

The Wednesday Word, Oct. 1, 2008: The Gospel and Faith, Part 2

Gospel Faith will cause us to give up our exhausting and useless efforts to do or feel something good in order to coax God to love us. Have you ever felt that at times you need to make that extra special effort at godliness to squeeze acceptance from the Heavenly Father? I've "been there and done that!" But to think like that is to walk in unbelief. The opposite of unbelief is faith and faith rests upon Christ alone to gain us approval and acceptance before God!

Gospel faith will cause us to see that we have nothing yet possess all things. By faith, the scripture, "Having nothing-and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:10) becomes a reality. The unsaved person, seeing the apparent contradiction, asks how we Christians have nothing, yet have all things. Perhaps a statement made more than one hundred years ago by the English preacher J.C. Philpot can help us. He said,

“It means, having nothing in self, possessing all things in Christ.----- My own beggary leads me out of self into His riches. My own unrighteousness leads me out of self into Christ's righteousness. My own defilement leads me out of self into Christ's sanctification. My own weakness leads me out of self into Christ's strength. My own misery leads me out of self into Christ's mercy. "Having nothing-and yet possessing all things" 2 Corinthians 6:10. These two branches of divine truth, so far from clashing with each other-sweetly, gloriously, and blessedly harmonize.”

J. C. Philpot: "Spiritual Poverty and Heavenly Riches.”

Gospel faith is mighty, not in itself, but because of its mighty object, the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as the Holy Spirit always points away from Himself, so too, gospel faith will always point away from itself towards the Lamb of God. A faith-filled Church will be a Christ-centered Church and a Christ-centered Church will be a faith-filled Church. If there is no gospel center, there will be no exploits done for God. Without a Christ center, service in His cause becomes a chore. The Pastor will continually plead for volunteers to help with evangelism and other forms of service and yes, he'll get plenty of 'volunteers' if he can make them feel guilty enough ---but what a mess they can make of the cause of Christ.

If the gospel does not hold first place in our Churches it holds no place. Unfortunately, in today's church, the gospel is continually being given a subordinate role. Either it is misunderstood and presented as Christ's work within the believer or it is seen as useful only to get the lost saved. Like the ancient Christians at Corinth, many believers today are occupied with their experiences rather than by being occupied with Christ. The condition of the believer's heart, like a spoiled child, is demanding center stage. If we are Spirit led, however, we will learn from Paul and his words of wisdom to the out of balance church at Corinth. They were in a mess because they were totally absorbed with themselves and their experiences. What does Paul say to them? Let's read his words again,

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein you stand; by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was

buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

History is repeating itself! That which happened at Corinth and at other churches is once more happening to many of our Churches today. Well-packaged false teachings have come among the believers, saying, "You have the gospel. That's fine - just what the Doctor ordered to start the Christian life. Now you must go on and rise higher in God. We bring to you the secret of the deeper life, the full gospel, the real secret of victorious living and the crucified life. "

In short, Jesus Christ, His person, His work and offices have now become too boring and unexciting for many Christians. Church services are held and Christ Jesus is paid lip service only. We have lost the desire and the ability to gather together unto Him. On the contrary, Church meetings are now all about the believer and his Christian progress (divorced from the cross) and about how good he can feel. This is the road to apostasy! The gospel has been demoted to something unimportant for the Church. Christ Jesus has been given a back seat and will shortly be thrust out the door. But let Christ be preached and the Church will undergo revival. As the gospel is preached, the Holy Spirit will generate faith. And faith will cause the believers to see that God became a man. Not only did He become man, He became our Man. Faith will see that this God Man, Christ Jesus, became our representative; and because he represents us, faith causes us to say, "When He lived I lived, when He died I died and when He rose again I rose again". When the gospel is proclaimed and applied, faith sees we were in Christ when everything was accomplished. The believer can now say I have lived a perfect life because I lived it in Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago. Faith also causes the believer to say I was punished, executed and buried 2000 years ago in Christ Jesus. In addition, the believer can now say, In Christ I rose again in newness of life out of that grave, I ascended into glory and, in Christ, I sat down on the right hand of God's favor (Eph. 2:5:6). In Christ, God purged me and perfected me: In Christ, I have been taken, not to the wood shed but to the throne of grace. Faith will cause us to embrace that we are,

“Buried with Him in baptism wherein you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God Who has raised Him from the dead. And you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh has He quickened (made alive) together with Him having forgiven you all trespasses--.

By faith we see we are risen with Christ and now by faith we may seek these things which are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. We now are free to set our affection on things above not on things on the earth. For by faith we see we are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God (see Colossians 2:12-13, 3:1-3).

Gospel mercies declare we have been washed clean in Jesus Christ and by grace have been taken into perfect fellowship with God. The good news is not “here are five steps to maturity” and “here are seven steps for growth”. The good news, when rightly preached and applied, is that the work is finished and ‘in Christ’ believers are already complete (Colossians 2:10).

The gospel declares that God Himself broke into human history in the Person of His Son. He became our representative Man. What a demonstration of His amazing love. That he would become one of us is almost too hard to fathom. This event must shout volumes even to the deafest among us, for it declares that God is not against usfor how can He be, seeing He has become

one of us? He has become so identified with His people that all that He did was not only for us, but was exactly the same as if we had done it. I needed to strive with sin and win but failed; I just couldn't get it together, so Jesus did it in my place. I had a great enemy, Satan, who wished to kill me and could have, but Jesus, on my behalf and in my place, destroyed his power. Faith can now boldly say, "I have won this fight and victory because I have already won it in Christ." The final enemy I will face is death, but Jesus went into its very jaws and defeated it. Faith makes me confess that in Christ I have already conquered death and the reality of this confession will be finally seen at the day of resurrection.

Many times in the Old Testament the question is asked of God "Who is like unto Thee". For example,

"Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? (Exodus 15:11)

Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto Thee! (Psalms 71:19).

Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retains not his anger for ever, because he delights in mercy (Micah 7:18).

Who indeed is like him? What did Buddha or Mohammed ever do for their people compared to Jesus? When Christ arose from the grave and was welcomed with joy into the presence of the Father with all honor and exaltation, His people were raised, welcomed, honored and exalted with Him. Neither Buddha nor Mohammed did this for their people! But gospel faith now says, "as certainly as God came to this earth in the Person of Jesus Christ, just so certainly have I gone to heaven in the Person of Jesus Christ." Let me challenge you---begin to make this your confession!

Say it; don't just think it! The gospel is not, as some would have us believe, about all the good things that God is going to do at some stage in the future, nor is it all about the good things God is doing now in our lives, but rather, this gospel proclaims the good things which He has already done in Christ. He has forgiven, justified, reconciled, redeemed and restored us to glory and honor in the Person of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3-7; 2:4-6; Romans 4:25; 5:8-10, 18, 19; Colossians 2:10).

And That's the Gospel Truth.