

The Wednesday Word, December 9, 2014: Motivated by Grace Alone

*The daughter of one of the attendees at
The Gospel of Grace Conference in Yadgir , India*

In attempts to help congregations grow in the Lord, it is easy for pastors to cross the line between grace and works. To my shame I have to admit that I've crossed that line oftentimes ... and I'm not alone. Sometimes we pastors find ourselves trying to motivate our listeners by the Law and its demands instead of by the gospel. However, it takes no spirituality whatsoever to get behind the pulpit and demand change as we warn about bad habits and lax living. But, this is not gospel preaching!

For example, in our zeal to see God's people grow in grace we can continually demand repentance. Yet, the doctrine of repentance, although vital, saves no one. Granted, no one is saved without it, but repentance is not the gospel. It is the gospel of Christ alone that is the power of God unto salvation, not the gospel plus our repentance (Romans 1:16).

Here's the gospel truth, the Good News is neither a call nor a demand to repent. In fact, the gospel is not even a demand that we change our lives. Indeed, the gospel is not a demand to do anything. In the gospel, all demands were laid on Christ and He fulfilled them all.

So let's say it again, nowhere in the scriptures do we discover that the gospel is about our repentance. Along these lines, Charles Spurgeon once said, *"You must not expect that you will be perfect in 'repentance' before you are saved. No Christian can be perfect. 'Repentance' is a grace. Some people preach it as a condition of salvation. Condition of nonsense! There are no conditions of salvation. God gives the salvation himself."*

(CHS Repentance unto Life: Sermon # 44, New Park Street Pulpit).

The gospel is not the story of what we must do, it is the story of what has already been done in history, by the Lord Jesus Christ. Far from being about us or anything we can do, the gospel is about the perfections of the doing and dying of Christ.

The gospel is not about how we behave, it is about Christ's behaviour in our place and stead. The gospel is not even a demand that we give up worldliness. Indeed, there are no demands at all in the gospel.

One old time preacher put it like this, "The Gospel is not good advice to be obeyed, it is good news to be believed." He was right! But as preachers, it is easier, at times, for us to demand that the flock obey the Word rather than for us to preach the accomplishment and person of Christ. It's easier to demand personal righteousness than to hold forth an invisible, alien righteousness that is ours by faith alone.

Nowhere, in scriptures, do we find the gospel presented to us as a duty or a call to reformation. So why is our preaching so full of demands and devoid of the gospel? Behavioural demands, unless bathed in the gospel are a toxic diet to feed the flock of God.

This gospel, by the Spirit, produces godly desires in its hearers and under its preaching God's people become a grateful people who desire to follow and obey the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's the Gospel Truth!

A special greeting goes out to Pastor Devadas who forwards the Wednesday Word to seventy pastors in his state of Andhra Pradesh, India. Also, a big welcome to the pastors and leaders from Karnataka who have signed up to receive these gospel messages.

Many thrilling things are happening both in Ireland and India. Will keep you posted.

Gospel Blessings
Miles

The Wednesday Word, December 30, 2014: God Does Not Forgive Sins

Let's get this straight, God, because He is righteous, holy and just, hates sins! He does not forgive them! He does not cancel their penalty. Sin is a direct assault on Him and, as such, has earned His wrath, fury and severe displeasure.

Sin is the real obstacle between God and man. We, by nature, have an inbuilt hardness and hatred towards God. We are sinners. We deserve damnation. Yet God, in grace, forgave us but not our sins.

“But, how is this possible?” you ask, “If He didn’t forgive our sins what did He do with them?” Here’s the answer. He punished them! He purged them and He put them away. In grace, love and mercy, He gave us the Sin-Bearer, Jesus the Christ, who laid down His life in our place, becoming a curse instead of us. Our sins were laid on Him instead of us. He became our substitute and died instead of us. Christ was punished instead of us!

The gospel truth is this, God does not forgive our sins, He forgives us. God is much too holy to arbitrarily forgive sins. He was righteously insulted by our sins. His holiness was offended by our sins. Because of this, in grace, the Father voluntarily gave Christ up unto death. And what the Father did, that also did the Son (John 5:19). During His life, Christ voluntarily made His way to the cross where He died instead of us. There at the cross, He became obedient unto death and by Himself, purged our sins (Hebrews 1:3). By Himself, He put away our sins (Hebrews 9:26).

Today, we stand forgiven because our sins were neither forgiven nor swept under the carpet. Our sins were dealt with as the crimes they were. The believer now, by faith, receives personal forgiveness because his sins have already been punished in Christ.

So why did God not merely turn a blind eye to our sins? The answer is discovered in His Holiness and justice. God could not be just, and at the same time lay aside His law. He could not ignore the condemnation we had earned. On the contrary, in His grace and justice He did something about our sins. In the fullness of time, He, in Christ, condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3). By becoming our sin offering, as one of us, Christ condemned the sin of His people and passed judgement on it.

Keep telling yourself this amazing gospel truth. Keep telling yourself that your sins have already been condemned and you have been set free.

The Lord Jesus has implemented and executed judgment upon all our sins and we have been forgiven. He has put our sins away and forgotten them (Isaiah 43:25). But again, let us be very clear on this, God did not forgive our sins. Instead, He ruthlessly punished them and their bearer at Calvary. In that way,

He can righteously forgive us.

What an amazing truth this is to tell yourself. There is now no damnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). The penalty of our sins has been paid for by blood, the precious blood of the precious Lamb. As Adolph Saphir said:

“All our sins were lain upon Jesus, everyone (of them) was punished... He executed judgment upon all our sins ... for all the Children of God”

Adolph Saphir: The Epistle to the Hebrews: Chapter 5

And that's the Gospel Truth!

The New Year is upon us!

Our 2015 outreach plans can be realized, under God, only by the generous support of friends like you. In this next calendar year we are concentrating on preaching the gospel in Ireland (both North and South).

In addition to our gospel work in Ireland, we are holding a leaders conference in Malawi in April and also holding three leaders conferences in India in November. It is a really exciting time for the gospel and we are so privileged to be the ones to do this. Time is flying past and we don't have nearly enough time to reach the lost.

We are grateful for every gift that enables us to play our part in the Great Commission. Your gift of any amount will help us start the New Year in strength as we provide people around the world with Christ-centred Bible teaching.

Happy New Year!

Miles and Gillian