**The Failure of the Social Gospel**

**Introduction**

1. During this time of year (Christmas Holiday Season) the focus of the majority of the religious community becomes exceedingly evident.
2. While they speak of “the reason for the season,” and plead to “keep Christ in Christmas,” their actions and messages stand to minimize anything of true spiritual importance, and instead cater to the social needs and wants of man.
	1. Food drives, soup kitchens, toy drives, Christmas programs (and many other forms of entertainment), etc.
3. It may be that others wonder why our church is not involved in such efforts, not only on Christmas, but any other holiday or time of year.
4. Do such things truly address the greatest needs of man? Are these approaches in line with God’s scheme of redemption? Does the social gospel fulfill God’s purposes?
5. It Fails to Realize Man’s Greatest Need
6. It is common that skeptics suggest that the persistence of human suffering is proof that God does not exist.
	1. Ironically, those who have adapted the social gospel play into such reasoning.
	2. If the overall thrust of the gospel is to cure social ills and injustices, then why do they persist, and even seem to worsen as time goes on?
7. Jesus came to address man’s greatest need – **Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10** – to save the lost from their sins.
8. To manifest His authority to take care of the sin problem, Jesus performed miracles – such aided some men in physical ways, but the purpose was spiritual – **Mark 2:5, 9-12**
	1. The purpose of these works was not to eradicate suffering, hunger, etc. – **John 20:30-31** – to incite faith in Christ for spiritual life.
	2. Why didn’t Jesus heal everyone at the pool of Bethesda? – **John 5:2-3, 5-6**
	3. Why didn’t Jesus feed the crowd again when they found Him? – **John 6:25-27**
		1. There was a more important problem, and an infinitely better solution.
9. Jesus never said there would be a time where these social ills and injustices would cease to be – **John 12:8** (after Mary anointed Jesus’ feet, and Judas complained) (poor you have with you always – could add the sick, oppressed, etc.)
10. Rich man and Lazarus – **Luke 16:19-21** – who had the greater problem?
11. Man’s greatest need is salvation from sin – **John 5:14 (**man healed at pool of Bethesda); **Romans 6:23** (wages of sin death)
12. It Fails to Implement God’s Power for Addressing Man’s Greatest Need
13. There is immense power in the gospel – **Romans 1:16**
	1. However, this power is only realized in its purpose – power to salvation.
	2. **(v. 17)** – power in it because the righteousness of God is revealed (God’s plan of righteousness.)
	3. When the gospel is used for purposes that it isn’t designed to serve, its power is not realized. (It is used in vain.)
14. The power of the gospel is magnified, not as a platform upon which carnal projects are carried out, but when it is proclaimed in its simplicity to appeal to the souls of men:
	1. **1 Corinthians 1:18, 21** – it is God’s power, and when it is preached it saves.
	2. **1 Corinthians 2:1-5** – its power is realized in its simplicity, not in any additions from man.
		1. Those who are attracted to the social gospel are not drawn by God’s power **(v. 5).**
		2. Their faith is not in God, but in man, or some physical matter.
	3. The power of the gospel is not in effecting physical change, but spiritual:
		1. **James 1:9-11; 2:5** – the poor may remain poor, and the rich may remain rich, but they’re changed spiritually – “rich in faith”
		2. **Philippians 4:11-13** – Paul’s relationship with Christ did not mean freedom from abasement, but the strength to do God’s will and sustain a relationship with Him, thus, the hope of life eternal, regardless of his circumstances.
15. Many suggest that the social projects are meant as attractions to gather lost souls so they can have the gospel preached to them:
	1. This is illogical, for carnal attractions bring carnal people, not spiritual – **John 6:26-27, 66** – these only sought physical food, and when Jesus emphasized His offer was spiritual, they left.
	2. It is counterproductive to attempt to draw men to Christ via our own methods that are separate from God’s – **John 6:44-45** – it is God who draws men to Jesus, and He does so through the message preached.
	3. The only feat of the social gospel is filling buildings with carnally minded people.
16. The 1st century church was not involved in social projects, not because there were not physical needs in the world, but because they themselves being saved by the gospel knew that such wasn’t the purpose of the gospel, and that they had no authority to do so:
	1. **1 Timothy 3:15** – church is the pillar and ground of the truth.
	2. They were told to preach the gospel to save souls, and that they did – **Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:4**
17. It Fails to Fulfill God’s Purpose
18. Social projects in churches are promoted under the false premise of carrying out God’s purposes.
19. In reality, these actions are merely products of the gospel being hijacked and abused to serve man’s purposes.
20. God’s revelation of the gospel of Christ is intended to reconcile men to Himself through Christ – **Colossians 1:19-23** – enemies reconciled to God through Jesus’ death, accessed and sustained in the gospel – “continue in the faith”
	1. The relationship with God through reconciliation by Christ in the gospel is described – **Colossians 3:1-2** – it is a relationship characterized by “things above” not “on the earth.”
		1. **Colossians 3:17** – a relationship characterized by seeking to do God’s will in everything.
		2. Those reconciled to God according to His purpose in Christ Jesus have shifted their focus from the physical to the spiritual.
		3. This is God’s will – that men live as sojourners and pilgrims who do not seek this world, but the one beyond where God dwells – **Hebrews 11:16** – He is not ashamed to be associated with such people.
	2. However, those who remain focused on the physical cannot please God – **Romans 8:7-8**
21. The social gospel inherently draws attention to the physical, not the spiritual. Thus, it actually defeats God’s purpose by driving a wedge further between God and man with physical distraction.
	1. The social gospel attracts natural men as though they will bring God glory, but such men are incapable of receiving God’s wisdom necessary to bring Him glory – **1 Corinthians 2:14**
22. The social gospel ultimately accomplishes the opposite of what Jesus praised Mary for – **Luke 10:38-42** – Mary chose the good part, and Martha was distracted from it.
23. The social gospel reverses the conclusion of Solomon – **Ecclesiastes 12:8, 13-14** – it reduces the purpose of life to the temporary, and places fearing God on the back burner.

**Conclusion**

1. We must be careful that we aren’t confused by the many social activities of churches around us, especially in this time of year.
2. It is not God’s will, nor the gospel’s purpose to focus on the physical.
3. Such turns the spiritual message into a carnal one with a fake spiritual front.
4. Our greatest need as man continues to be freedom from sin so that we may return to glorifying God, and the only way to meet that need is the pure gospel of Christ.