

Faith, Works & the Holy Spirit

by Dave Hunt

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting Christ alone for salvation, without relying on works or human effort, and the need for a return to biblical fundamentals to avoid compromise and ecumenism.

Scripture: Isaiah 42:8, Matthew 22:21, Mark 16:15, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 2:1, Ephesians 2:9, Revelation 20:1

Topics: "Sound Doctrine", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Dave Hunt addresses the spiritual climate in various countries, highlighting the challenges faced by Christians in Eastern Europe with the temptation of materialism and the rise of false doctrines like the New Age movement and cults. He emphasizes the importance of staying true to biblical fundamentals and sound doctrine amidst a crisis of faith within the church, where experiences are valued above truth and a false 'faith' is promoted. Hunt warns against the dangers of compromising the gospel for political and social action, urging a return to God's truth without compromise.

Transcript

In our recent series of meetings in Switzerland, Germany, Poland and Russia my wife, Ruth, and I saw again that the spiritual climate is much the same worldwide. Everywhere we found joyful, victorious Christians and good evangelical churches but they are a small minority. Seventy-five percent of Russians claim to be Russian Orthodox (the Eastern counterpart of Catholicism), yet 63 percent deny the existence of God! It is not much better in Western Europe. The prophesied apostasy is deepening everywhere.

Christians in Eastern Europe now face the previously unknown temptation of materialism. Once-persecuted believers are succumbing to the love of money, now that anyone may possess all that ingenuity and hard work can acquire. An emerging class of entrepreneurs has created a new Anglicized word in Eastern Europe: "beeznessman." Pray for Christians in former communist lands to resist this new temptation to ape the western ideal of the successful man and megachurch!

Dissolution of the Iron Curtain opened the door to every false doctrine and _ practice we exposed in The Seduction of Christianity. In both East and West the New Age movement and every cult, including Satanism, are rampant. Thankfully, in every country we found "Bereans" who receive The Berean Call. Their expressions of gratitude for the warnings and teaching it provides were encouraging . Heresies we expose here quickly spread everywhere. American church leaders, through radio and TV, books and speaking tours, disseminate worldwide every new toad tram Benny Hinn to Rodney Howard Browne along with the well-entrenched errors of Christian psychology, Peale/Schuller positive/possibility thinking,

I-Hagin-Copeland positive confession, inner healing, visualization and ecumenical "unity."

There is an international crisis of faith within the church that is changing what it means to be a Christian. God's Word is neglected, experiences valued above truth, a false and selfish "faith" is promoted, and sound doctrine and correction are despised as "divisive" and "unloving." A subtle and appealing error is spreading worldwide. One example is Pat Robertson's "Christian Coalition," which joins evangelicals, Catholics, Mormons, Jews and even Moonies in political action. Christianity is being reduced to traditional morality and conservative politics minus the gospel.

The Great Commission (to "preach the gospel to every creature" - Mk 16:15) has become the Christian mission (to morally reform secular society)-a mission that anyone may join who affirms "traditional morals." One must not push the gospel on partners for that would break up the political /social-action coalition. Signers of the document, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (ECT), which we analyzed and vigorously opposed (see May 1994 TB C), acknowledged that it grew out of working together in conservative political and moral causes. Here we confront again a controversy that will only grow in importance: what about Roman Catholicism?

J. I. Packer (like Charles Colson), in a four-page Christianity Today article, justified signing ECT even though he admits that evangelicals and Catholics have considerable "differences about salvation and the church...." Says Packer, we must together seek "to re-Christianize the North American milieu...[and] rebuild the ruins...[of] North American culture 2 In fact, no such "mission" was ever assigned by Christ or pursued by early Christians!

Promoting the same error, Christianity Today declared that ECT "should have been prepared and signed by all evangelicals three decades ago." Senior Editor Kenneth S. Kantzer wrote, "With the spread of moral rot that destroys the roots of a free and just society, we evangelicals need to close ranks with our Catholic neighbors. And with Mormons, conservative Jews, and secularists who share our values...." 3 Try to imagine Jesus or Paul in such an alliance!

The Roman Empire was utterly corrupted in government and society, yet Christ never addressed that fact. His only mention of Caesar was in response to the question of paying taxes:

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's". (Mt 22:21)

Nor did Christ ever address the evil of the local ruler, Herod. He rebuked the religious leaders for corruption and heresies and gave the gospel to sinners-but never suggested reforming society. Nor did the apostles lead the early church in social action. They devoted themselves to the gospel.

That devotion to political/social action encourages apostate ecumenism is clear. While admitting that "the doctrine of justification by faith...separates evangelicals and all Catholics," Kantzer approves ECT's declaration that "Attempts by evangelicals to win 'converts' from Catholics..." undermine the Christian mission." What new Christian mission is this that denies the gospel to those who need it? ! ECT bluntly says it is not "theologically legitimate" to evangelize "active" Catholics!

One would have to be blind not to perceive that much of the evangelical church is now following the same path of political / social action which Fuller Seminary has taken into compromise and ecumenism. Somewhere down this path an apostate church will welcome Antichrist. Only 35 short years ago Roman

Catholicism was included among the "Modern Cults" about which Harold Lindsell warned his students in a course by that name at Fuller.⁴

Today, in spite of its false gospel of works and ritual which millions of martyrs faithfully opposed to the death, Catholicism is _ embraced by our most trusted evangelical leaders!

It takes considerable double-talk to lead the church down this destructive path. Thus Packer has also helped draft and signed (along with 34 other church leaders) a counter document to ECT which acknowledges "radical disagreement" between evangelicals and Catholics re "justification by faith alone as an essential of the Gospel" and "radically disagree[s] with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that unbelievers may be saved by their good works."⁵ SO Catholicism is admitted to be a false works gospel. Does Packer therefore denounce ECT for calling active Catholics true Christians who are not to be evangelized? No. He "continue[s] to thank God" for ECT, which he is proud to have signed and which he calls "a good beginning...."⁶

Ironically, Christians are repeating in the church the same error which conservatives recognize and oppose in government and education. The American educational system, the world's most costly, is an international disgrace, with our students ranking last in most academic comparisons. There are about 500,000 violent incidents each month in our schools, including serious injuries to 1,000 teachers. We have 15 to 20 times as many students in special education classes as other developed countries. Psychologists increase their influence by inventing new "scientific" labels for what used to be known as laziness, selfishness and disobedience. Spanking is now "child abuse" and correction of any kind is avoided as "negative" and harmful to a "positive self-image," which is the key to all "behavior modification." The same delusions have come into the church through "Christian psychology."

The purpose of school is to teach essential skills and knowledge in subjects which prepare students to earn a living. Psychology provides phony excuses for incompetence, rebellion and sin. No one is guilty; everyone is a victim. The heart is not evil; low self-esteem is the problem. Sin has become "mental illness" requiring not repentance but therapy. Instead of the fundamentals of reading, writing and math, educators consume vital school time teaching environmentalism, sex education (which has only made matters worse), multiculturalism, self-esteem and self-importance. The only hope is a return to the old-fashioned fundamentals of teaching the essentials and enforcing discipline.

The church, too, needs to return to _ biblical fundamentals and God's truth without compromise. The church is to love and worship God and to call out of this world citizens for heaven-not to reform society. If Christians could persuade everyone on earth to live as uprightly as Nicodemus, they would still be bound for hell-and doubly hard to convince of their need of Christ because of their splendid morality.

Society will not even be reformed when Christ himself rules the world from Jerusalem, with Satan locked up for 1,000 years and earth an Edenic paradise once again. For when Satan is released he deceives millions who make war to destroy Christ (Rv 20:1-9). The Millennium is the final proof that a perfect environment without crime or war and a righteous government are neither the solution nor God's goal. Sin is in the human heart. Yes, God will destroy this present universe and create a new one without sin. But its inhabitants will be a new race of repentant sinners transformed through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who paid the debt for sin.

This gospel of God's grace is denied by every cult and false religion, including Roman Catholicism, where infant baptism removes original sin and makes one a child of God, salvation is in the church and its

sacraments, redemption is an ongoing process of perpetually offering the body and blood of Christ upon its altars, and good works merit acceptance with God. We have documented these facts in prior newsletters and in my new book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*.

Sadly, in spite of the reformation, many Protestant churches carried on some of Rome's errors: infant baptism, baptismal regeneration and the necessity of works, if not to earn, then to keep, one's salvation. These heresies produce two opposite results: a false assurance of salvation because one has been baptized, confirmed and belongs to the right church; or a haunting fear of losing salvation by failure to live a good enough life. Assurance is only found in trusting Christ alone plus nothing else.

To be saved, I must only believe the gospel. There is nothing else that I or any church can do for my salvation. Yes, one verse says,

"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk 16:15)

but scores of verses, without mention of baptism, declare that he who believes is saved and he who does not believe is damned. Not one verse says that he who is not baptized is damned. Clearly we are saved by believing the gospel (Rom 1:16, etc.), not by baptism. Nor is baptism ever mentioned as part of the gospel when it is defined (1 Cor 1:4, etc.). We offer attract on this subject, available upon request.

It is equally unbiblical to teach that salvation can be lost if one fails to live a good enough life, yet this error persists worldwide. Yes, the Scriptures urge us to live holy, fruitful lives for Christ, which is the norm for real Christians. And yes, the warnings to those who do not (if taken in isolation) sometimes seem to teach that one can lose his or her salvation. We also offer a tract titled "Once Saved, Always Saved?" which goes into the relevant Bible verses in detail on this important subject.

Suffice it to say that if salvation may be lost by not living a good enough life, then those in heaven will be able to boast before God's throne: "Christ died to save me, but I kept my salvation by the good life I lived, so I deserve credit, too, for being here . " On the contrary, salvation both in its reception and retention is all of God and all of grace through Christ- "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:9). He will share His glory with no one (Isa 42:8, 48:11).

Faith in Christ brings liberty, joy and great peace. Yet many Christians labor under the impossible burden of trying to live up to a standard they can't maintain in order not to lose their salvation. Christianity isn't just difficult, it's impossible. The only one who can live the Christian life is Christ himself. Stop trying to live it in your own strength and let Christ live it through you in the power of the Holy Spirit. Rest in Him! There are those who reject works for their own salvation, yet work mightily to save others through fleshly attractions and techniques. Surely sinners will come to Christ if they are invited by a beautiful actress, a top athlete or popular public figure. And now we have "virtual reality." _ Satan will use it for the greatest seduction ever of mankind. It will enable anyone to have the wildest adventures and even sex orgies in one's own living room. Paul Crouch is going to be the "First to use it for the GOSPEL!" In TBN's December 1994 newsletter he exults, "What if at the end of the film, Jesus Christ, Himself, could walk up to you and invite you to accept HIM?!" Yet in His day, multitudes confronted Jesus Christ in person, not some actor or "virtual reality," and even so they rejected Him.

Would Paul have been more effective if he could have used virtual reality, brat least a rock band or some brick-smashing musclemen on his tour? In fact, he preached the gospel "in weakness and trembling," and carefully avoided using human wisdom to persuade anyone (1 Cor 2:1-5). People are being persuaded to

become "Christians" by fleshly means and for the prosperity or healing or better family life they've been promised, rather than by repentance of their sin. Let us, like Paul, devote ourselves to the pure gospel in reliance upon the Holy Spirit to convince and convict and regenerate through His Word. TBC

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