in this verse are your works, your church work, your religious activities, your good deeds. None of these will make you righteous. God will not give you salvation in exchange for anything at all that you can do. No matter how much you do, it will not put away a single sin, nor remove a particle of guilt. The works that will save you (and they are good works) are the works of the Lord Jesus which He did for you at Calvary. We are saved by *His* good works, and not by our own. We read in Romans 5:6, 'Christ died for the ungodly,' and we also read in the 8th verse, 'Christ died for us'; and again in the 9th verse, 'We shall be saved from wrath through him.' Again we read in verse 10, 'We shall be saved by his life.'"

This was, indeed, a revelation to the heart of my friend. She seemed astonished beyond measure. It seemed a completely new thought to her

that we must be saved by the person and work of the Lord Jesus, entirely apart from our own merits. She hesitated about accepting it. She wanted to see this with her own eyes. I handed her my Bible opened at Romans 4, and let her read these passages for herself. Fortunately, she had been trained through the years to believe the Scriptures. She only needed someone to point out to her what the Bible said. As she read the passages, a new light came into her face. She had a new vision of the real value of the Lord Jesus. She saw for the first time that He, by His death, paid her price, and by His resurrection was able to give her life. The transformation was wonderful. She laughed and cried at the same time. Her heart was too full for utterance. She clasped my hand in a hearty handshake of thankfulness and left the room to enjoy her new life.

I bowed my head in thanksgiving to God that again His Word had accomplished His purpose in turning another soul "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

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