

“The Wrong Gospel”

Galatians: 1: 1-12 This letter is from Paul, an apostle. I was not appointed by any group of people or any human authority, but by Jesus Christ Himself and by God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead.

2 All the brothers and sisters here join me in sending this letter to the churches of Galatia. 3 May God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. 4 Jesus gave His life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live. 5 All glory to God forever and ever! Amen.

6 I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to Himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News 7 but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.

8 Let God’s curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you. 9 I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed.

10 Obviously, I’m not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant.

11 Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to understand that the gospel message I preach is not based on mere human reasoning. 12 I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

[NOTE 1] Seems like it's becoming a regular occurrence in the information age -- someone is always discovering a new "gospel" that purports to shed some new light on Jesus that the church has either ignored or suppressed for two millennia. In 2010 a fragment (and we do mean “fragment”-- it has four words) from a fourth-century Coptic Codex was found in Egypt. Harvard Divinity School professor Karen King says it may (read: "possible-but-I'm-not-going-to-stake-my-reputation-on-it") reveal that Jesus actually did have a wife, à la the claims of The Da Vinci Code. The revelation of this "Gospel of Jesus' Wife," as it has become known, follows in the footsteps of a host of other "gospels" that have been unearthed in recent years, like the gospels of Judas, Thomas, and Mary Magdalene, just to name a few.

Historians and archaeologists don't have a corner on the new gospel market, however. Just do a search of "The gospel according to ..." on Google and you'll come up with a host of other takes on the Christian gospel -- the gospel according to the Simpsons, Dr. Seuss, Coco Chanel, Elvis and even Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Jesus' Childhood Pal. Granted, some of these are merely trying to find themes of the Christian gospel within popular TV shows and characters, but others are certainly

trying to craft a gospel that fits their own conceptions of God.

Churches, of course, aren't immune to this gospel-izing. There are plenty of gospels out there that more reflect the culture than they reflect anything having to do with Jesus or the Bible. Think about some of them:

The Gospel of Hate spewed by "Christians" from the Westboro Baptist Church, who picket soldiers' funerals and believe that people who don't follow their agenda deserve whatever tragedy befalls them. So much for grace.

The Gospel of Prosperity touted by famous TV preachers like Joel Osteen who only makes 54 million a year, who tell their people that God wants them to be rich, and that all they need to do is "name and claim" what they want and God will give it to them (if they will only believe and send a check to their ministry). So much for "Blessed are the poor" (Luke 6:20), and "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24).

"The Gospel of Sin Management"-- a phrase coined by Dallas Willard to describe a gospel that "produces vampire Christians who want Jesus for his blood and little else." This gospel is only concerned about getting people into heaven and "reduces salvation to a spiritual exchange divorced from life in this world. It makes salvation and God irrelevant to daily life."

The Social Gospel, which grew out of the Enlightenment idea of progress and reason, believes that humanity can rid itself of social evils, and that human progress will continue to make things better and better. In this gospel, Jesus provides a good example of how to make the world a better place, and his death and resurrection are mere metaphors for living sacrificially --more good advice than good news. Jesus wasn't the son of God, he was a great prophet.

The Apocalyptic Gospel is all about watching the sky for Christ's return and waiting for the Rapture that will suck all the right-believing Christians into the great beyond like some kind of Heavenly Hoover, leaving the rest of humanity behind to stew in hell. **[NOTE 2]**

We're in need of some "good news," or you could say, we are in need of more gospel. Amy and I can only stand to listen to the first 10 minutes of the news to get the headlines. There is so much emphasis on murders, shootings, the bad things! If it bleeds it leads! There really is a need for good news. There are places to get it.

One such site is the Good News Network (www.goodnewsnetwork.org). Here's a look at what these folks at GNN are all about:

The mission is to provide a "Daily Dose of News to Enthuse." The Good News Network® is a clearinghouse for the gathering and dissemination of positive compelling news stories from around the globe. Daily stories will confirm what we already believe: Good news itself is not in short supply; the advertising of it is. Miracles happen, people sacrifice to help others. People do loving and kind things. But we never hear about it!

No place for negative news? Negative news is an important staple of any well-informed citizenry and necessary for society's evolution. But, today we are in dire need of a well-balanced media diet. Local TV news, especially, has been continually feeding

us junk food. We need to be informed by a world view that is not dripping with sensationalism and attuned to the police scanner.

Why Good News? There are many ways that positive news can improve our lives by bringing emotional well-being, health and even prosperity. How do we define "good" news? Good question. No matter what the story line, "compelling" is the bottom line. GNN tries to find news that's worth your time. They have a Good News Philosophy which defines our content and audience. Our audience shares a set of values that leads to common ground. For instance, our target audience shares a commitment to personal development and environmentally-friendly living. --For more, see www.GoodNewsNetwork.org.

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You can probably think of other "gospels" that get preached all the time. Of course, there are always elements of truth in these "gospels." God does hate sin, but continues to love sinners. God does want us to be prosperous, but in the richness of his grace, not necessarily the wealth of our bank accounts. Jesus' blood does save us, but it doesn't just save us FROM something, it saves us TO the work of God's kingdom. Yes, God desires our participation in making the world look more like what we pray for in the Lord's Prayer ("on earth as it is in heaven"), but we can't make that a reality that without Christ's redemptive death for the world and his resurrection promise of the ultimate defeat of death. We do, indeed, await Christ's return, but he's not coming to take us away -- he is coming to take over! **[NOTE 3]**

What's interesting about the "wrong gospels," is that they tend to reflect or represent the people who promote them rather than reflect or represent the good news of Jesus Christ and his kingdom. People tend to understand the gospel through the lens of their own times. That can often lead to incomplete or distorted versions of the message, and the church in every age has had to recalibrate its understanding of the gospel. Martin Luther, John Wesley, Desmond Tutu and Mother Teresa are just a few of those who called people back to the full and powerful gospel of Christ. Paul had to do the same thing as early as Christianity's second decade. Paul gets fired up at the Galatians because they have bought into the "wrong gospel" --a gospel that reflects "the present evil age" (1:4).

The "different gospel" that the Galatians had bought into was one preached to them by some Jewish Christian missionaries who required Gentiles to be circumcised as Jews before they could become Christians (v. 6). Paul regarded this message as a non-gospel because it reflected the status quo of the age before the coming of Christ -- an age governed by the law of Moses. Paul believed that Jesus' death and resurrection had transformed the status quo, and that faith leading to a spiritual circumcision of the heart was the mark of a true Christian (Romans 2:29; Colossians 2:11). The requirement for physical circumcision was thus abolished because God had reconciled Jews and Gentile through the grace of Jesus Christ -- a theme that runs through most of his letters.

[NOTE 4] A close look at this passage, then, reveals the gospel that Paul preached, and the one that the Galatians (and we) should be centering our faith around:

A. The gospel is not a human construction, subject to alteration by every human generation. The gospel comes from God, who has taken the initiative to rescue us from sin and death through his grace (1:1, 3-4, 6).

B. The grace of God is embodied and enacted in Jesus' death. Jesus' death liberates us from sin and the power of the present age. We cannot defeat sin and evil and change the world on our own. We need a Savior who defeats sin and its ultimate power, death. Jesus does this through the cross and His resurrection (1:3-4)

C. The grace of God enacted through the Lord Jesus enables us to become children of God, bringing people from different backgrounds, cultures and customs together into a new community not marked by ethnicity and circumcision, but by faith and baptism (1:3). We receive Him by believing He is the Son of God and seeking to live His way!

D. As God's children, we participate with God in his mission of transforming the world into God's new creation. As Paul puts it, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything;... but a new creation is everything!" (6:15). The goal of the gospel is not the mere transformation of our spirits or our bank accounts, nor is it merely about making the world a little better. The good news is that God's kingdom is near and that will be the means of changing the world, not taking us away from it. As Revelation puts it, God isn't about to destroy the world and make all new things; instead, God comes to redeem the world and "make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). Jesus Christ is our Redeemer! We need to seek His kingdom, seek to know His will and live His way! We need to look at what Jesus did and follow. He loved God with all His heart, mind, soul, and strength and loved others as Himself. He made disciples who would make disciples and shared the gospel. He taught, He gave us a model to follow. He had compassion on people. He served others. He was humble. He sought to heal.

If a gospel only benefits the individual, you can bet it's the wrong gospel. A false gospel always seeks human approval and mostly benefits the human who preaches or believes it. Paul reminds the Galatians that the real gospel -- the gospel of what God has done and is doing through Christ -- does indeed benefit us by saving us from sin and death, but it doesn't stop there. God loves and accepts you right where you are at, but also loves you enough to not leave you there. The real gospel is the good news that God is transforming us so that we can be part of God's transformation of the whole cosmos. To put it another way, the gospel isn't about our leaving, but about God's coming! We have been saved by grace through faith, for God's purpose, for doing good works. The gospel isn't about pleasing others or even ourselves; it's all about pleasing God and, like Paul, becoming Christ's servants (1:10).

Maybe we keep coming up with new gospels because the one Jesus gave us actually requires something of us. We serve Christ and we serve others, which is more important than any physical mark or promise of individualistic eternal bliss. Paul will go on to talk about the fruit of the Spirit as being the mark of those who belong to Christ and have crucified their old selfish and sinful natures (5:22-24). So the mark of those who belong to Christ is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and

self-control. If you don't see those things growing in people, find out why. Is it sin? Is it lack of the Holy Spirit? None of us is even close to perfect! But we should be growing. If we are not, something is wrong! Endless debates about eschatology, soteriology, ecclesiology, Pneumatology, missiology, and any other -ology can keep us from responding to the heart of the good news not only with our faith, but with our faithfulness to the gospel's call to be and work for God's new creation. Pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Become disciple-makers in the power of the Holy Spirit by standing on God's Word, walking in love, and resting in the arms of Jesus.

What will you do with the good news? Are you going to follow Jesus example? Are you going to share it? Or are you going to be comfortable and just watch another TV show until the feeling goes away? I pray that the Holy Spirit is working in your life, in your heart, and inspiring you to go and do something about it. Please write out an "I will" statement. My "I will ...statement is: "I will rededicate myself to reading the Bible every day, pray for my 5 people/families, and look for opportunities to share the gospel this week." (In case of visitors explain the 5 people) Let's pray ... AMEN

“Sermon Notes for The Wrong Gospel based on Galatians 1: 1-12
Given April 12, 2026 at Doster Community Church

- I. What is the gospel? The Good News is simply that Jesus Christ died for our sins, rose again from the dead and offers salvation and reconciliation to all who believe and seek to live His way!
 - II. God does hate sin, BUT continues to love sinners. God does want us to prosper, but in the richness of his grace, not in earthly wealth. Jesus blood does save us, but it saves us FOR the work of God’s kingdom.
 - III. These “wrong gospels” reflect or represent the people who promote them rather than reflect or represent the good news of Jesus Christ and the new covenant and His Kingdom! We all have filters that color our understanding and how we interpret things.
 - IV. The Gospel that Paul preached, the one we should be centering our faith around is this.
 - a. The gospel comes from God who took the initiative to rescue us from sin and death through His grace.
 - b. The grace of God is embodied and enacted in Jesus’ death. We need a Savior who defeats sin and has resurrection power.
 - c. The grace of God enables us to become children of God by receiving Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.
 - d. As God’s children we participate with God in His mission of transforming the world into God’s new creation. The goal of the gospel is transforming our Spirits, growing us to be more like Jesus. What did Jesus do? He made disciples (followers of Jesus).
 - V. What will you do with the Good News! Keep it to yourself? What are you going to do about this? Please write an “I will _____” statement!
Write something down ...please! _____
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