

## An Interesting Observation

Written by Ben Winslett

Wednesday, 24 September 2014 08:33 - Last Updated Wednesday, 24 September 2014 09:09

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What do you think most Christians really crave to hear preached? Practical insight? Something motivational? Were people polled, I imagine many would answer accordingly. However, a recent server log gave me reason to pause and reflect on something I have believed for years. People, especially people who are outsiders to the message of grace, need to hear the truth about their salvation!

Last week, I broke from my traditional radio format of producing a message in studio specifically for the listening audience and used a pulpit sermon from our current series through the book of Ephesians. In this case, it was a portion of our first message, taken from Ephesians 1, entitled "The Eternal Purposes of God." You can't get much more PB than a sermon from Ephesians 1. In this chapter, Paul addresses election, predestination, redemption, and the resurrection. Good ole Bible doctrine! Well, in a week's time, this particular sermon was downloaded from iTunes TWICE as many times as any other message, making it my most listened to program.

You would think, with practical insight (a very worthy area) being so trendy in Christian radio and web these days, that a simple gospel message on Sovereign Grace would be overlooked and discarded. But that wasn't the case. In the vast landscape of Christian listeners, this message was their top choice from those available. Not the one on marriage. Not the one on serving God. Not the one on living by faith. Folks chose to hear of the Eternal Purposes of God.

## What "Grows" Churches

What subject matter do you think leads to more growth in an Old Baptist Church? You might be inclined to say "practical things." That sounds right on the surface, doesn't it? I mean, how many times have you heard the statement *"we just preach too much grace"*? But do you realize much of evangelical Christendom agree on the practical matters? I am convinced that what leads to

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lasting, real growth in a PB Church is presenting the true gospel that God chose them, Christ redeemed them, the Spirit regenerated them, and eventually God will glorify them! It will feed the hungry, sin sick soul and it will also purge out the proud. An atheist could even agree with some of the Bible's teachings on money or marriage, but the gospel cuts to the quick.

It's a simple concept, but for one to be converted to the truth, they must hear the truth proclaimed! We exist as a spiritual body to proclaim Christ's finished work and worship Him in spirit and in truth. Our main focus to newcomers should be to teach them the truth of their salvation. In my experience, if you visit churches which have experienced a great ingathering, the main spiritual topic of conversation among the new members is God's grace.

## Two Levels of Teaching

Notice Jesus' instruction to His apostles in Matthew 28.

*"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..."*

Go and teach. The word teach means "to make disciples." If you read the Acts of the Apostles, their first message to new people was always the message of the gospel of Christ. What comes after this INITIAL teaching? Baptism. Then what? You teach them to observe ALL things God commands us. This gives us the proper order of things.

1) We preach the unadulterated gospel to newcomers.

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2) We baptize those who confess Christ.

3) We then teach them God's will for their life, subjects like marriage, childraising, finances, etc.

Folks can go to a marriage seminar any time. They can only find the gospel message in the Church. What leads to lasting, true growth among the flocks of God is the message of God's grace. The gospel is the foundation, practical godliness is the structure we build after the foundation of Christ has been laid.

I share this as food for thought. Don't think for a minute that the message of Grace isn't something God's children want to hear in our day. While followers of Christ need to learn the practical teachings of God's word, the "bait for our hook" is the Gospel of Christ.