

Adventuring with God

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December 2007 / January 2008

I Reckon

Down here in the South folks *reckon* on things – “I reckon I’ll go on down to the store shortly.” “Do you reckon we’ll get some rain?” “I reckon you’ll be leaving us when you get that new job.” “I reckon that’s true.” The word *reckon* can seemingly be used for a wide range of situations, from a remote possibility to an absolute certainty. But what does it really mean?

Generally, according to the dictionary, we can use the word in three different ways. The first is to establish something by counting or calculation – like reckoning how long something will last. The second way is to be of the opinion that something is so / to consider or regard something in a certain way – like when someone is reckoned as unreliable by someone else. A third use is to rely on or be sure of doing, having, or dealing with something.

I’ve been wondering lately how God uses this word. I remembered seeing the term used in several instances, particularly in the older versions of the Bible. So I did a quick search to find out. Aside from a “day of reckoning,” which obviously is describing a day of judgment to come, the word *reckon* or *reckoned* is usually used as meaning either a calculation or considering someone or something in a particular way.

It’s interesting how seldom the word is used in its third usage – being sure of something. Even more interesting is the fact that it is not used in that way until we come to the New Testament. Paul is the author of three verses in which *reckon* is used in this way. And since they deal with something we can rely on or be sure of, they are verses we can hang on to as we begin another season of adventuring with God. Let’s look at them.

In Romans 3:28 (ASV) we read that Paul was sure of this: “*We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.*” This is a certainty – *faith* is the commodity by

which we are justified. So this year I need to remind myself that all my fussing around, trying to do everything just right so I’ll gain God’s approval, is a waste of time. I demonstrate my devotion to Him by believing what He has said and trusting Him to work things out correctly in my life as I yield to Him. This is the rest spoken of in Hebrews 4. In the same way that God rested from His labors, I am to rest from mine in the sense of trying to keep the law. I can rest in the finished work of Christ’s redemption on my behalf. It’s done, it’s complete – no need for me to try to add to it. I don’t stop working for God and His kingdom, but I work out of the certainty that I am accepted in the Beloved. Faith in Him has justified me fully.

Here’s another thing that Paul is certain of: “*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (Romans 8:18, KJV). What a powerful thing to know! Anything I am going through currently or have gone through in the past or will go through in the future . . . none of it compares to the glory that will be mine some day. This is not some pie in the sky wishful thinking. Paul was certain of this information, and because he was so sure, he was willing to undergo tremendous suffering so that the cause of Christ could be advanced in his generation.

How certain am I of this? Do I live as if I believe “it will be worth it all when I see His face”? Do I see my sufferings and trials as “*light and momentary troubles*” that are “*achieving for [me] an eternal glory that far outweighs them all*” (2 Corinthians 4:17)? Here’s where the rubber meets the road. Christians prove their sonship in the same way that Jesus did: by submissive obedience to all that God has called them to be and experience. If we let Him, He will work out His purposes in us – purposes that exceed anything we could imagine, think, or ask. But if we shrink back from every difficulty in life, we prove that we do not reckon, as Paul did, that the glory to come is more important than what we are asked to endure in this life.

The third verse is more of a command than a statement. Paul tells us to do something in light of what we know about our relationship with Christ. Because of what we are certain of – that our right standing with God is based on Christ's work on the cross, not our own works, and that we can anticipate our obedience to His way of life being rewarded and revealed as glory one day – we should do the following. "Reckon yourselves to be *dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 6:11 KJV).

In the NIV it says "Count yourselves dead to sin." Why? Because through Christ, sin and death have been conquered. Our old sin nature remains with us, but we are no longer held captive by its demands. It cannot make us act contrary to God's will. If we reckon ourselves free from its effects, we will not give in to its temptations. Scripture assures us that we can and will give in to sin from time to time (1 John 1:8-10). However, we can choose to exercise Christ's authority over it. Here's how Paul puts it: "*Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life. Sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace*" (Romans 6:13-14).

Again, *do I believe that?* Can I reckon it as true, as Paul did? This is not heavy and ponderous like we might think -- this is *good news!!* Because of Christ Jesus we are free to choose whom we will serve. Evangelist and author E. Stanley Jones reckoned on the truth of this and had the following experience. "I laid at Christ's feet a self of which I was shamed, couldn't control, and couldn't live with; and to my glad astonishment he took that self, remade it, consecrated it to Kingdom purposes, and gave it back to me, a self I can now live with gladly and joyously and comfortably."

He invites us all to rest in His finished work for us. He encourages us to take heart and to stand strong in any circumstance that comes our way. And He calls us to try out the enormous implications of our redemption: to live as if we are no longer enslaved by our sinful nature. We can do this if we count ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God through our conquering Lord and Savior. In Him we have all we need.

I reckon that's all I have for now.

Have a great adventure with God in 2008!