

Prayer – Ignorance Prevails

Written by K B Napier
Thursday, 05 March 2015 16:03

A student, who was put off attending the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, sent us a link to the Tabernacle's page on 'Doctrinal Basis' (<http://www.metropolitantabernacle.org/Church-Details/Doctrinal-Basis>) for comment. It interested me because I wrote a criticism of the pastor's (Dr Peter Masters) beliefs a while ago, particularly to do with prayer. The student was certainly not keen on what appeared, to him, to be an overly-traditional and rigidly-organised church. In many senses he is right about the structure. However, many today would be comforted by such a structure in the midst of charismatic mayhem and modernist traits ruining the churches.

However, the reason the student ought to be wary is not the structure or the traditionalism (much of which I prefer to current trends), but other factors, such as prayer meetings and the Gospel call, both of which bear the marks of rigid 'reformationism' (see my article on this), rather than of genuine beliefs.

The first policy in the list is that the Metropolitan teaches the '**Doctrines of Grace**'. This is an admirable policy to adhere to! How many today keep to these, as exemplified in what are called Calvin's 'five points'?

Under the heading '**Free offer of the Gospel**', the student was concerned by the words "***the universal tender of salvation, also called the 'free offer of the Gospel'***".

He felt this was universalism. I must say that to have one service a month dedicated to "*persuasive Gospel preaching*"

does not sound very Biblical. The local church is not a place for evangelists to operate – because a local church consists ONLY of the saved. Meetings should not be engineered to suit unbelievers. And what is meant by 'persuasive'? Arminian methods?? It was my view some years ago, when looking at the beliefs of Peter Masters, that he indeed had Arminian tendencies.

The words used do suggest universalism, which is Arminian... and Arminianism is Roman Catholic in concept. It is a sad fact that many reformed preachers and pastors think they can save people by 'persuasive preaching' and that there is a 'free offer of the Gospel'. There is no 'free offer', only a Gospel that commands us to be saved. However, this command is made by a God Who already knows those who will be saved by the Gospel, and Who commands that we obey the call. It is NOT an 'offer', but a declaration by Almighty God that we are sinners bound for hell except for His predestination and election. It is heresy to imply that the Gospel is given to all to contemplate and maybe receive!

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Policy number six '**The Prayer Meeting**' drew concern: *"We believe in the great importance of prayer, and maintain the church prayer meeting as a distinctive weeknight meeting. Without the blessing of God in answer to prayer, all our witness would be in vain. Corporate prayer is paramount."*

To put it bluntly, Peter Masters has got it wrong regarding prayer meetings! See my articles on this matter, where I fully deal with this error of Masters (which is typical of many). There is a very odd idea in some circles that God makes the Gospel a "free offer", as if He wishes all men to come to salvation. He wishes all men to repent and to stop sinning – but this is not the same as saying He therefore 'offers' salvation to everyone, regardless of their eternal state, that is, whether or not they have been elected to salvation. Those who will be saved (the elect) will respond to God's command to do so, not because they desire after God and His 'free offer'!

There is a patent absurdity in saying that God offers everyone, without discrimination, the Gospel, and thereby its blessings if accepted. It is spiritual logic (and Biblically stated) that only those who are elect will be given the Gospel in a saving sense... all the rest will be lost, and the Gospel is, to them, a stumblingblock.

There is no 'free offer', because God demands our obedience. He gives each person who is elect their eternal salvation after hearing the Gospel, knowing they are elect and WILL respond. But, those who are NOT elect will go on to know hell, because God has rejected them in eternity. God does not uselessly wish for their salvation when He fully knows they will never receive it!

Far better to say that the Gospel is freely preached, which is closer to truth. This complements entirely the fact that we must preach to all (that is, all we are commanded to preach to) and yet expect only a few to respond and be saved. In this there is no 'offer', only a declaration of God's will on the matter. It is understandable for those ignorant of truth to call the preaching 'an offer', but it is folly for theologians to use the same term, when they know it is used by universalists and Arminians.

The policy is rife with poor thinking and explanation. Prayer is indeed vital and of prime importance... to the saved who must pray in their closets. It amazes me that so many pastors and preachers do not consider this direct command given by Christ, replacing it with odd and

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badly formed arguments based on their personal interpretation of other texts! For a full examination of this matter see my articles on prayer meetings).

A regular church prayer meeting is *not*, as Masters claims, the hub of Christian life or of church life, and there is no scripture to back the claims. Masters says that prayers without blessings are in vain. That is true – but false prayers are in the majority, mainly through insisting on corporate prayer! Masters says corporate prayer is 'paramount'. This is untrue and it is based on denominational ideas rather than on scripture, which does not mention this supremacy at all. Not one single text supports the notion! (Again, see articles on prayer meetings). In this way, Masters mixes direct truth with indirect theological constructs without biblical proofs.

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