

Indictments Of The Social Gospel

Churches today love the attraction of the "social gospel." It is a philosophy of church growth which is designed to appeal to the outward necessities with the hope of teaching the inward necessities. In common business language, one would call this a "bait and switch" tactic. The purpose of this article is to examine five problems with this so-called "philosophy" and appeal to God's truth.

First, the social gospel is a philosophy in religion that the church should concern itself with worldly problems rather than spiritual ones. It is more interested in ecology, biology, psychology, and sociology than in theology. It is more concerned about preserving the whooping crane and alligator than about preaching Christ the emancipator. It spends more time fighting earthly pollution that may damage the body than with fighting spiritual plagues that will certainly damn the soul.

Second, the social gospel is more interested in feeding the body than in nurturing the soul. Its goal is education, not salvation; recreation, not sanctification; fraternity, instead of eternity. It concerns itself with the "new morality" rather than with immortality; birth control rather than self-control; ministering to the "inner city" rather than seeking the heavenly city; slum clearance rather than with spiritual perseverance.

Third, the social gospel philosophy is more interested in helping men make a living than in helping them make a life. It is more concerned with civil rights than with spiritual fights; civil laws rather than spiritual flaws; revolution rather than revelation; civil disobedience rather than spiritual obedience; communism rather than faith, repentance and baptism.

Fourth, the social gospel is a lame duck spiritually because it is without the power to fulfill the lasting needs of the human race. It concerns itself with matters of this life. Although matters of this life are important and necessary, they are not what man's soul needs. Jesus reproved the multitude because they sought Him for the food He gave them, and not for His teaching. He said, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled*" (John 6:26). The social gospel does the exact same thing when it appeals to mankind's needs of the flesh.

Fifth, the social gospel preaches Christ as a great social reformer instead of a great spiritual Savior. It limits His work to earthly benefits for mankind. Paul said, "*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most*

miserable" (I Corinthians 15:19). Instead of caring for mankind physically, the social gospel can only leave mankind spiritually naked!

Make no mistake, there are serious problems with the social gospel. While it may appear to be the wisest way to help churches grow, it is completely carnal and spiritually bankrupt. We have to turn from the appeals of the worldly and carnal so that we can stay true to word of God and always do His will.

Adapted From James P. Needham