

Revivals And Church History :: Putting the GOODNESS and GLADNESS back into the GOSPEL

Putting the GOODNESS and GLADNESS back into the GOSPEL - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/18 9:11

EUAGGELIZO

The Gospel is from the Greek word *euaggelizo* which means, to bring *good* news, or to announce *glad* tidings. It was used in the Old Testament for *any* kind of good news, especially of the joyful tidings of God's kindness, in particular, of the Messianic blessings. In the New Testament it is used especially of the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God, and of the salvation to be obtained in it through Jesus Christ, and of what relates to this salvation.

Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. "And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."

When the Gospel comes-off as 'bad news' someone is not doing their job. When the Gospel does not bring a sense of 'gladness' you can bet that God is going to shut the person down. REVIVAL is when men respond rightly to the revelation of the *good news* of the Gospel. This is an opportunity for men to hear the Gospel as it should be presented with an ample opportunity to respond rightly.

In our times many who wish to see revival and repentance have hair-trigger denunciatory tendencies. Many people hear their denunciations before they ever hear the true Gospel. Ministers in an attempt to 'correct' the easy-believism of our times are postured for conflict from the start. I used to work with an older man who used to say at the end of day that he was in a hurry to get going, because, "he needed to get home before the fight starts." Him and his wife obviously did not get-along or were not getting-on as some would say. It was an attitude of preemptiveness. I have to ask, why would any one preach the Gospel like this?

When Jesus came preaching the Gospel His ministry was loaded with goodness. It was strikingly different to the way in which John Baptist preached. We have heard it said, "John did no miracles." Yet, our Lord performed many miracles in demonstration of the goodness of God. So did the early church.

I wonder how we can solve this problem; we have a fundamentalist church that is almost militant against the supernatural and a Pentecostal/Charismatic movement that has to a great degree lost its holiness and power and in some cases have substituted them for flakiness and falsehood. We actually have Baptist churches inviting Pentecostal churches for fellowship in our parts. I would like to say it is due to great love and willingness to accept differences, but I wonder if it is merely evidence of a weakening Pentecostal movement.

When I was a child I can recall a mixture of preaching in which holiness and sin were preached, miracles took place, and folk received the Gospel with Gladness and served God out of JOY. Folk were filled with the Spirit and services would last until they ended. The Holy Spirit would move among the people and many great works took place. Many ministers were called of God in those days right out of our church and youth camps. Many are still in the ministry to this day.

In the early 1960's Leonard Ravenhill's book, "Why Revival Terries" made a great impact upon the Pentecostal Church of God in our state and beyond. The message of the book, coupled with the deeply held Pentecostal tendencies, coupled to produce a people who sought the Lord afresh for a renewed Pentecost. Back then folk did not care how they were perceived or ridiculed. They did not care that they were called 'cult' or any such thing. But something has happened in Pentecostal Circles, and is not revival.

Who has more missions on the mission field than full Gospel believers? Who has more Indian Missions Missionaries than full Gospel ministries? IHOP is often criticised for their odd beliefs, but perhaps it would be good to note that they have ministry to the largest group of homeless folk in our city 3 times a week. Is the devil driving them to minister? I don't condone all their practice, but who do you know that prays 24/7 365? I know of or have ever heard of anyone else save possibly the Monastics.

In summary, we have a powerless Gospel being preached as 'bad news' with no real signs and wonders and goodness following. We need to put down the bad news that hits people and pick up the good news that heals people. When the ba

d news don't work, many then compensate by ratcheting up the tone and trying to arm twist folk into getting saved. If that don't work, the denunciations start flying.

We need a fresh look at the scriptures. We need a revelation of the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel. We need a people that will rise up in the midst of criticism and friendly fire and proclaim that God is a miracle working God. We need to lay hands on folk, led of the Spirit. We need to bind up the broken hearted and set at liberty them that are bound. We need to do goodness that folk would glorify God in the day of visitation. As the scripture says, *these signs SHALL follow them that believe...*

Re: Putting the GOODNESS and GLADNESS back into the GOSPEL - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/18 13:21
EUAGGELISTES (EVANGELIST)

Theoretical ministry and evangelism will not do in our times. We need a life of ministry that moves beyond the chalkboard into the highways and hedges. If it don't work there it was false in the classroom. I hear the same story over and over of little results and closing doors. I hear messages proclaimed on paper, but will those messages work in the streets?

We need a 'right now' message. We need equipped with a Gospel that will meet folk where they are 'right now'. I recently heard of a man who had not been church and knew little of the Gospel. Upon it having been explained to him in detail through the use of the story of the prodigal son, the minister attempted to lead the man in prayer. As he began to pray suddenly the other man was praying for himself! He prayed along the lines of the story presented. When he was through he told the minister, "I feel like shouting and jumping HURRAY!! HURRAY!!!" Not having been church that was his response. The minister just encouraged him, "Go ahead and shout HURRAY!" No doubt this man felt conviction of Sin. But when he surrendered all the Holy Spirit lifted that conviction and poured in the joy, the man wanted to release in great exclamation!

What good is a Gospel that does not leave a person with JOY to draw from the wells of salvation? Joy does not come from the devil. If a person has JOY, why trifle with the Holy Ghost? We know that happiness and JOY are not the same. Why do men press on to place upon a people a spirit of heaviness? The LORD has come in to perfect the work and the evidence is the fruit of the Spirit.

I had the privilege of hearing one of the few true Tent Evangelists left in this country just last Sunday, Sam Rose. Sam and his wife have been to all 48 of the continental United States preaching the Gospel. While many tarry and wait, they have been about the Master's business. While others have formulated theories and processes, they have been out in the fields. Having forsaken all, they have lived by faith for nearly 20 years preaching the GOSPEL in America.

They did not come with a message of closed doors or low attendance; they came with a message of God's provision and mighty works. Raised in holiness circles as a Classical Pentecostal, he spoke of preaching a message of no compromise, yet with an added necessity of the true Gospel of the Kingdom. They told of folk coming up to the Bus in rest stops wanting to hear about God even. Folk knocking on their doors asking for prayer. God is doing mighty works!

I can almost hear the 10 spies report, "there are giants in the land, giants of rejection, giants of closed doors, giants of low attendance..." and yet there was that voice of reason that saw the circumstances through God's eyes and said, "We are yet WELL ABLE to take the city!" God only needed two witnesses and the thing was established.

Imagine folk coming to the tent meeting so deep in sin that you had better have the goods and I don't mean a harsh word of 'REPENT'. I mean the unction of God in your life that backs His word and delivers the captives from their bondage. Imagine people coming up and asking for deliverance from their sin. What then? Legion came up to our Lord and begged for help. Many Christians, sad to say, don't believe in demonic spirits having power over people. Yet, I have heard with mine own ears men tell me on the streets that when they shoot meth in their veins it's like a DEMON takes over them. Do we have GOOD news? Do we have a prayer of power and deliverance? Do we send them down the street bowed down under the load of their sin and bondage? Do we add to this the heavy word "repent or be damned?" What did Jesus do

? What did Paul do? What did the disciples do?

And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. (Acts 4)

The same God that raised up Christ from the dead can likewise DELIVER you from the death of your Sin! Turn unto Him and be ye saved! But do we have the unction and power of God to back such a message? How long will we continue to plan out new ways to bring revival? These signs shall follow them that believe.. *in MY NAME they shall cast out devils and lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.*

Re: Putting the GOODNESS and GLADNESS back into the GOSPEL - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/7/19 0:30

Didn't want to let this slip off the main page...

Re: - posted by murdog (), on: 2006/7/19 0:41

Uh-Oh,

Someone has been communing with God again. Who is it? It is Robert!

Excellent word brother. Thank You.

Murray

Re: - posted by deltadom (), on: 2006/7/19 8:15

good word

Dom

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/19 8:19

WE WOULD SEE JESUS

I was listening to a message some time ago that I keep coming back to. Ron Bailey was ministering and at a point told the story of some years ago when he would step behind a certain pulpit to preach; there on a plate for the eyes of the preacher only were these words, *We Would See Jesus*. I can't help but wonder, caught up in the doctrines of the Bible, wanting to preach holiness, righteousness, repentance, and so on, if we forget the most important thing; *Sir, We would See Jesus*.

"I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (I Corinthians 2:2)

This is the lifelong attitude of Paul, *that I might know Him...*" Many people have their 'version' of who Jesus is. Most of them fail miserably in their attempt to rightly represent His person. Paul simply said, "that I might know Him..." Paul's first real revelation of who Christ is made a dramatic effect upon his life. He had heard of Him by the hearing of the ear, but somehow, something, was lost in the translation. Even when the majestic preaching of Steven, whose angelic like countenance poured forth the reality of the Prince of Life, it was but a foretaste of Glory Divine.

We often hear of pictures of the Majesty of God brought forth and solemn pictures of fearfulness gripping even the Saintliest of men. John the Revelator comes to mind. Here was a man that some have said heard the heartbeat of God, but yet fell at our Lord's feet as dead. Sadly, all too often many want to stop right there and take a 'portrait'. Here is John lying prostrate on the ground before the LORD trembling under that thunderous voice as he dare not look into those piercing flaming eyes. As if some would summons a Rembrandt, Leonardo, or a Van Gogh to capture that pitiful moment and forever enshrine the image. Hoping to add to the terror of sinners and folk that would come to Christ- ministers may well have nailed that portrait to the pulpit to *add* to the effectiveness of the sermon.

Yet, those words keep haunting me and echoing through the corridors of my mind, *Sir, We would See Jesus*. I recently heard of a preacher who had wrongly accused one of his teenaged daughters and interrogated her thinking she had broken a rule in the home. Believing he was right, he leveled upon her every possible means of gaining a *confession*. Finally he resorted to preaching to her a most fierce sermon, dangling her (as it were) right there in the bedroom over the pits of Hell with his words. At last he was convinced she was a liar, though she insisted her innocence. He SPANKED that teen

aged girl and sent her to her room. About that time the little sister came in his room and confessed to the crime. And if I might so say, a lot of Saints have been 'spanked' and held over the pits of hell when they were innocent of the crimes. This is the folly of always throwing stones at the goats, invariably you wound the sheep in the process.

What did our LORD say to John when he fell at His feet as dead. Did He say, stay there that I might show forth an example of thee throughout all the ages?

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And *he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:* (Revelation 1:17)

At once the comforting hand of Christ was extended to drown John's fears and strengthen Him that he might come boldly. Yet, some would say, "Stay down John, fear and tremble before His Majesty"... yet our Lord says, *Fear not; I am the first and the last.* And this is the missing element in repentance preaching today. Folk are preached onto the ground under the awesome Majesty of Christ, but rarely made to see that right hand that is so utterly willing to stretch forth and comfort. As if to almost intentionally misrepresent who Christ truly is in our relationship to Him, bore out on the cross. The reward of the Lamb's suffering is that He might stretch forth his right hand as we tremble before his flaming eyes and say to us justly,... *Fear not; I am the first and the last.*

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/19 8:30

LOVE LIFTED ME

James Rowe and Howard Smith (1912)

I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore,
Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more,
But the Master of the sea, heard my despairing cry,
From the waters lifted me, now safe am I.

Refrain

Love lifted me! Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help
Love lifted me!

All my heart to Him I give, ever to Him I'll cling
In His blessed presence live, ever His praises sing,
Love so mighty and so true, merits my soul's best songs,
Faithful, loving service too, to Him belongs.

Refrain

Souls in danger look above, Jesus completely saves,
He will lift you by His love, out of the angry waves.
He's the Master of the sea, billows His will obey,
He your Savior wants to be, be saved today.

Refrain

Re: - posted by Nellie, on: 2006/7/19 14:02

This is very good, Robert.
Thanks for posting this.
God Bless you
Nellie

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/19 21:34

OUR RESPONSE TO PERSECUTION; THE TEST OF OUR LOVE

I have been musing over the sermon of Steven of late. I marvel again and again at how this man was willing to wait on tables for the widows and then God so powerfully used him. I have often wondered how many times Paul the Apostle reflected back on the experience of watching Stephen preach and die.

They stoned Stephen as he called out, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, don't hold this sin against them!" When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:59, 60)

I see in this passage an important truth as it relates to the 'spirit' we are of as ministers of the Gospel (I say 'ministers of the Gospel', as a friend recently pointed out to me, that is what we are. If we preach only repentance, we are not preachers of the whole Gospel). You will recall the reaction of Peter and company when the people 'rejected' the LORD when He determined to take a different route. He stated to them, "*Ye know not what manor of spirit ye are of*". Why? They had proposed calling fire down from Heaven. This is frustration at rejection talking and is not the attitude we encounter with Steven who was *FULL* of the Holy Ghost.

How do we react when we are railed upon? Do we return railing for railing? If we are empowered and 'fueled' by the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit will be the 'spirit' in which the unction is coming forth. What had happened if Steven had broke into an argument and nearly fist fought with these people? The story likely would not have made it into the record.

Paul once lashed out at the High Priest and immediately repented when he found out who the man was. This is the 'spirit' in which Paul preached, even in the midst of brutal persecution. He was not determined to 'win arguments' but to *win souls*. Imagine Paul's bloodied lip as he spoke the words, "... I wist not that it was the high priest, for it is written, thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people..." (para)

How do we react to 'persecution' (so-called)? When folk shut us out or speak evil of us? Do we react with a, "Lord lay not the sin to their charge!" Or do we react, "Lord, shall we call fire down from Heaven?"

An honest confession is good for the soul. I recall as a young believer reacting in the wrong spirit to the things I had seen of the highhandedness of our times. There was a war movie I saw years ago in which the commander radioed to the air support that, since the enemy had overrun the camp, he may as well just drop all he had left inside the parameter! Believe it or not, I have actually prayed that way. Lord, the enemy has overrun the camp! We are overcome on the right hand and on the left! Just let your fire fall inside the parameter! Just destroy all of it and me with it! Sound radical? You bet. I wist NOT what manor of 'spirit' I was of. Thank God He ignored that prayer!

We have to get our 'spirit' right before we head out to minister. We need to know that God is in the *saving* business. Why would you or I care, we didn't die on the cross for them? That's why we were so quick to rain down threatenings and slaughter. We have a relatively 'minimal' investment in the souls of men.

Solomon taught us a great story when the two women came before him and the one had rolled over and smothered her baby. BRING ME A SWORD! We shall divide this baby and give each half to each woman. The question comes to this, "which woman are we?" When it comes down to applying the sword, are we those that would say, because we had no real investment or love, "DO IT!" or would we be moved in great compassion and love? Steven loved the souls of the men that killed him more than he cared for his own personal suffering.

I am persuaded to believe that the LAST action he would have wanted for them would have been, "Lord let us call fire from heaven." No, but why? Because he was an *intercessor*. REAL love, as found in Moses will stand in the GAP and make up the HEDGE. Could we step between an Angry God and a sinful people and say, "Lord, lay not the sin to their charge" or as Moses who exclaimed, "Lord if you blot them out- blot me out of the Book!" Or Paul who wished himself "accursed from Christ" for his kinsman according to the flesh.

What was the difference? They loved the people they were ministering to with the love of God and their hearts were broken for them. They wept as Jesus wept. It is a common saying in our circles given before prayer is made for requests that when we pray we should pray as if it was your spouse that was lost. As if it were your son or daughter that was lost. PRAY as if it were your mother or father in the throws of death and in need of salvation. How do you pray for your loved ones? Your close friends?

Strangers to whom you minister are as close to the Lord's heart as those whom YOU and I love. If it were your mother or father, how would you preach the Gospel to them? What about your sister? What if the whole congregation you were speaking to was your own beloved family dear to your heart? Would you preach to them like you do total strangers? If not, why not? Because you love them and they are close to your heart. Your objective would be utterly to the intent of winning them to saving faith in Christ. Not winning an argument or anything else. Your *tone* would be a lot different if that were your grandmother or sister.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/19 21:51

HE BROUGHT ME OUT

Henry J. Zelle (1898)
1859-1942

My heart was distressed Â'neath JehovahÂ's dread frown,
And low in the pit where my sins dragged me down;
I cried to the Lord from the deep miry clay,
Who tenderly brought me out to golden day.

Refrain

He brought me out of the miry clay,
He set my feet on the Rock to stay;
He puts a song in my soul today,
A song of praise, hallelujah!

He placed me upon the strong Rock by His side,
My steps were established and here IÂ'll abide;
No danger of falling while here I remain,
But stand by His grace until the crown I gain.

Refrain

He gave me a song, Â'twas a new song of praise;
By day and by night its sweet notes I will raise;
My heartÂ's overflowing, IÂ'm happy and free.
IÂ'll praise my Redeemer, Who has rescued me.

Refrain

IÂ'll sing of His wonderful mercy to me,
IÂ'll praise Him till all men His goodness shall see;
IÂ'll sing of salvation at home and abroad,
Till many shall hear the truth and trust in God.

Refrain

Re: - posted by jimp, on: 2006/7/20 1:17

hi robert, you have written most of what the Spirit has been telling me for the last 24 months or so. i thank you for doing it and doing it well. jimp

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/20 8:09

A MESSAGE OF MISERY

I have observed a thing under the Sun in my days and it is the destruction of beauty by two things: 1) Sin 2) Legalism. In Independence, MO where I live the city is known as the 'meth' capitol of the world. Meth is a most terrible drug, as it seizes upon the person and locks them into a most horrible devilish way. The signs are obvious, faces that were once radiant and beautiful and now sunk in and lifeless. Bodies that were once youthful are now aged well beyond their years. This is Sin and the death it brings.

I have seen another thing that has stripped folk of their natural beauty also. I recall once in the early 90's attending a family gathering of a distant relative. I knew only a few of the attendees. As with most gatherings there were a host of different people. I was a new born believer and met for the first time a certain family of 'holiness' people. They lived strict lives. This was not new to me as I came from a family that held such strict legalisms that most of them could not 'live the life' and backslid. But, I believe I saw something on this day that would change me forever. It happens that there were two teenaged daughters that were born of this holiness family. The mother had her hair in a bun and was intentionally plain and unattractive. She was at an unhealthy weight also, if I might say respectfully. The daughters were eating their meal slowly and deliberately like. Small portions, etc. They were naturally beautiful girls who carried themselves in modesty and shamefacedness. At once mother enters the room and says, "girls would you like some pie or cake?" They replied, "No, thanks mom." With a look of irritation and disdain almost, as a school teacher would look over her glasses to correct a wayward student, the mother answered back, "Don't worry, honey, when you get married- you'll eat!"

It was then that I realized something. Sometimes folk are not what they are because they are disciplined or are trying to be 'holy', they are what they are for reasons quite unbiblical. Under the *pretense* of holiness a person would let themselves go and take on an careless and miserable look. I could not reckon with this. Was that in store for me? Was my beautiful wife going to cast off all restraint in the name of religion and sup and feast until the God given beauty was lost to a life of carelessness? "You are married now, and married folk live miserable lives!" "You are married now, no need to take care of yourself and look beautiful for your husband!" I then understood many things family members would say as a child and understood why so many people who are supposed to be emulating the Kingdom of God had plunged into ruin.

So, I made a determination. I knew I could not always look young and vibrant, but I knew I could do unto my wife as I would have her do unto me. Why? Because I felt carelessness was taking advantage of her commitment to me and to do that would be sin. I want to be as much as I can the man God wants me to be. GOD FORBID that I should take on an attitude, "Now I'm married, I don't have to care about myself any more" and then cloak that attitude in 'holiness' garb.

And this takes us to the crux of my point. So many things that get categorized as 'holy' or 'sanctimonious' are *not* really that at all. Some things are personal 'hang-ups' people have that have nothing to do with God or the bible. People have 'personal preferences' and these become 'convictions' and soon they get preached. Some people like to be miserable. They are miserable and they are working to make a theology to promote it.

I shall close with a final story. When I was a teen I worked at a gas station (petrol station). I met many men who were married and looked miserable. They would throw their tools around and cuss. They would carry on about their miserable life at home and how the 'old lady' was such a problem. "Wait till you get married, boy!, you'll find out!" I could not possibly recount all the horror stories they would tell. What was I hearing, "I was happy till I got married"... "I was happy till I got married"... "Don't get married.. you'll be miserable!!!" It was as if marriage had been reduced to a bunch of 'do's' and 'don'ts'. What's marriage like Bill? "Well, son, let me tell you... you can't do this and you can't do that..." My wife locked me out of the house last night and I had to sleep on the porch. Gotta hurry home!

With preaching like that its a wonder anyone ever gets married. A friend of mine recently reminded me of how preachers pray, "Holy Ghost, turn the search light of heaven on and show them their sins..." He then asked, have you ever heard it prayed, "Holy Ghost, turn the search light of heaven on and show them what your PLEASED with!" No, I have not, I said. Why not? Could it be because, whether we mean to or not, we have reduced and depicted the Christian life to one of the utmost misery? With preaching like that its a wonder anyone ever gets saved.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/20 8:20

O HAPPY DAY, THAT FIXED MY CHOICE!"

Phillip Dod Dridge (1702-1751),
Published in 1755

O happy day, that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Savior and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad.

Refrain

Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away!
He taught me how to watch and pray, and live rejoicing every day
Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins a way.

O happy bond, that seals my vows
To Him Who merits all my love!
Let cheerful anthems fill His house,
While to that sacred shrine I move.

Refrain

Â'Tis done: the great transactionÂ's done!
I am the LordÂ's and He is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on;
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

Refrain

Now rest, my long divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful center, rest.
Here have I found a nobler part;
Here heavenly pleasures fill my breast.

Refrain

High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in lifeÂ's latest hour I bow
And bless in death a bond so dear.

Refrain

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/21 9:02

OVERTHROWING THE WORKS OF GOD BY EXCESSIVE CRITICISM

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling. I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself: save that to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love. Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that serveth Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men. So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another. Overthrow not for meat's sake the work of God. (Romans 14:13-20)

The issue at hand is that of *liberty of conscience*. One of the dangerous things about having a group of folk always givin

g their opinions on topics is that invariably folks confuse *personal convictions* with biblical mandates. By the time everyone gives their convictions there had scarce been a person left that had not been constricted into a state of *joylessness*. Reason being is that as folk take on other folks personal convictions they part company with what God is doing in them and bring an imbalance in their life that could lead to their ruin. This works both ways. It works for 'positive' convictions and 'negative' convictions. What is tragic is that when we set at naught one another as we don't line up with each others convictions.

It is important to understand that one is not spiritual because they live the strictest life possible; one is spiritual because they follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit and the word agree. God knows how to bring a person into equilibrium spiritually. He has a unique calling for each of us and the most spiritual thing we can do is cooperate with God as He leads us into it.

Long ago I set aside the stumbling block of spiritual competitiveness. I learned that competitions of who spends the most time in prayer and in the word is nothing more than Pharisaism. It leads to prayers like;

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. (Luke 18:11 ASV)

This is the heart of the Pharisee, *that I am not like the rest of men*. Holiness is not our ability to 'out do' one another in our personal convictions, holiness is emulating the person of Jesus Christ. He was the holiest man on earth. There was nothing weird about Jesus. The striking thing is that there were actually people around who accused him of doing things they thought were 'unclean' or as we might say, 'unholy'. You eat with sinners? You don't wash your hands? Don't you know that cleanliness is next to Godliness, Jesus? What said He?

And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled (that is to say, unwashed) hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat, unless they wash their hands oft, holding to the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, they eat not unless they wash; and there are many other customs which they have received and hold to, as the washing of cups, pots, brazen vessels and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" He answered and said unto them, "Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Therefore, in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' (Mark 7)

This is man trying to make themselves 'holier' by traditions. Again, spirituality is based not on these outward things but on our fulfillment of the plan of God for our life. Imagine how these Pharisees challenged the Holiest man on earth? Now if the Pharisees wanted to wash and wash and keep this between them and God that would have been fine, but that is not what men do. Once they sense they are going above and beyond 'other men' they are swift to make it a new law and attempt to enforce it upon others.

Dr. Aaron Wilson author of *Basic Bible Truth* once made a statement in a sermon that at the time really upset me. He said to the effect, "It is NOT your job to play the Holy Spirit and clean people up- that is the Holy Spirit's role." I began to get figity in the seat as if to say, "How dare he tell me that?!" Surely it IS my job to clean folk up! They need to be HOLY. What I did not realize is that God brings folk along step by step and areas that I might be worried about God was not at all concerned about at the time. What a mess I could have made of *the work of God*. Not my work, *the work of God*. This is HIS work. He, is the author of eternal salvation. My legalistic mind was unable to see the working of the Holy Spirit and His prerogative in the work. I wanted them straitened out NOW and in my order.

I thank God that He limited the people who 'input' into my life when I first came to Christ. My life was a complete mess. It was in such shambles that *one wrong move* and the whole thing could have collapsed. The Holy Spirit persuaded me of my error one part at a time and worked these things out in me. And this is where Finney and I are increasingly parting company in our views of God dealing with convicted sinners. It is God's prerogative to bring up before the mind and heart that point of contention that He wants to deal with at the time. He has a controversy and He will point it out. What point would it make to list out such a list of christian perfection for a person to repent up to and line up with in order to be saved? God will change the nature of the person and empower them for sanctification. We must not destroy the work of God by usurping the authority of the Holy Spirit.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/21 20:35

A 'BOOK OF ACTS' REVIVAL

Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. (Acts 8:4-6)

Philip seemed to be content staying at home ministering to the local crowd when all the sudden Saul of Tarsus commenced going from house to house macking havock of the church (8:3). A local minister once said, "When the man of God won't move, sometimes, God will move him." Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, going from house to house arresting and imprisoning folk, merely scattered a nest of on-fire believers.

Yes, Philip was heeding the call. He had preached in Judea and now it was Samaria's turn. No doubt the Finger of God was with him, *For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed : and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.* Many folk in our time need just that; they need the devil cast out of them. Philip arrived in Samaria with such an arrival that the devil had to step back because the power of God was manifest in that place (D.L. Burch). Folk had not seen such a demonstration of authority since the Lord Himself had cast devil's out.

And the results? *And there was great joy in that city.* Here was a people that *with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.* When the finger of God is near, the cooperation of the people is not far off. These people were ready to hear and do what the man of God had to say.

Simon the Sorcerer had met his match. He had bewitched the people until they actually believed he was the oracle of God. He had these people deceived from the least unto the greatest. That means from the slave to the highest echelon's of government the people had been 'giving heed' to this man. But he saw his tenure fading and fading fast. When Philip opened his mouth the power of God manifest and men and devil were subject to the word of God.

But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. (12, 13)

If the passage said he believed, I think it safe to say he *believed*. Not only did he believe, he was baptized. Yet, here is a man that was not changed in spite of his confession and baptism. You see there was something to this laying on of hands that he thought to purchase with money. This man understood power and he was witnessing something taking place that he felt worth trading off his business and starting up a new. Here was a man that had bewitched a city from the least to the greatest and yet, he wanted to purchase this 'power' that when he laid hands on folk they would receive the Holy Ghost.

Peter gives us insight into his covetous ways; *But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.* (20, 21) The gift of the Holy Spirit was *free* and yet this man, perhaps wondered, "How much could I charge per person for them to receive this Holy Spirit?" Notice he saw something in this 'laying on of hands' that he knew was special. His error was to think he could make merchandise of it. Merchandise of what? Would Simon offer us money for what we profess we have? I think this is a powerful insight into understanding the magnitude and effect the receiving of the Holy Spirit had on folk in the Book of Acts.

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/7/21 20:47

Quote:

-----When the Gospel comes-off as 'bad news' someone is not doing their job.

This is a great series brother! We need to warn some but also simply tell of the good news to some. I was sitting on the beach today with so many crowds of people all around me. And was reading the bible and read at Ephesians Chapter 2: "who were dead in trespasses and sins." those people around me that did not know Christ were DEAD not simply in sinful habits or harmless unbelief in their life but were DEAD totally without life and any saving virtue! I spent a good time of prayer for all the people to come to life and know their condition and come to God.

I was reading in Philpot earlier:

"Unbelief reigns and rules in the hearts of the reprobate." It does not just plague them in their simple not believing in God and His Christ but rather they are controlled and are in bondage, in slavery to their UNBELIEF!

FEATURED ARTICLE: Peculiar People by Joseph Philpot...

https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=11423&forum=34

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/21 21:01

LED OF THE SPIRIT LEADS TO CONVERSION

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

Philip had gone into the villages and ministered and now he was waiting on his next assignment. It's been said that when God speaks and sends us some place we ought to stay until we receive *fresh orders from God*. What's the use in looking around at inaction when God's next great design is right around the corner. Imagine if Philip had grown weary in well doing and stepped OUT of the perfect will of God at this moment. I had a Sunday School teacher tell me once concerning life changes, "When you don't know what to do- don't do anything." It may not be true 100% of the time, but it's good wisdom most of the time.

Philip arose when he heard from God. God had been working on a man leading him step by step towards Himself and Philip was about to be sent to the scene of the plan. *And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship...* There are not many mighty and noble saved, but this man was one of the few. He exercised great influence and it can be deduced had tremendous resources with which to aid in the work.

Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to , and heard him read the prophet Esaias,... I can almost see the BOLDNESS of Philip as he approached this dignitary. *Understandest thou what thou readest?* And the man, right at the point and time God had worked out, his heart having been prepared to receive the word said, *How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.*

This is a picture of the importance of being sensitive to the Holy Spirit. God knows who He is working on and where they are at in that work. He knows who is ready to receive the word. Sometimes there are other purposes involved so this is not a rule, but it is certain that a great many times God would work just like this if we would be sensitive to the Spirit.

The results? *Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?* (35, 36) This is a man that has become assertive in his obedience. His belief was at such a level that the time was NOW; *what doth hinder me to be baptized?* And here is where our theology gets all messed up. Surely Philip told him he needed to confess all his sins? Surely this man had to be broken down? What happened next? *And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* What was Philip's prerequisite for water baptism?

I dare not presume, but we are left to believe that this man likewise received the Holy Spirit at baptism. *And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.*

This is revelation, power, and obedience in *symphonic equilibrium*. Before it was over the persecution from house to house had led to revival from city to city.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/22 10:43

LIVING IN DENIAL

And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. (Acts 8:6)

The word we have for 'gave heed' is the Greek *Prosecho* which in this construction meant they were 'spell bound' by the word. *They kept on giving heed or holding the mind on the things said by Philip, spell-bound, in a word.* (Robertson's) When the Finger of God is near the words of the Lord's messenger take on a whole new effect. This was not a take it or leave it type message. This was a message that carried Divine Authority in a way we rarely see in our times.

When Jesus came preaching He was setting forth a message that was quite contrary to what the people had been taught by their ancestors. Over time, the message of Moses and the Prophets had suffered greatly. The Old Covenant was birthed in the Fires of God's Holy Spirit. God was speaking on the right hand and the left. There was evidence of His presence during the sojourn in the Wilderness and during the days of the Kings, His prophets were never far off. But something happened tragically and folk began to see religion as something all together different than before.

No more was this true than when the Jews went 400 years without a prophetic voice. The scribes and Pharisees arose and soon adopted a religion that could subsist apart from God's Holy Spirit. They 'competed' with one-another to see who could be the most pious looking and acting. They disfigured their faces when they fasted and would hurl their coins into the offering receptor making a most raucous of a sound; Jesus called this, "sounding the trumpet." (Matthew 6:2) This competition was certainly a stinch in the nostrils of God. The greatest evidence of God's displeasure was their lack ofunction.

God will *back* His message, He will not back ours. God will anoint His agenda, but He will not anoint ours. God will move when we are ready to *give heed unto the word*. The Pharisees had already written the word's of our Lord off even before He spoke them. Why? Because their purpose was to maintain a pious look. They wanted the people underneath them in terms of spiritual things. So they made a show of all they did and kept a record of their pious deeds and sufferings.

A lot is said about 'confession'. Charismatics talk about confessing the word and yet others talk about confessing sin. One word for confession is *exomologeō*. This word means to confess joyfully. It has a hint of a *public* acknowledgement. Th

is is what many did in the New Testament at repentance (Matthew 3:6, Mark 1:5, Acts 19:18); yet we also have this as a directive coming from James in 5:16;

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Not to a priest or a pastor, but when appropriate, 'one to another'. To confess is to *say the same thing* as or to make an 'admission'. The word 'faults' is *Paraptoma* and means to slip off the right path. The purpose of the confession is for prayer and healing. This is something the Pharisee's would have never done. They would not admit their faults. They had to maintain an image of perfection.

Lets look again at the word 'confess'. This is found also in I John 1:9 and likewise means to 'acknowledge' or to 'say the same thing after'. God's says this and that and we say this and that. This is a coming into open unabashed agreement with the truth of God's word. We may be embarrassed that we did not line up with what God said, but we willingly and openly acknowledge the truth no matter how that truth casts us in our own eyes or the eyes of others. If God says, "YE have sinned against Me" the right 'confession' would be, "Indeed, I have sinned against Thee." Not making excuses and not changing the standard. No pointing fingers. This is almost a "repeat after me type thing..." it is not whitewashing or anything else. It is FULL ON acknowledgment of what we have done. No believer is above this truth.

Many years ago I was involved in a Federal Lawsuit in which a corporation had franchised to a local company their name and trademark for the sale of their product and that 'company' had been caught red handed allowing illegal activities to be done by its employees. The corporation was concerned for its reputation as the events were spread all over the news and the company name was at stake. There was mounted evidence that the company was guilty. Eyewitness testimony, video taped activities, etc. having been subpoenaed myself, I had to ask the investigator a troubling question. I asked him, "With all of this evidence before us- why does the company keep fighting this and asserting their innocence." His answer, "Its an age old problem known as denial."

Denial is a psychological defense mechanism that comes into play when a person cannot come to terms with the results of a truth and refuse to allow it to come into their consciousness. It's a mental block. The admission will have consequences- so they maintain a state of denial. What did God require for His forgiving us? That we acknowledge our sin. Its hard to do this when your making excuses. Its hard to do this and point the finger at others.

The PRESSURE to act like nothing is wrong when there are clear shortcomings is incredible at times. I think about John Wayne and how he always had to come off as if he had it all together. Many think they are spiritual John Wayne's. They are struggling and will not admit it for one reason or another. Everything they do has a stamp of perfection. What is even more sad is that preachers will ask folk to come forward and repent of their sins and yet they will not acknowledge their own side slips. This is a terrible tragedy. Soon, without the power of a 'Church Authority' another type of authority is jockeyed for. This is what the Pharisees did, they 'lorded' their piety over the people.

Denial is the great enemy of healing. Just yesterday a man checked into the hospital in our city with his legs BLACK from the knees down. He has diabetes and the legs are going to be lost. What is worse is that they don't know if he will survive the surgery because the kidneys are failing now. He needs prayer for sure. He needed prayer a long time ago! And so it is with many who stay in denial until a CRISIS arises. I'm OK, I'm OK. Are you really? *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/22 11:32

Quote:

-----When the Gospel comes-off as 'bad news' someone is not doing their job.

I had another thought along this line. If the Good News is preached as *Good* News and it is received as 'bad news' the hearer is a pure pyromaniac. I'm reminded of Leonard Ravenhill's story of Charley Peace and how if he said that if one had truly believed in hell, one could crawl on broken glass across England to save just one soul and it would be a noble deed. Truly the Gospel is 'Good News' to anyone with a sober mind.

Re: - posted by markm, on: 2006/7/22 15:22

Quote:

-----I'm OK, I'm OK. Are you really?

Lord, help me to recognize the symptoms of denial in my life sooner.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/24 8:32

BLOCKING THE GATES

Are You a Gate Blocker?

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by his good conduct that his deeds are done in gentleness o f wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't boast and don't lie against the truth. Thi s wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, sensual, and demonic. For where jealousy and selfis h ambition are, there is confusion and every evil deed. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceful, gen tle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is s own in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:13-18)

Some would say that James had a reputation for being no-nonsense and even legalistic at times. Luther may well have exempted this epistle from the canon or scripture. But who could miss the heartbeat of God in these writings? James 3 o ffers us great wisdom and counsel for preachers and teachers everywhere.

There is a word I want to introduce here that I have never read in Christian writings on the subject of repentance preachi ng in my short days on this earth; that word is overbearing. The word means to be domineering over people. It is a word that has to be experienced to be appreciated. I chose this word for my subject because it is *antonymous* to our passage.

Overbearing preachers generally do not realize they are being overbearing. They may be sincere and loving at any other time. They may be overbearing to those close to them or 'under' them in authority. At the worst of times and in the most cirritical circumstances it rears its *ugly* head. They think that folk are rejecting the *message*, but they are really rejecting t he *delivery*. Like a backhanded compliment, oberbearing preaching embraces with one hand and smites with the other. Almost as if a pre-penance is prerequisite for delivering the 'good news' of the Gospel. "You have been a bad people and I must smite thee for it..." This is God's prerogative alone and to take it up in preaching is to destroy your own ministry (selah).

Overbearingness does to people what *begrudging* does to people. Begrudging is displeasure at the satisfaction of anoth er. It is giving *resentfully*. It causes a person to draw back from receiving something at their hands because they can sen se the resentment. Overbearing preaching causes folk to sense something that has a similar effect and the result is the same. People are not dumb, they are human beings and they readily sense *hostility*. And hostility has no place in the pul pit.

One can preach in such a way that folk want to run from the meeting and it has nothing to do with Holy Ghost conviction. A *harshness* in the tone that makes it difficult to receive the message certainly did not come from God; it is earthly+fleshl y+demonic. In other words, the message lacks common courtesy and is void of the fruit of the Spirit. Like a man passin g through a crowd saying, 'excuse me', 'pardon me' etc., instead of 'MOVE', 'GET OUT OF MY WAY' or 'I'M COMING T HROUGH!' *Courtesy* is the decent way to pass through the crowd and preaching with courtesy and peacableness is like wise the biblical route.

It makes no difference what you feel the Lord has called you to do or preach, you and I are not *above* James 3. No one i

n the New Testament era has been licensed to preach overbearingly. What is even worse is when folk begin to interpret the 'feeling' of overbearingness as the *anointing* or as *unction*. This is most unfortunate and is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Selfish ambition is a subtle griever of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes I think preachers and teachers who are caught up in preaching overbearingly should have to quote Psalm 22 a hundred times before they step up to preach... But I am a worm, and no man... But I am a worm, and no man... But I am a worm, and no man... and so on until they get a right perspective of themselves. Perhaps the plate "We would see Jesus" attached to the pulpit would put the finishing touches on the preachers disposition and the people may actually receive the word.

I have wondered for some time if what we see today is not just as much hardness in the preacher as it is hardness in the people. Both are *insensitive* to the Holy Spirit and neither know they are. *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits...* The unction of the Holy Spirit will walk hand in hand with the *fruit* of the Holy Spirit. Unction is God backing the words. When God backs the words that 'backing' will have His fingerprint. That fingerprint, as it were, is His personality. His personality is that of the fruit of the Spirit. We should sincerely ask ourselves, "Does my teaching and preaching resemble James 3?" If not, why not?

The Devil can preach repentance. It has been said that if he could preach it without unction that would be a weapon in his hand. BUT, I submit to you that if the Gospel is preached without the fruit of the Spirit it is the most serious affront on God of all. And that, because it misrepresents His character. It IS the devil preaching! Is that not what James 3 is saying? If our preaching and teaching is not *first pure, then peaceful, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*. And if the fruit of righteousness is not sown in peace, is it not earthly, sensual and demonic?

You can repent today and ask God for a fresh revelation of how He wants His message delivered. You can cast off selfish ambition and envy. What is envy? Envy is displeasure at the blessing of another. Displeased that God would actually lift the burden from folk and allow them to walk in peace and joy. It's not too late. Save yourselves and your ministry before the stench and stigma of overbearingness destroys it all.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/7/24 9:54

Quote:

-----Truly the Gospel is 'Good News' to anyone with a sober mind.

There is much to reflect on in this simple statement. Certainly many of the people we witness and preach to, void of the Holy Spirit, are suffering from impaired judgment. Conversely, Christians are portrayed in popular culture as coming to church and getting "happy". In the 90's, much of American Christianity seemed to get lost in a sweeping celebrative parade complete with loud music and dancing. All of this coupled with our modern insistence on measuring the Gospel only by its psychological or humanitarian value could tempt us to never insist on sobriety and severity when considering man's desperate poverty, and utter need for Christ.

Perhaps in response to the happy raucous of the 90's, there arose another intoxication in the form of Emergent or Post-Modern Christianity. Their Gospel is soothing to the nerves; reluctant to disturb, resistant to proclaim unilaterally there is only one salvation for the race. The Prozac spirit of our age equates ambiguity with enlightenment and even kindness. Yet it is only a human tactic to lay a honey trap for men with practiced kindness and sweetness...hesitant to ever 'break' the news to them that they are sinners.

We need sobriety more than ever.

However, within many repentance circles, sobriety is still lacking on another level...it is always a danger to become preoccupied with our own ambition and become void of the Spirit when preaching to people. It is remarkably easy to preach fanatically from mere human energy.

This paragraph from O. Chambers speaks about this 'energy...'

"He (God) puts love in the place of lust. What is lust? The impatience of desire-I must have it at once. Love can wait seven years; lust cannot wait two seconds. Esau and his mess of pottage is a picture of lust; Jacob serving for Rachel is a picture of love."

How often is repentance preaching rigged to smash the will of people rather than make straight the way of the Lord in their hearts? It is a sad riddle, but lust for success and control can be a motivation for preaching the 'good news.'

I'm finding this thread a very helpful exhortation to my own heart. (I think it should be noted, that many of us here have become familiar with Robert's clarity, consistency, and seriousness when handling the Gospel, which provides a trustworthy context for discussing these things. Forgive me for saying so Robert! :-)) Now with this exhortation to put the goodness and gladness back into the Gospel, I might be tempted to simply 'dial' in the right temperature for my outward presentation. I might even coach myself..."Smile more...stand up straight...don't slouch...make eye contact...say something kind to them...use their name once or twice!" Of course such a superficial reaction to all of this would be missing the deeper point!

We need the sobriety of the Holy Spirit as much as the lost! Our winsome smiles, our engaging preaching and teaching, and even our holy living are all precious but these things are not the light men need! He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.. We need to know more than the principles of Christ...we need to know the Person! This is what this thread is leading me to I believe...not trying to "glow" when preaching, or 'turning' it on when someone is watching... but to learn to abide in the 'light'...and to reflect this light of Christ's life regardless of the activity.

"Those who look to him are radiant..."

Blessings,

MC

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/24 10:47

Quote:
-----This is what this thread is leading me to I believe...not trying to "glow" when preaching, or 'turning' it on when someone is watching..
. but to learn to abide in the 'light'...and to reflect this light of Christ's life regardless of the activity.

Amen. I am captivated by what the Lord is doing in me at this juncture in my life. I am growing concerned that somehow I would insert 'Robert' into my teachings and preaching and like a 'dead fly' in the ointment, spoil the manifestation of Jesus Christ that God seeks to bring forth in the exposition of His word. Maybe what we need more than anything is a clear sense that God must move folk and not our manipulations. No fake smiles and no pretensions.

When I was young in the Lord I used to go door to door with a man who was a beloved Christian. He had a way with people and had used his 'gift' to do door to door evangelism. He had a book that was in his car that I picked up and it was Dale Carnegie, "How to win friends and influence people." He recommended that I read that book, but I *never did*.

KJV: He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue. (Proverbs 28:23)

I think this passage fits into the whole scheme of things.

Quote:
-----Compton's: However, within many repentance circles, sobriety is lacking on another level...it is always a danger to become preoccu

pieced with our own ambition and become void of the Spirit when preaching to people. It is remarkably easy to preach fanatically from mere human energy.

Wesley had a word he used from James 3 calling 'bitter envy'- 'bitter zeal'. I am concerned for myself and for the Gospel on all levels. Certainly I am concerned that the typical evangelical message is way out of step. But I have witnessed something first hand repeatedly in our parts that is also of concern. The 'distance' between the repentance preachers and the church gate keepers (pastors) is too wide and the people are not getting to hear the message. In many cases I believe this could be remedied by the folk who would be expected to be the most 'spiritual'. It's all on the line now, but I feel we need to prayerfully consider this.

Pastors are very concerned about allowing folk to come in and preach a word of repentance. When our church recently attended a Billy Graham Crusade there were folk that stood outside with signs that said, "Billy Graham is a FALSE PROPHET!" and all other sorts of radical statements. When we left there were folk who were quite 'weird' even by what I would consider 'weird' trying to pass out pamphlets onto the busses. Keep in mind that we are only a stones throw from that radical group in Topeka Kansas that shows up at Military Funerals, etc. This kind of "GOD HATES YOU!" stuff is too much even for some of the most seasoned and holiness and perfection type ministers.

I have heard some hard preaching in my short days. Hellfire and brimstone- holiness or hell type stuff. Yet, we have to be careful here as folk with discernment can sense even a slight amount of 'hostility' in preaching. This is viewed as dangerous and not the Spirit. There must not be even a trace of bitter zeal in our message. It will be a challenge enough for God to navigate through the madness of some of these more radical repentance groups that are frankly spoiling a lot of what God is wanting to do.

The only way this will be circumvented is for ministers to walk completely in the Spirit and keep themselves totally in check at all times. It will be too late to try to 'smooth things over' half way into the sermon and beyond. The damage is done and it will not be easily reversed. They burned their own bridge. Few will likely get a second chance to scold a congregation. We need a Gospel message that is *what* the Holy Ghost is saying and *how* He would say it. I am not calling for compromise here. I am calling for repentance preachers to check their spirit at the door and ask themselves if this is what Paul of Peter or Philip would say and do? Is there a New Testament parallel to what I am about to say and do? Etc. Allow the Holy Spirit to get us where we need to be to bring the message. If this does not happen doors will remain shut. This goes for me and everyone else. I have experienced this personally and believe the Lord will help me. I use myself as the example.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/7/24 12:31

Quote:

-----Maybe what we need more than anything is a clear sense that God must move folk and not our manipulations.

This is one of those statements that at first glance can appear very unremarkable and obvious. Yet, once we step back and survey the vast landscape of our own making, we can't help but admit how deep-rooted is the emphasis we have put on our own 'effectiveness'. This is measured by church growth, fund raising, big stadium rallies, moral political victories, emotional displays of spirituality, and even great men themselves. All of these things show how sincere we are for becoming effective.

I can testify how vain it is to be merely effective for Christ instead of being faithful to Him. When I first started hearing the message of "repentance" I was tempted to repent (or at least relent) to the men who were preaching it...which is quite a different thing than repenting to God! These men were so powerful of personality, and persuasive in their presentation that I wanted to find their approval. How this type of 'repentance' leads to despair!

Because of this I am thankful for men and women of true holiness, who disturbed me with a steady reality that needed no electric amplification, or sweeping hand gestures. (Not that these things are bad in themselves.) With these Christians,

you are not pressured to satisfy them with some demonstration of repentance...but instead are bothered at your own lack of reality, and provoked to holy jealousy for theirs. They are unwitting salt in the wounds of your conscience and heart!

Quote:

-----There must not be even a trace of bitter zeal in our message.

You know, recently I have been 'spending time' with Jonathan Edwards. Here is a man caricatured as a great Fire and Brimstone preacher, giving the hard-hearted sermon-proof church one "homiletical slap in the face" after another to get them to repent. But after my reading of him, I realized that this is a distortion of the man...a distortion that perhaps some modern repentance preachers practice.

They perhaps do not realize that jarring sermons like "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" can only be delivered in the hands of a humble preacher.

One of my favorite Edwards quotes from his youthful sermon "Way of Holiness."

Have you ever read the four Gospels, and did you not observe in the life of Christ wonderful instances of humility, love to God, love to religion, wonderful instances of zeal for God's glory, steadfastness in resisting temptations, entire trust and reliance on God; strict adherence to all his commands; astonishing instances of condescension, humility, meekness, lowliness, love to men, love to his enemies, charity and patience? Why this is holiness. When we imitate Christ in these things, then we are holy, and not till then.

What a wonderful blessing holiness is! Why do so many preach as if it is a scourge?

MC

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/24 13:26

Quote:

-----These men were so powerful of personality, and persuasive in their presentation that I wanted to find their approval. How this type of 'repentance' leads to despair!

This was a point I wanted to capture, but was unable to find the words. I likewise have felt this pressure to somehow meet some standard or 'please' some minister who I held in esteem. It was not repentance God-wards, but was a repentance for man's sake. I think this can lead a preacher into deception in that when a person comes forward or repents they are thinking they had done God a service, but the person is repenting for the wrong reason. When the leaders looked at Stephen they saw as it were the face of an angel. He obviously was not trying to intimidate people into repenting.

Quote:

-----Edwards: Have you ever read the four Gospels, and did you not observe in the life of Christ wonderful instances of humility, love to God, love to religion, wonderful instances of zeal for God's glory, steadfastness in resisting temptations, entire trust and reliance on God; strict adherence to all his commands; astonishing instances of condescension, humility, meekness, lowliness, love to men, love to his enemies, charity and patience? Why this is holiness. When we imitate Christ in these things, then we are holy, and not till then.

I share your observations of Edwards. It is only a track record of such love and grace that allowed a people to receive such a message of "Sinners in the hands of an angry God." If that had been his full-time message, folk had may well stamped it as "Sinners in the hands of an angry man."

Thanks for sharing that MC!

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/25 8:34

"I DETECTED IT IN HIS PREACHING"

Let your moderation be known unto all men The Lord is at hand (Philippians 4:5)

Spirit filled preachers who have been around for a long time have a great ability to discern things that younger and more 'zealous' ministers may never pick up on. It comes from years of being sensitive to God and the leading of His Spirit. It comes from having 'been there' and 'done that'. This quality at times can be quite frustrating because it seems to stifle what God is wanting to do in the name of 'playing it safe.' On the other hand it is an invaluable gift, that like a well worn tool, is a mighty defense against confusion.

When I was a young man an older minister was given some audio tapes of a Campmeeting in Baton Rouge, LA. You will recall that this is the home base for JSM or Jimmy Swaggart Ministries. The minister listened to the tapes and heard 'something' that the excited congregational member who went to the meeting never heard. As far as the attendee was concerned, it was a wonderful Campmeeting. The minister listened to the messages. Soon he began calling trusted friends who were prayer warriors with a closely guarded message, "Pray for 'Jimmy', he is in trouble." Who? Jimmy? You have to be kidding me right? How do you know? The minister's reply, "*I detected it in his preaching.*"

This minister was well past the green days of anything goes and well into the seasoned times of great discernment. Having taken his first church at 21 years of age and serving in other widespread roles within his Pentecostal organization, he had seen revival many times and knew the moving of the Spirit. Jimmy Swaggart was just the latest fire breathing preacher to come along with any real popularity, he had studied the Wesley's, G. Campbell Morgan's, Leonard Ravenhill's, and many many others. A man of tremendous sobriety, he easily separated the wheat from the chaff. One false slip in a sermon would raise an attentive ear. Not being critical, but *discerning* and there is a great difference. A few months later Jimmy Swaggart gave his televised confession.

The face of the American Pastoral base is growing older by the day. In Pentecostal circles we have many pastor's in place who have been around for a very long time. They are not afraid of revival and they are not afraid of the fire. They were 'Pentecostal- when Pentecostal wasn't 'cool'." They have seen your kind before. Sometimes in the health and vigor of youth and sometimes in the throes of death. They have preached from pulpits and across metal bed rails alike. While you're in bed asleep, they may well be at a hospital or on a visitation.

There are legitimate ministers in this nation. Men who long as much to see a move of God as the next person. I'm not talking about careless shepherds or 'hirelings'. I'm talking about Spirit filled older elders. They used to be Christian 'idealists', but *reality* has taken hold and they live for the glory of God in a darkened world. They know 'flesh' from 'Spirit' and understand more than you think. It is the epitome of arrogance to cast these men aside as if the 'Elijah's' were outdated and the 'Elisha's' are in. Youthful zeal that does not rightly respect its elders has the stench of rebellion. These men are men of God also, would you take them as fools? Like Miriam and Aaron who had saw a flicker of God's glory and the first signs of His revelation, suddenly become authorities on God's Glory and speak foolishly against Moses. Make no mistake, there are some 'Moses' (if you will) in our times and we do well to take heed to their wisdom and insight if they have been true warriors of the Cross.

One thing about these men is that they are 'stable'. They are not constantly searching out some new thing. They can spot a 'fad' a mile off and they have seen the finality of building a work on any type of 'fad'. Most importantly they have that keen sense of awareness from having preached under the unction of God so many times themselves and having received so many messages from God, that they discern things in preaching that many would never notice. They are attending to the 'spirit' of the message and the *content* of the message. They are taking things into view.

I am sharing these things because you may be a young preacher and reading this. You may have enough zeal for 2 men and that zeal may cause you to sin. Just because a minister is old does not mean you can look upon him with disdain or contempt. God sees it. No matter what your agenda is that older preacher has seen your kind before and likely a more extreme version. He has learned how to handle you because he realizes you may need it. I'm not trying to anger you, I am telling you this for your own sake and the sake of your calling. I don't know you. God has been talking to these type of men for decades, likely before you were born and maybe before your parents were born. Do they not have a part to play in all this? Don't be quick to relegate them to the position of pestilent popery or twistedness of the pastor's in George Fox's time. You may have no idea who you are really dealing with and it's important to keep that in mind. Don't prejudice preachers. That would be a most terrible sin.

Re: Respecting those with discernment - posted by roadsign (), on: 2006/7/25 11:46

You expose truths that Iâ've not heard shared so transparently. A part of me wants to say, "Shhhh" We shouldn't judge. But, I agree, you can learn a lot about a person by how he/she preaches. You can sense his sincerity, you can sense when a root of pride is starting to develop, or when an abrasive edge begins to set in, or when he's expounding less and less scripture. You can tell when something is hidden. You just know!

Really, if we see this happening, we should not let it slide— esp in the earlier stages, when there is more hope for repentance. If we wait too long, the pastor's heart gets more and more hardened, and then it's too late. I think most of us, after a while, realizing that we will be ignored, just shrug our shoulders and ignore our earlier senses. We feel that we can't do anything about it, and are just glad to get home to our Sunday dinners.

You make a clear distinction between elders and hirelings. Elders have had years to develop an acute sense of discernment and wisdom. Of course that would be why elders are to oversee the church -and should be the ones who mentor young pastors and hold them accountable.

But really, not all true godly elders are recognized for who they are. I have profoundly benefited from those in the church who were never pastors or elders and never preached a sermon—but still had much godly wisdom gained from experience and years of walking closely with God. Those are the ones I've tended to look up to, view as my role-model, and approach when I needed wisdom. That hasn't changed.

I would say that in our culture, education and status are valued far more than maturity and discernment. Most churchgoers and pastors assume that no one else can have keen "eye-sight". Or they just don't want to trust the words of someone lower on the seniority ladder or too "old" to be "relevant". Just this past week a true elder/friend by character and past leadership experience, whom we have known for years, left his church because, essentially, he was pushed out. It was nasty and tragic, and the church will suffer down the road. This seems to be happening a lot.

I believe that discernment largely remains undeveloped— deliberately. I was taught that I'd be rebellious if I questioned the special man who shares God's word from the sacred pulpit. After all, he is called by God and hears from God. So my power and freedom to discern got suppressed, and I felt guilty for questioning. I distrusted my "inner voice", and instead listened to the ones "in the know".

When the exercise of discernment is suppressed long enough, then the door is wide-open for all kinds of imposters and immature pastors to reign freely, unchecked. I think that this is not only their fault. The congregation has also failed them.

One more thought regarding discernment:

My kids, even when young, had amazing discernment. And they, in their naïve way would say exactly what they saw. I was often amazed at the pointed truth of their statements, and was at times quite convicted through their words. Clearly age is not the only criteria for discernment.

That brings us back to the heading of this thread:

The joy of the gospel is that we are given the freedom of children and the freedom to grow up!!!!

Diane

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/25 12:30

Quote:
-----My kids, even when young, had amazing discernment. And they, in their naïve way would say exactly what they saw. I was often amazed at the pointed truth of their statements, and was at times quite convicted through their words. Å.... Clearly age is not the only criteria for discernment.

This is true Diane. Children have a way of telling things. They seem to know the difference between 'Christlike' and 'not'.

I have shared things in this thread with great reluctance. I have observed some things that I think we need to be aware of. Again, I use myself as the example. There are a lot of 'repentance' type ministries coming along. I think a clear line needs to be drawn that sets some biblical parameters or the whole thing will jump the rails. We need the mind of Christ.

Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2006/7/26 8:58

Quote:
----- I think a clear line needs to be drawn that sets some biblical parameters or the whole thing will jump the rails.

This reminds me of a cow we once owned Å– who always jumped the fences and led the rest of the herd with her. She was our most intelligent cow Å– a reminder of the dangers of intelligence and the futility of fences. After all, fences don't change the heart. And we end up jumping themÅ.... becauseÅ.... of course the grass is always greener on the other side.

Your messages are far better than fences. They help us change our heart Å– from the inside out. And then we don't need to depend on fences. We'll be more likely to stay within biblical parameters Å– as we trust in God's grace.

I appreciate your reluctance about using personal examples. Yet they have a way of grabbing and getting through the cobwebs in the mind.

Robert, I enjoy and look forward to your articles about our tendencies to cling to law and that is why we present a message void of hope, joy and gladness.

Diane

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/26 9:04

WHOM THE SON HATH MADE FREE

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may you also do good, who are accustomed to do evil. (Jeremiah 13:23 web)

There is a master that withholdeth not wages when they are in his power to pay. A taskmaster ever willing to make payments of death. The master I'm referring to is *Sin*. there is a need for emancipation from this master- not a being 'set free' (as Ron Bailey has pointed out) but being 'made free.' *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* (John 8:36)

As Leonard Ravenhill has rightly pointed out, John Baptist did no miracles. His message was repentance. He was preparing the way of the Lord. Repentance is when one turns to God with a changed mind about whose will should be obeyed. He came to change minds and point to Christ. And some would think that a 'John Baptist' is needed in our times. Not one person was ever set free from sin under John's ministry recorded in scripture. No demoniac's were loosed and those in the clutches of sin were just as bound when he left them as when he met them. This is no slam on John Baptist, it is a reality of his function in God's eternal plan. He had a simple purpose- "prepare the way of the LORD." We often skim by his own proclamation of how he was unworthy to loose the sandals of the one coming after him and how that 'One' will be

ptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He knew his *limitations*.

Humpty Dumpty is a character in a Mother Goose rhyme, portrayed as an anthropomorphized egg. Most English-speaking children are familiar with the rhyme:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

That Humpty Dumpty is an egg is not actually stated in the rhyme. In its first printed form, in 1810, it is a riddle, and exploits for misdirection the fact that "humpty dumpty" was 18th-Century reduplicative slang for a short, clumsy person. Whereas a clumsy person falling off a wall would not be irreparably damaged, an egg would be. The rhyme is no longer posed as a riddle, since the answer is now so well known. (Wikip) An addendum has been made to this rhyme in our parts that I think goes along with our entry. "Why didn't anyone call the KING?"

John Baptist and a host of others are merely the King's men if I might so say. Yet, there are some things that take the King Himself to fix. This is what puts the shout of praise into the hearts of those who hear and appreciate the Gospel. If we are going to put the 'Goodness' back into the Gospel and the 'Gladness' back into the hearts of the hearers, we will have to put the KING back into the Gospel. We hear much about the "King's men", but there are a lot of humpty dumpties in this world and the King's men are not right for the job.

And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. (Acts 3:11-16)

My heart is heavy this morning. Heavy for the multitudes in my city and family that are bound to sin. A people that need more than a John Baptist message, they need the delivering hand of Jesus Christ. I'm thinking of a woman right now not yet 50 years old who is dying. Her belly is swollen as if she were 9 months pregnant and filled with fluid. She has a deadly form of Hepatitis C and her liver is all but destroyed. I have seen this before with Cirrosis of the liver and how folk have to be 'tapped' to drain the water of lest they burst. It is not always sin that causes these diseases. In the cases I have seen it is. In the first case the woman lived a hard life; dancing, prostitution, drugs of every kind. She stumbled once into Sonny Argonzony's center in California not knowing whither she went. She heard about Christ afresh. She had been raised in Pentecostal Holiness unlike most could not imagine. She was no stranger to the message of Christian perfection.

I'm reminded of Legion and have to respectfully wonder, what would John Baptist have done with him? He saw the *Master* and ran for help. His heart was already prepared and changed about his situation. He was tired of the violence and madness and yet he could not get loosed. He had broken enough chains and lived long enough among the dead. He needed more than the word of repentance, he needed *deliverance*. He needed emancipated from Sin. He needed the KING.

When Philip came to town folk were delivered. We seen that in a previous entry. What a message? That you can be free from sin and with that message have the Finger of God in our midst to see Him confirm His word with a mighty deliverance. Some folk are bound to drugs so much that preaching repentance to them is like pouring water on a ducks back. Some people are so bound to alcohol that they are NOT in their right minds as Legion. They need a deliverer. They need the Power of God manifest in that place.

Excuse me in my folly, but, what if a person came up to us on the streets and said, "I want to be FREE from this bondage to Meth, but I can't get LOOSE, pray God to set me free!?" Could we pray the prayer of faith and that one be loosed and in their right mind? Could we expect God to do to *them* what He did for Legion and others? What are we preaching for if we can't? Are we vain talkers and deceivers? Surely Christ had set them free. None that came to Him sincerely were ever cast out. Would we send them to rehab? Or could we pray in such a way that God would literally LOOSE them from t

heir bondage? I mean in a verifiable way?

I have found that it is a light thing to preach repentance. It is another thing to bring a message that folk can be delivered from the chains of sin that has them utterly in bondage. Sleepless nights are increasing in my musings and longing to see a people loosed from their infirmities. I think of Elijah praying with his head between his knees he was so focused on hearing from God. Can we pray with that level of faith and focus? Can we pray with such compassion? Elijah was a man of like passions as we. Would to God that we would take hold once again of the Horns of the Altar for some people and lay hands upon them that God may loose them and save them and God send them their way clothed in His white robes and with the mind of Christ.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/26 10:52

JOY UNSPEAKABLE

Barney E. Warren (1867-1951)
1900

I have found His grace is all complete,
He supplieth ev'ry need;
While I sit and learn at Jesus' feet,
I am free, yes, free indeed.

Refrain

It is joy unspeakable and full of glory,
Full of glory, full of glory,
It is joy unspeakable and full of glory,
Oh, the half has never yet been told.

I have found the pleasure I once craved,
It is joy and peace within;
What a wondrous blessing! I am saved
From the awful gulf of sin.

Refrain

I have found that hope so bright and clear,
Living in the realm of grace;
Oh, the Savior's presence is so near,
I can see His smiling face.

Refrain

I have found the joy no tongue can tell,
How its waves of glory roll!
It is like a great o'erflowing well,
Springing up within my soul.

Refrain

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/7/26 11:12

Quote:
-----I have found that it is a light thing to preach repentance. It is another thing to bring a message that folk can be delivered from the chains of sin that has them utterly in bondage. Sleepless nights are increasing in my musings and longing to see a people loosed from their infirmities.... Can we pray with that level of faith and focus? Can we pray with such compassion?...that God may loose them and save them and God send them the way clothed in His white robes and with the mind of Christ.

Dear Robert! You are opening Heaven here!

I find that we human beings can believe in repentance, supernatural manifestations, and revivals but we have a hard time believing what you are describing here.

This is the Gospel you are telling us about brother! It is one thing to read about it in books but quite another to see it for yourself. You are blessed among men brother. Perhaps many, in the pulpit or out of it, don't preach the gravepassing transformation of the Gospel because in reality...they have never believed it themselves.

I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you do not accept our testimony.

Many of us look for a revival where God will be moved to give us an addendum to His Gospel...an extraneous outpouring of power, a supernatural supplement to finally be a church. Robert, if we could get the understanding, the life, you are trying to convey here...and believe it...what further cry for an appendix of revival would the church need? After receiving the Jesus of the Gospels into our hearts, revival(edit:)is the only possible outcome.

Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

Brother let us return to our unfinished business at the cross...let us join you at the altar.

MC

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/27 8:50

Some Thoughts on: "HOLINESS OR HELL"- PREACHING

The official soteriological position of the PCG organization under which I have been a part of through the years is highlighted in Dr. Aaron Wilson's introduction to Bible Doctrines titled, *Basic Bible Truth*. In part the statement reads, *Our salvation is not fragile*. Yet, this has not always been the position of individual ministers who preached in the small country towns of Southern Missouri (and I'm sure other places and denominations).

It's a joy to sit down with older Spirit filled ministers who are now up in years and listen to them pour forth their wisdom. I love to hear about the old days when local revivals would take hold and whole communities would be effected. I have lots of old tapes of their preaching that contained references to Wesley, G. Campbell Morgan, The Welsh Revival, and others. Messages like you would hear right on SI, but with a Pentecostal fireyness. Yet, there is a constant caution I am met with in the undertones of these talks, and it is that of so-called "Holiness or Hell" type preaching.

When I say, "Holiness or Hell" what comes to *your* mind? Salvation through sanctification? Tight rope Christianity? Well, the passage of scripture I wish to begin with is Hebrews 12:14,

Follow peace with all, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

There was a generation of preachers that lived many years ago that preached a message that they themselves could not live

ve. They made *reputations* for themselves that they could not live up to. From my personal research it all began during the transition that some made from Methodism to Pentecost. There was a sense that whatever may offend God had to be done away with. This gives rise to 'Achan's Tent' sermons in which a tent might be set up and the preacher goes into the tent and brings out items that he feels may be *hindering* a move of God. I don't think this is all bad, but not all people agree what should come out of the tent. It gave rise to many teachings that were based purely on personal convictions.

It is an admirable thing that folk would want to cast-off anything that would possibly grieve the Holy Spirit. Yet, it is not long until this thing can go to wild extremes. Folk were bent on Holiness to such a level that 'fun' was actually considered a sin. Softball or some other activity at a youth camp was off the table. Finally when *non-*coed swimming was approved down by the river, the boys had to swim in jeans and shirts. As if that were not enough Coffee was outlawed. Soon little old ladies were drinking cream and sugar in hot water, lest they offend God. TV's were a sin. The story is told of an old timey holiness preacher great uncle of mine who once preached against TV until the folk set their sets out on the curb. When the Sheriff got wind of it he was arrested. Many such stories I could tell.

In fairness I must say that God often moved amazingly in their meetings. There were a people who were 'genuine' and God knew their hearts. And yet there were other people who were also strict in those days. It was not all that uncommon for a preacher to have young children on the front rows and if they acted out- he stopped preaching, went down, 'blistered their hide' (that's old timey talk for a hard spanking), sat them back down on the bench, and went back up to preaching. Seem odd? How does that strike you? My personal feeling is that it came about from folk trying to serve God out of intimidation and fear and NOT out of *love* and *joy*.

This had a most *horrible* impact on the children. Many walked out on God believing that they had to live an utterly holy life or they were going to hell. For some it was an excuse, but for others it was a genuine feeling of despair. The lack of love and joy, the long faces all the time, made for a life that few wanted to live. Their concept of Christianity was wildly off. Ministers who have been around for a while and seen this play out over the generations will tell you. Again, there is a constant caution I am met with in the undertones of our conversations, and it is that of so-called "Holiness or Hell" type preaching.

Strangely, most modern day revivalists and repentance preachers would have to seriously 'repent' just to get in step with the ministers I'm referring to. Many would be 'skinned' (as they called it) under one of their tents or in their meetings. A list of points would likely include; TV, smoking, drinking (alcohol), cursing, chewing tobacco, secular music, playing cards, women wearing pants, tattoos, Make up, braided hair, high heeled shoes, dancing (not in the Spirit), going to movie house, coffee, etc. God forbid a *man* would ever be seen with an *earring*. Those preachers would roll over in their graves over it. I'm certain of it.

Yes, Entire Sanctification (Total Sanctification) has a totally different meaning today than it did to my great great Methodist Grandma Amy Anne Vansel. She was a street preacher in Cole Camp Missouri. It is said that no one in the family had ever once seen her ankles or wrists. A few of the granddaughters came in wearing pants once and were met with the softest of rebukes. They later told that they felt like crawling under a rock or something. No, we know little about what these folk were all about.

The problem I see in all this is that folk tried to live this standard without the moving of the Spirit in place and it became vain *religion*. Rebellion set in. Soon this created concern as folk tried to maintain the 'fire' with imposed rules and such. This was nothing more than formaldehyde in the carcass.

Ever once and a while I get a 'talking to' from one of those old timey preachers who have seen a *more excellent way*. I guess I tend to walk and promote a lifestyle more in step with the old timers. I talk to younger revivalists and repentance preachers and we use the same terms but are pouring completely different meanings into the words. The old timers are doing the same thing in many cases. They are using the terms based on their understanding and experience and we should be aware of that.

The one piece of counsel perhaps I have heard this the most, "*Don't be so 'hitting' all the time - the people have to serve God out of joy and their love for Him.*" I keep it in mind and it helps me be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/7/28 7:46

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride. These are the words of the pen of a ready writer. These are the words of one who has seen something that others have not seen. It is the revelation of the Glory of God in the cross of Christ Jesus.

If I would take up my cross I must *preach* the cross. *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.* (I Corinthians 1:18) The Gospel, made possible through the sufferings of the cross is not preached with enticing words of man's wisdom. Wherein do we have to glory- save in the cross of Christ?

If I be persecuted in this life for the Gospel's sake, may it be for the preaching of the cross. For it was *at the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burden of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day.* On a wooden bench under the mighty load of sin I saw a revelation of the love of God as He offered His Son for my sins. *At the cross He beckoned me, drawing me gently to my knees, I was lost for words, sweetly broken and wholly surrendered.* As my knees smote literally together and I trembled at His love, what could I do but surrender all to Him.

As if I had been Lazarus and the stone sat quietly before my life as the stench of my sin and death filled the room- a voice called into the darkness a most glorious light. Not the name of another, not a general call He made. But my name- He called my name and up from the grave of Sin and death I came. He stinketh, some would say. But my ears were focused, as it were, upon that which I knew in my heart. And as if the Lord had said, "COAT"- remove these grave clothes and gird Him with this which I have woven special. "RING"- with this ring I thee...

If I had cried a river that day it had not been enough to express the feeling in my heart at the revelation of the price of my sin and His willingness to take my place. I shall never forget the echo of those words, "MY GOD MY GOD... WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?" At once I wondered, "My God, my God, why had I forsaken Thee?" Yet, without a harsh tone or an angry look, His goodness led me to repentance. I heard of Him by the hearing of the ear... but now the eyes of my understanding being enlightened, I knew what was the *hope* of His calling.

In the late 1980's as one of those who had stumbled gave a final bidding to preachers around the world. With little credibility left, and one last plea before he took his place in almost obscurity, he said these words, "Preachers if you ever stop preaching the CROSS, you have LOST it all!" The preaching of the cross has no more appeal today than it did when it was supposed to be foolishness in Paul's day. As if the ambassadors would say to their King, "Bid me take any message - save this one!" "Bid me tell of your anger- bid me tell of your wrath... I beseech Thee, Lord, let me go and warn them of everlasting burnings and the great gulf affixed; but press me not with the heavy burden of the Cross! I dare not think of it - I dare not tell of it. Repentance, faith, healing, deliverance, wrath, anger, joy, hope, please, I beg of thee, place into my hands any scroll but this! What have I to do with Thee, Lord, that thou would'st lay upon my back such a burden."

And in the silence a still small voice arises in our hearts... It is... It *is* the power... It is the power of God ... It *IS* the power of God unto salvation to EVERYone that believes. Do you want souls saved... do you? Do you want to bring a message for your King? Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, IS THERE HOPE FOR THIS DARKENED WORLD? Yes, yes., but are you willing to humble your ears to hear? I beg thee, tell me? What is it? *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.* (I Corinthians 1:18)

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/8/7 16:39

HURRAY! HURRAY! HURRAY!

I was listening to a sermon recently in which the minister relayed the story of an experience he had in leading a man who had never known the Lord to salvation. Completely unversed in the stories and the language of Christianity, the minister shared with this man in the simplest of ways the story of the Prodigal Son. As the sharing neared a close it was time to pray. The minister prayed when at once was startled by the man praying for *himself* a prayer that was based upon his understanding of the story he just heard. They prayed again, the man followed through with the message and it happened.

d again; before the minister could get right started to praying, the man overtook him again and prayed for himself.

When finished the man looked at the minister and says, "I feel like jumping and shouting HURRAY!" So the minister says, why don't you? So the man commences jumping and shouting HURRAY! HURRAY! HURRAY! - in the most child-like of ways. The story has gripped me greatly. As I had never seen such a joyous case of a person passing from 'convicted sinner' to 'hopefully converted'.

Finney reasons that when a person truly turns to God in repentance and faith that the 'conviction' that weighed so heavy a hand upon the sinner turns to comfort with the deepest sense of joy and peace. When that 'controversy' with God is resolved and true submission is attained- joy cometh. Truly it is the 'touch' of God- it is the JOY of thy salvation.

Can you remember that joy? The joy that came when you trusted Christ and surrendered all to Him? When the heavy weight of your sin was removed and God issued a pardon for the multitude of your crimes? Oh what joy that came when God through your sin behind His back and cast them away buried from the sight of men. If there is one thing that men fear to have revealed it is the measure to which they have hurt God. Yet, when the Divine displeasure is removed and the blood cleanseth from all sin- joy cometh! Oh how deep a man can sleep when he knows his sins are carried away! To look God in the eye once again with a pure conscience- void of offense and free from controversy. There is nothing like it! There is no substitute for this joy if a million worlds were to be offered- they would be utterly despised a thousand times over.

I met just last week in the altar area of a youth camp where a 15 year old girl had given herself over to the Gothic life- a life of rebellion, drugs, and witchcraft. Covered with signs that the enemy had been near, she fell on her face before God- even before the invitation was given. I felt pressed to make my way to the front and ask her but a few questions. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT I HAVE DONE! I don't believe God can forgive me! I was saved as a child and I backslid and went into deep sin. I marveled and wondered- how could a 15 year old believe they had out sinned the blood of Christ? I pressed upon her the Gospel in all its power. This must have went on for an hour. It seemed to take that long just for the blinders to come off her eyes, and her mind to be sobered.

Having worn myself dry I called upon another dear saint to come and help us pray. She addressed this young lady with a most powerful unction and discourse. She compelled her to forsake her sin and renounce the powers of darkness that held her bound. She confessed (agreed with God concerning) her sin openly without reservation and this I believe she did once she realized that God truly wanted to reconcile.

We went to pray together with another dear praying saint and prayed the enemy would loose her from the bondage of sin. This may have been an additional hour. Finally after a few hours she broke through and the joy of the Lord flooded in. She began hugging the ladies with a huge smile on her face. What an awesome change in countenance! She said to them, "I feel like jumping for JOY!!" Well, go ahead then.

I watched for the next days and seen that same joy and glow. She switched out her gothic clothing and had settled down in her right mind. The love of the Lord took hold of her and she was able to tell those sisters she loved them for the first time in a long time. She gave a testimony Friday morning at the close of the youth camp. If you think about this story, say a prayer for her. I believed her life was changed by the power of the Gospel and for the first time she knows the Lord in the free pardon of sin.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/8/9 8:34

LOVE WILL MAKE A WAY

I wish to share an encouraging series of experiences that have greatly influenced my life as I think over them from time to time. As I type this entry, there is a dear little old lady in a Nursing Home in Belton, MO. who has suffered her whole life with a cerebral palsy type physical infirmity. There was a time when she could walk, albeit it was difficult. She is one of the charter members of our church and has worked to do what she could to aid in the propagation of the Gospel. This dear woman's name is Doris.

Doris used her twisted hands and contorted fingers to weave pot holders for the church to sell for a small fee to raise funds. She had no job and was totally unable to work. When she was still walking she volunteered to go monthly to the church outreach to a hospital care center where her best friend lived. Her name was Juanita. Juanita was nearly a quadriplegic, her contorted body battered by years of suffering from what I presume was a similar disease as Doris. Completely helpless she was unable to help herself down the long hall way to the elevator and on to the other side of the hospital meeting hall. Doris volunteered to go to the hospital and with what little strength she had she balanced herself with the hand grip rails of the wheelchair and made her way down to the meetings. I have seen it with my own eyes more than once and what a sight to behold! I decided then that I had no excuses whatsoever for not doing what God called me to do.

In time Juanita grew sicker and weaker. She was elderly in her sufferings. She had an unshakable faith in Christ. She spoke to the people one day by way of her writing board. She held a pointer in her mouth and pointed to letters to spell out a message. She said to the Pastor that the Lord has shown me that he will be calling me home soon. I wish to donate some of my last checks to help people. This fund became the beginning of our food pantry. She asked the pastor if she could be baptized in water before she died. So she was taken to the church and baptized.

In time Juanita passed on and we attended the funeral. it was a wonderful remembrance of a dear Saint that loved God faithfully to the end. She had fought a good fight, she had finished her course, she had kept the faith. It seemed services were over and we were shaking hands ready to leave the grave side. In the distance I saw a man standing. You have probably seen scenes like this in movies... a man a little ways off observing leaning against his car. A few minutes and he walked up and introduced himself. "Hi, I used to be Juanita's neighbor, I used to come over to visit her." He continued, "You see, one day Juanita took out her writing board and slowly pointed out the letters that led me to salvation and I was won to Jesus Christ."

Few times in my life have moved me like that. I can almost see her twisted frame struggling to reach each letter, happy and trying to smile, full of the joy of the Lord. I was watching Ray Comfort last night as he talked about personal soul winning. A lot of times I have made excuses I suppose. And yet, those two ladies, Doris and Juanita are a powerful case. Maybe they didn't have a whole 'talent'. Maybe they only had a half a talent? But they took what God gave them and what an increase! I can't move my arms, I can't move my legs, I can't speak even as my speech has been overthrown by this terrible disease? Let this stick be my tongue and this letter board my voice. Can you imagine the unction of God that was upon each revelation of a letter as she spelled out the Gospel? No booming voice like a Whitfield. No on stage motions as a Billy Sunday. Just the pure revelation of the Gospel in a most simple medium.

Doris can't walk today. She can't make her pot holders. Yet, while her talent remained she used it to the fullest and the testimony of her and Juanita's gift will ever speak in my mind. What is in *your* hand? What is in *mine*?

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/8/11 7:51

KNOWING THEREFORE THE TERROR OF THE LORD

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves with gain unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. (II Corinthians 5:10-12)

Holiness of heart is a most unpopular subject. We had well been contented to present ourselves as if we were the epitome of sanctification. But if the things that have found a lodging place in our hearts that please not the Lord were to be m

manifest in the consciences of the people, what then? Holiness of heart is an inward rejection of even the thought of wickedness. It is to love righteousness and hate iniquity. What more does the enemy challenge than this?

Now it happened, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" So he answered, "What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many?" (II Kings 9)

Many want *peace*, but they don't want holiness of heart. They wish their conscience would lie down in silence so they flood their minds with words of grace and mercy and hold on to their sinful thoughts. I can almost hear the man calling out to that great watchman within, the conscience, "conscience, tell me, is it peace? I beg of thee, give me not a bad report?" And yet, that unaffiliated member, that internal voice that resounds with the voice of a multitude, thunders back its report, "So he answered, "What peace, as long as the harlotries of thy tainted heart are so many?"

What does it profit to cry within ourselves, "peace!, peace!,... when there is no peace?" The goodness and gladness of the Gospel are reserved for those who have submitted themselves fully to the will of God. The Holy spirit will go to war against any rebellion in our hearts. He will not wait until the heart is full and the body headed for ruin, He will lift his voice like a trumpet. He will tell Israel her sins! What good is a false peace? What good is a false hope?

A dear brother a few years ago made a great statement. He said, "It is the good grace of God that He has put up with our sin *this long*." Yet folk have within their heart that age old tendency to take advantage of a good thing. Soon grace is viewed as a free pass to put off yielding to the Holy Spirit today and submitting to His rule *right now*. Almost as if one would say, "this grace will buy me time, I can put off until tomorrow what I ought to do today." Grace will give me time to break up with my 'lovers' slowly. What is this evidence of, I ask?

I hear the resounding words of the apostle echoing in my ears, *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*;.... This is a revelation of the terror of the Lord *in Paul's eye*. That is to say, it was made real to him in such a way that it was no longer idle tales but had gripped his soul in truth. It was a revelation! He 'SAW' it. First it persuaded HIM. I might well persuade men, but have I persuaded me? Has the terror of the Lord taken hold of me in such a way that anything less than holiness of heart and a pure conscience before God is unacceptable?

I believe that in times when we start to allow things to creep into our minds, hearts and then lives it is the direct result of not 'knowing' the terror of the Lord. That revelation is no longer before the eyes and it is open season on the pure conscience and the whited heart. Can a man entertain the revelation of the terror of the Lord and a temptation to entertain wickedness at the same time? I trow not.

This is the danger we face as the Lord brings us into balance in our proclamation of the true Gospel; that we would overindulge in His goodness and grace until we make ourselves vulnerable to the lies of the enemy. I have often heard preachers who God had laid it on their heart to preach repentance for a period of time suddenly sense the cloud moving to a different message when at once they torch what God has been saying through them previously. Almost as if suddenly we ought to be ashamed of preaching what the Lord was saying because the emphasis of the message was different then - than now. What God was saying then is just as valid as what He is saying now. This is not to say that we do not deal with excesses, but it is folly to disown a great work today that God was doing yesterday. It never has been an either or message (grace or holiness), it has been both.

Don't allow the enemy to put a trip on you about calling for repentance if you know that is what He was saying at that time. Hindsight is not 20/20 in this case. This is not a "try it and see what happens" - type of thing. This is an "instant in season and out of season" *attempt* to say what the Lord is wanting said. To place the emphasis where He is placing it in the 'here and now'. There is no place for second guessing if you believe with all your heart you are following the Lord. This does not mean we are to shut out counsel from spiritual believers either. But, I challenge you to look at the BIG picture and think back upon what God was saying and doing. If the Holy Spirit points something out that needs changing or correction that's one thing, but don't go there with the devil and let HIM critique your message. What did Paul say? *Knowing the refore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*;... it was a great motivator of Paul and NOTHING to be ashamed of if it is fostered in a pure heart and anchored in love.

Re: - posted by TonyS (), on: 2006/8/11 10:47

Good Morning,

You wrote:

Don't allow the enemy to put a trip on you about calling for repentance if you know that is what He was saying at that time. Hindsight is not 20/20 in this case. This is not a "try it and see what happens"- type of thing. This is an "instant in season and out of season" attempt to say what the Lord is wanting said. To place the emphasis where He is placing it in the 'here and now'. There is no place for second guessing if you believe with all your heart you are following the Lord. This does not mean we are to shut out counsel from spiritual believers either. But, I challenge you to look at the BIG picture and think back upon what God was saying and doing. If the Holy Spirit points something out that needs changing or correction that's one thing, but don't go there with the devil and let HIM critique your message. What did Paul say? Knowing the refore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;... it was a great motivator of Paul and NOTHING to be ashamed of if it is fostered in a pure heart and anchored in love.

put a trip on you about calling for repentance ?

Hindsight is not 20/20 in this case ?

There is no place for second guessing ?

but don't go there with the devil and let HIM critique your message. ?

NOTHING to be ashamed ?

Why would we ALLOW the enemy of our soul to put a "trip" on us? Why would we ALLOW the enemy of our soul to believe hindsight is ever 20/20? Why would we ALLOW the enemy of our soul to second guess what the Spirit is saying? Why would we ALLOW the enemy of our soul to critique the Gospel? And finally, we are NOT ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God.

I am reminded of Solomon's words, "... 27:5 Better is open rebuke Than love that is concealed. 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

Your first entry with this series was:

In summary, we have a powerless Gospel being preached as 'bad news' with no real signs and wonders and goodness following. We need to put down the bad news that hits people and pick up the good news that heals people. When the bad news don't work, many then compensate by ratcheting up the tone and trying to arm twist folk into getting saved. If that don't work, the denunciations start flying.

What is interesting to me, this series IS an attempt at hindsight. It is an attempt at second guessing, it is an attempt at critiquing. The reason? To put a "trip" on someone.. NO. In order to bring shame?.. NO.

Rather... that we might allow the Holy Spirit to fine tune our delivery, our understanding, our interpretation of the Gospel. If we allow Satan to put a trip on us from your series, then your intended affect has been thwarted. No, review, an inventory, reminiscing, examination of our past is for the intention to repeat that which was correct and to delete that which was not.

As I have mentioned previously, Setting the Trumpet to our mouth is only part of the equation. Hitting the right notes also is involved, knowing how long to hold that note is another, breathing techniques between notes as it is with singing is crucial. And as well WE are not the only members of the band!!! I started playing clarinet in the 5th grade, and when I put down the instrument as a High School Senior I was a far better developed musician. I assure you the "sound" of that clarinet was much different in 1984 than it was in 1978. Same instrument mind you, but the musician had a much better understanding and ability to handle it.

We have been blowing the trumpet with an intensity for a couple years now Robert, far more right notes than wrong I believe

ieve, because it has been fostered with a pure heart and anchored in love as you write. And the Holy Ghost desires that we learn there is more than JUST hitting the right notes even as with the above illustration.

God only has very frail, feeble humanity to deliver His message. And so if and when there is a problem it is NEVER with the Gospel and is always with the Messenger. "IF " there is any shame, it is only with my ignorance, my lack of compassion, my misunderstanding of agape Love and how to filter my delivery through that Love.

“Putting the Goodness and Gladness back in the Gospel?” It never left!! WE DECIDED to REMOVE it from the Gospel. WE decided to “persuade” men rather than the Holy Ghost to persuade them.

Our best,
TonyS

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/8/12 12:51

Quote:
-----There is no place for second guessing if you believe with all your heart you are following the Lord. This does not mean we are to shut out counsel from spiritual believers either. But, I challenge you to look at the BIG picture and think back upon what God was saying and doing. If the Holy Spirit points something out that needs changing or correction that's one thing, but don't go there with the devil and let HIM critique your message.

I was thinking this morning about Paul and the fornicating man in I Corinthians. He leveled upon him a most stern rebuke, but looked back later and in II Corinthians described the terrible feelings he dealt with for having to come off so strong.

But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. (II Corinthians 2:1-5)

Matthew Henry said, "We should always give pain unwillingly, even when duty requires that it must be given." I think Henry is right here. I have found it to be a perpetual attitude of heart. To be reluctant to bring pain and to feel concern afterwards. *For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears...* This is the heart of the apostle. He does not like confrontation with the Saints. Even when he has no other choice- he still does so grieving along the way. I don't think this is "second guessing" though, in the usual sense. To second guess would be to cast doubt on what was said and open the door for the blame to shift from the fornicator to Paul. I know that seems odd, but I have seen it happen. Someone has to be confronted and then the 'confronter' apologizes as if the confrontation should not have taken place at all, when in reality they should have said, "I'm terribly sorry I had to do that." This is an attitude of displeasure at the process of confronting or causing pain.

I think this is why Ravenhill said often that Prophets were tragic figures. They loved the people, but they likewise feared the Lord. They had compassion for the people, but had to level upon the word of the Lord. It is not a pleasant thing when we know it will be a painful word to receive. Never should it be.

Re: - posted by TonyS (), on: 2006/8/12 13:28

Yes, this passage you mention is useful I think. Whenever I read through this area of scripture I always think it similar to a Godly Parent who would have to administer discipline to a child. If the Parent is really interested in growth and not just punishment that parent will take the child in his arms afterwards and embrace them, that child will leave knowing Daddy or Mommy loves them.

This absolutely pictures what I have found so lacking and missing from what is called the “repentance message.” It has been often times a message that leaves the sheep crying, their backside smarting, and the shepherd stays not around to pour in the oil and the wine, with an embrace. I suggest if we would get it right, that shepherds embrace will be the v

ery embrace of God to His sheep !!

tonys

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/8/14 8:21

THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE TOWARDS GOD

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

One writer has translated our passage as, *“this is the duty of all men.”* The duty of all people is to fear God and keep His commandments. This is the answer to Solomon’s own question as we find it in chapter 2 verse 3;

I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

That 'thing' that he discovered, in the final analysis, is to *fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the duty of all men*. There was no joy in the world, no joy in a life of sin, no joy in even an ‘occasional’ sin. How can a man find happiness when the conscience is in him like a scorpion, stinging every hour of the day? (para Ravenhill) As the old hymn says, *“trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”* Free from the penalty of sins and free from Sin’s power, one is set loosed 'to will' and 'to do' his/her duty, which is God's own pleasure.

Sin In ‘Moderation’?

Solomon did not fall overnight. First he had to deal with his *conscience*. The conscience is that inward voice, that unaffiliated member that speaks on behalf of God charging a person to walk in what they believe to be right. A thousand voices without has not the volume or the authority of that one voice within. How shall a man silence this troubling voice within? Here we read of Solomon;

I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine. We need read no farther to now have the full explanation of the future course of his life. Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. (Proverbs 20:1) and again... Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again. (Proverbs 23:29-35)

Adam Clarke states that, *“More iniquity springs from this one source of evil, than from any other cause in the whole system of sin.”* (end quote) Leaven is the elixer that distorts the drinkers of wine. Leaven is as symbol of sin. Both wine and sin are intoxicating. Can either be taken in moderation? Take heed that you understand this one fact, sin often carries with it a spirit of slumber. There is no such thing as 'sin with no side effects.'

A Clear Conscience

A clear conscience is not the same as a ‘numb’ conscience. Sin comes in and at first has a 'numbing' effect, but when the effect wears off and the conscience reasserts itself. Then it happens as Solomon writes in verse 35, *I will seek it yet again*. In this case the ‘it’ is wine, but this holds true for all sin that temporarily circumvents the conscience. This is one of the reasons why sin can be addictive, it is because of the initial numbing effect that it has upon the conscience. The conscience begins to trouble the heart and that ‘troubling’ has to be dealt with somehow. The only way to purge it is through the blood of Christ.

Yet, indulging in sin has a temporary effect that relieves the mind from the weight of the accusing conscience. I have relayed the story in times past of how wolves would be destroyed in the arctic by trappers. They would take a sharp knife and bury it 'blade up' in the ice and place just one drop of blood on the tip. The wolves would smell the blood and begin to lick the blade clean. As their own tongues were severed the taste of that fresh blood only hastened their death. So it is with

ith sin.

Joy cannot rightly flow when the conscience is not affirming or approving of our actions. Can a person have joy and peace when the conscience is at war with intruding sin? When the throne room of the heart is being stormed by the enemy, is there any way to decry, peace peace? Sin is an enemy and the conscience is that inward watchman. Say what you will you will not soon train your conscience to cease performing its God ordained duties. It will take your sleep and your peace of mind until it is satisfied that you have renounced the means of your own death, sin.

The conscience is faithful to make us conscious of what we have done before God. The Holy Spirit also is at work to bring us back into full obedience to the known will of God so that our joy may be full. Imagine this, the conscience rises up, the enemy accuses and the Holy Spirit is dealing all at once. What JOY is there in sin? This is mass confusion! The conscience does not soon lie down. The enemy does not soon cease mocking and pointing the finger. The Holy Spirit is almost relentless in drawing us back to God and OUT of the snare of sin. What a mess of things? What trouble and shake up? What sin could possibly be worth even this much trouble?

The key to a joyful Christian life is walking in complete obedience to the *known* will of God. Your conscience agrees with this statement. Listen for its affirmation when it is said again, *The key to a joyful Christian life is walking in complete obedience to the known will of God*. Your conscience and the word agree, especially when you have been in the word of God in study.

Sin leads to anguish of mind. The conscience seems to provide almost a mental foretaste of Hell itself when we are in disobedience. And its all because God loves us. It has been called the 'sixth sense'. It is as to your heart what pain is to the body. Can a man take fire into his bosom and not feel the burning? So also, man cannot take sin into his life and not feel the heat of the flames. For this cause I believe it is proper to state that what is desperately needed in our times is a return to the truth the God expects His people to live in total obedience to the known will of God and walk before Him in a pure conscience. There is no other way to live a life of joy and peace and fully appreciate what it really is like to be a Child of God in right relationship. Nothing takes the place of Obedience.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/8/17 8:08

THE END OF THE COMMANDMENT

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: (I Timothy 1:5)

The dispensation of God leads to love both to God and man, through faith in Christ. The whole purpose of salvation is man's *reconciliation* to God. You did not join yourself to a creed, you joined yourself to a *person*. Very often religion is reduced to a series of 'do's' and 'don'ts', but this is most unfortunate. God used the illustration of marriage to show the 'mystery' between Christ and the Church. Some in our times have taken hold of this fact and ran it to its wildest extremes, but we must not allow their 'excessive' and 'immoderate' teachings to stigmatize this truth in our minds. We have come into a relationship with God again through Jesus Christ. Would you describe your marriage in terms of what you can or cannot do? Or what you must or must not do? Truly there are these aspects to marriage; but they do not fully represent the nature of the relationship.

Religion alone leaves the heart under the influence of all its vile tempers and evil propensities; FAITH in Jesus Christ purifies the heart. It readies the person to function in a restored relationship with a holy God. It offers a heart of flesh in place of a heart of stone. This brings the nature of the person into harmony with the nature of God. Regeneration removes the spirit of disobedience and gives in its place the Spirit of Obedience, which is the Holy Spirit. As Rev. D.L Burch says, "the Sin moves out and Jesus moves in." This is a complete change in rulership and dominion. A New King is on the throne of the heart.

Religious exercise cannot take away Sin's power or penalty. The Gospel proclaims pardon, through the blood of the Lamb, to every believing *penitent* sinner. That is, to everyone who has surrendered to Christ in humility. This is a heart with a willingness to obey God. Godly sorrow brings a person to this humility that positions the heart to submit to God. Godly sorrow produces a repentance, a turning from sin, in which turning back to sin is no longer considered an option.

The design of God in giving this dispensation to the world is that men may have an unfeigned faith, such as lays hold on

Christ crucified and produces a *good conscience* from a sense of the pardon received. The conscience can only be purged by the knowledge of the blood applied. This truth is all that will allow the conscience to lie down satisfied that all is well with the soul. The Holy Spirit comes in and the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. He whose soul is filled with the Holy Spirit resulting in love to God and man, has a pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith. But these blessings no soul can ever acquire, but according to God's dispensation of faith. (para Adam Clarke)

This is the whole point of the Gospel, that we might be restored to God in reconciliation and might come to know Him. Some want eternal life? But what is eternal life? Is it merely living forever? Is it escaping the wrath to come? Leonard Ravenhill points out in his interview:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

We need to be saved from Sin because Sin and 'sinning' are an affront on our relationship with God. Worldliness in our relationship to Christ is like unfaithfulness in marriage. This is why it is impossible to love God and the world at the same time. This is why it is impossible to 'serve' God and Mammon at the same time. This is why idolatry is as adultery in marriage. God expects faithfulness and when our hearts turn aside after some other thing- that 'turning' damages the relationship. If left unchecked it can be fatal to the soul.

Perhaps this is why Jesus did not tell the woman caught in adultery, "Go and sin less" or that Paul did not tell the thief, "let him that stole steal less", it is because in order to maintain our relationship with God we need to walk away from sin with an attitude of going and sinning no more. Sin is the *antithesis* of love. We don't always view it that way because we are not accustomed to placing ourselves in the shoes of the offended. Sin hurts. Sin hurts someone.

When I was a small child I was sent to a Christian summer camp at a Salvation Army campground. As often happens, the teenagers were giving the 'juniors' (12 and under) a hard time about coming around their dorms. This was a hurtful thing to us because we wanted to hang out with them. It became a sore spot. A few nights later a serious prayer meeting broke out in the junior dorm in one of the rooms. 'Yours truly' (I) was manning the front door stopping the Teens from coming over to see what was going on. "Now, boys, just head on back over to your dorms, this is the junior side and yours is the teen side." At once, and I shall never forget if I live to be 100 years old, a dear elder said in the most solemn and yet soft tone, "That's not brotherly love." I dropped my head, the teens went in and the rest is history.

Do we stop to think about how sin effects others? Do we stop to think about how some of the things we say 'hurts' others? Do we even care that people are human beings and have feelings? Have we become so hard that we can say a cross word to a person and not even bother us? God help us! I think about how Jesus wept. Is it a mark of spiritual maturity that one would no longer weep for others? For their hurts and how we may hurt them? The truth often 'hurts' and we should never not tell the truth as it is to avoid hurting someone (the truth of the Gospel at least). Sometimes pain is a good thing if it gets the healing process started. That is NOT what I am talking about. Everything we say is not always truth. It is not always in the right 'spirit' either.

Do we stop to think about how we have hurt God with our behavior? We all know what it feels like to be hurt. We don't often put the shoe on our foot. Well, guess what, God knew that would happen. And I believe this is one of the main reasons we have a conscience. It almost forces us to put the shoe on OUR foot and feel what the one we hurt is feeling. The heaviness and sorrow. The pain of one kind or another. Those words echo in my mind over and over again, "That's not brotherly love..." In time I began to examine and weigh my words carefully before I spoke them to try to see if those words would come off wrong or be taken wrong. At times I have been better than others, but it has helped me keep from opening my mouth and letting em fly!

Do you have a good conscience towards *man*? When you get down to pray is there a face that comes up before you that you may have offended and you just can't seem to get anywhere in prayer? Maybe you need to make that call or send that letter? One of the greatest problems in Christian Perfection circles, I think, is an attitude of not saying "I'm sorry" or "I apologize." What is behind this? "I'm in perfection- I don't *have* to apologize." Are we blinded by our own perceptions of our own goodness until we can't even admit wrong? Again, don't worry, your conscience will sure let you know. The Holy Spirit will also come alongside and let you know if you have not hardened yourself in that area too much. Keep your conscience pure before God. Keep it pure before man. Be willing to heed its counsel and make amends where need be.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/8/18 8:55

THE DUTY OF ALL MEN

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

What was the finality of Solomon's experience? Sin all but destroyed Solomon's relationship with God. Sin did to Solomon's relationship with God what abuse, neglect, and unfaithfulness will do in a marriage. We have to focus on this. We have to start seeing sin as God sees it. When we sin against God we hurt Him at His heart. We have all been hurt by those we love. Some are familiar with the terror of abuse or the loneliness of neglect? Some have felt the sting of unfaithfulness?

We are not in a relationship with a creed or an inanimate object, we are in relationship with a person, Jesus Christ. Sin is 'personal' between us and God. That is, it is a personal relationship issue. It may have wide reaching effects and hurt many people, but as David said in Psalm 51, "Against Thee alone have I sinned and done this great evil in Thy sight." (para) Notice how personal the repentance and confession was? He did not look on a list of 100 commandments and look down on #37 and say, "Oops, I missed one!" NO! He understood the personal nature of the close relationship he had with God and felt the sin as it really is.

What did he say? "Renew a right Spirit within me." A 'right' Spirit? A right Spirit is the Spirit of obedience. Cast me not away from your presence. This is a pleading for the relationship to continue. "God, all I want is you- take my houses, take my lands, take my dreams, and take my plans" (as the old saying goes). Take anything, but don't take your Holy Spirit from me! This is a man who loves God more than anything else.

Yet, Solomon in the end knew he had lost out with God. He seemed to nearly have gained the whole world, but what about his soul? What about us? What about a 'little sin'? What about 'sin in moderation'? Every sin we commit knowingly is an affront on our relationship with God. Do we respond like David? How did Solomon respond? One of the saddest passages in all the Bible was Eli's response to the prophet when the declaration of judgment was pronounced, "Let the Lord do what seems right to Him" (para). What? What did you say? You mean to tell me you are going to let God just walk out without trying to plead for mercy? Do you sons mean more to you than God? What a most terrible thing. Yet, have we done the same type thing at times? Not really reckoning with what we have done and downplaying the implication? God help us.

Joy stops flowing and conviction fills the void when a true believer sins. Heaviness from the weight of a transgressed conscience saps the happiness of a Christian. It only takes entertaining one sin to awaken the conscience. Evil thoughts (like birds) are flying through the head and we stop shooting them down and they build a nest in our hair. This is why James said that if we offend in one point of the law we are guilty of all, at least that's how the weight of a transgressed conscience levels the crime.

The reaction to the conscience and conviction? WOE is me! WOE is me! What have I done? We do Christians no favors by leading them to believe they can have a 'little sin' in their life and be OK. Why? Because the conscience does not agree with this. The conscience will keep on being the conscience no matter what we do to the Gospel. We cannot alter its make up. We can silence (sear) it or numb it, but we cannot change some basic preprogrammed variables. The main thrust of the conscience? Not ONE known sin can be tolerated to remain. It only lies down when we have FULLY submitted to God.