

The Wednesday Word, September 3, 2014: The Gospel and “The Holy Man of God.”

I pity the poor spaceman coming to earth to try to discover the God of the Christians by examining the various standards that are presented as holiness. What a variety of views he’s got to choose from! For example, some groups of Christians drink wine while others think such practices to be accursed. Some watch TV; others make TV a taboo. A friend of mine once went to preach in Germany. He showed up on the first Sunday morning and was met by the elders who told him to remove his tie. Ties were worldly they said. That evening, he was to preach for another group just 50 miles away so he showed up without a tie. The elders met him and told him, in no uncertain terms, that he could not preach without a tie. The lack of a tie was a sure sign of laxity and carnality. Go figure!

Some groups eat everything while some refuse to eat meat. Some go as far as to stick strictly to the Old Testament food laws. One group I knew were so confident of their stand on the food laws they even crooned about it in their services. They sang;

“Keep the food laws, they are good laws
You know I’m feeling fine since I left off eating swine.
Keep the food laws they are good laws,
I aim to keep the food laws all the time”

What a jolly little chorus!

Some groups insist that their women wear hats or head coverings while the same denomination perhaps in a different location would not have the same emphasis. I’ve found that standards of piety can vary and change by geography. Unfortunately, we have become masters at teaching for doctrine the standards of man and our group piety is often subtly presented as the way of obtaining “Grade A” status before God.

But the gospel is not about our piety. It is about Christ’s piety. Jesus Christ completely pleased the Father in everything he did. He worshiped and glorified the Father with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. Everything Christ did not only pleased the Father but “well” pleased Him. His actions were, not only always right and correct, but were also always done from a pure heart and a right motive.

Psalm 24 gives us a wonderful picture of Jesus. It asks, “Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord or who shall dwell in His holy place.” It then gives the answer, “He that has clean hands and a pure heart who has not lifted up His soul unto vanity.” Jesus Christ is the only one who perfectly fits this picture. He is the only one whose hands are truly clean and whose motives are utterly pure. We would do well if we worried less about how to have clean hands and occupied ourselves with the one whose hands are already entirely clean. Our clean hands will follow along afterwards.

So be warned, preoccupation with ourselves and our standards removes us from the gospel because our condition and behaviour, once more, become the central focus of our Christian life.

Important to us as they may be, no church standards are able to grant us acceptance before the Father. Christ alone does that! Since standards cannot gain acceptance for us, then they certainly can not make us more accepted before God than the others who do not share them. The world is not in need of more Christians going out proclaiming their religion. The world does not need to hear about this or that group piety. It is not in need of a “don’t smoke, don’t chew, don’t go with girls that do” message. The need of the hour is a return to gospel proclamation. We need once more to announce the Excellencies

of the Person of Christ, His doing and dying and rising again!

And that's the Gospel Truth!