

Redefining the Gospel (2 Corinthians 11:4)

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Bruce Scott shared this story. “When our children were young, my wife and I would take them every October 31 to the storage shed behind our house. They each brought a sheet of paper on which they had written a simple sentence thanking God for something: ‘Thank you, God, for the Bible,’ or ‘Thank you, God, for salvation.’ Inside the shed, we gave them a hammer, and they nailed their papers to the wall. By the time they were teenagers, many yellowed, curled, and dusty pages adorned the shed wall. Why did we do it? Because on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door at Wittenberg, Germany, sparking the Protestant Reformation. Luther’s action unfurled a chain of events that realigned many people’s understanding of the Gospel with biblical truth. Namely, we are saved from our sins by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, according to the Scriptures alone—and not by good deeds or religious traditions. We had our children reenact Luther’s act so they would remember the event’s significance and how it continues to impact our lives today.”

Of course, not all professing Christians today remember what happened during the Reformation. A 2017 Pew Research Center survey, conducted in conjunction with the 500th anniversary of the start of the Reformation, found that “most Christians in the U.S. (62%) say that both faith in God and good deeds are necessary to get into heaven.” The same is true in Western Europe. According to the survey, “In every country except Norway...belief in sola fide [Latin for “faith alone”] is a minority view even among Protestants.”

In this study, we want to consider how many who claim to be religious people today are actually following another Jesus, another spirit, and another Gospel which is not rooted in the grace of God. Many are following a false gospel offering a false Jesus through the deception of a false spirit.

Paul addresses this reality in 2 Corinthians 11:4:

“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.”

The word for "another" means another of a different kind. In other words, the legalistic gospel or Judaizing gospel that was being preached was another gospel that was totally different than the Gospel of God's grace. The final words, "ye might well bear with *him*" means you may well put up with it (the false gospel message and messenger) and must be understood as irony. The apostle is not endorsing their acceptance of heresy (another gospel), but chiding them for their gullibility, lack of discernment, and toleration of the false messengers who preached a false gospel. The saints had not abandoned the true message of the Gospel for another false gospel ("which ye have not accepted") but they were sympathetic and open to others who did not preach the clearly revealed apostolic message of the true Gospel. This reminds us that we must "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 1:3) in these days of apostasy and false gospels.

Vance Havner once said:

“Contending for the faith is not easy. It is not pleasant business. It has many perils. It is a thankless job, and it is highly unpopular in an age of moral fogs and spiritual twilights. It is nicer to be an appeaser than an opposer.”

Today we must defend the Gospel message and oppose those who oppose it and change it. But we must begin by asking an important question. What is the Gospel? The term Gospel means good news. It is a simple message that even a child can understand. The Gospel is clearly and unmistakably defined in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 gives us the content of the Gospel message:

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

The content of the Gospel is explained as:

- Christ's death ("Christ died for our sins") - Paying the penalty for our sins;
 - It was sacrificial ("for our sins")
 - It was Scriptural ("according to the Scriptures")

- Christ's burial ("that he was buried") - Proving the finality of His death;

- Christ's resurrection ("he rose again") - Providing evidence that the Father accepted His sacrifice;
 - It was specific ("on the third day")
 - It was Scriptural ("according to the Scriptures").

This is the Gospel. The Gospel is nothing else but this! Scripture also identifies this Gospel as "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24) which means that the Gospel is all about what Jesus Christ has done for us, not what man has done or can do for Him. It is not a Gospel that revolves around legalism or man's human efforts and attempts to please God and merit his salvation. Anything else that is added to this clearly revealed message would change the true Gospel message and create what the Bible calls "another gospel." We will learn about this in our study.

M. R. DeHaan wrote:

"The gospel means 'good news.' According to Paul it is the good news concerning the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This indeed is good news for the sinner. Man by nature is lost, depraved, helpless and hopeless. But God sent His Son to bear our sins on the Cross, and declared His complete satisfaction with the work of the Son of God by raising Him from the dead on the third day. And now the poor, hopeless, helpless sinner can be saved, simply by receiving in faith the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Here is what I want everyone to see in this lesson. The Gospel is being redefined and changed today. This change of the Gospel occurs in three ways.

1. Through the remaking of Jesus

2 Corinthians 11:4:

“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.”

Imagine this – another Jesus! If you change the person (Jesus Christ) who is the central and only figure in the Gospel message, then you can change the message of the Gospel and create a false gospel. Redefine Jesus and you can redefine the Gospel. If you disbelieve in the virgin-birth, the deity of Christ, and His sacrificial shed blood for you on the cross, then you do not believe in the Jesus of the Bible. Are there many unscriptural teachings about Jesus today? Are religions and cults preaching a different Jesus in our time? Yes, there are!

Rod Mattoon said:

“You can find a religious smorgasbord of "Jesus Christs" being served to the public on the platters of perversion and deception.”

All the cults and false religions of our world reject the identity of Jesus Christ as being God incarnate and the only way of salvation through His shed blood.

Consider just a few false representations of Jesus Christ.

- The Jehovah Witnesses state that Jesus is Michael the archangel. He was the first creation of God, he came to earth as a man, he died on a stake, and arose invisibly as a ghost.
- The Mormons believe that Jesus was one god in a pantheon of many gods. He is the brother of Satan. To the Mormons, Jesus was our elder brother who pointed the way to Heaven, but He isn't the Way as the Bible teaches. Mormons believe that once Jesus took His physical form, He had to justify or earn His own spiritual salvation through His works while in the flesh, just as each of us must.
- Mary Baker Eddy taught in the Christian Science movement, that Jesus was a pleasant divine idea.

- Herbert W. Armstrong, founder of the Worldwide Church of God, says that Jesus was the first man to self-perfect Himself and is now our example of how we can perfect ourselves by membership in Armstrong's church and by giving 30% of your income to them.
- Unitarians say that Jesus was a good man but His followers mistakenly deified Him.
- The Transcendental Meditation movement says that Jesus was an enlightened guru who never suffered or died for anyone.
- The Bahai cult says that Jesus is one of nine great world manifestations. They say it does not matter what religion you believe since all religions are basically the same. The Bahai Temple in Evanston, Illinois, is a nine sided building. Each side represents a religion. Big signs on the walls read, "All religions teach the same thing about God."
- Muslims deny that Jesus was the Son of God. He was crucified but did not die on the cross.
- Hinduism believes that Jesus was a holy man and that Jesus was a god (a symbol of which humans can attain).
- Buddhism believes Jesus was an enlightened and holy man but not the God-man and Son of God. He was merely one who dedicated his life sacrificially to the service and betterment of others.
- The New Age Movement ignores the identity of Jesus Christ. They see Him as some sort of sage, teacher or philosopher. They reject the Biblical and traditional Jesus Christ of Christianity.

Because the Bible is God's infallible Word, those who teach anything different from what it says about Jesus Christ are both mistaken and misleading. Another Jesus! This is a Jesus that is not represented in the Bible. If someone's preaching denies the virgin birth of Jesus, the deity of Christ, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and His Second Coming, they are not talking about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which we read about in the Bible.

The late Dr. Walter Martin, described a cult as:

“A group of people gathered around a specific person’s misinterpretation of the Bible.”

When people misrepresent Jesus, they are misrepresenting the Bible. Another Jesus would be a Jesus who was a man but not God, or a Jesus that was crucified but not risen. Presenting a false Christology has always been a hallmark of false religions and cults. Instead of viewing Christ as the eternal, Second Person of the Trinity, who became a man and died as a saving sacrifice for sin, they see Christ as a prophet, guru, avatar (the embodiment of an idea), or a social or political revolutionary, Michael the archangel, a spirit child of God, an emanation from God - anything but the true God in flesh. Although the false apostles outwardly identified with Jesus, the Jesus they preached was not the Jesus of Scripture.

Back in 1970 there was a musical production called "Jesus Christ, Superstar," which denied Christ's deity and resurrection and presented a "Jesus" who never lived since the Bible does not speak of this Jesus. The Gospel records clearly teach Jesus' identity as the Son of God and the reason for His sacrifice and His resurrection. Jesus Christ was not a superstar – He was the sacrifice, Savior, and risen Son of God! The Jesus presented in this production was the "Jesus" of liberalism dressed in a new wardrobe. But the Jesus of liberalism never existed.

Another Jesus! When liberalism denies the virgin birth of Jesus, they are talking about some other Jesus, not the Jesus Christ of the Bible. When modernism or liberalism denies that Jesus performed miracles, they have a different Jesus in mind, because the Jesus in the Gospels is the One who performed miracles. They deny that Jesus was the One who died for the sins of the world. They deny that He was raised from the dead bodily. They also deny that He is the God-Man. This is why we reject the Jesus of liberalism.

1 Timothy 2:5

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

The ladder or mediator between a righteous God and unrighteous men, between Heaven and Hell, and between hope and hopelessness is Jesus Christ. There are no other mediators between God and sinners. This includes priests, Mary, dead saints, popes, and any other religious figures and relics that are worshipped with the hope of bringing a person acceptance before God.

Acts 4:12 declares:

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

There is no salvation from hell without Jesus Christ. He is the exclusive and only Savior. There is no other name under heaven that has been given to men for salvation, and it is by this name alone (Jesus Christ) that we must be saved. No other name! It’s not the name of an angel, a saint, Mary, or any other name. But only the name of Jesus!

“Jesus, name above all names
Beautiful Saviour, Glorious Lord
Emmanuel, God is with us
Blessed Redeemer, Living Word.”

No other name! This is a very narrow and exclusive message – not a broad and inclusive message that is promoted by the philosophies of syncretism, universalism, and pluralism (all paths eventually lead to God and Heaven). Some teach that the Islamic Jesus is the same as the Christian Jesus. That the Jesus of the cults is the same Jesus as Christianity and the Bible. Not a chance!

John 14:6

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way (the only pathway to God and Heaven), the truth (the only true and trustworthy way as opposed to untrue ways), and the life (the actual source of spiritual and eternal life): no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Salvation is in a person – not a creed, not in Christendom, not in carrying out your duties in observing the Mass or the sacraments. Salvation is found ONLY in Jesus Christ. If you accept this Person (Jesus Christ) as your own Savior, you have salvation. Christianity is Christ. The Lord Jesus is not just one of many ways. He is the only Way into the presence of God and Heaven. Jesus is not just One who teaches the truth; He is the embodiment of Truth. Those who have Christ have the Truth. It is not found anywhere else. Christ Jesus is the life. He is the source of life, both spiritual and eternal. Those who receive Him have eternal life because He is the Life.

The Pulpit Helps magazine asked this question, "What is 750,000 miles long, reaches around the earth 30 times, and grows 20 miles longer each day? Answer: The line of people who are without Jesus Christ." The so called "wisdom" of men has condemned them to eternal destruction (hell) because of their rejection of the true Jesus Christ of the Bible.

If you redefine who Jesus is (God in the flesh, virgin-born, crucified, risen and exalted at God's right hand), then you destroy the foundational message of the Gospel. If the person is not right, then the Gospel is no longer right and relevant to our lives. Beware when someone comes to your door who says: "We are here representing Jesus Christ!" They may actually be representing Satan and a false Christ.

2. Through the deception of demonic spirits

2 Corinthians 11:4 goes on to say:

"For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*."

There is also another spirit. The expression of "another spirit" would be a reference to a demonic spirit which opposes the Holy Spirit who is the Third Person within the Trinitarian Oneness of the Godhead. The idea that "ye receive another spirit" means that they were at least accommodating and tolerant of a demonic spirit, which was behind the false gospel of legalism. The false apostles of that day and the false teachers of today come in the power of a different spirit, a demonic spirit, not the Holy Spirit whom the Corinthians had received at the time of their salvation (Eph. 2:22; Rom. 8:9-11). The Holy Spirit is behind the true message of the Gospel but "another spirit" (a demonic spirit) is behind the message or teaching of every false gospel.

1 Timothy 4:1 declares:

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly (explicitly and distinctly), that in the latter times (the times subsequent to the time when the apostle was writing) some shall depart

from the faith (the truth that Christians embrace and wholeheartedly believe), giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines (teachings) of devils” (demons).

Deceiving spirits or demons are everywhere today. They are deceiving the minds of people through their own teachings which are inspired and promoted by the world of darkness, so that unsaved people do not receive the truth of the Gospel message for their personal salvation. Don't fool yourself. Any false gospel has its source in demons. They are behind it and promoting it.

2 Corinthians 11:13-14 is in the near vicinity of our main text and says:

“For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”

The false apostles or messengers of Satan, who outwardly deny the Gospel of grace and change it into various forms of legalism, are disguising or masquerading themselves as the true followers of God. Like Satan's masquerade as an “angel of light” (an angel that appears to be good through his visible emanation of light), so his followers (the false teachers) masquerade (change their outward form – who they really are) and make themselves look like ministers of righteousness and truth, even though they are led by demons and errant, demonic teachings.

The way Satan exists in His creation, a being of beauty and splendor, is the way Satan and his masquerading ministers approach us today. They come to us as something that appears to be good, wonderful, and right. Satan's followers use religious words such as God, Jesus, and the Bible but they deny salvation by grace alone through the Gospel message alone. Satan's ministers are apostates who deny the truth, but they come to us in a deceptive manner. They wear beautiful religious caps and gowns with prayer beads, they have beautiful architectural buildings, they present messages of love without mentioning a person's sin and need for salvation. They present a legalistic gospel (a gospel of works) which keep poor lost souls from receiving the Gospel of God's grace.

The battle of the ages is between truth and error, between God and demons, between the salvation and the damnation of souls to an eternal hell.

1 John 4:6 reveals this battle:

“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”

Yes, there are plenty of deceptive demons, but thank God for the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, guiding us in the truth of Scripture and impressing the truth upon our minds and hearts as God’s people.

Jesus taught in John 16:13:

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”

Of course, the illumination, understanding, and salvation of a believer through the Gospel message is the result of the Holy Spirit’s work (“salvation through sanctification of the Spirit” - 1 Thess. 2:13). The Holy Spirit causes us to see our own lost estate and our need for the Gospel of Christ’s death and resurrection to save us from hell. He reveals the glories of grace to our hearts so we have the opportunity to be saved by God’s grace through the Gospel (Eph. 2:8). He is the Holy Spirit of truth. But the “spirit of error” (1 John 4:6) is opposed to the work of the Holy Spirit in drawing people to salvation through the Gospel. This expression means that demonic spirits are behind the proliferation of false gospels and other teachings which clearly deny the essential beliefs of the Bible and Christianity. Serious spiritual error is seldom due to innocent mistakes. It is more often due to the conscious strategies of God’s spiritual enemies who are out to deceive the minds of unbelievers and even God’s own people (Eph. 6:12).

2 Corinthians 4:4 speaks of the spiritual blindfold placed upon the lost:

“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

Satan blinds the minds of unsaved and unregenerate people through his host of fallen angels, which consist of untold billions of demons. There is a vast army designed to dupe or deceive humanity into rejecting the Gospel of God’s grace,

through getting people to outwardly deny the Gospel as being true or being irrelevant to their lives, or subtly exchanging the true Gospel for a false gospel. Devilish and demonic blindness is very real. It's not some kind of medieval teaching; it is a Biblical teaching. Demons are deceptive and they want to keep unsaved people blinded to the revelatory light of the Gospel so that it will not shine in their hearts and bring them to faith in Christ. A great spiritual battle is occurring in our world and the hearts of mankind. This is why we need to keep sending out the light, the blessed Gospel light, and let it shine from shore to shore! We can be sure that the devil keeps people away from the truth of the Gospel by deceiving them through atheism, evolutionism, humanism, hedonism, postmodernism, and the sacramentalism and ritualism related to religion.

Proverbs 14:12

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Lost in the jungle, a man sought desperately to find his way to safety. His strength was ebbing fast as the insects and stifling heat did their deadly work. Suddenly he heard what he thought to be a bell, ringing in the distance. Believing he was nearing civilization, he struggled bravely onward, but he never seemed to draw closer to the sound. Finally, he fell to the ground exhausted, never to rise again. The mysterious bellbird had claimed another victim! This story is related in detail by G.B. Robeson. He says that many a traveler in the heart of the rain forest of Central and South America has been led to his death by the uncanny call of this seldom-seen bird. Its enticing, reverberating "toll" produces an almost overpowering temptation to seek its source.

In a similar way, Satan uses the pomp and ceremony of religion to ensnare the human race and keep them in the jungle of their lost estate and sinful lives. Poor lost souls are allured by the tempter's "bell" ringing in the distance. "At last," they think, "I've found a way of escape." And so, following the call of false religions deeper and deeper into the jungle of despair and doom they go, and they are eventually lost for eternity. Multitudes are following the deceptive call of the devil's "bellbird" because it "seems right" to them. But following a religion without the true Christ and true Gospel cannot save anyone. O that people might realize the

truth of these words before it is too late: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

I want to ask you a few questions. What kind of message have you been listening to? What do you believe about Jesus Christ and the Gospel? Are you lost in a religious jungle without any way to escape God's judgment and wrath because of your sins? Do you have religion or Christ? Have you been moving toward an eternal hell without knowing it? It's not too late to be saved by placing your faith in the Gospel message.

Romans 1:16 says:

"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."

If you embrace the true Gospel, by placing your faith in the death and resurrection of Christ, you can be saved from hell and given eternal life in Heaven. Don't be deceived any longer by the devil. You need to be saved through the Gospel.

We have seen that changing of the Gospel is the result of demonic deception. Demons are behind a crossless and bloodless Gospel which is also being promoted today. There is a real battle occurring in the minds and hearts of unsaved people, whether to receive or reject the Gospel message and embrace the free salvation that Jesus Christ offers to them through the Gospel. It is the Gospel that results in a person salvation and the Gospel consists of Christ's sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection from the dead, which when embraced by faith, gives one eternal life in Heaven instead of in Hell. Ephesians 1:13 says: "In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation ..."

The devil knows that the Gospel is what saves people and if he can keep redefining it, hiding it behind false religion and legalism (man's good works), if he can keep blinding people to it, keep them ignoring it and rejecting it through demonic deception, then he knows that their souls will end up in the Lake of Fire. Jesus said in Matthew 13:19: "then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart."

3. Through the teaching of a false gospel

Once again, the word Gospel means good news or glad tidings. Sadly, many have turned the good news into bad news by embracing other false gospels. But the gospel of legalism is the primary false gospel that is being propagated today by Satan and demons.

2 Corinthians 11:4

“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.”

Yes, there is also another gospel! A different gospel would be one of law/works/legalism and not grace. Legalism is essentially the human efforts of man to earn or merit God’s favor, instead of relying only on God’s grace for salvation (Eph. 2:8-9).

Galatians 1:8-9 also speaks of another Gospel:

“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.”

The Catholic canons damn people to hell for rejecting the false gospel of baptismal regeneration but Paul damns people to hell for rejecting the true Gospel of the grace of God. God does not play games with His Gospel message of the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son. If someone is outwardly opposing the clear revelation of the Gospel message of God’s grace, as seen in the sacrificial death of His Son on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, then Paul says that person should be “accursed” or damned to hell because he himself is damning many people to hell by rejecting the Gospel of grace.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:15:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”

Is a different gospel being preached today in American churches? Oh yes, unfortunately this is going on in thousands of churches. When a church preaches that salvation is found in belonging to the Roman Catholic church, that is a false gospel. When someone preaches that good works get you to Heaven, that is a false gospel. When the message is "baptism is a requirement for salvation," that too, is a false gospel. We have seen that salvation is in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone!

Redefining the gospel is nothing new. People have always attempted to infuse the Gospel with a new meaning and structure it into something other than the Gospel found in the Bible. The logical consequence of proclaiming a different Jesus in the power of a different spirit was that the false apostles preached a different gospel. The false gospel ("another gospel") that Paul was specifically referencing was the gospel of legalism (salvation through human effort). Elsewhere, Paul makes sure to remind us that this was "not another gospel" (Gal. 1:7) which means that there is no other true Gospel other than the message of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The false gospel of legalism denies that salvation is by grace alone through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ. It adds human works to the message of the Gospel.

Incredibly, instead of rejecting this damning heresy, the Corinthians tolerated it, causing Paul to reprimand them at this point in 2 Corinthians 11:4 when sarcastically saying "ye might well bear with *him*" (the message and proclaimer of the false gospel). Once again, we must understand that Paul clearly reveals that the saints did not accept the false gospel which undermined grace ("which ye have not accepted") nor the false spirit behind the message ("which ye have not received") but they had accommodated the errant message. Perhaps they wanted to feel accepted by everyone and "fit in" with whatever comes down the pike and "every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). So Paul condemns them for this compromising attitude toward those who were preaching a different gospel message.

1 Corinthians 15:1 says:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand."

The saints had received the true Gospel message, but Paul was warning them to not allow legalism to creep into the pure message of the Gospel. He was chiding them about their “nonchalant” attitude toward those who were preaching another false gospel that can potentially lead the saints away from the truth of grace (Gal. 5:1) and ultimately lead unsaved people to hell and damnation. He wanted them to separate from the preachers of a legalistic gospel and not accommodate them, promote them, or endorse them in any way.

2 John 1:9-10 explains the separation like this:

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed.”

We are not to accommodate, promote, and condone those who embrace a false gospel message by adding to it, taking from it, and changing it.

In summary, Satan has a counterfeit gospel that involves a different Jesus, which is backed by a different spirit, and which consists of a different message. The false gospel is normally a mixture of law and grace and is not a true gospel at all. There is only one Gospel and it centers upon the grace of God (Acts 20:24; Gal. 1:6-7) and not the meritorious works of mankind.

After looking at the good news of the Gospel, we must remind ourselves how it’s being turned into different news today and bad news! Throughout history there have evolved other false gospels (“another gospel”) which runs contrary to the simple truth of the Gospel of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. At this point, I would like to give you a summary of some false gospels that are being preached today which deviate from the true Gospel message of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

First, there is a *law-keeping gospel* (legalistic gospel). This gospel message teaches that man can earn or merit his salvation. It adds legalism to the message of the Gospel. As we have mentioned, this was the false gospel Paul was opposing in his day.

Acts 15:1

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.”

The idea or concept of legalism is derived from following the legal letter of the Law. It means that a person must do something to merit God’s favor and their salvation instead of relying only upon the Gospel of grace which is free (Rom. 3:24) to receive by faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone. After much debate in the Jerusalem council, the apostle Peter stood up and made the case for the Gospel of grace instead of the gospel of law or legalism.

Acts 15:11

“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

Second, there is also a *lordship salvation gospel*. This gospel adds a person’s commitment and discipleship to the Gospel message. Proponents of this gospel insist that the content of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians is not the full Gospel story. There is also the Gospel according to Jesus as revealed in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, a gospel of discipleship and following Christ as one’s Lord and Master. By wrongly interpreting other texts of Scripture, which have nothing to do with the true Gospel, those who embrace this errant gospel believe that a person must be willing to do something, become something, and promise something to Christ in order to be saved.

This teaching claims the Gospel message includes a message of becoming a discipleship, making Jesus Lord over every area of one’s life, and promising to submit to God the rest of your days on earth. The bottom line question is this: How much lordship is necessary when expressing faith in Christ, and how much lordship is necessary to maintain one’s salvation and be sure that you are saved? The lordship gospel frontloads and backloads the true Gospel with legalism.

Third, there is the *prosperity gospel*. This gospel adds or replaces prosperity and wealth to the Gospel message. This popular but false gospel claims God does not want anyone to be sick, poor, or troubled. The promise is given that if a person

comes to Jesus they will be healthy, wealthy, and problem-free. Many televangelists promote the false prosperity gospel. Of course, when studying the Bible, we discover that the Bible does not necessarily promise us physical and material blessings and these things have nothing to do with the true Gospel. Instead of promising us many material blessings, we are promised every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

The Bible teaches that we will suffer tribulation and persecution in this world if we live godly in Christ Jesus (Jn. 16:33; 2 Tim. 3:12). The apostle Paul's life was proof of this fact. (2 Corinthians 11:23–28). Sadly, this false gospel downplays or ignores the major Biblical truth that man is a sinner (Rom. 3:23), that he is going to hell, and that this is the key reason why he needs Christ. Making prosperity part of the Gospel message distorts the meaning of the Gospel and creates another gospel that leads people astray.

Fourth, there is the *self-esteem gospel*. This gospel adds to the Gospel or replaces the Gospel with a person's self-image. This gospel repackages the teaching of Norman Vincent Peale's popular positive-thinking philosophy. Peale's 1952 book, "The Power of Positive Thinking," captivated America and was on the best-seller list for 186 consecutive weeks. Proclaimers of this false gospel focus on improving your self-esteem, become all you can be, become your best self; and if you can think it, you can make it happen.

Once again, the major problem with this philosophy is that it either downplays or completely ignores humanity's central problem, which is sin. It also adds self-esteem to the true Gospel message. We need salvation because we are sinners by nature and choice and because the wages of sin is death, ultimately separation from God in hell (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). The Gospel is not about our self-esteem but Christ's death, burial, and resurrection to save us from the consequences of our sins. The cold, hard fact is that we cannot become better from a spiritual perspective by simply improving our self-esteem. We need a Savior, a new birth, and new life.

Fifth and finally, there is the *social gospel*. The social-gospel movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries emphasized the changing the world by ending

poverty, challenging injustices, and bringing equality to the oppressed in the hopes of creating a social revolution that ultimately will bring the Kingdom of God to Earth, which was a new liberal form of Postmillennialism.

I remember watching a documentary many years ago. They were filming poor people being fed by other people who cared about their physical needs and wellbeing. I'll never forget when the man turned and looked into the camera and said, "This is the gospel." In other words, he assumed that feeding the poor was the Gospel.

The problem with the social gospel is that it confuses good deeds with the Gospel. Doing good deeds with the prospect of transforming society is not the Gospel (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Furthermore, no one ever got saved by observing good deeds (Gal. 2:16; Titus 3:5). The true Gospel is a message of declaration or proclamation of salvation through Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:13–15; Gal. 3:2) – not a message of equal justice in society. Of course, meeting people's physical needs is a means to sharing the Gospel but we should never make it a necessary component of the Gospel. We must remember that the Great Commission Jesus gave to the Church says nothing about eradicating poverty, resolving every injustice, or bringing equality to all (Matt. 28:19-20). The Great Commission is to "make disciples" of Jesus Christ throughout the world by proclaiming the good news of the Gospel.

As much as God loves the poor, they do not always take priority. Even Jesus said in Mark 14:7, "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always." Jesus did not come to save people from poverty but to save them from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

J. W. Hyde said:

"If every person in the world had adequate food, housing, income; If all men were equal; If every possible social evil and injustice were done away with, Men would still need one thing-CHRIST!

Bruce Scott rightly observes:

“It is important to remember that the world’s greatest problem is sin, not poverty; and the greatest solution is spiritual salvation, not social revolution. This is why the apostle Paul said the gospel—and nothing else—is of first importance (1 Cor. 15:3).”

The Salvation Army is today almost exclusively devoted to a social gospel today with little emphasis upon the salvation of souls. But it is interesting what Dr. Harry Ironside (1876-1951), one of the most respected Bible teachers of his day, said of William Booth years ago. “I recall hearing William Booth, the first general of the Salvation Army, say, when explaining his ‘Darkest England’ scheme, that its real objective was, not just the amelioration (improvement) of social conditions, but first and foremost the bringing of men to repentance that their souls might be saved.

“I can recall the flash in his eye, and the noble bearing of his commanding figure as he exclaimed, ‘Take a man from the filth and squalor of the slums, exchange his rags for decent clothing, move him from the stifling stench of the city tenement to a neat little cottage in the pure air of the country, put him on his feet economically where he can make a decent living for himself and his family, and then let him die in his sins, unsaved, and be lost forever at last—really it is not worth while, and I, for one, would not attempt it.’” (Cited by Harry Ironside, *Except Ye Repent*, pages 181-182).

William Booth, although have compassion for the physical needs of others, did not lose sight of man’s greatest need which is salvation through the Gospel of God’s grace.

Dear friend, your greatest need is to be saved from hell and given eternal life through the Gospel. If you will place your faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which includes Christ’s suffering and sacrificial death upon the cross that paid the penalty for your sins (God’s wrath), and if you will place faith in Christ’s resurrection to give you everlasting life, then you can be saved from hell. Are you a Gospel believer? If not, why don’t you become one today by placing your faith alone in Jesus Christ alone to give you everlasting life.

John 6:47

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

To believe on Jesus Christ means to believe in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. They are one and the same. In other words, we must believe in what Christ’s did for us (experiencing God’s wrath in our place) and what He provided for us (salvation and eternal life) when dying on the cross and rising from the dead. Believing on Christ means to transfer all of your trust to Christ alone to give you salvation and eternal life. If you have never personally done this, I invite you to do so now.

Express your faith in Christ and the Gospel right now by praying in your own heart: “Dear heavenly Father, I know that I am a sinner and in need of salvation from hell. I want to express my personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone to be my Savior. I believe He died for me and rose again the third day to give me eternal life. I receive Him as my personal Savior today. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

If you have expressed faith in Christ today, let us know. You can contact us through our church website: www.bereaninternetministry.org