

Howards Corner

Observations of the Methodist Church

I am writing this based on my length of time in the Methodist church and am not “picking” on the Methodist church for there are other denominations that need to address their witness to this world also. So, I hope that other denominations will read because there are points that will apply to those churches. But I pray especially that the Methodist church clergy and congregations will wake up and seek the whole counsel of God and share these words of challenge for the church of today.

I have been in the Methodist church for 65+ years. I have been associated with several different Methodist churches and only found one church in the 1980’s and 1990’s that preached the gospel of salvation by grace and intentionally evangelized. Most now are ritualistic and without a witness of the Gospel. I wonder if they are trusting in John Wesley to save them, and you know he cannot. I could even say they worship John Wesley. Although John Wesley had a calling to preach the gospel, he did not know everything. Everything was not revealed to him at that time in history. He fulfilled his mission to preach the gospel to the ordinary man and did start a movement that brought many to Christ.

There seems to be a worship of the Methodist church organization and that being a member saves you and that because you are a member you automatically go to heaven. Church membership does not save you. You must personally accept the message of salvation by grace through faith which the Bible teaches. You must be born again and be given a new spirit in your heart.

The Methodist church was at one time a very evangelistic church and preached the gospel from town to town from village to village from person to person. John Wesley was a member of the Anglican Church which was formal in nature and was not in touch with the everyday man—the men in the coal mines—the poor man. John Wesley was a part of that church, a pastor and even traveled as an evangelist but was missing something until one day he was born again at Aldersgate Street which he described as a warming of the heart. If you are quoting John Wesley, be

sure you are quoting after 1738 for that was when he got a new heart and a new understanding fired by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

After that he was changed and went to preach the gospel to those people in their towns and on their mining hills and wherever there were the poor and down and out. The formal church of that day did not like this and his message of salvation by grace and would not let him back in the pulpit to preach again. They rejected him because of his “enthusiasm.” This enthusiasm is the presence of the Holy Spirit working in us. That is what the Methodist church of today is missing.

The Methodist movement did continue the same methods of reaching the lost and the down and out for a long time and had a reputation of being spirit filled and evangelistic, spreading the Word to all manner of people and establishing churches all over the world. The Holy Spirit was flowing in those days. Souls were saved and lives were changed, and the world was being changed. The Methodist church was looked up to by the world and had a reputation of doing the will of God.

Change in Methodism.

That changed somewhere around the early 1900's when the church started to take on the formal ways of the Anglican church. It did not happen overnight but has evolved over time. Just like ages do not change in a single moment but gradually blend into the new age. Are we still trying to live on an old reputation that is not true any longer? Have we gotten so sophisticated and prideful that we lost the word and spirit, and we no longer preach the whole word of salvation by grace?

The Methodist church of today is like eating dry cereal which has no taste but until you add the honey and the milk it does not come alive with taste. The church is today dry and full of ritual and traditions but the word, which is the honey, and the milk, which is the presence of the Holy Spirit, are required to provide taste of eternal life to the world. Do we not wonder why the world is not flocking to our doors to hear the good news of the gospel of salvation by grace? Well, the truth is that the Methodist church is not preaching that message. It is going through rituals and traditions and preaching a few parables that are good news for true believers but not the ones that are bad news. Broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many will travel that road. Where is that message today?

The message of today is like the wheat and the “tares”. The message today is more like the “tares” it looks a little like the wheat but has no fruit when it matures. I do not hear the message of salvation by grace through faith preached at all but rather other messages that “tickle the ear” and does not get to the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter is that all men are sinners and must turn to the Lord with repentance and receive this salvation by God’s mercy. We do not warn anyone that to not accept Jesus as our savior will result in going to destruction which is the destination of hell. We do not want to tell the results of not surrendering our hearts to Jesus. By the way joining the church does not mean we have surrendered our hearts to Jesus, but we must instead be “born again”. Until the Holy Spirit is in your hearts you cannot see the kingdom message and therefore cannot understand it and certainly cannot preach it.

I am deeply concerned about the Methodist Church. We have been in decline for an exceptionally long time. There have been a few exceptions but for the most part we have not been preaching the Gospel. Few are added to the church and the biggest majority are those transferring from other Methodist churches or from other denominations. I have been a member of the Methodist church for a long time and for the most part the Methodist churches I have observed no longer evangelize except for one church that was alive and spirit filled which I was a part of. Those that were spirit filled finally gave up and left because the church was not preaching the Bible and the message of salvation.

We somehow have lost our first love. Instead of Jesus and His work He has done on the cross, we have turned to a social gospel which thought we could change the world by our works and efforts. We cannot fix the world, which is not possible because to change the world you must first change the hearts of the world; this is not possible because the world has a sinful heart and can only be changed when we accept the fact that we are all sinners from the beginning. We must have a new heart and that is only possible by accepting the salvation offered from God through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. When we then accept this salvation by grace through faith, we are given a new heart by the presence of the Holy spirit which Jesus gives us. If we have this new spirit in us, then we must witness this to others so that other hearts may be changed.

Works

What then do we do about the works that we are attempting to do with our own ability? We must make sure that Jesus is in us and that we are sharing His message of the gospel along with these works. If you are supporting feeding the hungry or clothing the naked or caring for the widows and orphans, then you must make sure you are doing the greater good. If you feed people for the body's sake and do not also feed them eternal food, you have not accomplished the greater good because without the message of Christ they are still in their sins and are under the judgement of sin and death and have no hope of life eternal. You might say we have a well-fed person still going to hell.

We must tell them the message that Jesus loves them all but that they are all lost without Christ and cannot save themselves, but He came to save the lost the lonely the afraid the down and out. He did this by his work on the cross. He shed His blood for our sake. This shedding of His blood enables us to be forgiven and to have righteous standing with our Father God. When we do acknowledge this and accept Him into our lives, we have the hope of forgiveness and salvation and resurrection to eternal life.

I guess I could list a thousand things that have gone wrong in this world. I could talk about homelessness—drug and alcohol abuse-sexual perversion-human trafficking-wars and oppressions-abortion-famine-pestilence-crime- murder-lying and deceit and many other things that are the results of a corrupted nature of mankind and separation from God. These world problems cannot be solved by man alone. We are in a spiritual war. We do have an enemy which is Satan “who goes about stealing, killing and destroying.” The church's role is to fight this battle first with the spreading of the gospel of Jesus to the world and when hearts come to know Christ and His spirit is in them, they will be enabled to change.

The Bible teaches us however that we will not be able to defeat the enemy totally but as we see today evil is winning in this world and will continue until the return of the Lord at His second coming. It will get much worse before His return. He will then destroy the enemy and all that are not in Christ. Those that have accepted and followed Jesus will be saved and resurrected at His coming for the church (Rapture -caught up). Those resurrected will be the true Church, those that have been born of His spirit.

I am writing this in hope that some will listen and change direction. The Anglican church did not change. Is it possible for the Methodist church to change and return to our first love of preaching the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith? To tell you the truth, I wonder if I will be like John Wesley and not be able to get back in the pulpit again because the church did not understand and has grown formal and ritualistic and wanting to fit into this world. These writing of mine are my pulpit and so far, I have found only a few that understand. The Lord alone can open blind eyes. Beware of sophistication and worldliness and pride.

Yes-pride in the Methodist church and our local church and our buildings and our prim and proper surroundings. Yes-pride in our history and what we have accomplished or what we think we have accomplished and our list of dignitaries that belong to the church. I venture to say that we are not appealing to those like John Wesley went out to seek in the mines and the poor neighborhoods. More importantly I do not think most would be welcome in our pristine churches. I know for certain that If I led someone to Christ, I would not bring them to a church that does not know or preach the gospel. They would not have much of a chance to become a mature Christian.

Law vs Grace

There are basic problems with doctrine in the church. There are basic problems with understanding what the Bible has taught. It is common that the message of salvation by grace through faith is not preached but is polluted with a mixture of Law and grace. We are still trying to live by the law, but it is not the law of the first 5 books of the Bible but has been watered down to something we think we can do on our own. We have chosen to say the Ten Commandments are the law but if we think we can even keep these on our own we are foolish. Even if we were able to keep these laws it would not save us. If we have deceived ourselves into thinking we can then we are by pride boasting that we have achieved our own salvation. Remember that if we break even one law once we are guilty of all.

Remember that the church was never under the law but under the law of Jesus and His Spirit which is guided by His Word and His Spirit. Do you not yet understand that the law was given to the nation of Israel which they as a nation are still under, but we are under a New Covenant which was bought and delivered on the cross. The law never was a part of the church of Jesus Christ. If you do not believe me

read for yourselves in Romans and Galatians and Hebrew and many other places. That is why it is called the “New Testament” because there was an “Old Testament” which taught forgiveness (but even this was only good for a year) by keeping of laws, but no one could keep them. The New Testament brought forgiveness through faith in the Work of Jesus on the cross. To live in this faith in His work leads to a promise of forgiveness (which is permanent) and resurrection and eternal life at His coming for His Church.

Church quit preaching the law but preach salvation by grace!! The people have gotten confused by your preaching. They have been trying to do both but are not doing either correctly. There is no solid foundation of trust in **Jesus alone** for our salvation but trying to live with one foot in grace and another in law which leads to confusion and having unstable minds.

Sabbath

Let us look at just one item, the Sabbath it is taught in the church that we must keep the Sabbath, but we do not even understand when the Sabbath is. We are talking about it being Sunday. The Sabbath for Jews is Saturday, the last day of the week. It is not Sunday.

When the Church began, they started to worship on the first day of the week which is Sunday because it was “The Lords Day.” It was the day Jesus rose from the tomb. It is the eighth day which is the day of new beginnings. If it is the day of new beginnings, then why are we trying to go back to the old ways? If you want to keep the Sabbath, then you must go back to the first five books of the Bible to see all the requirements of the Law, but the truth is that Jesus came to fulfil the law and that happened on the cross – “It is Finished”. What can we do on the Sabbath, which you are calling the Sunday? Go about doing good. What can we do on Monday? Go about doing good. All days are for going about doing good such as spreading the good news of the Gospel.

If you carefully read the message of the whole Word from God, you will find from the very beginning we were given understanding, if we will accept it. God created the world in 6 days and rested on the 7th day which under law is the Sabbath. God has not stopped working but was telling us in His message that man has 6 days, and the 7th day of rest is yet to come when he establishes his Kingdom through Christ

Jesus. So, we must understand that our rest has come when we are in Jesus, for He is our rest (Sabbath). He said, "I am the Lord of the Sabbath". The world will see the Kingdom of God on this earth, and it will be "**The Sabbath**". It will come at Christ's second coming and will last 1000 years. Satan will be imprisoned and unable to deceive the world. There will be total peace. You must read the prophets and Revelation to understand. If you are in Christ, you have a taste of that peace in you now. The time is growing short for we have signs already that we are in the later days when He will return.

If you are in Christ, you are no longer under the Law but have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus "by grace through faith and that not of yourself but it is the gift of God so we cannot boast." It is the marvelous gospel that we are no longer under the requirements of the law but for gentiles, we were never under the law for it was only given to the Jews and if we are under the law then we are dead in our trespasses because there is no redemption under the law except perfect obedience.

The Nation of Israel however is still under the law because they have rejected their Messiah, but individual Jews can accept Jesus their Messiah at any time. That is why the Bible says we have a new Covenant. To have a new Covenant must mean that there was an old covenant, and that old Covenant is no longer applicable for Christians. You cannot help but to understand that, if you read Paul's writings and the book of Hebrew. Why would you want to put yourselves under the law which you cannot keep when you have been given liberty by grace. A liberty not to sin but a liberty to walk in the direction of the Word and the Holy Spirit.

The problem with mixing law and grace is that we are mixed up in our thinking. We are still kind of thinking we must keep the law but that we believe Jesus died for our salvation with our head knowledge, but we are hedging our bet by believing we can keep the law. We are not totally committed to trusting in Jesus alone for our salvation, but we are still looking to ourselves to do the works of salvation. I will state it plainly for you —You cannot do enough good works to save yourself—You cannot live a sinless life even after coming to believe but the Holy Spirit abiding in us, if we are in Christ, will help us to be more righteous in our behavior. So, mixing law and grace is a dangerous business because we are not totally committed to trusting in Jesus alone for salvation and we will not find salvation in law, but instead

be locked in religion, ritual and churchism. You cannot put new wine in old wineskins!

Why is the church so confused today?

Why is the church of today so confused about this message of law and grace? It starts because over a long time we have not been taught by the people that are supposed to lead us. They have taken a wrong turn somewhere and have lost the true meaning of what the Bible teaches. Errors have crept into our theology. We have strayed from the narrow path that leads to the narrow gate of eternal life. We have been trusting in our leadership and not reading and studying the Word for ourselves. Are we trusting in church organizations, or do we have a personal relationship with Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit?

Teachers and Preachers and Pastors and Bishops it is your responsibility to study and seek and search the scripture to find the truth of the scriptures and not follow things not taught in the bible. It is my belief that you will be judged for not teaching all the gospel at Christs Judgment seat and I will be judged if I know the truth and do not speak up and warn the church. It is out of love I warn you the bridge is out ahead. Change course before it is too late.

Do you not see we are under the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit who will lead us to do what is pleasing to the Father? Requirements of the law do not produce love but produce fear of failure and guilt. That is what happened to the Pharisees they were afraid of failing to keep the law and wound up adding all manner of extra rules so they could be sure they did not break the law. This was evident when the Pharisees were condemning Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. They forgot compassion and love and condemned Jesus for doing good on the Sabbath.

My prayer for you is that you find liberty in the grace that has been given you and listen to the Word and the Holy Spirit for guidance. Have peace and love in your heart and operate in the spirit. Do not live-in guilt and fear but in forgiveness and grace that has been bought for you. To have this love and peace you must have been born of the Spirit of Christ and He will give you these understandings. Are we as a church not operating in faith that if we are doing the work of Christ then He will provide?

It is time to put the law to bed and sleep for it has done its purpose for those that are in Christ Jesus. For the law had to be fulfilled and it was still in effect until Jesus lived a sinless life under the law and met all the requirements of the law by being obedient even to death and that His shed blood met the requirement of a perfect sacrifice which is the “Lamb of God” Jesus. The law is only awake in the lives of those that are still under the worlds system of rebellion against God and those Jews that have not accepted Jesus as Messiah for to them it produces guilt and sin and death. Do you not know that you have liberty now from guilt and sin and death? Celebrate with great Joy!

Evangelism

Evangelism no longer exists to any significant degree in the church today. It used to be our main purpose for being as a church but that has slowly change over the last 100 years. We do some charity work but little evangelism but so does Hollywood and many others that are not Christian at all. The PGA of America also gives a lot to charity. Everyone is talking about giving back today but none are talking about getting back into touch with God through His Word and Spirit. Do we carry the message of salvation along when we deliver our casseroles? Refer to the above section on works.

Do we assume that all are going to heaven because they are not murdering or thieves or atheists? Do we think that being “nice or kind” is enough? There are many in the world that look “nice and kind” but watch out for your billfold. Is that what the bible teaches? The bible teaches that “all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.” Unless one has become a believer in the Lord Jesus and the work, He did on the cross to purchase our salvation, they are lost and without hope and we need to work on reaching these people.

I watch a lot of different television preachers and different programs and I have not found one that claims to be Methodist. The only exception is that the Oral Roberts University which I understand is Methodist is occasionally on television. There may be others, but the voice is not loud. Baptist and Pentecostal and non-denominational are by far dominant. Why are the Methodists silent? Is it because we do not have anything to say or is it because we do not want to dare to challenge the world’s way and preach the words of Jesus? We are not supposed to be like the world but to be light and salt in the world. Jesus says that the world will hate us

because it hated Him first. Is our first objective to be “nice and kind” and not offend anyone? Is evangelism taught in the seminaries? If so, then we are not getting any evangelists in our churches. **MY LOCAL CHURCH THIS YEAR HAS “0” IN THE BUDGET FOR EVANGELISM. Does this not tell you where our priority is?**

Preaching the whole Word

Preach the message of salvation.

Preaching the whole word means preaching that man fell in the garden when Adam did not obey God’s words to Him and therefore fell into the sin of disobedience. When this happened, his spirit was corrupted and so the curse fell on him and all his descendants. Therefore, all those descendants of Adam are guilty and have a corrupted spirit. Since we are all descendants of Adam, we are all guilty.

God then in Genesis 3:15 prophesied the coming of a Messiah to come to enable man to break the curse and have salvation from our sins. That Messiah was the second Adam which is Jesus Christ who came to die upon the cross as a blood sacrifice for the sins of the world. Only by our faith in this shed blood of Jesus can we be reconciled to God the Father. We therefore are made righteous in God’s eyes, and we will be given a new spirit which is no longer corrupted. That is why we must be “born again”. We must have a new spirit which was given at “Pentecost.” This new spirit is available today for true believers.

That is why Jesus came as the Son of God being born of a virgin. So, Jesus was not in the lineage of Adam but was from the Seed of God and therefore was able to break the curse by His obedience to the point of death and the keeping of all of God’s law to perfection without one point of disobedience. Adam disobeyed God and we were lost but Jesus Christ obeyed God and therefore we that are in His spirit are found.

Salvation is therefore only by faith in the work of Jesus. We are saved by grace through faith and that not of ourselves but is the free gift of God. We are all therefore guilty and must acknowledge that we are guilty and repent and turn to Him for salvation. This salvation is from the law of sin and death. We are therefore already guilty, and the penalty is death. This death is not only death in the body for we will all find death in the body, but this death is of the spirit. Our spirit will live

for eternity, but the destination is either saved to live with God or unsaved to live in hell separated from God.

To preach the whole truth is to preach both the salvation of the spirit of man to live with God eternally and to preach that not to reconcile to God through Jesus His son will result in a destination separated from God in Hell.

Preach all the words of both old and new testaments.

To preach the whole word we are also required to search the whole word of God which is contained in the Bible. This includes the Prophets and Psalms and the law and the New Testament and to believe these words because they are all true. We do not always understand them, but we must believe all the word. They are there for a reason. If you do not believe the bible is the word of God, then you will never understand and find peace with God. You in effect are saying I do not believe God.

If we leave out words or add our own words, then it is not God's word. If we do not believe the whole word, then you will never understand. Only when we totally trust God and agree with what He has said will it be opened for our understanding. I am not talking about agreeing with a translation of a word or what it means but am talking about things like I do not believe God will send people to hell then you are calling Jesus a liar for He is the one who mentions it most. The **Bible** is inspired by the Holy Spirit and is therefore the **"Word of God"**.

This starts by reading and understanding the Old as well as the New testaments. Even though we as Christians are not under the Law the Old Testament is full of words that we need to understand if we are to interpret the rest of the bible. There is prophesy in Genesis as well as the other books of the law. There is prophecy in the Psalms and of course all the writings of the prophets. The New Testament is also full of prophecies.

These words are not being preached today. When have you heard a sermon on Daniel or Ezekiel or the return of Israel to their land in the final days as a nation? The last 7 years of Israel are plainly taught in the book of Daniel chapter 9. It is told in the Old Testament about the times of Jacob' troubles which happens in the last 7 years of Israel before Jesus' second coming. If you read Jeremiah chapters 30 and 31 it will be plain to you that God will return them to their land again and bless them. It is told in many other places also. Check it out for yourselves.

How did you as preachers of the gospel miss these facts. Were you absent the day all the things were taught or were they not taught? Did they say we do not believe in the book of Daniel, or did they tell you that it was not written by Daniel? I heard one seminary graduate preacher say he did not have much use for the book of Daniel. How sad! It is the Revelation of the Old Testament. It is your responsibility to read for yourself and understand. You must diligently seek the word to understand.

Although it is vital to us as Christians, we are not told about the rapture of the church and the congregations are ignorant of what to expect. Paul talked about it several times but not the church of today. It appears the church does not believe the rapture of the church is true. Paul certainly believed. Jesus certainly believed and taught in Matthew 24 and 25 and Luke 21 of the coming for the church and He also taught His second coming to judge the world and restore the nation of Israel and to set up His millennial kingdom. I am not talking about things veiled in the Old Testament but is right in front of you in the New Testament.

I have never heard a sermon in my 65+ years in the Methodist church on the book of Revelation. Do we not think this book is true or do we just do not understand it because we have thrown away the books of Daniel and other books of prophesy? The book of Revelation says those who read this book will be blessed. If you want to be blessed, then read it and study it? I admit it is difficult to understand because it is a spiritual book and requires help from the Holy Spirit and a thorough understanding of the Old Testament prophesies and knowing the things Jesus taught. Knowing the final outcome makes it easier to put it together in your mind and heart.

We must teach the whole word! Unless we do, we wind up in the wrong place and try to invent the wrong theology to make the "Word (Bible)" fit our wrong theology. The word of God fits together as a whole and is blended together beautifully when it is read with belief in all He has said.

Final Thoughts for preachers and teachers

Teachers and Preachers and Pastors and Bishops it is your responsibility to study and seek and search the scripture to find the truth of the scriptures and not follow things not taught in the bible. It is my belief that you will be judged for not teaching all the gospel at Christs Judgment seat and I will be judged if I know the truth and

do not speak up and warn the church. It is out of love I warn you the bridge is out ahead. Change course before it is too late.

It is with brotherly love that I share these observations and thoughts.

Howard