



Crossless Christianity

By Steve Gallagher

They have winsome personalities. Their message is positive—even encouraging. Thousands throng into their sanctuaries every weekend. Their doctrinal beliefs are orthodox—at least on paper. What’s more, multitudes of “unchurched” lost souls are attending services and hearing the gospel preached every week. The “seeker-friendly” model of reaching unbelievers has been extremely effective.

Their success has come in large part through adherence to certain marketing strategies found in the business world. One of the key principles that governs the “seeker-sensitive” movement is that pastors should tailor their message to what their congregations want to hear. One such pastor even polled his people to find out what they were looking for in a church.

One of the common denominators found operating among all “seeker-sensitive” pastors is their focus upon the positive aspects of God and Christianity. To put it in modern colloquialism: “You win more flies with honey than vinegar.”

Christian marketing experts have discovered that unsaved people are drawn to a message that emphasizes the love of God and de-emphasizes His judgment. The truth is that people simply don’t want to hear confrontive preaching. What they *will* follow is a Christian model that is “positive and uncondemning” and doesn’t make demands. But how does that line up with Scripture or the model of the early Church?

When Peter gave his Holy Spirit-empowered message to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost, he accused them of murdering the Messiah. Luke wrote that “they were pierced to the heart.” (Acts 2:37) When they asked him what they should do, he told them to repent. Three thousand people were saved that day!

The gospel presentation offered by those in the “seeker-friendly” movement may enjoy the same numerical successes, but notice the difference in what is presented by the following “prayer of salvation” offered by one of their well-known authors.

“Do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ? If you aren’t sure of this, I’d like the privilege of leading you in a prayer to settle the issue.

“Dear God, I don’t want to waste the rest of my life on the wrong things. Today I want to take the first step in preparing for eternity by getting to know You. Jesus Christ, I don’t understand it all, but as much as I know how, I want to open my life to You. I ask you to come into my life and make yourself real to me. Thank you. Amen.”

“If you just prayed that prayer for the very first time, I congratulate you. You’ve just become a part of the family of God.”

Huh? While this may sound appealing on the surface, where is the gut-wrenching examination of their hearts and lives? (II Corinthians 13:5) Where is the acknowledgement of sin and rebellion? (II Samuel 12:13) Where is “the sorrow that is according to the will of God [which] produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation...”? (II Corinthians 7:10) Where is the true repentance that dethrones Self as the master of the person’s life and bows in submission to the lordship of Christ? (Luke 9:23-24) Where is the commitment to follow Christ wherever He leads, to do whatever He commands, to obey His will at any cost? (Luke 14:26-27) Isn’t this a clear-cut example of what the Lord said during Jeremiah’s time? “They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ but there is no peace.” (Jeremiah 6:14)

Multitudes may be flocking around these teachers, but they are not entering the kingdom of God. They are simply propagating the lie that a person can be saved without really repenting of sin and renouncing his life of self-will.

“What many churches are offering America is a new religion that guarantees no hell and requires no holiness,” lamented Thomas Trask in his farewell speech as General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God. “It is a limp, spineless Christianity that does not confront sin for fear of being judgmental. It is an impotent gospel that tells people everything is okay. We are more concerned with acceptance of men, than we are about pleasing God.”

The Message of the Cross

If there is one thing that is certain about Satan it is that he will continually try to cheapen the gospel and offer in its place a cut-rate version of his own. Yes, the devil offers a gospel that makes no demands, expects no sacrifice, and yields no eternal rewards—except eternal separation from God!

True Christianity has a value and preciousness of which these spiritual amateurs know nothing. When I think of all of the true saints down through the ages who have earnestly sought God with all their hearts; who have faced “the dark night of the soul” to come into a real relationship with Christ; who have overcome the lusts of their flesh rather than cater to them; who have bravely resisted the enticements of the world; who have humbled themselves before God and man; who have selflessly laid down their lives in Christ’s service; who have spent long hours on their knees interceding for lost souls; what am I to think of the cheap, self-centered “Christianity” these hucksters peddle?

Yes, the emblem of our religion is the Cross—the very thing the “feel good” preachers and “seeker-sensitive” pastors avoid at any cost. This is precisely what the Apostle Paul was referring to when he wrote, “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (I Corinthians 1:18) What they don’t seem to understand is that without the Cross, there is no divine blessing, no forgiveness and no salvation. It is all an illusion.

Could it be that behind the plastic smiles, shallow personalities and \$2,500 suits these are spiritual cowards who are in it for themselves? Is it possible that they don't understand the Cross because they have never been to it themselves? Are these men "enemies of the cross?" (Philippians 3:18) Could they be leading multitudes into hell? Are they the teachers who will give people what their "itching ears" want to hear? (II Timothy 4:3) Only God knows the answer to such questions. One thing we do know for certain because Jesus said it: "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come!" (Luke 17:1)

My dear reader, can I interject a personal message here? I have purposely pounded away at the hawkers of this false gospel with my words because so much is at stake: thousands of souls stand at the brink of eternal destruction. I am not trying to be harsh; I am attempting to expose the lies that are being propagated in our day.

The painful fact of the matter is that there are many false teachers at work in the Church today. Sin and deception seem to be peaking just as the Bible foretells. Is it possible that we really are approaching the End?

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