

## **The Wednesday Word, Nov. 1, 2011: The Gospel and Authentic New Testament Ministry, Part 5**

The heart and passion of authentic New Testament ministry is the good news of Jesus Christ. For this reason, Paul wrote to the Church at Rome saying, “And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ” (Rom 15:29). In Paul’s apostolic mind, his visit would be for the purpose of bringing the gospel to the Roman believers. Paul, unlike many today, did not discount the gospel as being something un-necessary for believers. In fact, in Paul’s inspired thinking when it came to edifying and establishing the church, the gospel was an inescapable essential.

To grow in grace, we walk by faith in that which has already been accomplished in and by Christ Jesus. Fellowship with God does not rest on an inward process of supposedly being made holy and mature. Our inward condition cannot mediate between us and God. Christ Jesus is the only mediator and way to the Father. Authentic New Testament ministry, therefore, does not focus believers on themselves and their supposed progress towards perfection. The truth is, perfection is not something that God requires at the end of our Christian life: He demands perfection before any right relationship can begin and this perfection is legally found in Christ alone.

Furthermore, concerning authentic New Testament ministry, Paul tells the Ephesians,

*“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;” Eph. 3:8.*

Notice how the riches of Christ are unsearchable! This means they are so plentiful that they can not be numbered. In a sense, Paul is telling us that there is no one sufficient for the task of being a gospel minister because the subject of Christ is so vast and deep. We can only, as it were, scratch its surface. Yet many of our modern preachers want to by-pass Christ in favour of ‘principles’, ‘keys to life’, ‘deeper life’ and other assorted man centered fancies.. It is as if they see no beauty in Jesus (Isa 53:2). The following verse is not on their top ten list,

“Oh, the unsearchable riches of Christ,  
Wealth that can never be told!  
Oh, the unsearchable riches of Christ!  
Precious, more precious than gold.”

An authentic New Testament minister, however, is absorbed with the person and work and offices of the Lord Jesus. Paul, 38 years after his conversion, still yearned to both win and know Christ (Phil 3:8, 3:10). When he speaks of ‘winning Christ’ he’s not speaking of gaining Christ’s righteousness. He already has that! What he means is, in much the same way that an unsaved man may seek to gain the whole world, the follower of the Lamb wants to gain all there is to have of Christ. That is why Paul spent his life looking unto Jesus and continually mining gems from His unsearchable riches. Ah, but I think I hear that voice again---remember that voice? The voice of dissent which continually says that we need to move on from and not into the gospel. This time, we should let Andrew Bonar answer that rascal. In his sermon on ‘Winning Christ’ Bonar says,

*“If ever we begin to think that we have seen all that we need to see in the Person of Christ, we have made a very great mistake - a mistake that will affect all our after-growth. No; through eternity we shall be exploring the person of Christ. For in that person everything that is wondrous meets. There you have the Creator and the creature in one, the finite and the Infinite, the visible and Invisible. There you have humanity married to Divinity. A most wondrous mystery, the person of Christ, God-man! Let us always*

*take Christ's person with us, whatever subject in connection with Him we are about to explore.”*

And that's the Gospel Truth!