

Evaluation can be a means of grace

Frank G. Cookingham

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Reflections on Romans 3:21-26

The righteousness of God is that combination of grace and mercy by which God justifies us by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Satan opposes this righteousness, doing whatever he can to keep souls from believing in Christ as their only hope. This grace and mercy is freely given independently of law. The only thing I can contribute to my salvation is my sin from which I need to be saved.

The only access a person has to justification is through the will of God to dispense love and mercy freely without regard for that person's actions. The dynamic is something like this: "This is too great a gift for me to receive." "But it is not too great a gift for God to give." Grace is love transformed in the presence of sin.

The danger for evaluators who do not internalize this scriptural truth is that we will put our trust in science and ourselves rather than in the grace of God. The paradox of grace is like this. The judge asks the prisoner, "Guilty or not guilty?" The prisoner replies, "Guilty." The judge responds, "Then I acquit you." Program evaluation can help people affected in one way or another by a program to realize their shortcomings, experience God's saving grace, and then commit themselves to additional program work that demonstrates righteousness in the presence of God.