

THE TRUE GOSPEL AND THE FALSE

Zac Poonen

Christians are generally speaking, categorized into two groups as follows:

- (1) "Roman Catholics" and "Protestants" - depending on birth.
- (2) "Episcopal" (conformist) and "Free church" (non-conformist) - depending on church-pattern.
- (3) "Born again Christians" and "Nominal Christians" - depending on an "experience";
- (4) "Evangelicals" and "Liberals" - depending on doctrine.
- (5) "Charismatics" and "Non-charismatics" - depending on "speaking in tongues".
- (6) "Full-time Christian workers" and "Secular workers" - depending on profession.

There could be other such categorizations too. But none of these categorizations deal with the root of the problem that our Lord came to solve.

Many know that "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor.15:3). But many do not know that the Bible says that Christ also died "that we should no longer live for ourselves but for Him" (2 Cor.5:15).

A more Scriptural way of categorizing Christians therefore would be as follows :

- (1) *"Those who live for themselves" and "Those who live for Christ"; or*
- (2) *"Those who seek their own" and "Those who seek the things of Christ" or*
- (3) *"Those who seek earthly things first" and "Those who seek the kingdom of God first"; or*
- (4) *"Those who love money" and "Those who love God". (Jesus said it was impossible to love both - Lk.16:13)*

But I have never heard of such a categorization being used. This categorization deals with the Christian's inner life and private walk with God, whereas the methods mentioned earlier deal with the external details of his life. Yet it is in this latter way that heaven categorizes Christians. And if that be the case, then this is the only categorization that matters! In this method, others cannot categorize us. We have to categorize ourselves - for no one but we ourselves know our inner motivations and desires. Even our wives may not be aware what we are living for.

Our Lord did not come primarily to give people a doctrine, or a church-pattern or to make them speak in tongues or even to give them an experience!

He came to "save us from sin". He came to lay the axe to the root of the tree. And the root of sin is : Being centered in ourselves, seeking our own and doing our own will. If we do not permit the Lord to axe and uproot this "root" from our lives, we will be Christians only superficially. Satan may however deceive us into imagining that we belong to a higher class than other Christians, because of our doctrine or our experience or our church-pattern!

Satan doesn't care even if we have the right doctrine, experience and church-pattern, so long as we continue to "live for ourselves" (This, by the way, is just another phrase for "living in sin"!!). Christendom today is filled with Christians who seek their own and live for themselves, who are yet convinced that God views them as superior to other Christians, merely because of doctrinal differences or church-pattern or "experiences". This shows what a great work Satan has succeeded in doing in Christendom.

In John 6:38, our Lord said that He came from heaven to earth:

(1) To deny His human will (that He had acquired, when He came to earth as a Man), and (2) To do the will of His Father, as a Man. Thereby He became our example.

Throughout Jesus' earthly life -- during all His 33½; years - He denied his own will and did His Father's will. And He told His disciples clearly that those who wanted to be His disciples would have to go the same way. He came to hit at the root of sin in our lives - "doing our own will" - and to deliver us from that.

In the realm of science, for thousands of years, man made the mistake of imagining that the earth was the center of the universe. It looked like that to human eyes - because the sun, moon and stars did indeed appear to be revolving around the earth once every 24 hours. It took the courage of a man like Copernicus to question this popular notion, just about 500 years ago, and to show that it was utterly false and that the earth was not even the center of the solar system, leave alone the universe. The earth, he showed was created to be centered in the sun. As long as man had the wrong center, his scientific calculations and deductions were wrong - because his center was wrong. But once man discovered the right center, then these calculations and deductions turned out right.

It is the same with us when we remain "self-centered" instead of being "God-centered". Our understanding of the Bible and of God's perfect will (our calculations and deductions) will then be wrong. But just as men were convinced for over 5000 years that they were right (as we saw above), we too may imagine that we are right! But actually, we will be 100% wrong.

This is what we see even among many "good Christians" today. They have so many different interpretations of the same Bible - and yet each one is convinced that his interpretation alone is right and everyone else's is wrong. The others, they will say are "deceived". Why is this so? Because they've got their center wrong.

Man was created to be centered in God and not in himself. And when Christians have got their center wrong, their "gospel" will be wrong too. Basically, there are only two gospels being preached today - one man-centered and the other God-centered.

The man-centered gospel promises man that God will give him everything he needs to make his life on earth comfortable and will also give him a seat in heaven at the end of his life. Man is told that Jesus will forgive all his sins, heal all his diseases, bless and prosper him materially, solve all his earthly problems, etc., etc.

Self still remains at the center of such a man's life, and God revolves around him - as his servant - to answer his every prayer and to give him whatever he wants!! All that he has to do is "believe" and "claim every material blessing in Jesus' Name"!!

This is a false gospel, because no mention is made of "repentance". Repentance is what John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, Peter and all the apostles preached first of all. And repentance, unfortunately, is what is not preached today, even last of all!!

The God-centered gospel, on the other hand, calls upon man to repent. It explains that "repentance" means:

Turning FROM Self as the center of one's life, from doing one's own will, from walking along one's self-chosen way, from loving money, and from loving the world and the things in the world (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life), etc., and

Turning TO God, loving Him with one's whole heart, making Him the Centre of one's life and doing His will henceforth etc.,

Faith in Christ's death on the cross can forgive a man his sins only when he has repented. Then he can receive the power of the Holy Spirit empower him to deny himself daily so that he can live a God-centered life. This is the gospel that Jesus and the apostles preached.

The false gospel makes the gate wide and the way broad (easy to walk along, because one does not have to deny one's Self or stop living for one's own interests or stop seeking one's own gain). Millions attend meetings where such a false "gospel" is preached. And many enter through this gate and walk along this way, imagining that it leads to life. But it actually leads to destruction. The evangelists of this gospel however gloat in, and report about the large numbers of people who "raised their hands and made decisions for Christ" in their meetings!! But it is all a deception. Although some are indeed genuinely converted in such meetings, because of their sincerity, many such "converts" end up becoming "twofold children of hell" (Matt.23:15) - deceived about their true state.

The true gospel however, makes the gate small and the way narrow - not smaller or narrower than Jesus Himself made it, as some "super-spiritual" cultists do, but just the same size as Jesus made it. Few there be, that find this way to life. There is not much for the evangelists of this gospel to report about, and the statistics are not impressive. But this gospel leads people to the Lord Jesus and to heaven.

"Be careful how you listen. Whoever obeys what he has heard, to him more light and understanding will be given. But whoever does not obey what he has heard, even what light and understanding he thinks he has will be taken away from him." (Paraphrase of Luke 8:18).

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

The True Gospel And The False - English

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For further details, please contact :

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CENTRE

40 DaCosta Square,
St.Thomas Town,
Bangalore - 560 084. INDIA

Phone : (91)-(80)-25477103

Email : cfc@cfcindia.com web : www.cfcindia.com