



Social Gospel?

“And He said to him, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND’” (Matthew 22:37).

Here Jesus was asked what the most important commandment was that God gave man to obey. He replied that it was to love God with everything that you are. How profound and yet how elusive this command can be in our lives. Jesus called this the *“great and foremost commandment”* (Matthew 22:38). After He had established this, He said, *“The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF’”* (Matthew 22:39). It is important to notice the order of these commandments. Order here really matters because how you take these two commandments is at the heart of two very different views of what the Church is and what it is supposed to be doing in the world today.

You see, if you take the second commandment first—if you make this your mission statement in life, you may have a tendency to focus on meeting the physical needs of your neighbors over their spiritual needs—supplying water from your tap to quench a dry throat instead of Jesus’ living water that quenches the spiritual thirst for eternal life. This is not to say that as Believers we should not help our neighbors with their physical needs—we are commanded to! But we must be aware of the focus of our lives, for if the second command is your first, you will have a tendency to tolerate sin and seek peace over truth. Instead of the persecution, division, and conflict that Jesus said Believers would experience in the world’s society for standing for His Truth, you will create synthesis by bringing opposing ideas together in compromise—

tolerating evil for the sake of unity, common goals, and expedience to make the world “a better place.” In your heart, you may even be a humanist, and why not? since your focus is man, not God. This is the social gospel of the modern, “emerging” church.

It is not new. In the early 20th Century, emphasizing the second commandment over the first was called the “Social Gospel” because churches began applying Scripture to human needs over spiritual ones—applying the Gospel as a social service to reform the world, making it a “better place” to live in. Christianity became as much a political and social force as a spiritual one. Some believed Christianity would grow through revival until the world would be won for Christ, at which time Jesus would return. This mentality is also connected to Dominion teaching—recovering the “dominion” we were given over creation in the Garden. It is practiced by bringing world institutions into the church and the church into the institutions—binding business, government, and church together to “reform” society and take the world “back for Christ”—making strategic partnerships with businesses, governments, and non-believers to make the church a force to be reckoned with in the world’s geopolitical landscape. The problem with this view is the world is not redeemable through human means, and it will perish in its sin. God does not need us to conquer or reform anything for Him. Conquering is HIS Son’s business, not ours, and Jesus will conquer all on the Day of the Lord, when He returns as a conquering King to “reform” it in righteous judgment.

Our mission then is not to reform the world for God but to *“go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned”* (Mark 16:15-16). Even so, Amen.