

The Wednesday Word, Oct. 19, 2011: The Gospel and Authentic New Testament Ministry, Part 4

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: ---For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”

Paul equates the preaching the gospel with the preaching of the cross of Christ. They are one and the same. This is the heart of New Testament power ministry!

“But” says someone, “we must have Holy Ghost power to have an authentic New Testament ministry. “Indeed we do! Who’s arguing? However, today we often encounter a silly passion which chases spiritual power in all the wrong places. The truth is, we don’t have to run all over the place chasing after power. New Testament, spirit filled power is already centered in Christ and His finished work. According to scripture, Christ is the power of God (1 Cor 1:24); likewise the “preaching of the cross” is the power of God (1 Cor 1:18) and indeed “the gospel” itself is declared to be the power of God (Rom 1:16). What a threefold witness! Paul, therefore, being filled with the Holy Ghost preached Christ and Him crucified. This was and is the most powerful apostolic message available for the saved and lost alike. Let’s measure those who claim to be today’s apostles by this standard of ministry! Authentic, Holy Ghost ministry centers on Christ, His person, work and offices and indeed His glory. As we read in the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit makes us witnesses unto Christ Jesus (Acts 1:8).

The authentic New Testament minister preaches a person, the God man, who lived perfectly, died perfectly and rose again from the dead. This God/Man is the Christ of the cross. When we talk about the cross, however, we are not merely referring to a piece of wood on Golgotha’s hill. We are focusing on Christ crucified, the one whose entire life was a cross. He was the One who continually laid down His rights, riches and reputation and then died as our substitute.

Authentic New Testament ministry always points people away from themselves to the Lord Jesus and His perfect obedience on our behalf. The New Testament minister points us to a salvation that is not only by grace, but also a salvation which is already complete in Christ. Because of this, the true New Covenant minister will not cause us to dwell on anything the Holy Spirit has done within us. He will not urge us to focus on our ‘sanctification’ or in some new way of being Spirit filled nor will he dwell on some new experience or blessing. True apostles, like Paul, will cause us to look to doing and dying of the God/Man who is now resident in glory. They will continually bring us to His throne to magnify exalt, worship and behold the perfections of the One who is enthroned as Lord above all (Col. 3:1-4).

In addition, authentic New Testament ministry will continually point us to the righteousness, completeness and blessing which is already ours in Christ alone. Man’s way of ministry is to build up man and tell him how fine he is. God’s way of ministry, on the contrary, is to throw man into the dust of self- distrust so that he can trust and glory in Christ alone. It is only as the cross demolishes him that the believer becomes established in Christ! This offends the flesh, but it is authentic New Testament ministry!

Christ alone, is our hope, confidence and delight (Jer. 23:6). An authentic New Testament minister knows and teaches this!

And that’s the Gospel Truth!