

The Wednesday Word, Dec. 8, 2010: Needed! The Apostolic Gospel

We do not need to re-invent the gospel in each generation. The old one still works fine! It worked powerfully in the days of the apostles and age has neither decayed nor weakened it.

As we read the apostolic sermons in the New Testament we see how the simple facts of the gospel are at their center. In Acts 2, Peter's sermon at Jerusalem focused on Jesus of Nazareth, the One who had been crucified, raised from the dead and was now exalted to the throne of God, being made both Lord and Christ. Perhaps this kind of preaching is too simple for the pulpiteers of today, but, by the Spirit, the apostles saw both the power and wisdom of God in these simple facts.

In Paul's sermon to the unbelievers at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13) we see the same pattern. The apostle gives a statement of the facts regarding the death and resurrection of Jesus. He then, like any good preacher, applies the sermon with these words, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified" Acts 13:38).

Notice how the apostolic gospel for the lost is not, "Ye must be born again"--to preach the necessity of the new birth, while it is true, is to preach law and not grace. When Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again, he was showing him the impossibility of his situation. He was shutting the door in his face in order that he would look outside himself to the one who would be lifted up on the cross to die (Jn 3:14).

But back to Paul! When Paul brought the gospel to the Church at Corinth his message was very simple. Even though he was now teaching believers He says, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel, ----- 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 Cor 15:1-8) Then he adds: "So we preach, and so ye believed"(1 Cor 15:11).

In these simple facts of the doing, dying and rising of Christ the depths of God's righteous grace is announced to both sinner and saint alike. In the gospel, His great salvation is revealed. Why then change the content to sub-standard subjective sentiments that neither save nor heal? It is the good news of Christ which is, "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith"(Rom 1:16-17).

When it comes to bringing the gospel to either the Church or the lost, the apostolic message is not, "Do this, do that; make your best effort; pray in earnest and God will bless you"----- these things, although found in much popular preaching, are law, not gospel. But law doesn't produce saints, it only produces sinners. In the gospel, Christ has done it all. He was "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification"(Rom 4:25). He "made peace by the blood of his cross"(Col 1:20). It is finished! His doing and dying is so complete that, when it comes to the matters of right standing (and continued right standing) before God, there is nothing left for us to do but to enjoy what has been done.

Nothing to do no not a whit
Nothing to pay, no not a bit

All that's to do and all that's to pay
Jesus has done in his own blessed way

The gospel of Christ is as powerful as ever (Rom 1:16). It has lost none of its authority. Do you believe this? Do you believe that age has neither changed nor weakened its effectiveness or are you now resorting to new fads to widen your appeal?

How old is the gospel anyway? Some say it is 2000 years old for it dates back to the cross. Oh no! It's much older than that. Others say it's as old as the Fall of Man. Again, it's much older than that. How old then is the gospel? It's as old as God, and age has neither weakened God nor His gospel. The gospel of Christ still comes to us with full divine potency. The gospel is still sufficient and suitable for the lost sinner and the saved sinner alike. The gospel is still sufficient and suitable for all our growth in grace. The gospel will still motivate and energize us to follow the exalted Lamb who was slain. It is His finished accomplishments that are the basis of our life and the cause of our strength and peace.

And that's the Gospel Truth