

Series: Great Questions – week 2

CDOBC – beginning on 10/18/09

Title: “The Gospel’s Effect”

Genesis 4:9 ~ October 25, 2009

OBJECTIVE: To help us realize the Gospel is not only for the salvation of sinners, but for the societal help it brings all humanity.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Welcome Class – 10/28
- Annual mtg – Nov. 1st after 2nd service
- Fall Festival – TKU to Sheryl Beyer – and all who served!
- Operation Christmas Child

Opening Prayer

The Wheaton Declaration

<http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/docs/wd66/b01.html>

International Consultation on the Relationship between evangelism and Social responsibility

<http://www.lausanne.org/grand-rapids-1982/grand-rapids-1982.html>

(Lösön movement – started in 1974 in Lausanne, Switzerland)

Turn to Genesis 4:9

Are you your brother’s keeper? Or, to expand the question – are you / me – are we responsible to care for our fellow human beings? Are we obligated to be aware of them and their needs – and even further – to try and meet their needs?

I propose to you that the answer to this question is ‘YES’ – and that the Church’s failure to practice this has caused the world to look more critically upon the Church. The world sees a disconnect between our words – “Love one another” – and our actions – especially the words and actions of those of us in Bible believing churches.

This was not always so. In the early Church – we read in the book of Acts of the benevolent and loving concern Christians had for others. It's true that at times the Church sinned greatly and was responsible for some inhumane treatment of human beings, but the majority of Church history is marked with great social concern and action. This was certainly true for the years following the Reformation; the Church was truly a light in a dark world – and not only spiritual light, but the light of God's love measured out in practical ways.

Over the centuries, the Church has lessened human suffering in countless ways. Medical innovations brought to developing nation, agricultural help to feed the hungry, reforming and jump-starting struggling economies (see introduction of coffee and cocoa into Basel which revolutionized the economy of Ghana), elimination and compassionate treatment of diseases such as smallpox, malaria, leprosy, and AIDS, the introduction of pure water technologies to hurting people, holding tyrannical governments in check from exploiting native people groups, abolishing forced labor, children from forced labor, little girls from temple prostitution in the East, humane treatment for prisoners, abolishment of the slave trade, establishment of the first settlement of freed slaves in Sierra Leone (1787), mining conditions improved, fought the practice of foot binding, combated the practice of widow burning and the opium trade in India, helped establish trade unions to protect the rights and safety of workers in the 1800's, and the Church through it's missionaries and the influence of Christians around the world has in various societies effected change which has in many cases minimized the more evil aspects of humanity and promoted more positive social civilizations which have raised the level of human respect, dignity and decency.

Dr. R. Pierce Beaver *Christian Mission and Social Justice*, Introduction, pg. 7-9, 1978.

Anthony Ashley Cooper – elected to British Parliament in 1826 – his biographer said of him, “No man has in fact ever done more to lessen the extent of human misery, or to add to the sum total of human happiness.” (Involvement: Being a Responsible Christian in a Non-Christian Society, by John Stott, p. 22-23, quoting Georgina Battiscombe, *Shaftesbury*, a biography of the 7th Earl 1801-1885 (London: Constable, 1974), p. 334)

Who can deny the great social reform led by the great British Parliamentarian William Wilberforce who tirelessly worked for twenty six years to outlaw the slave trade and slavery in Britain and eventually passed the Slave Trade Act of 1807, followed by the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 – which was passed just days before his death?

The ministry of John Wesley was not only one of great spiritual revival, but one of great social concern and action.

So why are so many churches not involved now with social work like they once were? What happened to cause so many Bible-believing churches to turn their attention away from the physical and social needs around them and focus only on the spiritual needs?

The reasons are many – part of it was to defend the Gospel from being watered down – partly due to pure selfishness. But whatever the reason, we must look forward and fix our eyes on the needs around us as God sees the needs around us.

Understand the full effect of the Gospel.

Personal Reformation / Regeneration - Salvation

Societal Reformation – Service

Christianity that focuses only on the spiritual needs of a person but neglects the physical needs of a person will lack authenticity and integrity. Why? Because it violates Jesus' model of ministry and it violates the heart of God towards people. God is not only concerned of the spiritual welfare of humanity, but also for their physical well-being and their communal well-being (political, governmental structures).

Reasons we should be our “brothers keeper” – Our concern and love for humanity is based on: Our view of God...

God is over *faith* and *nature*.

We too often limit God to religion. John Stott says that, “*Our God is often too small because he is too religious.*”

(Involvement: Being a Responsible Christian in a Non-Christian Society, by John Stott, p. 36-37)

We limit God to working within the confines of our spiritual programs, within the walls of church buildings, and see His work only in religious books or religious songs. But God is much bigger than our church – and much bigger than the Christian community as a whole! He is God over all things – including nature – and nature includes all of humanity.

James 1:27

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

James 2:14-17

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

Another way to put this is that God is the God of creation and of the covenant. His interests go beyond the spiritual dimension of His commands – and they extend to the welfare of all His creation.

Israel was God’s chosen nation – but over time they twisted God’s choosing of them into a selfish and prideful attitude and they began to think they were better than the other nations. However, God chose them out of His grace – not because they somehow deserved to be chosen! Abraham was a heathen worshipping false gods when God called Him. The whole purpose of choosing Israel was for them to be a ‘light’ to the nations – and ultimately the “source” of the Messiah – the “Light of the world” (Ex. 19).

God desires *justification* and *justice*.

God is not only concerned with the justification of sinners, but with justice in our sinful world.

Ps. 146:7-9; Amos 2:4-8

Isaiah 58:6-7

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter--when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?”

Our view of humanity...

All humanity is made in God’s image.

If you believe Scripture when it tells us that human beings are unique in all of the creation – and that we have been created with the image of God, then how you treat other human beings will reflect this belief.

- If you ignore the poor and needy – you cannot say you believe we are all created in the image of God.

- If you are racists toward others, you don't believe we are all created in the image of God.
- If you refuse to care about the oppressed in our world, then you do not really believe we are created in the image of God.

The truth that we are all created in God's image is not simply a doctrinal truth, but it should be a truth that *informs* our mind, it should *transform* our heart, and *reforms* our actions from selfishness, self-interest and self-serving, to selfless serving and focus on others.

Our view of Christ...

The *incarnation* should motivate us to *discomfort*.

The truth is that serving your fellow man or woman can be uncomfortable and intimidating. When our family took a missions trip to Ecuador in 2005, when I was able to take some mission trips to the inner-cities of L.A., Chicago, and San Francisco, we were uncomfortable and stretched out of our comfort zone. These are not feelings and situations that we normally gravitate to.

But, when we look at Jesus – and what He gave up at His incarnation – the pleasures and safety of Heaven – and He tells us “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” (John 20:21), and we are commanded throughout the N.T. to be like Christ – what options do we have but to become uncomfortable? Certainly, if it was not too big of a leap for God to jump into our skin, then can we ever claim that we are too good to walk alongside another human being who is suffering?

Our view of salvation...

Faith and *love* cannot be separated.

Sola Fide – Faith Alone – a trumpet call of the Reformation. This is a truth that we stand upon – and we are prepared to die for this truth. But many Christians are guilty of proclaiming faith in Christ and failing to love those He loves! Faith Alone to them has meant just that...Faith Alone – without love!

Remember, love is a verb – your love can be observed by your actions.

1 John 3:17-18

“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”

You can't say you love someone and then neglect them or act in a way that hurts them. We stand on Faith Alone – but may our faith never be alone – devoid of the love of God for our fellow man.

Our view of the Church...

The Church has a *double-identity*.

“The church is the only cooperative society that exists for the benefit of nonmembers.” – William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury 1942-1944

The primary purpose of the Church is to bring glory to God. Most see this done through the worship of the Church – through the praises of God's people and the preaching of God's Word. But it's also done through the many ways the Church can offer a touch of God's love to the world through ministering to the needs of the world. The greatest need of the lost world is of course their spiritual need of Christ, but we cannot neglect their physical needs.

Jesus - speaking of helping the poor and imprisoned:

Matt. 25:40

“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’

Luke 10:29 – parable of the Good Samaritan

Lev. 19:18

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”

Mark 12:31

“The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

Gal. 5:13-14

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Application

“...if we turn a blind eye to the suffering, the social oppression, the alienation and loneliness of people, let us not be surprised if they turn a deaf ear to our message of eternal salvation.” (Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment, Section 4)

African proverb...an empty belly has no ears.

Employ the full effect of the Gospel...meet the spiritual and physical needs of the world.

Phil Tullar – a member of our missions committee – sharing about the Typhoons that have hit the Philippines in the last 3 ½ weeks – and the humanitarian needs we can help with.