

The Wednesday Word, November 22, 2023: The Gospel and the Believer - Part 1

“Christian, should your eye ever be withdrawn from the cross, you will be sure to go backwards, to grow cold, and to forget that you were purged from your old sins (2 Peter 1:9). That cross is life, health, holiness, consolation, strength, joy; let nothing come between it and you.” ...
Horatius Bonar: ‘Follow The Lamb’

Paul knew that the knowledge of Christ crucified was the highest knowledge we could obtain. Indeed, Christ, His person, work and offices, are the hub and center of all gospel truth. We believers have the privilege, therefore, to ‘Look unto Jesus’ and to occupy ourselves with Him.

The message we are to share is about a Person ... Jesus Christ. And yes of course we include His benefits but our message is to be centred on Him.

Our message is about who the Lord Jesus is, His doing, dying, rising, ascension and session (sitting down) at the place of cosmic authority.

Now here’s something we must grasp: since the gospel is about Jesus, the gospel is, therefore, not focused on us. In the genuine gospel, the believer is not on centre stage, rather, in the authentic gospel ministry, the limelight falls on Christ.

There are preachers who dispute this. They choose to make the believer and his condition the main thrust of their message. However, let me point out that ever since the fall of man, when sin entered into the human race, the focus of man’s attention has been upon himself. Listen to the Father of our fallen race as he cowers in embarrassed fear before his Creator; he says, “**I** heard your voice in the garden and **I** was afraid because **I** was naked and **I** hid myself.” (Genesis 3:10).

Notice how that four times in one verse he uses the personal pronoun “**I**”. Adam shows us by this one sentence that sin’s first warping of man’s character was to make him into a raging subjectivist. He, not God, is now the centre of his universe. No longer does his life revolve around God and His glory. His life is now centred on himself and his condition. And that, it seems, is exactly how so many churches want it to remain to this day.

Some preachers only talk about us and how our lives can be improved.

We talk about us.

We sing about us.

We preach about us.

It’s all about us!

It’s ironic; man the rebel has made his experience the centre of his concern and redeemed man, for a large part, has done the same.

Many preachers don’t say it this way but according to them, man not Christ must be the centre of their message. Satan’s prophecy, “You shall be as Gods” has, in one very real sense, come true in that man has exalted himself to the centre of all things even in the Church!

The theme song of so many preachers should be, “Oh come let us ignore Him” for Christ is continually being replaced by the believer as the centre of everything. On top of this, we have many believer-centred fad doctrines, which seem to bombard us on a regular basis. Fortunately, like Jonah’s Gourd they spring up in a day and die the next.

When pastors should be rescuing the flock from the wretched condition of subjectivism, caused by sin, they often, without knowing it, displace the gospel, placing the believer, his condition and experience firmly at the center of the church life. Eastern religions teach their devotees to look to the inner being and to focus on their experience and condition. There once was a time when there was a great distinction between Christianity and Eastern Mysticism. This is no longer so, But, more on that next time.

And that’s the Gospel Truth!