

General Topics :: Christian "Happy-Talk"

Christian "Happy-Talk" - posted by couch (), on: 2005/5/31 18:24

Brethren,

An excellent article I found earlier, definitely worth reading as to many of the recent "trends" we need watch out for / be watchman against by grace in the Lord's name.

http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=43946

A PIONEER OF CHRISTIAN HAPPY-TALK
by Brannon Howse

To attract the largest followings possible and because they have bought the lie of the new tolerance, many of America's churches, Christian publishers and Christian radio stations—whether they know it or not—have rejected biblical Christianity and adopted the more popular but bogus gospel of Christian happy-talk. As a result, churches brim with converts committed only to their personal self-actualization, publishers lavish feel-good pabulum on their readers, and the airwaves ring with an emotive rendering of Christianity that would fit nicely alongside the corruptions of faith Jesus chides in the second and third chapters of Revelation.

More than 30 years ago, Vance Havner, in his book "Playing Marbles with Diamonds," offered the following insightful:

The devil is not fighting religion; he is too smart for that. He is producing a counterfeit Christianity so much like the real one that good Christians are afraid to speak out against it. ... We are plainly told in the Scriptures that in the last days men will not endure sound doctrine and will depart from the truth and heap to themselves teachers to tickle their ears. We live in an epidemic of this itch, and popular preachers have developed ear-tickling to a fine art. Today, the angle is to avoid "negative" preaching and accentuate only the positive.

Havner wrote at a time when the work of one of America's most influential pioneers of Christian happy-talk was fomenting what is still a powerful factor in the happy-talk world. A follower of Norman Vincent Peale, Robert Schuller has become the face and voice of today's "Christian" self-esteem movement. Of course, there is nothing Christian or biblical about Schuller's self-idolatry message. It is clearly more akin to New Age thinking.

Nevertheless, Schuller is one of America's most well-known TV preachers and authors, and is pastor of arguably the most famous mega-church of all time. In fact, as pastor of The Crystal Cathedral, Schuller claims to be the father of the mega-church movement. In the April 10, 2002, issue of The Christian Century, Schuller claims, "I launched the mega-church movement through the Institute for Successful Church Leadership in 1970."

Many look to Schuller and his church as the model for achieving mega-church status. Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, Bruce Wilkinson and scores of America's best-selling authors and most well-known pastors have either spoken at Schuller's Institute for Successful Church Leadership or attended the conference. Perhaps this explains why so many of these authors avoid in-depth discussions of man's total depravity, the biblical doctrine of repentance, the moral law, or the need to die to self and reject the lie of self-love.

Mega-churches and many "Christian" books today conspire to make people feel good—to be comfortable with themselves. Preaching the cross and our need to die to self does not meet acceptable Christian happy-talk standards. In an interview with Christianity Today, published on Oct. 5, 1984, Robert Schuller noted:

I don't think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and, hence counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise, than the often crude, untruthful and un-Christian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition.

In his book "Self-Esteem, the New Reformation," Schuller argues that we now have a far more enlightened understanding of what is really going on in our souls: "Lack of self-love or self-esteem, here is a scientific, scriptural doctrine of original sin."

What Bible is he reading from? According to mine, the original sin of Adam and Eve was a choice of desiring what they \hat{A} – the self \hat{A} – wanted over what God desired for them. Adam and Eve succumbed to Satan's lie of human supremacy, which is to love self to the extent of seeing yourself as god. They also believed the favorite falsehood of humanism that they could be the ones to determine truth and to control their destinies. It was the desire to serve "self," not God, that led to disobedience and the original sin.

Later in his book, Schuller reveals the core of happy-talk teaching: "Let us start with a theology of salvation that addresses itself at the outset to man's deepest need, the 'will to self worth.'" But the truth is, man's deepest need is not "self worth" but forgiveness of sins through repentance and belief in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Unless we die to our own will and the desires of self-love and become alive to Christ and His will, there is no salvation.

When describing salvation, Jesus' words never sounded remotely like those of Robert Schuller. That belies the fact that the messages of Robert Schuller and Jesus Christ are in direct conflict. Jesus spoke about self-denial and dying to self, while Schuller promotes self-worship.

In Luke 14, Jesus describes the actions of a true believer and not once does He commend the need to love one's self. To the contrary, He even calls us to hate our own lives:

If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

Luke 9:23-26 is even unhappier in its talk. Jesus enumerates the requirements of His followers, including the need to reject the love of self:

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

Elsewhere, the Bible variously calls the works of self "filthy rags," notes that apart from Christ "I am as a little worm," describes people as "children of wrath" before trusting in Jesus Christ, and claims "we were dead in trespasses and sins." The Bible clearly is not high on the virtues of mankind. It says there is "no one good, no not one." Only God and His Son Christ Jesus are without sin.

To teach self-esteem or man's basic goodness is to say that mankind really was not 100 percent in need of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross. The self-esteem movement says people are perhaps good enough to pass through judgment on their own merit. Even if mankind is bad, we're not all that bad \hat{A} – certainly not totally depraved \hat{A} – only in need of a bit of work on the cross to make up for a few little failings, shortcomings and flaws.

To justify their self-love theology, many cite the biblical admonition that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. They point to Leviticus 19:18 (which Jesus Himself quoted): "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." How, they argue, are we to love our neighbors as ourselves if we do not fully love ourselves? But if you look at Leviticus 19:9-18, the entire list of things God is telling us that we must and must not do falls in the context of how we should treat each other in our daily conduct. The list of requirements never moves from the physical and emotional realm into adjectives or descriptions that involve an inner worship of one another, the affirmation of one another as good, or even as being lovely, lovable or worthy of love. When the admonition is read in context, it is clear that we are to look out for the best interest of others and not simply think only of our own best interests \hat{A} – contrary to the natural, sinful, reflex of every human being.

Robert Schuller, like many of today's liberal pastors, have a strong desire to avoid using the "S" word. In "Self-Esteem, The New Reformation," Schuller writes: "Salvation is defined as rescue from shame to glory. It is salvation from guilt to pride, from fear to love, from distrust to faith, from hypocrisy to honesty." Schuller never uses the word "sin" and says nothing about repentance. This kind of misleading verbiage actually leads people away from salvation, for without acknowledging sin and repenting of that sin, there can be no salvation.

This is quite clear in I John 1:8-10: "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we

say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."

Actually, I should acknowledge that Schuller doesn't forsake the "S" word entirely. He offers a rather creative re-invention that still shields us from the dark reality of our needs when he writes, "So lack of trust or a lack of self-worth is the central core of sin."

Uh Â... no. The central core of sin is disobedience toward God and our being in rebellion against His character and nature. The more we focus on self and self-worth, self-importance or our rights, the deeper our offending sin.

Schuller also writes, "Jesus Christ employed a strategy of evangelism where he never called a person a 'sinner.' They were sinners, of course, but he never told them they were."

I repeat: What Bible is that? Jesus not only told His audience He was calling sinners to repentance, but He called some of them names even less flattering than "sinner." How would today's happy-talk audience like to be addressed as "vipers," "serpents" or "tombs"?

In II Timothy 4:3-4, Paul predicted that we would see false teachers like the happy-talk crowd and that many in the audience would eagerly accept their false teachings:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

Jesus soundly warns us of the punishment that awaits those who add or take away from the Scriptures. He notes that we would be better off to tie a millstone around our necks and jump in a lake rather than to doctrinally deceive children or those that are new to the faith.

Alas, Christian happy-talk has become very profitable. But then what will it really profit anyone to gain the world and lose the soul?

Amen!

Re: Christian "Happy-Talk", on: 2005/5/31 19:43

I wonder how much people would be "amen"ing if I took a message of peace to World Net Daily? If I told the readership of World Net Daily that ALL murder is sin, whether it be abortion, or the foul lies that spawned the war in Iraq. It's all sin, and it's not of Jesus, not of God.

Do I get an amen for that?

Is that happy talk?

Re: Christian "Happy-Talk", on: 2005/5/31 20:01

Quote:
-----They also believed the favorite falsehood of humanism that they could be the ones to determine truth and to control their destinies...

...The self-esteem movement says people are perhaps good enough to pass through judgment on their own merit. Even if mankind is bad, we're not all that bad Â– certainly not totally depraved Â– only in need of a bit of work on the cross to make up for a few little failings, shortcomings and flaws.

Reading this makes me re-commit my life afresh - lest I should in any way miss the extent of my need and the necessity of trusting Him alone to save me.