

The Chief Danger of the 21st Century

When backsliders, hypocrites and the halfhearted seeker among us are made to feel comfortable instead of convicted, soothed instead of smitten, pampered instead of pricked, then something is terribly wrong.

The holy fire of God is to burn so brightly in the church that it allows no room for indifference so that hypocrites will not be able to stay and the true seekers will not be able to remain unchanged.

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:6-9).

These are the strongest of words penned by the apostle Paul through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the Galatian Christians. Twice Paul declares a terrible curse on those who pervert the real gospel of Christ.

One of the great tragedies of the modern Western gospel has been the accentuation of the blessings and benefits of salvation to the exclusion of other components of the cross. There is a very large movement that is sweeping through many churches today that major on life-enhancement, self-help and self-esteem without hardly ever confronting sin and the works of the flesh. Sadly lacking from this sugar-coated gospel are heart repentance, holiness and the empowering grace of God to

live in obedience to His demands.

The preachers of this smooth, soft gospel may frequently speak of forgiveness, but rarely do we hear a clear and definitive call for surrender in true repentance. They may even speak of the blood of Christ to cleanse us from our sins, but rarely do we hear of the necessity of that same holy blood to appease the wrath of God against sinners.

Frequently we may hear of how Jesus died to make us righteous, but rarely do we use God's holy Law to strip the sinner of his self-righteousness. We may often hear of the need to gain the glories of heaven, but rarely of the need to shun the horrors of hell.

At times we may hear of the resurrection of His power (although in many circles that is rare, too), but rarely do we hear of the fellowship of His sufferings. Frequently we hear of the good life we can have now, but rarely do we hear warnings of the judgment to come. And why don't we hear more of the latter? Because we don't want to offend anyone.

The offense of the cross has been virtually removed from our gospel.

What Salvation Army founder William Booth prophesied more than a century ago is increasing at an alarming rate in our day:

"The chief danger of the 20th century will be:

- Religion without the Holy Ghost
- Christianity without Christ
- Forgiveness without repentance
- Salvation without regeneration
- Heaven without hell
- And politics without God."

The 20th century has already passed, and things don't seem to be improving at all in the 21st century.

A new gospel has been produced from the ruling philosophy of the day that says, "If it works, it must be better. If our message adds to our number, if it comforts the people instead of offending them, if it makes them happy, if it keeps them coming to our meetings and keeps them giving to our causes, then it must be good." The results are what count.

This dominating school of thought regards anyone successful as long as they get the job done and accomplish the goals—in this case, growing the church and adding to its membership.

The proponents of this other gospel reason, "More people and more money equal success." It doesn't really matter how they accomplish their goals, as long as they do. In this philosophy God becomes a means to an end, a useful God to help them attain the desired success.

Others, to sound even more persuasive, may say, "More people means more salvations," but are they really getting saved? Or "More money means a greater propagation of the gospel," but is it the real gospel?

The constant popular emphasis on making the gospel relevant to our culture is both obnoxious and misguided because it's based in the error that modern people must be reached on the humanist level of their self-interest—that they are otherwise incapable of patiently hearing the gospel before becoming offended by its demands for righteousness and holiness. The church must clearly defeat that error by showing that the real gospel is "the power of God unto salvation" for all people, for all time.

If we do not restore the true preaching of the gospel to this generation, the next generation will battle moral anarchy and societal decay never witnessed before in our land. It is happening now! Without strong gospel preaching, the church is destined to only be a phantom of what it was in its earliest beginnings, lacking the true power, endurance and character to

influence the world for God.

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