

The Wednesday Word, December 7, 2017: Saved in the Past, Secured for the Future

As we read through the New Testament apostolic sermons, we discover that they always point back to events in the past. Those early, inspired preachers did not look to anything present tense as being the Gospel. From this, we learn that unless we are looking back and pointing to the redemptive events of the past, the Christ event, we are, in fact, not preaching the Gospel. Our message is not some vague philosophy about God, but rather a story packed with concrete, historical events and facts.

Here are the details; Christ lived; Christ died. Christ was buried; Christ rose again from the dead.

These are the significant specifics of the Gospel. They are events that have already happened in history. These facts are plain simple and few, so few that a child could remember and understand them.

The Gospel belongs to a completed history; its facts are not happening today. Christ is not on the cross, He is not atoning for sins, His work is finished; He is ruling and reigning that He might apply His entire accomplishments to His people. We are secure in Him! Because of the cross, He will come back for us (Hebrews 9:28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11). We are safe!

As a result of this Gospel, this Finished Work, Christ is now seated at the place of cosmic authority. Now, based on His accomplishments in the Gospel, Christ Jesus is our, "Advocate with the Father." Talk about security!!

BTW, since the Gospel concerns that which has happened in the past, it makes our job very easy. To share the gospel all we have to do is tell the story ----the story of the doing, dying and rising of Christ. We don't even have to tell our listeners to do anything because the minute we go to the realm of 'do,' we are not preaching the Gospel. Of course, we will eventually bring the hearers to the "Do" stage but asking them to "do" something is the application of the Gospel and not the Gospel itself. For example, if we preach all night on repentance; then all we've done is preach all night on repentance. We've not preached the Gospel since we've not preached a past historical event. If we preach repentance, we're preaching what should be a necessary application of the Gospel, but how can we have anyone repent and exercise saving faith unless they first hear the Gospel (Romans 10:14-15)?

In the 1620s a fierce preacher, John Glendinning, preached the law and dread of God to his listeners in Sixmilewater, County Antrim, Northern Ireland. By all accounts, his hearers were cut down in terror and actually swooned with fear----but they did not get saved. They believed every word Glendinning said, but because the Gospel had not been preached, they remained lost. Another minister, Robert Blair was then sent into the area, and he preached the saving acts of God in Christ, and the poor tormented souls got saved.

It is vital that we grasp the 'pastness' of the Gospel because, since the Gospel is a past historical event, it cannot be experienced. The Gospel is uniquely about Christ's unrepeatable experience. It is not about my experience or your experience. His life was the only one of its kind. He will never repeat His accomplishments or death. The Gospel is uniquely about the experiences of the Divine/Human Saviour, Jesus Christ. As He hung upon that never to be repeated cross, the experience was uniquely His. We can look back to that event and fully identify with it, but we

cannot travel back in time and climb on the cross with Him. We can, however, by faith, receive all the Gospel benefits He obtained for us, but we cannot experience the Gospel. We can only experience its benefits.

And that's the Gospel Truth!