

What's Wrong With The Gospel?

Galatians 1:6-9 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Romans 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Obviously, nothing is wrong with the Gospel of the Bible - what the Apostles devoted their lives to. But what about the "gospel" that is being preached in most churches today? Do they preach the same message - the whole message - about Bible salvation? How do they answer the question that people are still asking the Church, "Men and brethren, what shall we do (to be saved)?" Do they answer as the Apostles answered, or do they deviate from it?

The word "gospel" is from the Anglo-Saxon "godspel," meaning "god-message" or "good story." We use the transliterated term "good news" in place of the Greek word "euaggelion," and usually think of it as meaning ONLY the good tidings themselves. However, the Greek word "euaggelion" actually means "a present given to one who brought good tidings," or "a sacrifice offered in thanks for such good tidings having come." Therefore, the "gospel" signifies NOT ONLY the message of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (the "good news"), BUT ALSO our response in "thanks for such good tidings having come." Paul called this "MY GOSPEL" (Romans 2:16), because God revealed to him that the Gospel embodied not only our **relationship on the basis of grace**, but also our **responsibilities on the basis of gratitude**. This is why most of his epistles are divided between doctrinal and practical teaching. This is the REAL gospel!

Therefore, you are NOT preaching Paul's gospel if you preach "only believe!" Furthermore, you are not preaching Paul's gospel if you preach "repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost ... and stop!" The gospel of the New Testament BEGINS with the working of God's grace in salvation, but must CONTINUE with the working of God's grace in SANCTIFICATION, or it is NOT COMPLETE.

The gospel is not the gospel if you take away from it or add to it. It will not work if you do that! Paul says, "If any man preach any other gospel ... let him be accursed" ("anathema" or "devoted to destruction"). This applies to those that mix God's message with men's ideas, creating a "perverted gospel." The Judaizers of Paul's day did not deny Christ; they merely changed the plan of salvation preached by His Apostles. Many today do the same!

Jesus Christ would be angered by most "gospel" messages that are being preached today, mainly because they lack nearly all the major points that He and the Apostles preached on!

WHAT HAS BEEN CHANGED?

THE BLOOD OF JESUS. It's a fact that strong preaching of the blood of Jesus scares people; it's also a fact that His blood scares the devil, because it is the only cleansing agent for man's soul. A bloodless gospel will not save anyone. Remove the blood and you remove the power!

THE CROSS OF JESUS. Today we preach "Jesus Christ and what He can do for you" instead of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." A me-centered gospel is the enemy of a Christ-centered gospel. Anyone preaching self-denial as a condition of discipleship is called "legalistic" - but Jesus did! The sinner is not the center of God's plan - Jesus is! He never lowered the requirements for anyone.

A.W. Tozer: *"The cross is the most revolutionary thing ever to appear among men. The cross of Roman times knew no compromise, it never made concessions. It won all its arguments by killing its opponent and silencing him for good. It spared not Christ, but slew Him the same as the rest. He was alive when they hung Him on that cross, and completely dead when they took Him off of it. That was the cross the first time it appeared in Christian history. With perfect knowledge of all this, Christ said, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me.' So the cross not only brought Christ's life to an end, it also ends the first life, the old life of every one of His true followers ... this and nothing less is true Christianity. We must do something about the cross, and there's only one of two things we can do - flee it or die upon it!"*

THE TERROR OF HELL. We have decided to help God out because we understand our generation better than He does! They need a more gentle, loving message than what He preached. We talk about Heaven and the rewards of salvation, but neglect the other side of the gospel's "two-edged sword." What right do we have to omit hell from preaching when Jesus gave emphasis to it?

THE LAW OF GOD. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus, he asked a very direct question: “Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Can you imagine what today’s preachers would answer him? (“Admit you’re a sinner, accept Jesus as your personal Savior”) But what was Jesus’ answer? “You know the commandments ... keep the commandments.” (Mark 10:19, Matthew 19:17) The commandments! Didn’t Jesus do away with the law? But Jesus wasn’t preaching the commandments to him as the way of salvation, He was using the commandments to specifically convict him of his particular sin (greed). Jesus knew how to “flush him out” - by preaching the Law of God. And that’s exactly what the Law is for: “For through the Law comes the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20) The Law must be preached, not as the way of salvation, but as a searchlight on the sinner’s heart so he can see how bad he really is. “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” (Galatians 3:24) There are no “dos and don’ts” in today’s preaching because we don’t want to scare people away. If we condemned fornication, abortion or any other specific sin, people might feel condemned. But that’s the point - Jesus preached the Law so the rich young ruler would feel condemned enough to feel his need of a Savior. The modern gospel dwells on “all the good things God will do for you if you just accept Him” in place of conviction. But only by the preaching of the Law can a man desire to be saved from his sin. “I had not know sin, but by the Law.” (Romans 7:7)

THE FEAR OF GOD. Jesus is pictured today as so loving and so forgiving that He wouldn’t hurt a fly. But what happened to, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31) and “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10)? Modern preaching emphasizes only God’s kindness, but ignores the balance presented in God’s Word. “Behold then the kindness and severity of God.” (Romans 11:22)

GOD’S BROKEN HEART OVER SIN. God saw every person who was raped, murdered, abused or starved to death today. He saw every pornographic film and every filthy act. How can anyone believe that He sees this and does not grieve? But the church has created a carefree and cheerful God in their modern gospel. They don’t want a God who is grieved with sin, because then He would be grieved with them!

REPENTANCE. Conversion cannot happen without real repentance! Jesus said, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3) His teachings and those of the Apostles are full of commands to repent. Repentance is not just “being sorry” - that is only conviction. Repentance is not merely a change of heart and mind - it is a change of ACTION! We must turn from sin to be saved! But repentance is impossible where the Law does not convict the sinner of his wickedness.

BAPTISM. Paul taught that baptism is New Testament circumcision. In the Old Testament, a male was not in Covenant relationship with God until he was circumcised. Every one not so circumcised was to be “cut off from his people” as having “broken My covenant.” (Genesis 17:14) A child received their name when they were circumcised (Luke 1:59) on the eighth day (new life). In the New Testament, we call into being a Covenant with God when we are baptized in Jesus’ name. Baptism is not merely a part of church membership, it is absolutely necessary!

Colossians 2:9-15 *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST. Some today argue that Christians “receive the Holy Ghost” at repentance, without ever speaking in tongues. That is equivalent to saying that a child is fully born at conception. Jesus was crucified and buried by man, but rose from the dead by His own power. We fulfil His death and burial by repenting and being baptized; these are acts of men. God does His part (“resurrection”) by filling us with the Holy Ghost after we have done our part.

THE NECESSITY OF HOLINESS. Possibly the greatest insult to the gospel today is the almost total neglect of the preaching of holiness for the Christian. Because people are not being convicted by the Law of God and driven to the cross, we then have to invent doctrines to explain why these supposed “Christians” still have no desire to live for God! But the Bible says, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” (1 John 1:6), and “Follow ... holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14) If you call yourself a Christian but are still (perhaps secretly) living in your sin, what you need to do is to really repent!

THE ALTAR CALL. The only “altar call” in the Bible is the call to “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” (Romans 12:1) The altar call as we know it was invented only about 150 years ago, first used by the American evangelist Charles Finney as a means of separating out those who wanted to talk further about salvation (“the mourner’s bench”).

The Salvation Army developed it further, and many in these early revivals would stay at the altar all night confessing their sins (some even a few days!). But gradually, the altar call became a fixed part of every meeting, and - like all traditions - lost its original spirit as “coming forward” became more important than “repentance.”

How many confused sinners have left altars being told they were saved after repeating a sinner’s prayer, but knowing differently in their heart? Having someone repeat a prayer and pronouncing them “saved” takes away the conviction of the Holy Ghost prematurely, before repentance can lead to salvation. **This is spiritual abortion!** We are interfering with the work of the Spirit of God when we try to bring to birth a baby that isn’t ready. It takes not only repentance, but baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost to be saved. And you don’t have to worry - a true sinner’s prayer will gush out of anyone who is truly seeking God and tired of being enslaved to sin! **God would rather see one true convert than an ocean full of “decisions.”** What have we done to the Gospel?!

GOD’S WITNESSES. The world around us is going to hell - not because of rock music, television, drugs, sex, alcohol or the devil himself. It is because of the church! We are to blame! Only we have the truth of God at our disposal to deliver sinners from eternal death. The denominations are willing to go, but they are taking a watered-down, distorted version of God’s message which He has not promised to anoint. And that is why Christianity as a whole is failing. The only hope for the world is in the hands of real Apostolic Christians who will live their message!

The Bible says, “Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen.” (Isaiah 43:10) Sinners have next to nothing in their lives to make an impression on them in respect to eternity. If they were forced to examine the subject, they would be moved greatly - but they do not think about it and never will unless God’s witnesses rise up and testify! **But considering the way most Christians live, it seems they’re testifying for the other side!** A lawyer can address the jury for a month and be as eloquent as Shakespeare, but if his witnesses contradict him, all his pleading is in vain. Just so it is with a minister who preaches to sinners in the midst of a cold church - as he holds up the truths of the Bible, the members witness to the sinners that he is lying! **Do you think the preacher can bring revival by preaching while you live the way you do? Your influence stands in the way of revival! And your “witness” exerts eternal influence!**