

The Wednesday Word, November 23, 2016: The Genuine Gospel

The apostle Paul, in defining the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 begins by saying, "How that Christ." The authentic Gospel, as opposed to the many false ones (Galatians 1:6-7), was concerning a person, Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1-3). The apostolic Gospel is about Christ Jesus, His doing, dying and rising again. Well, of course, we all say 'amen' to that. But, if this is so, we need to realize then that the Good News is not about us...it's not about you and it is not about me.

If this is so, the Gospel is, therefore, not about Jesus coming into our hearts and making us new. Neither is it about our spiritual growth nor our spiritual development. The believer, his progress, and welfare are not the focus of the Gospel. The pure, apostolic Gospel puts the Lord Jesus Christ firmly on center stage. In the Gospel, the spotlight is on Jesus, not upon the believer. Of course, we believers enjoy the benefits of the gospel such as acquittal from all charges of sin, reconciliation, adoption, new life in Christ, etc. But the Gospel is neither about our new life nor what we are doing nor about how saved we are; the Gospel is about the great and glorious acts of God in the Lord of history,--Jesus the Christ.

Although Christ perfectly represented us as our substitute in His life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and session, the Gospel is not about us. The Gospel, on the other hand, is primarily the good news of who Christ Jesus is and what He has done and accomplished in history. It is not about the mercies we receive as a result of the Gospel. Christ Jesus and His finished work are the centre of the Gospel. The erudite 19th century Episcopalian Bishop of Ohio, Charles McIlvaine, said it like this:

"But it is abundantly clear from the Scriptures that the Apostles identified the Gospel with Christ; so that, in their view and practice, to preach the Gospel was neither more nor less than to preach Christ. The record which, in a few words, describes their ministry is to, "daily in the temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Paul to the Romans defines the whole Gospel by saying that it is "concerning Jesus Christ." (Rom. 1:3). The employment of his two years' imprisonment at Rome was all comprehended in "teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus." And his whole ministry was given unto him, he testifies, that he "might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ." As he could say, "For me to live is Christ;" so for him to preach was Christ. To him, Christ and the Gospel were one.

(Charles McIlvaine: Preaching Christ)

"Well," you say, "you are entirely wrong Miles McKee. The Gospel is about how Jesus died for sinners." Of course, Jesus died for sinners, but the Gospel is not sinner centered, it is Christ-centered. The Gospel is neither about the horror of sin nor the penalty that sinners will pay for sin. The Gospel is neither about God's hatred of sin nor His holiness. The Gospel, however, is about Christ and His doing, dying and rising again. Yes, it is true that the Gospel only really makes sense when the Holiness of God and the horrors of sin are understood, but the holiness of God and the horrors of sin are not the Gospel. The power of God will regenerate us, the goodness of God will lead us to repent and the love of God will melt our hearts, but our repentance, regeneration, and melting of heart are the result of the Gospel and not the Gospel itself!

And that's the Gospel Truth!