

The Harvest is Plentiful

Lesson 13: The Gospel Converts the Whole Person, Part 2

Using God's Truth to Inform and Humble the Mind

- I. Two extremes in Christian circles.
 - A. All head knowledge.
 1. The right words. The right answers. An intellectual grasp and mental assent to the Bible and its golden rule but no personal trust in the person and work of Christ as Saviour.
 2. Faith is not a casual acceptance of the truth about Jesus; it's not a cold, empty rationalism that simply gives intellectual assent to facts.
 - B. Little head knowledge.
 1. Biblical truths are held with a measure of conviction, but not in a foundational sense. Rather, *firsthand emotional experiences* serve as the criteria and content of faith.
 2. If the mind is never made to bow to the authority of God's Word and thoughts in Scripture, then it will continue on its rebellious course of autonomy and anthropocentrism.
 - C. "If the *content* of the gospel is Jesus Christ, then the *intention* of the gospel is to bind the mind of the unbeliever to the authority of the New Testament and to the Lordship of Jesus Christ."
 - D. This reminds us that there are three aspects to saving faith and all three are necessary to genuine conversion: a right *knowledge* of the facts of the gospel, an *acceptance* of the truth of the facts of the gospel, and a confidence and *trust* in the facts of the gospel for one's personal reconciliation with God (*notitia, assensus, fiducia*), Rom 10.13-14.
 1. Since *Christ* is the content of the gospel, saving faith is *knowing* the facts about Him, *bowing* before those facts as true and trustworthy, and then personally *entrusting* oneself to what their truthfulness demands, namely, faith, repentance, and new obedience.
- II. The Balance: Thinking God's Thoughts After Him NOT Judging God's Ways
 - A. Our minds are not to be bypassed in our Christian faith, but neither are they to stand in judgment over our Christian faith. Rather, the mind is to be taken captive by and surrendered to the truth of God in His Word, 2Cor 10.5.
 1. Faith and reason are not incompatible, but faith is primary to reason because only by humble faith can we come to see and accept God's Word as THE TRUTH, infallible, inerrant, inspired, entirely trustworthy, *the only infallible rule given by God to teach us what we are to believe and how we are to live*, WSC 2; 1Cor 2.12-16.
 2. To deny our rationality is to deny our humanity (*imago dei*) and behave like a beast without understanding. The mature are *rational*—using their minds to know, learn, study, and understand the things revealed to us by God in His Word, Heb 5.11-14; 1Cor 14.20; 1Pet 2.2.
 - B. As a result of the fall into sin, our minds are fallen, corrupt, self-deceived, blind, and ignorant. By nature, we can't reason our way to God, we can't receive and assent to the truths of God, and we can't come to the right conclusions morally. Our minds are not neutral. They're at enmity with God and His truth.
 1. By nature, we don't interpret any facts/evidence aright, because by default we begin with our sinful self as the center of all knowledge and judge of all reality.
 2. The proper function of the mind is to acknowledge, assent to, and trust in God's revelation to us, WSC 1. But because of our fallenness, we sit in judgment on God and His ways and we suppress the moral implications of His incontrovertible truth, Rom 1.18-25.

3. By nature we're committed to being mentally autonomous. Thus, one of the most critical parts of repentance is to cast down our vain imaginations and proud thoughts of ourselves and cast ourselves at God's feet as blind, ignorant, self-deceived fools, who know nothing as we ought and are ready to confess and acknowledge Christ as our Teacher.
- III. As we share the gospel, we're not to encourage people to "stop thinking and start believing." Rather, we invite them to bring their minds to Scripture, to open their minds to God's revelation, and to pray that He may instruct them in the way they should go.
- A. The content of the gospel assumes we're going to *engage* with it using our minds. But He who is Himself that content, goes on to demand that we *bow before that content as truth* and ultimately *entrust ourselves to it for our peace with God*.
 - B. Thus we must forsake any kind of evangelism that either overly exalts the mind or unduly neglects it. Rather, we must *proclaim* the good news of Jesus Christ to the minds of our hearers. And as we do, we must pray to God that their hearts and wills will be further engaged by the same Spirit who opened their minds in the first place, Rom 10.13-17.