

The Wednesday Word, Oct. 3, 2012: Beware of Wayward Teachers!

The ministry of the Holy Spirit will never lead us away from the cross; it led us there in the beginning and will continue to do so until we see Jesus face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). At no time in the believer's life do we cease to need the gospel.

However, some wayward teachers in this day and age suggest that we should go beyond the cross and leave it behind. (2 Peter 2:17-22). "The cross," they say "has done all it can do for us." They declare, "It is, of course, right and correct to come under the shadow of the cross in the beginning of our Christian lives, but now," they insist, "we need to move on to deeper things." They maintain that to continue in the gospel of the crucified Christ is to remain but an immature, spiritual baby (2 Peter 2:18).

But, what is the cross? It is not a literal piece of wood from antiquity; rather, it is the central issue with God. The cross has been planned from eternity (Revelation 13:8), and, as such, we dare not remove it from being our core doctrine and delight. To leave the cross would be to leave the eternal purpose and counsel of God. To leave Christ Crucified as the core of our thinking would be to turn our back on the Lamb that was slain (Philippians 3:18). Yet, this is exactly what we do when we follow these 'modern men', these apostles of the 'New Thing that God is Speaking Now.' If we follow them, we replace Christ Jesus with novelties and fads which masquerade themselves as Christian truth.

"But, Christ crucified is only for beginners and we must move on from it," they insist. They, however, mistakenly assume that the preaching of Christ crucified means that we endlessly talk about the crown of thorns and the nails! No! It's bigger than that. The doing, dying and rising of the Lord Jesus is a comprehensive event which cannot be divided. We cannot, for example, separate Christ's sinless life from the cross--- they are vitally connected; one establishes the other. Furthermore, no part of this event, this gospel, shall ever become redundant or obsolete.

Concerning this truth, Horatius Bonar says,

I am always at the manger, and yet I know that mere incarnation cannot save; always at Gethsemane, and yet I believe that its agony was not the finished work; always at the cross, with my face toward it and my eye on the crucified One, and yet I am persuaded that the sacrifice there was completed once for all; always looking into the grave, though I rejoice that it is empty and that "He is not here, but is risen"; always resting (with the angel) on the stone that was rolled away, and handling the grave-clothes, and realizing a risen Christ, no indeed, an ascended and interceding Lord; yet on no pretext whatever leaving any part of my Lord's life or death behind me, but unceasingly keeping up my connection with Him, as born, living, dying, buried, and rising again, and drawing out from each part some new blessing every day and hour."

There is no leaving of the gospel. The Holy Spirit keeps unfolding it in deeper and deeper ways. Beware, therefore, of preachers who are not centred on Christ crucified. In much the same way that a blind hog gets the occasional acorn, they can occasionally say helpful things, but the gospel is not the driving force of their preaching. Avoid them; they have no message. Although, their sermons are well packaged and smoothly delivered, they lack New Testament authentication since

they are not centred in Christ Crucified. They will mention Christ, but, even then, it is usually “Christ in you” who gets central billing. They have no passion for the person and the objective, finished work of Christ. In their preaching, Christ will always take second place to the believer. The believers needs will be central to their message, and if we have no needs, they will be kind enough to contrive some for us.

It is intriguing to note that, in scripture, we read of true and false prophets, wise and foolish virgins, faithful and unfaithful stewards, true and false apostles, but one thing we never read of is true and false sheep. Sheep are sheep, called by God (Isaiah 42:6), held by God (Isaiah 41:10), prayed for by God (Hebrews 7:25) and sealed by God (Ephesians 4:30). And here’s a distinguishing mark of the sheep, ----- they will not follow a stranger (John 10:5). They love their crucified and exalted shepherd. They will not fall prey to the wayward teacher who would lead them away from their Master.

And that’s the Gospel Truth!