

Today we begin a 2 part series on "The Gospel and Gandhi." He was doubtless a great political leader, but he was clueless as to the true nature of the gospel.

The Wednesday Word, Mar. 25, 2009: The Gospel and Gandhi: Part 1

Gandhi, the great liberator of India, once said, "If Christians would really live according to the teachings of Christ, as found in the Bible, all of India would be Christian today!"

Many well-meaning Christians have since seized upon those words and have attempted, at times, to make the rest of us feel guilty about the many deficiencies in our Christian living. And you know what? ----- there's some truth in the things that they say about our lifestyles. They're right when they say that our Christian behavior ought to make us stand out from the society around us. They're right when they say that we ought to be more loving, generous, kind and forgiving. The difficulty is, however, that we can say these things and preach about right Christian living, but if the gospel is not the center of the message, there will be no change in the listeners. It is only the good news of Christ's cross and righteousness that will effectually kill sin and cause us to grow in grace. John Berridge confirmed this when he said that, in the days before he understood the gospel, he preached on morality so much that after several years there wasn't one moral person left in his parish!

But back to Gandhi! Gandhi was genuinely distressed by the racism and hypocrisy which he encountered in Christian churches! But was Gandhi correct in his analysis? Would India have become Christian if all the Christians had followed the teachings of Christ? No sir---not by a long shot!

Gandhi, a Bible reader, like countless others, failed to grasp that there is no such scripture that says, "The gospel of a Christ-like life is the power of God unto salvation." Of course the gospel changes us, and people notice the change, but the gospel that delivers nations is the gospel of Christ! The gospel that brings salvation is centered in Jesus, not in our Christ-like behavior! Our lives, no matter how spotless can never qualify as the gospel.

Someone once said,

"You're writing a gospel, a chapter each day...
By the deeds that you do, by the words that you say...
People read what you write, whether faithless or true
Say, what is the gospel according to you?"

Cute, but moralistic balderdash! The gospel has already been written and written in blood---God's blood! The gospel is not about "the deeds that I do", but rather about the deeds that Christ has done!

"But" says someone, "isn't it true that Christians are supposed to be loving and kind?" Yes indeed, that is true ---see John 13:35, John 15:12 and Eph 4:32. However, to assume that people will flock to become Christ's disciples because they see the love in the redeemed community is to invest these scriptures with more meaning than is intended. We are to love one another, but our loving

one another will not get people right before God. Just as no one is acquitted before God on the basis of having a changed life, so no one is suddenly inspired to flee to God for mercy merely by simply observing our Christ-like behavior.

Alas, subjective preaching has conquered many of our pulpits. “If you want peace,” the preacher says, “then say this wee prayer!” Gone it seems is the need to come as a sinner before the all-holy God believing and trusting that Christ alone is the sinner’s substitute!

The focus from beginning to end is now set on the believer, his condition and experience. In many evangelical circles nowadays, the ground of salvation is actually seen as the inward experience of new birth. Regeneration, in the de facto thinking of many, has replaced Justification by Grace through Faith as the basis of acceptance before God. Rather than, by faith alone, embracing Christ alone, people are now being taught to look to an inner experience. And as for growth in grace, rather than continuing to look unto Jesus, the believer is being taught to focus inwardly, on his condition.

To influence people for Christ we must have a spotless life, they say. However, no matter how Christ-like we are, people will not get saved by merely observing us. Indeed, they might want our peace, but they will have to go to the cross to get that; sure they might want our joy, but they need a substitute who has lived and died for them to have that, and of course they might want our guilt free conscience, but they need a perfect High Priest for that.

In subjective Christianity, Gandhi’s words resonate with many for they have fallen for the lie that the power to get others saved lies within them, in the condition of their hearts and in their behavior!

The truth is, if all of India, or any country for that matter, is to come to Christ, then the gospel of Christ must be restored to its rightful place. Our churches need to once more, become gospel driven! Since Christ, His person, work and offices are the center and heart of the gospel, He needs to be proclaimed loudly, clearly and continually.

May God raise up a new generation of gospel driven Christians.

As CJ Mahaney says,

“If there’s anything in life that we should be passionate about, it’s the gospel. And I don’t mean passionate only about sharing it with others. I mean passionate about thinking about it, dwelling on it, rejoicing in it, allowing it to color the way we look at the world. Only one thing can be of first importance to each of us. And only the gospel ought to have that place in our hearts.”

P.S. Would you like to know whether or not you are gospel driven? To find out, ask yourself these following questions.

With which are you absorbed? (Answer A or B)

1. (A) your personal righteousness,
(B) The vicarious righteousness of Christ?

2. (A) the condition of your faith
(B) Christ's faithful obedience on your behalf?
3. (A) your self-crucifixion
(B) His crucifixion?
4. (A) your new life
(B) His sinless life?
5. (A) your experience of Christ
(B) His experience for you?
6. (A) your love for God
(B) His love for you?
7. (A) The depth of your personal surrender
(B) The depth of Christ's personal surrender?
8. (A) Your victorious life
(B) His victorious life on your behalf?
9. (A) Your attainment
(B) His atonement?
10. (A) The work of the Spirit in you
(B) the work of Christ for you?

If you answered "B" in all 10 questions, you have a grasp of the gospel, but better yet, the gospel has a grasp of you.

And that' the Gospel Truth!