

## T E N F A L S E G O S P E L S

There were false gospels preached in Paul's day and there are false gospel preached in our day, as well. There are some preached in churches.

Paul said, "*But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!*" (Galatians 1:8 NIV). Let's examine ten false gospel preached today.

### **The Merit Gospel**

This is the performance-based gospel. It is the do-gooder gospel. It is the morality gospel. It is the gospel that not only encourages good works but teaches that these good deeds can actually save you. It is the Pharisaic gospel.

My pastor calls this "a gospel of behavior modification through self-effort." This is gospel of all of the other religions in the world today. It is the gospel of works, which is no gospel at all, if salvation has to be earned.

This is the gospel of Buddha (which happens to be the title of a book written in 1894). It is the gospel of Islam. It is the Gospel of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. It is also the Gospel of the Roman Catholic Church. They believe in justification by faith plus works.

This gospel teaches that salvation is not received as a gift. It is achieved by human effort. If we could be saved by works or our own human effort, there would have been no need for Jesus to die.

His death would have been in vain. *I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!* (Galatians 2:21 NIV)

Of course, morals are not wrong. It is important to have good morals. People should not live immoral lives but good morals do not save people. Keeping religious rules do not save people. Following the Golden Rule does not save people.

### **The Full Gospel**

Pentecostals believe that healing is in the gospel. They believe that it is an integral part of the gospel. They believe that it is in the atonement. What is the problem with this view?

When Paul gives a detailed explanation of the gospel, he does not say anything at all about healing. Paul says many times that Jesus died for our sins but never says that Jesus died for our diseases. He says that Jesus became sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21). He does not teach that he became sickness for us.

Paul believed in healing. God does heal people today. He did not stop doing miracles in 70 AD. Healing is one of the spiritual gifts in the NT but it is not part of the gospel. It is NOT a message that you have to believe in order to be saved.

### **The Prosperity Gospel**

This is sometimes called "The Health and Wealth Gospel" or "The Name it and Claim it Gospel." One prosperity preacher said that there is gold in the gospel. [1]

This doctrine is based on many half-truths. God does bless believers and often blesses them financially. It is a biblical teaching. It is all through Scripture. Proverbs 10:22 says "*The blessing of the LORD brings wealth.*"

The problem takes place when preachers ABUSE this truth and preach the gospel as a means of financial gain (I Timothy 6:5). It becomes a get rich scheme. The gospel is not a message that, if you believe, you will get rich financially. It is a message that, if you believe, you will get saved.

### **The Self-Esteem Gospel**

This gospel is all about you. It has a feel-good message. It is the feel-good gospel. This gospel wants you to feel good about yourself. It gives people what they want, rather than what they need.

It focuses on happiness as the highest goal. It focuses on us. Jesus becomes just a therapist who meets my felt needs. It is man-centered, rather than God-centered.

One of the leading proponents of this gospel was Norman Vincent Peale, the big proponent of positive thinking. Peale was the author of *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952).

It became one of the bestselling religious books of all time. It is a book that will stroke your ego and make you feel good about yourself. This is the therapeutic gospel.

Some pastors preach sermons which are more psychological, than biblical. They focus on self-help and self-improvement, rather than on holiness. This is “The Self-Help Gospel” or “The American Gospel.” It is based on The American Dream.

As John MacArthur put it, “The true gospel is a call to self-denial. It is not a call to self-fulfillment.” [2]

### **The Liberal Gospel**

This is the liberal gospel. It is the politically-correct gospel. It is the gospel of mainline Christendom. It is the gospel of liberalism.

It rejects the exclusivity of Christ. It accepts other religions as saved. It is liberal. It is non-judgmental. It accepts all lifestyles. It is ecumenical. It is non-offensive. The gospel Paul preached offended people.

Paul spoke of “the offense of the cross” (Galatians 5:11). The PC gospel does not have any bad news in it. Sin is not viewed as man’s greatest problem and there is no Hell for those who reject this gospel. It is the same as universalism. It teaches that everyone will one day be saved.

### **The Ritual Gospel**

This gospel says that religious rituals are essential to salvation. It is often known as the Campbellite Gospel. It was strongly emphasized by Alexander Campbell who was part of the Restoration Movement.

Members of the Disciples of Christ and Church of Christ are big proponents of this gospel but so are many other groups. The Catholic Church also believes in this gospel. All of these groups believe in some form of baptismal regeneration.

They believe that you have to be baptized to be saved. If you are not baptized, you will go to hell. With this logic, a person who accepted Christ on a plane that crashed would be in hell. The thief on the cross would be in hell.

They would reply that the thief on the cross lived before Acts 2:38. He lived before the command to “*repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.*”

The problem with that logic is that these same people use John 3:5 (*No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit*) as a proof-text for baptismal regeneration but John was written before Acts.

There are answers to all of the Campbellite proof-texts which I give elsewhere on this website. People should be baptized. Baptism is a command for today but baptism is the outward symbol of faith. It is not a separate and equal condition of salvation.

### **The Free Grace Gospel**

It is a gospel common in the American church. It is the Easy-Believism Gospel of the American church. This is the hyper-grace gospel.

This view says that the gospel can be accepted without any change in lifestyle. Few churches in America seem to even practice church discipline today. The ones that do are the exception, rather than the rule.

The Free Grace Gospel is a gospel without repentance. It is the Gospel of Larry Flynt. Flynt was the publisher of *Hustler* magazine. He made a profession of faith in 1977 and said he was born again but continued to publish his pornographic magazines without apology.

This brings us to an important question. What happens if you claim to believe but make absolutely no change to your sinful lifestyle? What happens to people who continue to live in open sin?

What happens to openly gay couples or unmarried heterosexuals who are living together who say that they believe but do not repent or make any change in their life? In fact, these people often try to justify their sinful behavior? Are such individuals saved?

Some teachers on the Internet teach that they are. These false teachers say that you can continue to live in that immoral lifestyle and still go to heaven. You can be a rapist and murder and still go to heaven, just as long as you believe in Jesus. This is a false gospel. It is a gospel without repentance.

Paul told Christians not to be deceived. He said that the unrighteous will NOT inherit the kingdom of God (I Corinthians 6:9). He taught that people who live this kind of lifestyle have NO INHERITANCE in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Ephesians 5:5).

He said that “*because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience*” (Ephesians 5:6) and then exhorts Christians not to be partakers with the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 5:7).

This false gospel is called antinomianism, which is a fancy word for “lawlessness.” It was a heresy in the early church. I have heard pastors actually teach that Christians do not have any commands to follow. It is simply ludicrous. They have not read the NT.

## **The Political Gospel**

This is The Social Gospel. It is the gospel of Marxism and Black Liberation theology. It is a political gospel for the downtrodden and oppressed members of society. This gospel is political and humanistic. It is economic and social, rather than religious and spiritual.

There are many fallacies of this gospel. The church should make an impact on society but this gospel teaches that the primary mission of the church is to feed the poor and fight for social reform.

According to this gospel, man's greatest need is not sin. According to this gospel, the solution to man's problem is political, not spiritual. The answer is not God, according to this gospel, but human government.

## **The Restored Gospel**

The gospel of the Latter Day Saints is called "The Restored Gospel." Mormons talk about the restoration of the gospel, although the gospel they end up with is another form of the merit gospel. Mormons believe that that soon after the apostles died, the church became completely apostate.

They believe that the message of the gospel was completely lost and stayed lost for two thousand years until God revealed it again in 1820 to the "prophet" Joseph Smith and the gospel was restored. That was when, according to them, the true church has now been restored to the earth.

Critics might say that what Martin Luther did for Protestants is not different than what Joseph Smith did for Mormons. He rediscovered a gospel that the church had long lost for thousands of years but there is an important difference between the two.

Luther did not get a special revelation, add some books to the bible and change the gospel. He simply preached the gospel in the Bible that was not being preached in the Catholic Church.

That is a huge difference. Luther preached what Paul preached, namely justification by faith, not works. Joseph Smith preached a gospel of works. Mormons today teach a salvation by works.

Joseph Smith claimed to restore the true gospel but ended up coming up with a completely different gospel. Paul warned that if anyone changed the gospel (and even if he changed the gospel), he would be cursed. He called a curse down, not just on the message, but on the people who preach the unbiblical message ([Galatians 1:6-9](#)).

The Roman Catholic Church put a curse or anathema on anyone who taught salvation is by grace, not works (*Council of Trent*, Session 6, Canon 9, 12, 13, 14). Paul put a curse on anyone who preached a gospel of works and not grace.

This message is unalterable. APOSTLES cannot change the message. Even Paul, the greatest of the apostles, could not change the message. He included himself in this curse. ANGELS cannot change the message.

How many false religions have begun with a supposed angel from heaven, resulting in a false gospel. Muslims believe that the angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad in 610 AD in the country of Saudi Arabia, leading to a book (*Quran*) which contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture and teaches a false gospel.

Mormons believe that the angel Maroni appeared to Joseph Smith in the US in 1823, resulting in another book (*Book of Mormon*) which contradicts Scripture and teaches another false gospel.

Did Muhammad and Joseph Smith have a genuine experience with some type of supernatural being? They may have. That is not the issue. The Apostle Paul made it clear that even angels cannot change the gospel.

We are to follow the clear teachings of Scripture, not the teachings in another book by a supposed angel from heaven, which contradicts that book.

### **The Modern Scholar's Gospel**

Some modern biblical scholars argue that the gospel is not about salvation. The gospel according to N.T. Wright is not a description of how people get saved. He, and others, argue that the gospel is the message about the life of Jesus, His death, burial and resurrection. Take, for example, what Wright says in his *Paul in Different Perspectives*:

“when Paul uses the word ‘gospel’, this is the very centre of what he is referring to: the announcement that Jesus, the crucified Jew from Nazareth, has been raised from the dead by the creator God, and has been exalted as Lord of the world, claiming allegiance from all alike, Jew and Gentile, great and small, from Caesar on his throne to the poorest child of the humblest slave in the farthest corners of the world.

For Paul, what he means by ‘the gospel’ is not, despite some of our current usage, the description of a way of salvation... but ‘the gospel’ itself refers to the proclamation that Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah, is the one, true and only Lord of the world.” [3] If you read what Paul says, it seems that the modern scholars are right.

*“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:3-4 NIV).*

Paul calls this message the gospel. The scholars are right that the focus of the message is on Jesus, but the gospel is also said to be the message of salvation, even in I Corinthians 15.

*Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are SAVED, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. (I Corinthians 15:1-2 NIV)*

Paul called the gospel “*the power of God UNTO SALVATION*” (Romans 1:16). That is what makes the gospel “good news” (which is what the word means). Simply recounting the basic facts of someone who lived two thousand years ago in the Middle East is not good news.

It is the significance of this death which turns it into the gospel. Jesus did not simply die, He died FOR OUR SINS, according to the Scriptures, so that we might be saved. That element is left out in the modern scholarship gospel.

1. Have you been Guilty of any of these false gospels? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Which one of these was a surprise to you? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Did you think of anyone you know that might be deceived by one of these? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. Can you see how easy it is to add things to The True Gospel? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. Can you find the man pleasing in these false gospels? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. Can you see what they might have left out of these false gospels? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. Have you encountered any other false gospels? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. Please name 5-10 people you will commit to pray for their salvation.

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