

## Revivals And Church History :: [revival] TOZER - "PREACHING that HINDERS"

[revival] TOZER - "PREACHING that HINDERS" - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/5/25 17:29

### TOZER - "PREACHING that HINDERS"

To any casual observer of the religious scene today, two things will at once be evident: one, that there is very little sense of sin among the unsaved, and two, that the average professed Christian lives a life so worldly and careless that it is difficult to distinguish him from the unconverted man. The power that brings conviction to the sinner and enables the Christian to overcome in daily living is being hindered somewhere. It would be oversimplification to name any one thing as the alone cause, for many things stand in the way of the full realization of our New Testament privileges. There is one class of hindrances, however, which, tends out so conspicuously that we are safe in attributing to it a very large part of our trouble. I mean wrong doctrines or overemphasis on right ones. I want to paint out some of these doctrines, and I do it with the earnest hope that it may not excite controversy, but bring us rather to a reverent examination of our position.

Fundamental Christianity in our times is deeply influenced by that ancient enemy of righteousness, antinomianism,

The creed of the antinomian is easily stated:

"We are saved by faith alone;

Works have no place in salvation;

Conduct is works, and is therefore of no importance.

What we do cannot matter as long as we believe rightly.

The divorce between creed and conduct is absolute and final.

The question of sin is settled by the Cross; conduct is outside the circle of faith and cannot come between the believer and God."

Such, in brief, is the teaching of the antinomian, And so fully has it permeated the Fundamental element in modern Christianity that it is accepted by the religious masses as the very truth of God.

Antinomianism is the doctrine of grace carried by uncorrected logic to the point of absurdity. It takes the teaching of justification by faith and twists it into deformity. It plagued the Apostle Paul in the early Church and called out some of his most picturesque denunciations. When the question is asked, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" he answers no with that terrific argument in the sixth chapter of Romans.

The advocates of antinomianism in our times deserve our respect for at least one thing: their motive is good. Their error springs from their very eagerness to magnify grace and exalt the freedom of the gospel. They start right, but allow themselves to be carried beyond what is written by a slavish adherence to undisciplined logic. It is always dangerous to isolate a truth and then press it to its limit without regard to other truths. It is not the teaching of the Scriptures that grace makes us free to do evil. Rather, it sets us free to do good. Between these two conceptions of grace there is

a great gulf fixed. It may be stated as an axiom of the Christian system that whatever makes sin permissible is a foe of God and an enemy of the souls of men.

Right after the first World War there broke out an epidemic of popular (NEWor NEO) evangelism with the emphasis upon what was called the "positive" gospel. The catch-words were "believe," "program,?? "vision. " The outlook was wholly objective. Men fulminated against duty, commandments and what they called scornfully "a decalogue of don'ts." They talked about a "big," "lovely" Jesus who had come to help us poor but well-meaning sinners to get the victory. Christ was presented as a powerful but not too particular Answerer of prayer.

The message was so presented as to encourage a loaves-and-fishes attitude toward Christ. That part of the New Testament which acts as an incentive toward holy living was carefully edited out. It was said to be "negative" and was not tolerated. Thousands sought help who had no desire to leave all and follow the Lord. The will of God was interpreted as "Come and get it." Christ thus became a useful convenience, but His indisputable claim to Lordship Over the believer was tacitly canceled out.

Much of the stream of gospel thought has been fouled, and its waters are still muddy. One thing that remains as a dangerous hangover is the comfortable habit of blaming everything on the devil. No one was supposed to feel any personal guilt; the devil had done it, so why blame the sinner for the devil's misdeeds? He became the universal scapegoat, to take the blame for every bit of human devilry from Adam to the present day. One gathered that we genial and lovable sinners are not really bad; we are merely led astray by the blandishments of that mischievous old Puck of the heavenly places. Our sins are not the expression of our rebellious wills; they are only bruises where the devil has been kicking us around. Of course sinners can feel no guilt, seeing they are merely the victims of another's wickedness.

Under that kind of teaching there can be no self-condemnation, but there can be, and is, plenty of self-pity over the raw deal we innocent sinners got at the hand of the devil. Now, no Bible student will underestimate the sinister work of Satan, but to make him responsible for our sins is to practice deadly deception upon ourselves. And the hardest deception to cure is that which is self-imposed.

Another doctrine which hinders God's work, and one which is heard almost everywhere, is that sinners are not lost because they have sinned, but because they have not accepted Jesus. "Men are not lost because they murder; they are not sent to hell because they lie and steal and blaspheme; they are sent to hell because they reject a Saviour." This short-sighted preachment is thundered at us constantly, and is seldom challenged by the hearers. A parallel argument would be hooted down as silly, but apparently no one notices it: "That man with a cancer is dying, but it is not the cancer that is killing him; it is his failure to accept a cure." Is it not plain that the only reason the man would need a cure is that he is already marked for death by the cancer? The only reason I need a Saviour, in His capacity as Saviour, is that I am already marked for hell by the sins I have committed. Refusing to believe in Christ is a

symptom of deeper evil in the life, of sins unconfessed and wicked ways unforsaken. The guilt lies in acts of sin; the proof of that guilt is seen in the rejection of the Saviour.

If anyone should feel like brushing this aside as mere verbal sparring, let him first pause: the doctrine that the only damning sin is the rejection of Jesus is definitely a contributing cause of our present weakness and lack of moral grip. It is nothing but a neat theological sophism which has become identified with orthodoxy in the mind of the modern Christian and is for that reason very difficult to correct. It is, for all its harmless seeming, a most injurious belief, for it destroys our sense of responsibility for our moral conduct. It robs all sin of its frightfulness and makes evil to consist in a mere technicality. And where sin is not cured power cannot flow.

Another doctrinal hindrance is the teaching that men are so weak by nature that they are unable to keep the law of God. Our moral helplessness is hammered into us in sermon and song until we wilt under it and give up in despair. And on top of this we are told that we must accept Jesus in order that we may be saved from the wrath of the broken law! No matter what the intellect may say, the human heart can never accept the idea that we are to be held responsible for breaking a law that we cannot keep. Would a father lay upon the back of his three year-old son a sack of grain weighing five-hundred pounds and then beat the child because he could not carry it? Either men can or they cannot please God. If they cannot, they are not morally responsible, and have nothing to fear. If they can, and will not, then they are guilty, and as guilty sinners they will be sent to hell at last. The latter is undoubtedly the fact. If the Bible is allowed to speak for itself it will teach loudly the doctrine of man's personal responsibility for sins committed. Men sin because they want to sin. God's quarrel with men is that they will not do even that part of the will of God which they understand and could do if they would.

From Paul's testimony in the seventh chapter of Romans some teachers have drawn the doctrine of moral inability. But however Paul's inner struggle may be interpreted, it is contrary to the whole known truth to believe that he had been a consistent law-breaker and violator of the Ten Commandments. He specifically testified that he had lived in all good conscience before God, which to a Jew could only mean that he had observed the legal requirements of the law. Paul's cry in Romans is not after power to fulfill the simple morality of the Ten Commandments, but after inward holiness which the law could not impart.

It is time we get straightened out in our thinking about the law. The weakness of the law was three-fold: (1) It could not cancel past sins - that is, it could not justify; (2) it could not make dead men live - that is, it could not regenerate; (3) it could not make bad hearts good - that is, it could not sanctify. To teach that the insufficiency of the law lay in man's moral inability to meet its simple demands on human behaviour is to err most radically. If the law could not be kept, God is in the position of laying upon mankind an impossible moral burden and then punishing them for failure to do the impossible. I will believe anything I find in the Bible, but I do not feel under obligation to believe a teaching which is obviously a mistaken inference and one, furthermore, which both

contradicts the Scriptures and outrages human reason.

The Bible everywhere takes for granted Israel's ability to obey the law. Condemnation fell because Israel, having that ability, refused to obey. They sinned not out of amiable weakness, but out of deliberate rebellion against the will of God. That is the inner nature of sin always, willful refusal to obey God. But still men go on trying to get conviction upon sinners by telling them they sinned because they could not help it.

The vogue of excusing sin, of seeking theological justification for it instead of treating it as an affront to God, is having its terrible effect among us. Deep searching of heart and a resolute turning from evil will go far to bring back power to the Church of Christ. Tender, tear-stained preaching on this subject must be heard again before revival can come.

The contradictions observed in the teachings which we have examined here are another cause of weakness. Christians do not, as a rule, enjoy great power until they begin to think straight. Whether or not the Methodists were right on every point they held is an open question; but their leaders had thought things out so clearly that they were not leading the people around in circles. As far as they could see there were no contradictions in their philosophy of faith, and this was a source of real strength to them. The same was true in the Finney revivals. God used Finney to get people thinking straight about religion. He may not have been correct in all his conclusions, but he did remove the doctrinal stalemates and start the people moving toward God. He placed before his hearers a moral either/or, so they could always know just where they stood. The inner confusion caused by hidden contradictions was absent from his preaching. We could use another Finney today.

**Re: [revival] TOZER - "PREACHING that HINDERS" - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/5/26 0:26**

Quote:

-----It is always dangerous to isolate a truth and then press it to its limit without regard to other truths.  
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Great article brother.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/26 7:22

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The whole time I was reading this article I was almost hearing, Finney, Finney, Finney... then I came to this ending. :-)

I thought of this quote of Finney's and wanted to share it:

*Immediately attached to this, growing out of it, and founded upon it, is the tradition of inability on the part of the sinner to accept the gospel. These maintain that the sinner is not more able to embrace the gospel, than he is to make a world. Some of this class call on sinners to repent, but are careful to tell them they cannot repent: call on them to believe, but are sure to remind them that they are unable to believe: and thus as some have humorously and truly said, they preach*

*You can, and you can't.*

*You shall, and you shan't*

*You will, and you won't.*

*You'll be damned if you don't.*

I think Tozer has said it best when he says that Finney may have been wrong on some of his conclusions, but God still used him and we could use a Finney today!

Thanks for sharing this.

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/5/26 9:34

Thanks Robert, hadn't heard this before. Interesting to take note of these things and had also thought of Finney as he was going on (made the eye's go skimming for his name ahead while reading it). This passage came to mind as well;

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. 1Co 9:24-27

Quote:  
-----I think Tozer has said it best when he says that Finney may have been wrong on some of his conclusions, but God still used him and we could use a Finney today!  
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Couldn't agree more.

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/5/26 21:54**

Quote:  
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Great point Mike. This is a wonderful piece from Tozer!