

Articles and Sermons :: The Need For A New Apprehension Of The Gospel

The Need For A New Apprehension Of The Gospel - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2009/8/8 6:16

I am just going to talk for a moment out of my heart, because I do feel that we are in a very perplexing, but very significant, situation at this time. There is a sense in which it does seem that the Lord is not doing very much. I mean there are not very manifest movements of God on the earth along certain lines in which we look for God to be moving. I do not mean that He is doing nothing, that there is nothing going on. I believe there is, and in parts a very real work of God is going on. But, speaking generally, there is no great movement of God in an outward way spiritually. For a long time such forms of Divine activity seem to have been suspended.

We think back to Wesley, and even to Moody, and then see that at a certain time a whole galaxy of great Bible teachers was raised up. We have all the names of the men of a generation ago. They have all gone. There are no movements like that, and have not been for a long time. Moreover, the situation has changed so much that I do not believe that if all those men came back today, they could meet the situation. Something has happened. The situation has not only changed but it has become much deeper, and the need is for something more than has been during these past generations, something more potent and something deeper. The need is such as to require something from God of a new order. It was there, of course, in New Testament times. I am not thinking of something extra so far as the New Testament is concerned, but I am wondering very much whether this whole matter is not largely one of a new apprehension of what the Gospel is.

We have a very widespread situation the world over today amongst Christians which is an altogether unsatisfactory one, and I think most leaders and responsible people realize that. I think ministers and missionaries are aware that the state of the converts and the Christians is altogether unsatisfactory and inadequate. It is a real question sometimes whether many of them have really been born again. The spiritual life of the Lord's people is a very shallow thing, speaking generally, a very poor thing. And surely today it is manifest that the Church generally is failing to register itself with any impact upon the world situation. Why this apparent hiatus, this suspension of any general and impressive working, any working that is adequate to the situation - God seeming to be doing nothing? Oh, I believe that He is doing something inwardly, but that is not what I am talking about. Why does this situation obtain?

Well, I say, I wonder whether it is not because there has to be a new apprehension of the Gospel. I believe that it really is the demand of a late hour in the dispensation, that we have advanced in this dispensation toward the end so much that the Lord cannot any longer accept the elementary. He must have the mature; He must have the fuller. Everything surely along the line of intensification, as we see it, demands that.

How did God decide to solve the whole problem of this universe after the chaos and ruin resultant from the working of Satan, and men's complicity with him, and the entrance of sin? How was God going to deal with this whole situation? By Himself coming right down in the form of man in terms of sonship and begetting a new race of beings as sharers of His own Divine life; not His Deity but His Divine life, partaking of His own Divine nature, becoming as a family His own moral and spiritual reproduction in the universe.

I say that is infinitely - may I use the word of God? - infinitely ingenious. There is wisdom about that that is profound. Not a working from the outside to try and remedy and patch up a broken down situation, not a dealing with the thing objectively at all, but Himself coming right into it - God incarnate, God manifest in the flesh in terms of sonship; that is, in generic terms, to reproduce after His own kind. That is a secret which God kept hidden through ages and generations. God had that secret.

What is the Gospel? It is Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh in terms of sonship, brought through to glory to generate a new race after His own kind, to bring many sons to glory. That is it in brief. Oh, that is something very much more than getting your sins forgiven; that is very much more than justification by faith. It is that, but it is infinitely more than that, and all the other things included - the deep, deep inner secret of God, how He is eventually going to have triumph in His original purpose. "The faith", according to the New Testament, is sonship, and it is in relation to sonship as an inward, spiritual reality brought about by this work of God in generation which is the occasion of all the conflict.

Yes, the fact of sonship is there through new birth, but sonship is something more than birth; sonship is maturity. It is so clear that the New Testament shows that the continuation unto the full growth of sonship is as vital and as important as the beginning of sonship; that is, the bringing of the Lord's people to full spiritual growth is as important as bringing them to new birth. That is where there has been a breakdown.

Today, and for a long time, evangelical leaders have put all the emphasis, or the main emphasis, upon getting people saved. They are interested in that more than anything else, and that is the direction of their main occupation. With what result? That we see a most unsatisfactory state among Christians, and that too in the face of the fact that the very existence of the New Testament itself is the evidence that to bring converted people to full spiritual growth is as important as bringing them to new birth. Why have we the New Testament, with Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and all the other letters, occupied with the fight of the faith to bring believers to full growth? Every one of them is a battleground. All these letters are battlegrounds, and they all have to do, not with the conversion of the unsaved but the going on of the saved - the terrific fight of sonship. Why? Because the issue is not that babes are going to oust the powers of darkness, but full grown believers. The Church has to come to maturity.

So the Apostle says, "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.....and He gave some apostles, and some, prophets," and so on. What for? "The perfecting of the saints.....till we all attain unto the unity of the faith.....unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:8,11-13). The unity of the faith, the fullness of Christ. You see, that is the thing that comes to light. It is just as important for the seed or the family or the Body to come to spiritual full growth as it is for it to be begotten at all. That is a tremendous thing. The mystery of the Gospel is not just getting people born again. The mystery of the Gospel is the fullness of Christ, and that only begins at new birth. This is the disclosed secret, this Gospel, and it is the occasion of the tremendous, unrelenting conflict, a cosmic conflict with principalities, powers, world-rulers of this darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12). That is where the wrestling goes on.

Beloved, the focal point of the conflict is the spiritual advancement of the children of God toward full growth, and by any means whatever the enemy will seek to interfere with that. He is striking right at the heart of this thing all the time by every means in his power. God will reach His end; He will come in, in His Son in terms of sonship, to take up residence within those begotten of Him, and will grow in them, increase His measure in them, until at last, brought to the unity of the faith, they become a mighty embodiment and revelation of God Himself. Not in Deity, but in what He is spiritually and morally in this universe - conformed to the image of His Son, a living expression of God's own thoughts - to fill His universe. The enemy is out against that, and every little step in that direction is challenged; the spiritual growth is countered all the time. He is striking at God's Son.

Oh, that we could get a fresh glimpse of the immense significance of the Gospel, the Gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ, God's secret! I like to dwell upon that. If you sit down in the presence of the world situation and try to sort it out and find the solution to it, it is beyond us altogether; but all through the ages God has been perfectly at rest about this whole thing, about the issue. He was able to say, I have the secret of the whole thing, I have solved the whole problem, I have the means in hand; in the end My method will absolutely succeed!

And the secret? Why, it is just this: "I will go down Myself in terms of sonship and will generate a new race through faith, and that new race will be brought eventually to spiritual full growth; which simply means that then I shall fill all, I shall occupy all the space; there will be no room for anything else at all." That is the issue for every Christian life. It is whether God is going to fill the whole space or not, or whether we are going to have a bit. All the time that is what is going on.

by T. Austin-Sparks

Re: The Need For A New Apprehension Of The Gospel - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2009/8/8 7:09

What is the Gospel? It is Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh in terms of sonship, brought through to glory to generate a new race after His own kind, to bring many sons to glory. That is it in brief. Oh, that is something very much more than getting your sins forgiven; that is very much more than justification by faith. It is that, but it is infinitely more than that, and all the other things included - the deep, deep inner secret of God, how He is eventually going to have triumph in His original purpose. "The faith", according to the New Testament, is sonship, and it is in relation to sonship as an inward, spiritual reality brought about by this work of God in generation which is the occasion of all the conflict.

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2009/8/8 12:26

Amen! Simple. Biblical. Revealed by the Spirit Of God.

Praise God for the true gospel preached by the apostles.

Re: The Need For A New Apprehension Of The Gospel - posted by anonymity, on: 2009/8/8 20:34

I read this article this morning. I never read articles that people post. This one caught my attention though. I began to read and I thought who is this guy he writes different. It is as if he has a good deal of spiritual apprehension and is speaking from the heart. I found out it was Sparks. I didn't really know who Sparks was though. Then I looked him up and found that he was friends with Nee, Kaung, and Singh. I began to understand a little more. As I read I was blown away by so many things that he said. There is too much to go one by one so I'll just say in general. This is a good word.

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2009/8/9 7:30

What is the Gospel? It is Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh in terms of sonship, brought through to glory to generate a new race after His own kind, to bring many sons to glory. That is it in brief. Oh, that is something very much more than getting your sins forgiven; that is very much more than justification by faith. It is that, but it is infinitely more than that, and all the other things included - the deep, deep inner secret of God, how He is eventually going to have triumph in His original purpose. "The faith", according to the New Testament, is sonship, and it is in relation to sonship as an inward, spiritual reality brought about by this work of God in generation which is the occasion of all the conflict.

This article goes past the overlay of what many say the Gospel is all about to the "eternal purpose" of God in the gospel and why it is an example to the principalities and powers.

How can someone believe that their sins are forgiven and they are justified yet not by the same Spirit given have a witness of these great things such as sonship.

This article is worth being read by all.

Re: The Need For A New Apprehension Of The Gospel - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2009/8/9 8:59

the article was an article published in the magazine "witness of the spirit" but I believe it is a re-write" or a modified version of this chapter from this book, it has a bit more in it, also very worth the read.

(<http://www.austin-sparks.net/english/books/001955.html>) ch 5 fight of faith

There are not a half a dozen mysteries in the New Testament. It is the Gospel of God concerning His Son, and the Gospel is not a system of truth to be preached, the Gospel is a Person, and the power of the Gospel is not that you accept certain things proposed to you about Jesus Christ, but that Jesus Christ comes to reside in you by new birth. That is the Gospel. That, of course, is going back to the very elementary; but oh, that we could get a fresh glimpse of the immense significance of the Gospel, the Gospel of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, God's secret!

Re: The Need For A New Apprehension Of The Gospel - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2009/8/9 9:42

excerpt from the book "the gospel according to Paul"

The Gospel in Eternity Past

Now, if we look at this letter again as a whole, we shall find that the good news, or the good tidings, of the gospel is not only in the Cross of the Lord Jesus - though that is the focal point of it, as we shall see in a moment. The good news, or the gospel, is found to be something very, very much bigger even than the Cross of the Lord Jesus! What is that? It is "the good tidings of God... concerning his Son... Jesus Christ our Lord". The Cross is only one fragment of the significance of Jesus Christ Himself.

So this letter, what does it do? It takes us right into the eternity of the Son of God. This is wonderful, if you grasp it. If this gospel does not save you, I do not know what will. Here we are taken right back into the past eternity of the Son. "Whom

he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29). He must have had His Son, the Master-Pattern, there in view before ever man was created, the eternal, the timeless, Pattern that the Son was: before there was any need of redemption, atonement, the Cross, the Son was the eternal Pattern of God for man. And, mark you, it is so positive, so definite. It is in that tense which means a definite, once-for-all act. "Whom he foreknew, he also foreordained". It is something which was done before time was. That is where the gospel begins.

Yes, we see the Son in His eternity as God's timeless Pattern; and then we have the eternity or timelessness of the redeeming sovereignty. The redeeming sovereignty is included in that. 'He foreordained, He called, He justified, He glorified'. Now these three remaining things are not subsequent. They all belong to the same time - which is not time at all; it is eternity. It does not say that He foreknew and foreordained, and then in course of time He called and He justified and He glorified. You see what you are committed to if you take that view. Most of us have been called and justified, but we are not glorified yet. But it says 'He glorified', in the 'once-for-all' (aorist) tense.

This must mean, then, that when He took this matter in hand in relation to His timeless Pattern, the Lord Jesus, He finished it all in sovereign purpose and intention. It was all rounded off then, so that the marred vessel is an incident in time; a terrible incident, a terrible tragedy, that the vessel was marred in the hand of the Potter; but, for all that, an incident in time. God's counsels transcend all that has come in in time. Dear friend, when the Lord projected the whole plan of redemption, it was not because something had happened calling for an emergency movement to try to save the situation on the spot. He had already anticipated the whole thing, and had got everything in hand to meet the contingency. The Lamb was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). The Cross reaches back over all time, right back over all sin, over the fall, over the first Adam - right back to the eternal Son, before times eternal. The Cross goes back there - to "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world".

What great hope is here! If that is true, if we can grasp that, that is good news, is it not? We make everything of the situation in ourselves which is so hopeless; God makes everything of His Son to meet our hopelessness. And God is not experimenting because something has gone wrong - 'We must find some kind of remedy for this, we must find something with which we can experiment to see if we can meet this emergency; man has gone sick, and we must look round for a remedy.' No; God has already covered it from eternity, met it from eternity, in His Son. It is the gospel, the good news, of God "concerning his Son". This may raise a number of mental problems, but here is the statement of this book. Hope, you see, is not destroyed because Adam falls: hope reaches back beyond man's sin.

You say, 'Then what about the Cross?' Well, the Incarnation and the Cross are only effecting what was settled in eternity - bringing out of eternity into time in a practical way, making effectual for man in his desperately needy condition, that great purpose, intention, design of God concerning His Son. The Cross is the means which lifts right up out of the trough, the valley, of human sin and failure, on to the level of the eternal counsels of God, and restores the even course of that which ultimately is eternally unaffected by what has happened in time. Tremendous good news, that, is it not? The Cross becomes the occasion of faith by which all this is transcended - of course it provides the ground for our faith - and when faith acts in relation to the Cross, what happens? We are brought into Christ: not brought into the Jesus of three and a half years, or even of thirty years, but brought into Christ as representing God's timeless thought for man. Faith brings us into that. That is the good news, "the good news concerning his Son"; the gospel, the good news of "the God of hope".

You see, hope is founded upon God's eternal provision outside of time: and that is a very safe rock upon which to stand! Yes, founded upon the eternal rock of Christ's Sonship, not upon an after-thought and an after-measure to meet something that has happened unexpectedly. Hope is grounded and anchored outside of time. The Apostle, writing to the Hebrews, uses a picture, a metaphor. "The hope... which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil" (Heb. 6:18,19); taking you outside of time, outside of this life, anchoring you there in eternity. How great is the Cross! How great is the message of Romans 6! It takes us right back beyond Moses, Abraham and Adam. It takes us right back past Adam's sin and failure, and the whole race's hopeless condition. The Cross takes us back before it all, and there in the past eternity links us up with what God intended. The Cross secures that. And with the other hand the Cross reaches right on into eternity to come, and says, "Whom he foreknew... them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:29,30). The Cross secures the coming eternal glory. How great is the Cross!

Hope, then, is resting upon the immensity of the Cross. Hope rests upon the fact that Christ, who passed this way, becoming the last Adam, being made sin for us, bearing it all, now raised by God, is seated at God's right hand, and therefore that we, as "in Christ" have been placed beyond any risk of another fall. I always think that this is one of the most blessed factors in the gospel - that Jesus in Heaven now, having been this way and the way of His Cross, says that this Adam will never fail. There will never be another fall. This heredity is secure, is safe, because linked with Him. There is no fear of our being involved in any more falls of that kind, no fear at all. It is indeed a wonderful hope, this gospel of the God of

hope!

Do you see how very vividly the dark picture of hopelessness is drawn? I have only given you the outline, but you look at the details - the terrible picture of the Gentiles and the Jews drawn in the first chapters of this letter, and the hopelessness of the situation for both. Yes, despair indeed - and then over it all written, Hope! The good news of hope stands over it all, in spite of it all, because hope rests upon God having before all things determined upon something which He will carry out, and which He has demonstrated by the Cross of His Son, Jesus Christ. You and I know, do we not, that when faith has acted in relation to the Cross of the Lord Jesus, something begins in us which reverses altogether the natural course of things. Now faith is growing, faith is developing; we are learning the way of faith, we are being enabled to trust God more and more. Everything has changed: obedience is now possible.

And there is another life, another nature, another power, in us, which has made for hope. A contradiction of the Christian faith is a despairing Christian, a hopeless Christian; one who is not marked by this great thing which is pre-eminently characteristic of God - hope. He is "the God of hope". The Lord make this true, that we are filled with hope, "rejoicing in hope". "Patient in tribulation" but "rejoicing in hope" (Rom. 12:12).

Re: - posted by anonymity, on: 2009/8/13 18:17

Quote:

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amen.