

The Wednesday Word, Sept. 28, 2011: The Gospel and Authentic New Testament Ministry, Part 2

Paul proclaimed the gospel evangelistically (1 Cor 4:15), but he knew that this was far from its exclusive use. Unfortunately, today, many preachers don't have this insight. According to them the gospel is primarily for the lost. They foolishly imagine that spiritual growth is divorced from the gospel and its application. Yes indeed, Paul preached evangelistically, but as an apostle, Paul's central burden for the Churches was to establish them in the faith. This apostolic ministry of establishing, however, was accomplished only through the preaching of the gospel. He writes,

"Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, -----(Rom 16:25).

According to this scripture, gospel preaching establishes believers. It is the gospel of Christ that makes the believer stable and steady. Paul tells the Corinthians the same thing when he writes,

"Now he which establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God; (2 Cor 1:21).

Mark it down, we are established in Christ and nowhere else!

The gospel of Christ is the primary power in establishing and confirming the people of God. Yet, in spite of this, many believers are encouraged to run 'hither and thither' to seek new life changing blessings from some 'new move' or other of the Spirit in various parts of the world. However, these 'new things' are a damp squib; give them enough time and they will fizzle out. They promise much, they deliver little. The gospel alone will build Christians and make them sturdy! Why? Because the gospel is the heart of authentic New Testament ministry!

But what is the gospel? It's important that we get this right. Every preacher I've met claims to preach and understand the gospel and its significance, but most of them don't. They have failed to see that the gospel is the good news of a person. It's about Jesus. It is the good news of His offices, His doing, dying and rising again. He is the one who is presently seated on the throne of grace applying all His redemptive riches to His blood bought saints. When this ever-living crucified Christ is ministered and held before the people they find Him to be both beautiful and precious and discover in Him the road to spiritual strength, stability and godly character.

But many people in Paul's day could see no beauty in Jesus. Paul says in 1 Cor 1:21,

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

The unsaved still laugh at the gospel and strange as it may seem they are not so far removed from the 'believer' who sees no use for the gospel other than as a doorway doctrine. Such a person sees no power in the finished work to transform. He wants transformation by rules and principles, but not by grace alone.

The gospel centered believer, on the other hand, delights that the gospel is both the power and wisdom of God. Being the power and wisdom of God, the New Covenant minister also knows better than to restrict the gospel to evangelistic meetings.

The gospel is the power of the all-powerful God: So just how powerful is Omnipotence? It defies description! The gospel is also the wisdom of the all-wise God: so just how wise is Omniscience? We can not express or fathom such things: But this we know, the power of the Omnipotent and the wisdom of the Omniscient are bound up and manifest in the gospel. A true New Testament minister knows this and would, therefore, never take us away from the centrality of Jesus to focus us on a subjective, man centered message.

And that's the Gospel Truth!