

News and Current Events :: Are Christians Guilty of "Cheap Grace"?

Are Christians Guilty of "Cheap Grace"? - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2005/11/2 8:47

Are Christians Guilty of "Cheap Grace"?

A recent report from The Barna Group revealed most Americans believe themselves to be Christians, but few base their moral decisions on the Bible. In fact only a few believe absolute truth exists. Interestingly, even the faith community largely addresses morality in divergent ways. The report said just "six out of ten evangelicals (60%)" rely on the Bible as their main source of moral counsel and "only two out of every ten non-evangelical born again adults (20%) do the same."

For several years, Barna has been emphasizing the need for churches to help their members develop a "biblical worldview." The organization defines such a life perspective on the basis of several questions about religious beliefs. The definition requires someone to believe "that absolute moral truth exists; that the source of moral truth is the Bible; that the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches; that eternal spiritual salvation cannot be earned; that Jesus lived a sinless life on earth; that every person has a responsibility to share their religious beliefs with others; that Satan is a living force, not just a symbol of evil; and that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful maker of the universe who still rules creation today."

In previous studies, Barna research demonstrated how a biblical worldview radically alters a person's lifestyle choices, causing them to reject matters like cohabitation, drunkenness, gay sex, profanity, pornography, adultery, gambling and abortion.

Nevertheless, Barna says despite all the debate in recent years about various moral issues and the effort of thousands of churches to strengthen people's moral convictions, "only 5% of adults have a biblical worldview. The percentage varies among faith groups. About half of all evangelicals have such a perspective. Overall, 8% of Protestants possess that view, compared to less than one half of one percent of Catholics." Furthermore, the vast majority of people without a biblical worldview, 88% to be exact, feel they are "accepted by God."

These amazing statistics remind me of a phrase Dietrich Bonhoeffer coined to address the self-delusion of Lutheran Church members in Germany in his day. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer spoke of those who had only experienced "cheap grace." He defined cheap grace as "the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

Well-known biblical commentator Arthur W. Pink once mused: "Never were there so many millions of nominal Christians on earth as there are today, and never was there such a small percentage of real ones We seriously doubt whether there has ever been a time in the history of this Christian era when there were such multitudes of deceived souls within the churches, who verily believe that all is well with their souls when in fact the wrath of God abideth on them."

In his book, *Now for Something Totally Different*, Dr. Stuart Briscoe shared his observations about why many professing Christians today seem to have difficulty translating their profession of faith into practice:

"Our modern day is seeing a startling reaction against authority, an intense distaste for obedience. This movement seems to be a natural outgrowth of our democratic philosophy when it gets out of control. Government is to be of the people, for the people, and by the people, according to the democratic principle, and this can be beautiful as long as it is operating ideally. Today, however, we are beginning to see signs of a breakdown in the process this kind of thinking can result in what the writer of Judges described: 'In those days there was no King in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes' (Judges 17:6). The democratic system, out of control, can degenerate into anarchy. The erosion of authority can accompany the democratic process when confidence in government declines, as it has in our day Obedience is lacking on the family level, in the political realm, on the educational scene, even in the sports arena. And in the church we have a similar situation. People in our churches who profess that God is God and Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, is his Son are also reacting against his authority."

Jesus warned, however, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Obedience is an _expression of a right relationship with God in Christ. It's a relationship of love. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). If one really knows and loves Christ, it's bound to show in their actions. Where there is essentially no obedience there is every reason to question whether Christ actually resides in the heart. The apostle Paul taught: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:9-10). Without question, we are saved by grace through faith alone in Christ and His finished work of redemption on our behalf, but a genuine conversion experience results in good works -- a characteristic obedience to the Lord's commands -- a dynamic and increasingly growing biblical worldview approach to life.

Anything else is just cheap grace. And cheap grace is no grace at all.

Re: Are Christians Guilty of "Cheap Grace"? - posted by habakkuk3 (), on: 2005/11/2 14:22

Well done. We also refer to as "greasy grace." Sorry I'm from the South.

Since I'm reading a couple of William Law's books these days here's another quote from him that was appropriate:

Quote:
-----"No one can know the truth of salvation by a mere rational consent to that which is historically said of Christ. Only by an inward experience of His cross, death, and resurrection can the saving power of the gospel be known. For the reality of Christ's redemption is not in fleshly, finite, outward things - much less in verbal descriptions of them - but is a birth, a life, a spiritual operation."

Re: - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2005/11/2 14:27

Just to make sure no one gives me credit for writing this... here is the link.

(<http://headlines.agapepress.org/archive/10/242005mc.asp>) <http://headlines.agapepress.org/archive/10/242005mc.asp>