

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“Feelgoodism”

By Edward Bragwell

I know that word does not pass the spell check test. It is not even in the dictionary – but it ought to be. If Mr. Webster, or whoever is in charge of adding new words to dictionaries, wishes to add **my contribution** to our language, he can feel free to copy and paste it along with my definition.

Feelgoodism (fil-gōd-is-m): The doctrine that the prime purpose of Christianity is to make its adherents feel good, especially about themselves.

This “*doctrine*” is very pervasive and those who teach and practice it seem to be completely oblivious to being influenced by it. Here are a few times when people show they are subtly affected for it:

1. When attendants at church services are mostly there to hear something to feel good about.
2. When preachers/teachers feel their best when their hearers feel best about themselves.
3. When one allows “feeling good” to trump plain Bible teaching.

Should Christians not want to feel good and cause others to feel good, after all, “*gospel*” means good news or glad tidings? But, is that what their major should be?

Consider the preaching/teaching done in both both testaments. “*Repentance*” was the recurring theme because repentance was the recurring need. Godly sorrow is a necessary ingredient in Scriptural repentance (2 Cor. 7:10). One of the reasons the apostles received the Holy Spirit was to convict the world of sin (Jn. 16:8). Before one can repent, he must first feel *bad* about himself and his condition. Satan would like nothing more than to convince us to do only what makes us feel *good* rather than “*what saith the Scriptures.*” Feelgoodism plays right into his hands.

Often we hear good people emphatically declaring how sure they are of salvation. When asked how they can be so sure, they reference the good feeling they have in their hearts – without referencing a single verse of Scripture that would justify that feeling.

People often conclude that anything that makes them “feel so good” could not possibly be wrong. They feel that God wants them to be happy and what they are doing makes them happy – case closed.

The most frequent reason that I hear for forgiving a brother who has sinned against us, without his repenting and asking, is that it makes us feel so good for having done the magnanimous thing. But, the question needs to be raised about whether it is the Scriptural thing to do. And is it in the best interest of the offending party to be forgiven without repentance.

Forgiveness before repentance presents some real problems in applying various scriptures:

Luke 17:3 – “*If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.*”

Matt. 18:16-18 – “*And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publi-*

can” (ASV). At what point in this scenario is the offended party told to forgive him? At each juncture *“if he hear”* implies if he repents then forgiveness should take place with the matter settled. The idea is to hold him accountable until he hears (heeds) the rebukes rather than washing our hands by going ahead and forgiving him anyway.

1 Thessalonians 3:6 – *“... withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.”* How do you withdraw from him if you have already forgiven him.

No doubt, part of the problem is that folks confuse **deferring** forgiveness with an unforgiving spirit, grudges, and hatred. Nothing is further from the truth. As we seek to bring one to repentance so he can be forgiven, we must sincerely **want** to forgive him, harbor no grudges, and love him even as we love ourselves. And when he does repent we will forgive and rejoice in with the angels in heaven.

Let us measure every facet of our lives as Christians by what the Bible teaches rather than how good or bad we may have come to feel about things. Hope can make us feel really good. So can *false* hope. We need to learn the difference by growing in our knowledge of God’s word.

May we always remember how deceptive our feelings can be *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked who can know it?”* (Jer. 17:9, KJV). – *Ed’s Sermons and Things*, July 10, 2017. ■

Pointless Preaching

By Greg Gwin

The famous denominational preacher Charles Spurgeon complained about a fellow preacher whose sermons he said were “little better than sacred miniature painting” and amounted to “holy trifling.” Spurgeon went on to explain that: “he is great upon the ten toes of the beast, the four faces of the cherubim, the mystical meaning of badgers’ skins,...and the windows of Solomon’s temple: but the sins of business men, the temptations of the times, and the needs of the age, he scarcely ever touches upon. Such preaching reminds me of a lion engaged in mouse hunting” (Spurgeon’s Lectures to His Students).

Spurgeon has been dead for nearly 100 years, but the situation has not improved. There’s precious little preaching that addresses the real problem of sin in men’s lives. Most preachers (like Spurgeon himself) teach a perverted doctrine that could not save a man even if he was convicted of his sin. Paul says that they are *“accursed”* (Gal. 1:9). ■

Churches of Christ are not immune from this problem. We see more and more of this “pointless preaching.” The test of a preacher’s worth has come to be his ability to entertain and make folks *feel good*, rather than his ability to proclaim God’s truth in a way that provokes men to obedience. Too many sermons that are preached do not include any information about what one must do to be saved. Such efforts clearly miss the mark. There’s a proper place for words of comfort such as Paul preached (1 Thess. 1:11). But these positive words of peace need to be based on the foundation of true obedience, or else they are meaningless. - *Truth Magazine*, October 19, 1989, p. 623. ■

“1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250